

Dialectics of Progressivism in Suryakant Tripathy Nirala's Poetry

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Abstract-

The present study is being conducted on progressive writers with special reference to Surya Kant Tripathy Nirala with the objective to study the role of Niralaji in shaping the Indian society which was suffering from casteism and capitalism from 1920 onwards through his original works and translations done by different scholars. By using onion technique the study reveals that the poet Nirala who was a revolutionary and progressive poet appealed strenuously for the cause of poor, oppressed, untouchables and down trodden. He raised his voice by presenting the pathetic condition of lower class through his novels, stories and poems to show us the society where rich were getting richer and poor were getting poorer.

Key Words: Progressivism, Communism, Conservatism, Untouchables, oppressed

Introduction: “Indian literature is one, though written in different languages”. This statement made by S. Radha krishnan continues to inform Indian literary historiography in fundamental ways. This so-called 'oneness' has however been a matter of critical contestation. Sheldon Pollock, a modern-day Indologist, tends to place the variety of vernacular (bhasha) literatures in Sanskrit Cosmopolis with all kinds of originary claims. But keeping in view rather checkered history of Indian literature, its oneness cannot be pinned down to one definitive originary moment. The bhasha critics tend to discover the oneness of Indian literatures in the revolutionary bhakti-past. Modern Indian literature, as a repository of multiple pasts and presents that Indian subcontinent has seen is actually placed at the cross-section many cosmopolises - cultural, ideological, and aesthetic. The progressive sentiment was of course propelled by the rise of Marxism at the global level in Europe on the early twentieth century, but it did not supplant the native traditions of protest and resistance. Indian language literatures of the subcontinent saw the rise of progressive writings across genres with distinct regional markers and coordinates. Indian progressive literature has many native variants, and its ideological textuality is determined as much by the European shades of Marxism or socialism, as by the local people-centric narratives of culture. The Progressive Writers' Association traces its genesis to a group of four Urdu writers—Ahmed Ali, Rashid Jahan, Sajjad Zaheer, and Mahmudazzafar—who published a collection of short stories in an anthology titled 'Angarey' in 1932. The movement gained new currency in the later years with more writers joining to its fold. Hindi literature underwent different progressive phases – from pragatisheel to janvadi. In Telugu literature progressive flourished under Abhyudaya Kavayitram. One of its prominent poets, Sri Sri, was instrumental in founding a more revolutionary group Virasam (Viplava Rachayitala Sangham) in 1970. In Punjabi progressive sentiment goes on to acquire a more virulent Naxalite/jujharvadi turn. In Malayalam literature progressive literature took off with the formation of Jeevat Sahitya Sangham in 1936. In Bangla, the second PWA organized in 1938 in Calcutta provided a structural take off to progressive poetry and theatre. In Orissa, the Utkal Congress Samyavadi Karmi Sangha was at the forefront of progressive literature in Odiya. In Maharashtra, the film industry of Bombay came to embody the high tide of the progressive movement, whose values and ideas found representation in mainstream cinema. The present research intends to put critical views on Surya Kant Tripathy Nirala as progressive writer of Hindi language to reveal the simultaneity of experience that the entire subcontinent underwent right from 1920s onwards.

Objective: The objective of this research is to study, specifically, the role of Nirala in shaping the Indian society, which was suffering from casteism and capitalism during 1920 onwards through the original work of Surya Kant Tripathy Nirala and its translations done by different scholars.

Data Source and Sample Size: For studying 'Dialectics of Progressivism in Nirala's poetry, the great revolutionary, satirist, poet, novelist, story writer and essayist Surya Kant Tripathy Nirala has been chosen as matter of study. The study covers the period, 1920 onwards. The time of Nirala was 1897-1961. For conducting the present study, data has been collected from different books of Suryakant Tripathy Nirala. 'Rag Virag' by Dr. Rajeshwarprasad Chaturvedi has been taken as primary source of study. In Hindi literature, the time period from 1916-1938 is marked as 'Chayavad' and it refers to as Neo Romanticism. It was marked by an increase of romantic and humanist content, 'Chayavad' was marked by a renewed sense of the self and personal expression, visible in the writings of that time. It is known for its leaning towards themes of love, nature as well as an individualistic re-appropriation of the Indian tradition in a new form. Nirala's poetry was different from his contemporaries as he propped imagination at very rare places rather he showed the actual picture of society. That is why Ramvilas Sharma called him People's poet. He tried to fathom the experiences, struggles and aspirations of ordinary people of India. All his writings which scream to improve the plight of ordinary men have been taken into account.

