

STUDY OF AESTHETICISM IN MODERN PUNJABI POETRY

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Literature is directly connected to the creation of aesthetics but compared to the other genres of literature, poetry is considered to be a unique expression in itself in terms of the creation and presentation of aesthetics. Its language goes beyond the realms of ordinary meanings and puts forth new dimensions of meanings for prevalent words. The main task of a poem is the creation of aesthetics but this does not imply that poetry is a genre disconnected from the society. The aesthetic task of a poem only refers to a process that is unique from other prevalent processes and to the fact that aestheticism in poetry cannot be deducted to any type of methodological approach. Aesthetics is the basic condition for the existence of poetry.

Modern Punjabi poetry is easily differentiated from the mediaeval Punjabi poetry from the angle of aesthetics. Modern Punjabi poetry lacks the thematic and formational harmony and concentration that was very clearly visible in the poetry of mediaeval era. It is very difficult to recognise a common of aesthetics is realised in the Gurmat, Sufi and Kissa forms of verse witnessed in the Punjabi poetry of middle ages. Modern Punjabi poetry on the other hand is based on the uniqueness of every poet and his creation. In this era, various poetic outputs from the same poet are different to each other in terms of their aesthetic expression. However many commonly related aesthetical features can be recognised from the poetry of modern day Punjabi poets and their prevalent poetic perceptions. Some poets have also attempted to present their originality by moving beyond the boundaries of aesthetics in their poetic perceptions. These selective poets include prominent names like Bhai Veer Singh, Pooran Singh, Mohan Singh, Bawa Balwant, Shiv Kumar, Harbhajan Singh, Jaswant Singh Neki, Paash and Surjit Paatar.

Most of the punjabi poetry especially the poetic mainstreams emerging under the modern age of Punjabi poetry have been centralized in nature and very little poetry has been found to be decentralized. Similarly, very few instances of poetry have been found to be providing evidences for a decentralized aesthetic capability. This concept of centralisation and decentralization also discussed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their research paper 'Rhizome' this is as much as to say that this system of thought has never reached an understanding of multiplicity: in order to arrive at two following a spiritual method it must assume a strong principal unity.¹ According to him, a tree helps to establish thoughts and concepts which further inspire and influence creations that nourish under the shadows of this particular tree whereas the grass is connected to a the flow of a progressive movement. The branches of this tree are connected to the established centres in one form or the other whereas the grass attains a multi directional growth due to its roots being firmly planted on the earth's surface. The basic nature of a tree is to be connected to one particular ideology, philosophy, concept or formational features as the main sources thereby enabling the originality of its aesthetics in their purest and the most original form. Originality can be also found in the sources but the creation arising out of the same source cannot be claimed to be purely original. One particular and continuous use of a source also makes the whole process stale but a poem using the decentralized approach is free from the pre-established notions, philosophies and ideological perceptions subsequently making it create original outputs in a regular and active manner. Most of the poetic creations in the modern Punjabi literary era have often found themselves trapped inside structures formed by the pre-established notions and philosophies thereby not attaining an independent and free nature.

The main source of aesthetics in the poetic outputs of Bhai Veer Singh is found to be the mystic or the fateful elements of destiny. In his poetry, the supernatural or the destiny based elements have presented themselves as the basis for the creation of poetic outputs in light of the Gurmat ideology and its explanation while other poems and creations have also been based on the experience derived from these mystic elements. In his thought based poems, the descriptions of nature or the beauty of poetry is not aesthetic in itself but they become aesthetic due to the highlighting touch of the mystic features. In this way they also go on to connect aesthetic to the truth subsequently also bringing together the concepts of poetic aesthetics and religious

ideologies. However, his experience based poems and their creation provide a rich evidence of creative methodologies in their purest form. These poems of Bhai Veer Singh have lived through the mystic and fateful experience but they have not propagated or popularized the same in any way, shape or form. The aesthetic instances in his poetry can easily be recognised as creations on the lines of determined regulations inside a centralised form.

