

## **Metaphysical Echoes in the Poetry of Gopaldas Neeraj**

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**Abstract.** The paper titled “Metaphysical Echoes in the Poetry of Gopaldas Neeraj” attempts to examine the relevance of his lyrics in the context of changing times and Hindi poetry’s temper which has not remained consistent. The paper further explores the depths and dynamics of Neeraj’s poetry and how profound they are in terms of lyrical energy that propels his art to a philosophical discourse and survives the onslaught of time. Neeraj is both lyrical and melodious while being at times indifferent to the optimism of life which is rarely a breathing presence in his art.

**Keywords :** Romantic temper; pathos; lamentations; despair.

Metaphysical echoes can be traced in the poetry of Gopaldas Neeraj as he sounds scholastic and is very akin to metaphysical in the experiment of poetry however, he tends to be less persuasive than Donne in dealing with issues of romanticism as Donne was direct, uncompromising on the issues of romance while Neeraj was more thoughtful in handling the sentiments of romance as he held himself back from unleashing into direct persuasion and therefore, Neeraj also evokes images which are akin to metaphysical but he is far too subdued in the assertion of his romance.

Gopaldas Neeraj emerged on the horizons of Hindi poetry from dust and ashes and ran a race that was not without its share of miseries as he hung between 20th and 21st centuries to produce incredibly exalted verses which were seeped into the chaos of time. He had a humble beginning rising from the obscure ghetto to the gloss of the Bollywood by writing lyrics composed in utter penury as existential troubles drove him to his fortune and lyrics not only had the rare musicality about them but also heralded the beginning of a new era as songs held the audience of the time not only captive but echoed in the singing hall of immortality. Endowed with a romantic temper, Neeraj had the imagination to turn his lyrics into ecstasy in a period of hungry audience who applauded those compositions that relieved them from their daily troubles of existence.

Gopaldas Neeraj evolved his art by exploring his own strengths and a Bidi tucked between lips while playing cards in the backwater of the Aligarh could not have realized that he can add a chapter in the history of Hindi Poetry that would have him join the front ranking poets like Dinkar, Suryakant Tripathy, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Maithili Sharan Gupt, Pant, Madhvi Verma, Nagarjun and Dharamveer Bharti. These were all poets who altered the course of Hindi poetry, but Gopaldas Neeraj evolved his own milieu that was individualistic yet created cannons in Hindi poetry, a tad experimental as 1970's were witness to the growth of new lyrical sensibility. On the one hand the war between India and Pakistan erupted in 1971 while on the other a flourishing tradition of lyrics bludgeoned songs of yesteryear with the emergence of Hasrat Jaipuri, Anand Bakshi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Gulzaar, Naqsh Loyalpuri as it was the wave of Rajesh Khanna that produced a host of chartbusters. There was a distinct shift in the nature of lyrics in 1971 as Gopaldas Neeraj brought within the ambit of Indian panoply thoughts that were once considered anathema for poetry. He blended the diction, accommodating common words, the parlance like "Ye Bhai Zara Dekh Ke Chalo" for Raj Kapoor's 'Mera Naam Joker' based on Shakespeare's lines 'All the world's a stage' from *As You Like It* which had Hindi audience zapped and at the same time Gopaldas Neeraj experimented the not so common style in lyrics which was an instant hit.

It was the same year that produced *Tere mere Sapne*, *Gambler* and *Sharmilee* and Gopaldas Neeraj ushered in a period of incredible glory. Lyrical energy or spurt in those films reached their crescendo. But not only lyrics his poetry was equally sublime in the sense that he dwelt on the trials and tribulations of life, the other side of paradise which had fullest expressions in songs like 'Kahta Hai Joker Saraa Zamana' for Raj Kapoor's *Mera Naam Joker* (1970) 'Jhoom Ke Gayun Aaj Mere Dil' in *Patanga* (1970) 'Bas Yahi Apraadh Mai Baar Baar Karta Hoon' in *Pehchaan*, 'Choodi Nahi Ye Mera Dil Hai, Dil Aaj Shayar Hai, Mera Man Tarsa Pyasa' in *Gambler* (1971) etc. were the songs that ran amok and established his credentials as a lyricist firmly in the echelon of Hindi cinema. His success as a lyricist was determined by the romantic temper, he induced into songs that at times dipped to pathos and at times rose to euphoria.