Research Methodology: This study has been done on the basis of original works of Surya Kant Tripathy Nirala and their translations done by different scholars. Help of internet needs applauds as three websites, namely 'Kavita Kosh', exoticindiaart.com and litpile.wordpress.com helped in shaping this research paper. The method sprung from the traditional qualitative approach. Onion method has been used by its five main layers, which served step by step to reach the conclusion. Firstly, time period of Nirala was studied and evaluated, then his approach towards society was taken into account. Grounded theory was used as a strategy and then time horizon or the period of that time was taken into consideration. In the end his revolutionary appeal was evaluated by keeping in view the society, rituals and culture of that time. The above methodology was used to reach to the point that Nirala, was not only a poet but prominent social reformer. The main purpose of this research is to prove that Nirala is not of an age but of all ages. Poems, essays and novels written by Nirala were read and its evaluation was studied broadly via books and websites. A deep observation was made of the data collected in the search light of Neo Romantic period, when Britishers were ruling India and society was at upheavals. India was struggling hard for the freedom. The stepping in of Nirala into the Progressive movement proved fruitful in bringing about reconciliation between upper class and lower class and also it gave new direction to the bond slaves, farmers and oppressed class. The study of his works proves that Nirala followed the path of revolutionary writers. He can be called another Kabir who lead the life of saint and devoted his life for the upliftment of society and its people.

Study Content: Suryakant Tripathy Nirala got better opportunity to spend early days of his life in West Bengal. It was not an ordinary Bengal. It was not sick, rotten or famine stricken Bengal, not dull, spiritless or listless full of labourers but on the other hand, it was a land full of prosperous feudal lords with all the amenities of life. It was a land where royal family of 'Mahishadal' lived. It was the same royal rose, to which once mushroom had challenged. Nirala was an epitome of beauty and talent. He had not been so much attractive with stout sporty figure, royal family would never have accepted him. If Prince Dwarkanath Tagore had seen young Nirala, he would certainly have become fidgeted to grab him. Acharya Shivpoojan Sahay in his Reminiscences has written that Seth Madhav Prasad himself with his hands used to polish the shoes of Nirala. There was nothing in the market of Kolkata, which was not under the reach of Suryakant Nirala. An elite class, cultured man, dressed in rich attire could be seen in the streets of Kolkata. He was a well-known man of Kolkata because of his deep knowledge of literature and Philosophy, his exquisite poetry, melodious recitation of poetry, knowledge of classical music, hatred towards English rulers and philanthropic nature.

It was in 1920-22, when Gandhi ji mounted upon the stage of Indian political show as an important leader of masses. Chitranjan Das was the only leader in Bengal during those days. Subhash Chandra Bose and J. M. Sengupta were his followers. There were quite a number of revolutionary parties in Bengal. Because of this political revolution, trade unions had also come into existence, which were striving hard to grab their rights through leaders from factory owners. As has been said, "Literature is the mirror of society", its impact could be seen on the then literature of Bengal. The great Suryakant Tripathy Nirala was part of such society.

West Bengal could have produced another 'Naz rule' Islam if Nirala's pen had taken its turn only towards Bengal. More or less he was also influenced by the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. But those easily attained powers, which shaped the personality of Tagore were lacking here.

After the death of his wife, love in the life of Nirala started diminishing and another blow on his back came in the form of daughter's death. Source of income weakened after this and somehow he bore the family responsibilities by doing translation work. Life became like a 'pulling on' factor. For becoming a political leader, one needs ample of time and money, in the same way freedom from family responsibilities and free mind are the requirements to become a poet. Due to inflation after second world war, eatables of daily need rocketed the sky in 1942-43. Nirala's plight was pitiable at that time, when he sold his poems just for penny price.

The thought that Nirala could have soared higher than Tagore haunts the mind frequently. He had remarkable command over the various genres of prose and poetry. There are so many critics, who compare the poetry of Tagore and Nirala and have placed his poetry on higher place due to its highly exquisite artistic and literary features. Rahul Sanskratayan, a great Hindi writer says about Nirala:

Today, the person who does not worship Nirala,
will be considered atheist. As much as the coming
generations imagine about this great artist, won't be able
to have a glimpse of his simple, naive and selfless life.
great personality like Nirala is difficult to find.
Like his literary brilliancy, his exquisite humanity is out of
our range to fathom..... (trans. Self, Ek Vyakti Ek Yug)

The new wave which witnessed a boost around 1935 in Hindi, is known as progressivism. It received its inhalation from Russia's communism. The mind-set which is called communism in the arena of politics, socialism in the sphere of Economics is called progressivism in literature and the poets are called progressive writers. In short we can say progressivism is the literary pronunciation of the communism.