The main specialty of poetry created by Pooran Singh lies in the fact that it is capable of a centralised aesthetic ability. The actual meaning of being centralised does not signal the deduction of poetic aesthetics but it is such a unique concept that avoids being bound in one particular ideology or school of thought and does not become one-dimensional in terms of inspiration thereby preparing the ground for an original aesthetic creation. Pooran Singh attempted to create poetry that was free from any kind of preexisting notions and the aesthetic value in his poem does not relate itself to any religious, social, political or moral narratives. In this way his poetry gives a strong evidence of a purely original and self-introductory aesthetics. The poetic talents of Pooran Singh are so rich and prolific that his poetic outputs go way beyond the established traditions of poetry. In his book, *Khulle Lekh*, Pooran Singh has remarked regarding the use of *rules and regulations by a poet whilst also mentioning the word crime in the same sentence². The aesthetics abilities of Pooran Singh provided an infinite level of possibilities to all eras of Punjabi poetry.

Another important and distinguishing feature of Pooran Singh's poetic aesthetics is the very little distance between the presentation of his experiences and their actual presentation. Normally in the process of transforming the experiences and emotions of a poet into poetic presentation, many of its elements and instances are often marginalized and also skipped in the process but this does not seem to happen in the poetry of Pooran Singh wherein he surpasses all these pre-existing poetic trends and happenings. No other poet of the time was able to maintain such high level of concentration and harmony between the experience and its poetic presentation which often manages to keep the poet extremely close to the reality and truth. In the modern era of Punjabi poetry, progressive poetic movement was the first to be classified as a determined poetic movement. In this particular poetic movement of modern Punjabi poetry the required aesthetic difference between the world of objects and the world of politics has not been maintained. Most of the poetry created under this movement deals with a photogenic presentation of the world of objects in the world of poetry. Slogans, direct addresses and other instances of phrasal remarks in this poetry hindered its allegiance to a pure poetic creation. This also suggested a lack of poetic language in the poetry of this movement. The language used by the poets of this progressive poetic movement while propagating the movement at a conscious level, does not open itself up. For the creation of aesthetics, the absence of concrete and realistic statistics is compulsory. This absence is only possible if the poet allows his imagination to fly like a free bird. In reality the progressive poetry, adopts a convenient approach. The easy and straightforward presentation has made the communication process easy and smooth for the attainment of its needs but at the same time it has moved away from the possibilities of the presence of signifiers and the multiplicity of meaning. Artistic poets like Mohan Singh rendered many new prospects to the art of poetry by the use of symbolic images with the help of senses but the repetition in themes and presentations made them somewhat mechanical. The divide among the poets of this movement on the grounds of the conscious determination and the inclination towards the unconscious also resulted in the stumbling of aesthetics in their poetry. On an unconscious level, poets of this movement were inclined towards romantic themes involving romance and singing of human beauty. It has led to the presentation of progressive ideology move towards wine, glasses, feminine beauty and other romantic imagery which formed a solid divide between the object and artistry of this poetry. Despite all these, the progressive poetic movement is classified as the first poetic movement in Punjabi which brought the genre of poetry out of the realms of religion thereby also connecting it to all sections of society and their fortunes.

The experimental movement in Punjabi poetry experimented with the creation of a new kind of poetry which was completely different to the poetry put forth by the progressive movement. Poets inclined towards new experiments and methodologies formed this movement and named their poetry as experimental poetry. The individualist and introvert nature of experimental poetry was opposite to the notions of progressive poetry. The poets under this experimental ideology claimed to compose non-romantic and non-emotive poetry thereby providing another strong contrast to the progressive poetry. This new form of poetry was in no way, shape or form, connected to any other particular ideology. Every creative poet attempts to present new experiments and innovations but all these attempts must be spontaneous and not premeditated. It has also been observed that various uncalled elements also become a part of poetry on the name of experience and innovation. Similarly experiments based on the name of creating experimental symbols and imagery can also lead to poetic becoming and un-poetic and the aesthetic turning into the unaesthetic. A poem by Ajaib Kamal can be cited as a reference:

The old four lane of ghanta ghar is flowing continuously
Just like a Lahori ulcer