That as a poet, Gopaldas Neeraj was sublime on the level of imagination, on a more meaningful discourse in life as he exuded fire

and smoke, agglomerated Hindi and Urdu words, adumbrated and juxtaposed conflicting thoughts in the same breath very akin to English Metaphysical poets who yoked most of the heterogenous ideas together. His body of work is vast and diverse such as *Karwaan Guzar Gaya*, *Asaviri*, *Geet Jo Gaye Nahi*, *Pushp Parujat Ke*, *Nadi Kinare*, *Karwaan Geeton Ka*, *Neeraj Ke Prem Geet* and *Neeraj Rachnawali* are all illuminating representations of a poet's mind that sways into different directions with divergent thoughts. My objective here is to evaluate not only lyrics that he wrote but his poems, which are equally profound in terms of inconsistent human moods. His one of the greatest poems *Karwaan Guzar Gaya* calls for a detailed evaluation to see how it wanders and veers around zeal, remorse, melancholy, joy and sorrows as this is not only a poem but a discourse in itself.

*Karwaan Guzar Gaya* is the magnum opus wherein Gopaldas Neeraj dwells on the very philosophy of life, which is a bundle of thoughts pieced together in a philosophical discourse. Here he delves deep into the very nature of life, its different stages with a profound touch of regret for things he could not realize in time. Musical in nature, melodious in imagination, rhythmical in structure, and sizzling in thoughts, he encompasses a whole range of human emotions to suggest the different stages and conditions of life. *Karwaan Guzar Gaya* has deep speculations about time, time lost, life, opportunities, and opportunities missed in life. This poem has radiance in terms of inconsistent, erratic human nature and lousy and lazy elegance in a diction that leaves all in a state of complete inertia. The poem moves from ecstasy to melancholy, from optimism to despair and rises from the depths of despondency to the ultimate realization that life is short and by his own confessions he was caught napping for the most part of his existence as life was lost in a moment and that moment had a dramatic emergence :

Hum Khade Khade Bahar Dekhte Rahe  
Karwaan Guzar Gaya Hum Ghobaar  
Dekhte Rahe (Internet)

He is deeply regretful about the actions of life as there is a strong sense of existential anger reflected poignantly in the above lines and again, he laments :

Neend Bhi Khuli Na Thi Ke Haye Dhoop  
Dhal Gayi

Paon Jab Talak Uthe Ke Zindagi Phisal  
Gayi (Internet)

It has serious undercurrents of lamentations about a life doomed and time lost. The sense of time is a recurrent theme in his poetry as he just could not rise to catch up with time. There is a deep sense of repentance for not being alert to life, which he finds a fleeting one :

Chaah to Nikal saki Na  
Par Umar Nikal Gayi (Internet)

The desires of life remained incomplete, but age caught up as he dwindled into the evening of his life :

Aur hum Jhuke Jhuke  
Mod Par RukeRuke  
Umar Ke ChadhavKa Utaar Dekhte  
Rahe (Internet)

The same realization hits him hard as he moves into the corridor of despair :

Kiya ShabaabThaKe  
Phool Phool Pyar Kar Utha  
Kiya Sawaroop ThaKe Dekh Kar Aina  
Sihar Utha (Internet)

He is conscious of the beauty of the self that even pierced the fragrance of flowers and the mirror almost cracked given the beauty of the person but all these resound a thumping past as the poet plummets into crepuscular and stygian shadows and time did not hold on. Here again Gopaldas Neeraj writes with a sense of regret as slumber did his spirit seal. The poem is a longish exploration of different facets of life, that was enthralling and the other half that is equally depressing, so this life is temporal and it takes no time to disappear into history.

Gopaldas Neeraj has dominated the imagination of masses and lyrics composed by him, which has flowed incomparable energy into time itself and one can connect to time while recognizing the past can find ways in any condition. On the one hand a person rises and dips with the flow of love while on the other mourns the burning of greenery and listens to lugubrious voices of falling leaves because the poet has provided a view to hear the turbulent and quiet equally well. The poet also talks

about the rustling wind that rumbles across all seasons as seasons change and the construction of life continues :

PhoolPar Has Kar Atak, To Shool Ko  
Rokar Jhatak Mat

O, Pathik Tujh par Yahan Adhikar Sabka  
Hai Barabar (Internet)

The flowers and thorns be equally respected as everyone has an equal share in this universe.

Gopaldas Neeraj at times has a philosophical touch to his art, and that touch of thought lifts him to higher artistic level. Neeraj's literary oeuvre is vast and divergent including collections such as "KarvaanGuzar Gaya", "Asaviri", "Geet Jo Gaye Nahi", "Pushp Parijat Ke", Nadi Kinare, KarvaanGeetonKa and Neeraj Rachnawali which provide insights into the imagination of the poet and mechanism of his thoughts. Taken together, the art of Neeraj asserts in various forms as he sings saddest thoughts of life blended with celebratory spirits. Gopaldas Neeraj did not die unsung as he was acknowledged with prestigious literary awards such as Padma Shri in 1991 and Padma Bhushan in 2007 for his contributions to literature and cinema.