Surayakant Tripathi 'Nirala', who is a designated name in Hindi literature, came to be known as revolutionary and anti-conservative poet. He was a pioneer of 'Chhayavad', neo romanticism but later chose to write progressive poetry. He was influenced by the rise of socialist thought after October revolution. He was conscious of the exploitative character of capitalism. His poetry is always admired as path breaking in Hindi literature. In progressive thoughts he could find the shades of his inner feelings and for the welfare of society he adopted progressive thoughts and writings. According to him, "Pure Karma is that, in which good number of people gain advantage and become happy." He wrote and raised voice for the oppressed and down trodden class and showed his sympathies through his poetry and that is the reportable of progressivism. His poems, 'Bhikshuk' (Begger), 'Todti Pathar' (She Breaks Stones), 'Vidhwa' (Widow) etc. are good examples of his progressive thoughts. In his poem 'Shivaji Ke Patra' (Letters by Shivaji), he has blatantly said that India's future will remain in dark if we do nothing to raise the exploited and persecuted. Apart from this, critics describe his poetry full of mysticism, nationalism and experimentalism. The sources of his themes include History, religion, nature, 'Puranas' and contemporary social and political questions. Nirala unflinching turns the oppressive, dominant discourses of caste, class and gender upside down in his poetry and prose.

Nirala could have lived twenty years more or could have died earlier. People looked at him like a person leading solitary life but he was in every atom of this universe. He was one among many. He followed all downtrodden and untouchables like a shadow. That was the reason he reached and understood the plight of a labour woman on the road to Allahabad and wrote, "Todti Pathar" (She Breaks Stones). in a heart rending manner, he portrays her plight;

I saw her along the road in Allahabad,
 engaged in her toil.
 Not a shady tree under which she sat
 with acceptance of her lot.
 Dark skinned, fullness of youth restrained.
 Cast eyes, her dear-work engrossed mind,
 A heavy hammer held in hand,
 Striking repetitively... (trans. Archana Bahadur Zutshi)

A progressive writer always shows his sympathies for downtrodden and oppressed. Nirala's 'Bhikshuk' (Beggar), 'Vidhwa' (Widow) and 'Todtipather' (She Breaks Stones) are vivid examples of his progressive views. In 'Bhikshuk' (Beggar) he writes;

He comes.
 Making us repentant with remorseful remarks
 He comes on path.
 His stomach and back seem one
 A stick in hand,
 Asking for alms and grain to satisfy his hunger
 (Trans. Litpile.worldpress.com)

Nirala roamed in the streets of his country. If he was detached and innocent, how would he give a vivid glimpse of villages of 'Chitrakoot Mountains'? His weak economic condition was different from that of an ordinary man's bereavement. Everybody in this world is calculating, even a child calculates and spends his money wisely but Nirala was indeed 'nirala' (strange). He had never learnt the art of spending money by chalking budget. If he had thousands of rupees one day, he would be bare-handed the very next day because he would spend his money to fulfil the needs of poor and needy. He was an arbiter, generous, a warrior, who was kind and soft by heart. According to Nagarjuna "Nirala was a poet, in whom we found Tulsidas, Kabir, Bhartendu and Ramkrishna Paramhansa". (P.11, 'Ek vyakti Ek Yug') From the point of view of progressivism and experimentalism, Nirala's poetry reached at its best as 'era awareness' from 1933-34 to 1942-43 (ten years). During this period, he gave us 'Tulsidas', 'Chaturi Chamar' and 'Devi'. During this period he made our introduction with ordinary era heroes like, 'KulliBhat, 'Billesur Bakriha' etc. Mushroom challenged the rose and we heard the burning challenge coming out from the throat of a revolutionary:

Today, the mansion of rich
 Will be the school of farmers,
 Washermen, 'Pasi', Cobbler. Oilmen
 Will open the lock of darkness.
 They will recite the lesson.
 Spread the mats.
 Hurry up, hurry up, come, and come. (Nirala, Ek Vyakti Ek Yug p.69. trans-self)

Today socialism is not an unknown word. It is a fashion or an attitude to discuss socialism today. One feels that he is getting pure by discussing socialism. Nirala also announced socialism to be his ultimate goal. In his poem "Moscow Dialogues" (1938-39), he satirically draws the profile of fake Socialist.

I have a friend Mr Gidwani, A big socialist
 Has come to meet with 'Moscow Dialogues'
 Said, "See, this is Moscow Dialogues.
 Shri Subhash Chandra had asked to bring in jail

Met me, then... when he was on mountains.

.....two copies were brought.....”

Then he said, "I don't get time,
Elder brother is getting a bungalow constructed
I look after that”.