There in lies the pleasure
With dreams tarnished
Just like the vomit of a patient
Being licked by a dog³

The poets of this movement connect poetry to the expression of complicated psychological realities of humans in the light of new scientific knowledge and modernism. For this particular kind of expression the poetry of this age lays an emphasis on experiments. The basic beliefs of the poets indulging in such kind of poetry denounce the use of previously utilized symbols and images on the grounds of their inability to create new truths and realities. In their fast paced attempt to create a new symbolic structure, poets sometimes confined themselves to the creation of imagery that lacked aesthetic sense on the whole. When identified and analysed from an aesthetic angle, this poetic movement presents more shortcomings than achievements. This also subsequently lead to a premature decline and eventually a reincarnation of this poetic movement. The poets of the movement attempted to recognise their limitations and in the process of removing these limitations they started a new kind of modernistic poetry. Dr. Karamjit Singh states:

Experimental movement was basically dedicated to the experiments regarding form. Modernistic poetry becomes an important evidence of the creative and artistic collaboration between form and object in the context of modern meanings and emotions.⁴

Most of the forms of the modernistic poetry have represented the contemporary realism while the modern thought process has also based itself on the intelligence based trilogy of past, present and future. Most of the points composed by Dr. Harbhajan Singh provide an aesthetic presentation of human beings standing on the fringes of the past and present along with traditions and modernism. His poem Kach Sootak is an important instance of this fact. The next important distinguishing factor of this poetry is its suitable representation of the object based realities in the form of selective aesthetic representation instead of the exclusive and unmodified representation of the objective realities. Similarly, this particular poetry does not present a romantic or idealistic showing of object based realities. It also transforms the un-aesthetic reality into an aesthetic political presentation. This poetry is truly a representation of the experiences held by the poet. Features such as these have led to poets like Dr. Harbhajan Singh being recognised as aesthetic poets. This school of poetry is also opposite to the progressive movement on the basis of its inclination towards the creator because it eventually becomes a genre that avoids providing a determined, accurate, singular and a closed meaning of a poetic work. In such kind of poetry, infinite possibilities of meaning are arisen. This is an identification of the arrival of poetic aesthetics.

Poets connected to Rebellious phase of poetry can be classified into two categories. The first category includes those poets who put forth slogan of rebellion arising out of a feeling of discontent from violence and chaos spread around them while also expressing a romantic desire for revolutionary political happenings. These poets carried an approach to turn poetry into an expressionistic medium of propagation. The second category of poets aimed at the expression of protest against the social and political circumstances and the inspiration to protest against the same but their poetry does not lose its aesthetic sense and the ability while expressing the heat of emotions against the prevalent circumstances. These aesthetic poets include names such as Harbhajan Hundal, Harbhajan Halwarvi, Amarjeet Chandan, Joga Singh and Jagtar. However, from a particular point of poetic creations, this particular poetry is recognised as a poetry containing high tones of protest. Names like Avatar Pash, Darshan Khatkad, Sant Sandhu and others are also added to the second facet of the poetry of this movement. This poetic movement and its poetry is different from the progressive poetry in the aspect that it takes Marxism and Naxalite ideology for its basic thought process and it also emphasizes and beckons the need of a political revolution before expecting any other sort of revolution or change. Political power and position is the main target for its process of protest and opposition. However, the use of swearing language and other expletives against the political opponents somewhat deducts the aesthetic presence in this poetry. In reality the poets of this movement do not consider poetry to be responsible for the creation of aesthetics; instead they consider poetry to be the main weapon for social struggles and protests. The poets of this movement used poetic forms and vocabularies to create poetry very similar to folk songs and folk tales for the purpose of connecting public awareness and public sentiments to themselves. Sant Ram Udaasi has written a song:

Do not call for selling bangles
In our yard, thou seller!⁵

These poets attempted to present various symbols and images from well-known and well recognised descriptions of rural and agricultural way of living in addition to the use of common phrasal language in order to

create a bonding with the masses. For instance, we can see the presentation of irrigation starved agriculture in the poetry of Paash as well as the representation of sugarcane fields starved of fertilizers, peacocks feeling the brunt of hot climate, defective engines and clothes torn apart; all of them symbolising the condition of the masses at the time subsequently also building a connection with their emotions. Such kind of poetry also gives the illusion of being communicative and thereby gives a preference to the communicative purpose of a language. Such type of poetry can also be classified reader- centric because in order to properly convey this message it usually goes on to the in order to comprehend the intended meaning. At the same time, such type of poetry is diverted from the path of its aesthetic sense. Poets belonging to the later period of this age, acknowledged this diversion from aesthetics. Paash comments on the same as:

Poetry cannot take its essence from the strategies of political parties⁶

Apart from the poetic phases and movements in Punjabi, a discussion must also take place regarding the individual effects of various poets regarding the uniqueness of aesthetics in poetry. The poetry of Mohan Singh is embodied in a romantic presentation of the uniqueness in aesthetics. The background to this romanticism in his poetry carries symbols and imagery of natural as well as feminine features of beauty and these images were always found to be ever active in his poetry. However the aesthetic sense in the poetry of Mohan Singh is disturbed when he attempts to bring the contradictory and unmatchable concept of the unconscious love for beauty face to face with the conscious ideological determination. Despite all these complications and implications, the poetry of this age holds a special mention in terms of its creation of sensory imagery.

The quality of aestheticism in Harbhajan Singh's poetry lies in its special poetic language ability. His poetry transforms the aesthetic lacking reality into an aesthetics based poetic reality but the poetic language of Harbhajan Singh is not as spontaneously capable poetic language as that of Pooran Singh. His poetic output is an exemplary collaboration of aesthetic poetic presentation of reality arising out the conscious creations. A dense and deeply interwoven creation of imagery is the basis of aesthetics in the poetry of Shiv Kumar Batalvi. The poetic output of Shiv Kumar Batalvi is free from historic and political descriptions as was the poetry of Pooran Singh. His poetry is also not affected by the contemporary situations and ideologies and a major reason behind that is the theme of his poetry which mostly revolves around the concept of love. The theme of love in his poetry is universal in nature. Such focus of theme in his poetry lends an introvert concentration to his poetic outputs. In this way, the poetic language of Shiv Kumar Batalvi is found to be extremely solid and capable. This poetic language takes its essence from the collaboration of three basic units of culture, nature and human relations.

The poetic creations of Jaswant Singh Neki are based on the balance established between the aesthetics sense of poetry and its philosophy. The aesthetic journey of this poetic is realised from its movement from the world of imagery to the world of reality. Such poetry takes its origin from emotions but eventually it does not render much distance to emotions instead prefers to provide a layer of knowledge over it.

The poetic output of Paash takes its essence from the reaction arising out of the contemporary issues and situations but he has also relieved Punjabi poetry from the clutches of urbanized vocabulary by creating a vivid imagery and poetic creations inspired from the rural environment. He also disapproves the delicate and emotional nature of aesthetic presentation in poetry. In the later age of his poetic stage, he also aims to dig deep into the philosophical depths; instead of a straightforward presentation of the realities. Some examples can be seen in his later stage of poetry such as 'Joga Singh di Sway-Padchol', 'Kaamred Nal Gallbaat' etc.

The aesthetic sense in the poetry of Surjit Paatar can be understood in the search for realising the distinctive situation of poetry and ultimately leading to the identification of active abstract regulations or systems active in the background of poetic creations. This poetry begins from the liquefied flow of emotions but its approach around the system and knowledge of the spots of symbolic relations. This poetry also concentrates on the contexts which are focused on each and every individual and thus applied uniformly on each and every human being. The speciality of aesthetics lies in its ability to transform the poetic situation from the individual to the concept of the whole. Dr. Tarlok Singh Kanwar describes this particular aspect and methodology of poetry as a '*collaborative paradigm of abstract and concrete'⁷ where in the poetry coming out of this process is often based on the useful poetic expression instead of a direct and clear presentation of events. This type of poetic output also goes on to defy the sensory sensibilities playing an active part in the poetic creation process. A unique kind of seriousness and regulation prevents it from indulging in emotive progression. This poetic creation does not deal in emotions but it deals with meditation of emotions. Similarly, poetry of Surjit Patar is based on experience but the actual poetic output is more inclined towards the maturity and intelligence of this experience than its sole expression.