Gopaldas Neeraj wrote lyrics for films and had a certain degree of success, too, like the Urdu poet Shahryar but he was disillusioned to the extent that he eventually quit the film industry and returned to literary societies to end up as one of the most endearing voices in the history of Hindi-Urdu poetry. No artist is ever satisfied with his art, but Gopaldas Neeraj made some adaptations for songs in films and some of his songs were instant hits but art by nature itself is contradictory and Neeraj too suffered from such dichotomy. As a poet artist, he was secular to the core and upheld the highest values of craftsmanship. What a wily craftsman he was as he remains timeless.

Gopaldas Neeraj's poetry resounds with melody and lyrical energy as he is a poet who has set a different structure in terms of poetic elegance, musicality and the splendor of imagination so rare in the realm of Hindi poetry. He is claimed by many as a Hindi poet but basically, he was a chiseled artist who had a unique rhythm in his thoughts and the diction pulsates with an apparent echo of romantic thrill. Earlier he

struggled in his life as all great men did and the songs of troubles were plenty.

A great representation of sentiment that hovers around the much-vaunted relationship, the oft quoted love in Gopaldas Neeraj, is a central thread that binds his art together and what is more emphatically said is the crumbling possibility of union much like Donne. He persuades his beloved, not to weep, not to mourn, not to fall into the paroxysm of sorrow or else your courtyard would be wet by your tears which are precious. Gopaldas Neeraj has a strong romantic temper that manifests itself in a variety of ways in the poem “Mera Geet Diya Ban Jaye” :

Andhiyara Jisse Sharmae  
Ujjiyara Jisko Lalchaye  
Aisa De Do Dard MujheTum  
Mera Geet Diya Ban Jaye (Internet)

The poet here finds darkness as shy of his beloved and the snow-white color which tempts anyone in fact is a reference to the beauty of his beloved. The poet further writes that her pains are given to him and these miseries would turn into a flame :

Ghate Na Jab Andhiyaar, Kare  
Tab JalakarMeree Chita Ujela,  
Pahala Shav Mera Ho Jab  
NikaleMitane VaalonKa Mela (Internet)

The poet has a strong wish that when you are plunged into darkness let my pyre be lit to expel the sheath of darkness and let it with my corpse first when committed people decide to sacrifice the lives. In fact, there is a strong undercurrent of idealism that permeates the consciousness of poets whose grandeur of diligence comes to the fore. Like metaphysical English poets and like the romantic tradition of English poetry, Gopaldas Neeraj does not go beyond his average hour which sounds unrealistic which is his limitation too. One of the limitations of his art is to end up as the Wordsworth of Hindi poetry which characterizes him with a romantic sentiment, subjectivity and a pronounced commitment to pursue nature :

Yaad Sukhad Bas Jag Mein Usakee  
Hokar Bhi Jo Door Paas Ho,

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Kintu Vyarth Usakee Shuddhi Karana  
 Jisake Milane Kee Na Aas Ho (Internet)

Remembrance of things are pretty bright but he knows that his beloved is a far cry and is futile to connect to her because there is barely any possibility of reunion. The poem is a touch sad as it completely indicates a bright day and ends up into a desperate wish. As we have seen that Neeraj has tendency to address his beloved as somebody who is never going to meet him which reoccurs with a certain degree of regularity.

MujheNa Karna Yaad, Tumhara Aangan  
 Geela Ho Jayega  
 Roz RaatKo NindChuraLe Jayegi  
 Papehon Ki Toli,  
 Roz Praat Ko Peer Jagane Aayegi Koyal  
 Ki Boli...  
 Tum Siskogi Wahan, Yahan Pag Bojhila  
 Ho Jayega,  
 Mujhe Na Karna Yaad, Tumhara Aangan  
 Geela Ho Jayega (Internet)

The touch of pathos is so apparent that he even convinces his beloved not to even shed tears which would leave her courtyard wet. This is a symbolic representation of very a strong sentiment which reminds again of John Donne, who had similar persuasions but he is slightly different in the sense that he was not into persuasion, rather he used to exhort his beloved to leave things behind and abandon everything to come to him where as Neeraj doesn't do that and insist his beloved should not lament his absence :

Busy old fool, unruly sun,  
 Why dost thou thus,  
 Through windows, and through curtains  
 call on us?  
 Must to thy motion's lovers' seasons  
 run?...  
 If her eyes have not blinded thine,  
 Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,  
 Whether both the'Indias of spice and  
 mine (Internet)

The poem by Donne is not opposite to that of Neeraj because he persuades his beloved not to come to him while Donne makes no bones

about his beloved to emerge from the backwaters for reunion. These differences apart, Neeraj remains one of the luminous lyricists who modified the sensibility of the Indian lyrics.

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