Then he said, in my society

There are big people

All stupid

I have to cheat them.”(P-70, 'Ek Vyakti Ek Yug' trans, self)

Today the situation is different. He is not only getting his brother's bungalow constructed but also his own. Very soon they'll buy a car, big bank balance, son And son-in law drawing handsome salary, such people can be found everywhere in the country. Nirala had a strong desire of Ram Rajya in his country before independence. He writes:

Make everyone successful!

The youth that is withered

Fill them all with life!

Colour the sky

Let everyone live with suitable pride

Shackles of cheating should lose its grip

And country should celebrate happiness! (p-72, 'Ek Vyakti Ek Yug trans, self)

India started having a smaller glimpse of independence between 1937-40. Opportunists started showing their selfish mien. They started drinking the fresh juice of materialism. At this time, Nirala prepared himself completely to face the situation arising out of that critical situation. Politics started entering the arena of literature and made it its slave but Nirala did not move a budge. He knew the reality of those new emerging politicians and to snub them, he developed stone hard tone. As far as emotions were concerned, he was in full favour of ordinary people. His 'Kullibhat' started teaching untouchables and he invited Nirala to visit his school. Nirala took the opportunity as a boon and visited the school. There he happened to meet the parents of untouchable students. They were the men, who had been bowing their heads in the reverence of so called high born people for generations and leave the world in the same manner. They didn't find any place in the history of civilization. They had no right to call them 'Kashyap', 'Bhardwaj', 'Kapila' or 'Kanada'(who wrote Ramayana and Mahabharata), their ancestors. They had not been given right to call Ashoka, Vikramaditya, Harshwardhan, Prithviraj of their own lineage. Then too, they only exist in this world. According to Nirala, 'Kulli' was great. He was real man, a lion among jackals. Though he was not highly educated yet he surpassed all the educated class. The parents of untouchable students wanted to honour Nirala by giving flowers but were afraid of touching him lest he should take a bath. Nirala was full of pity for them. He was a real revolutionary. With utmost patience, he asked them to put flowers in his hands. Nirala was full of peace to see their exhilaration. It was soul to soul connection. Kulli died but he had earned name and fame in that area for serving down trodden and untouchables. People participated in funeral procession but no twice born was ready to make them perform all the rituals after death as Kulli's wife was a muslim lady and according to them she was a pseudo hindu. At that time, Nirala came forward and made them perform all the rituals like, 'shradha'. At one hand, people were surprised to see his mastery over Sanskrit and on the other it came as an emerging India without the shackles of conservative ideas and fearlessness. As a progressive writer, Nirala too was of the view that economic difference or class system is the root cause of all the pains being suffered by society and its only solution was communism. That is why he always looked at Russia with hopeful eyes and eulogised Red Army of Russia. Here one strong feature of Progressivism which we saw in Nirala's poetry was the description of fleshy Body of woman. Progressive writers no doubt showed great sympathy for the harassed woman but at the same time considered her a commodity to be used by men. In "Juhi ki Kali", he talks about crushing fair cheeks of woman. In 'Todti Pathar' (She Breaks Stones), he of course sympathises with the labour woman but does not forget to describe her outer appearance:

Dark Skinned, fullness of youth restrained” (trans. Dr Archana Bahadur Zutshi)

Nirala was indeed a luminous star of Hindi literature whose work is mirror of the then society. Though Sumitranandan Pant also showed sympathy towards oppressed but the emotional touch is missing there. Nirala's poetry was the soul of Progressivism.

Summary and conclusion: As we see that the whole study swirls around Hindi poet Suryakant Tripathy Nirala, who was a revolutionary poet and was strictly against conservatism. He was a staunch champion for the cause of oppressed, downtrodden and untouchables because rich were getting richer and poor were getting poorer. Following the path of progressivism he had a better glimpse of his inner self. He followed this path just to help the caste ridden and class ridden people. He was in favour of everybody's happiness. Following features of progressivism can be counted in his poetry:

- 1) He was totally against donnish and conservative philosophy. This fact is very much clear from his visit to the school of untouchables.
- 2) Through his writings like, 'She Breaks Stones' and 'Beggar' he has showered great sympathy for labour class and poor people.
- 3) "Moscow Dialogues" is a pure example of his hatred for corrupt politicians and capitalists.
- 4) Through his poems and writings, Nirala invoked the people of India to take part in new revolution, which wrote History and built new India.
- 5) Nirala was in favour of Communism and he eulogised and celebrated Russia and its Red Force.
- 6) Besides fighting for the cause of women he also did not overlook to describe or portray the fleshy body of hers like a Progressive writer.
- 7) Last but not the least, he was an exceptional patriot. It is very clear from his poems, 'Bharti Jay Vijay Kare' and 'Jag Ka Ek Dekha Tar'.

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