The study of aestheticism in modern Punjabi poetry establishes the notion that most of the poetry composed in the modern era has taken its essence from the contemporary social and other circumstances which punctuated that particular phase in time. Very few instances of poetry of the time are found to be distinct from the contemporary issues, attachments and influences. Aesthetics in poetry is not opposite to the contemporary concepts but aesthetics in poetry must use the contemporary phase as its original stage from where the journey to the state of timelessness must begin. A successful journey will enable the acceptance of the poetic outputs as per the standards of aestheticism. Similarly, most of the poetic movements of modern Punjabi literary era are connected to either one or the other conscious ideological commitments or pre-established concepts and notions. These types of premeditated concepts or ideologies are a detriment to the spontaneous application of creativity in poetry. The pure form of aestheticism in Punjabi poetry can only be credited to the poetic talents of Pooran Singh. The inability of other poets of the age to replicate the aesthetic creation methodologies of Pooran Singh and his poetic outputs has led to a situation where in almost all of the poetic movements and methodologies become stagnant instead of providing a universal light of aesthetic knowledge. The main purpose of poetry lies in reflecting the truth of this universe and it can only be universally accepted if it represents human experience and knowledge along with their ingredients and characteristics in the purest aesthetic form. Poetry from the time of Mohan Singh has slowly and steadily evolved itself into a meaning-centred intellectual unit. Names such as Pooran Singh and Shiv Kumar Batalvi are however away from this transformation. In this way, the aesthetic specialty of modern Punjabi poetry can be measured from its movement to the phase of realism from the initial stage of religious idolism.

Quotes :

*ਕਰੀ ਜਨ ਆਧਾ ਨੇਮ ਤੇ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਆਪ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ।²

*ਘੰਟਾ ਘਰ ਦਾ ਚੌਕ ਪੁਰਾਣਾ ਰਾਤ ਦਿਨੇ ਹੈ ਵਗਦਾ ਰਹਿੰਦਾ
ਕਿਸੇ ਲਾਹੌਰੀ ਫੌੜੇ ਵਾਂਗੂੰ।... ਔਹ ਵੇਖੋ ਆਨੰਦ ਇਹ ਆਇਆ
ਸੁਪਨੇ ਸਿੱਲੇ ਨਾਲ ਲਿਆਇਆ
ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਬਿਮਾਰ ਦੀ ਉਲਟੀ, ਕੁੱਤਾ ਜਿਸਨੂੰ ਚੱਟ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ।³

*ਪ੍ਰਯੋਗਵਾਦੀ ਧਾਰਾ ਮੁੱਖ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਰੂਪ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਯੋਗਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਰਪਿਤ ਸੀ। ਆਧੁਨਿਕਤਾਵਾਦੀ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਭਾਵ-ਬੋਧ ਦੇ ਸੰਦਰਭ ਵਿਚ ਰੂਪ ਅਤੇ ਵਸਤੂ ਦੇ ਰਚਨਾਤਮਕ ਸੰਜੋਗ ਦੀ ਸਾਧਨਾ ਵੱਲ ਆਧੁਨਿਕ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਕਵਿਤਾ ਦੀ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣ ਬਣਦੀ ਹੈ।⁴

*ਸਾਡੀ ਵੀਹੀ ਵਿਚ ਚੁੜੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਹੋਕਾ
ਦੇਵੀਂ ਨਾ ਵੀਰਾ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ।⁵

*ਸਿਆਸੀ ਪਾਰਟੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਪੈਂਤੜੇਬਾਜ਼ੀ ਨਾਲ ਕਵਿਤਾ ਦੀ ਹੁਨਾੜੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋ ਸਕਦੀ।⁶

*ਸਮੂਹਤਨ-ਅਸੂਰਤਨ ਦੇ ਮਿਲਵੇਂ ਪੈਰਾਡਾਈਮ⁷

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