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Sensing the Transition: A Study of Manglesh Dabaral's selected poems from *Naye Yug Mein Shatru* (*Enemies in New Era*)

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Abstract

Manglesh Dabaral (16th May 1948 - 9th December 2020) is an Indian poet who immensely wrote in Hindi. His contribution to Hindi language, prose and poetry made him one of finest modern writers in Hindi Literature. His sensibilities and thought-provoking expressions have simply mesmerized the readers across the globe. He had been translated into many languages. It underscores his universal appeal. The most crucial aspect of his poetry is his keen sense of capturing the

changing pace of emotional, intellectual make up of human beings in modern society. His mastery in capturing the transition in different layers of emotional and intellectual outlooks amid the changing patterns of human and nature. Present paper is an attempt to trace the sense of transition as reflected in Manglesh Dabaral's Hindi poetry collection *Naye Yug Mein Shatru* (*Enemies in New Era*)

Keywords: Manglesh Dabaral, Transition, Poetry, Power, change, Environmental problems, Human Relations, Touch, Naye Yug Mein Shatru, Enemies in New Era

Introduction

Manglesh Dabaral (16th May 1948 - 9th December 2020) is an Indian poet who immensely wrote in Hindi. His contribution to Hindi language, prose and poetry made him one of finest modern writers in Hindi Literature. His sensibilities and thought-provoking expressions have simply mesmerized the readers across the globe. He had been translated into many languages. It underscores his universal appeal. The most crucial aspect of his poetry is his keen sense of capturing the changing pace of emotional, intellectual make up of human beings in modern society. His mastery in capturing the transition in different layers of emotional and intellectual outlooks amid the changing patterns of human and nature. He intersects the space of these transitions in a sacred manner preserving the innocence as well as wisdom in social, temporal, spiritual, natural, technological backdrop. Present paper is an attempt to trace this acute sense of change that echoes in his poetry. His poetry has a unique style. He wisely chose words while writing his poetry. He had won Sahitya Akademi Award for *Hum Jo Dekhte Hain* in 2000.

Writing about his style, it can be witnessed in his Hindi poem *Pratikal* (1999) as below:

*Jo kuchh bhi tha jahan-tahan har taraf
Shor ki tarah likha hua
Use hi likhta main
Sangeet ki tarah. (108)*

Translated it reads as

Whatever written here, there, and everywhere

Like a noise

I write it

As a music.

This poem reflects his style about his absorption of creative writing in the above poem. It hints at his readiness to map the changes around him and notify those changes in a very sensible and philosophical manner. It also underscores his brighter vision of human predicament amid chaos and darkness.

He turns a noise into a melodious note. Poem's title *Pratikar (Retribution)* is very symbolic. It suggests that he changes violence into nonviolence. This is also a technique used by Mahatma Gandhi in his life. He used nonviolence as a weapon for the freedom of India. Poet is a musician of his own words. He transformed words into a musical note. World needs music to survive in a problematic situation not an aggressiveness. Music can heal the patient through musical treatment or therapy.

One of the most significant contributions of Manglesh Dabral to Modern Hindi Poetry is his poetry collection entitled *Naye Yug Mein Shatru (2013) (Enemies in New Era)*. It reflects changing scenario in internal and external relations of human society with its surroundings. It records the change in outlook, perception in human understanding as well as behaviour at the wake of new civilization with the advent of modern technology. *Enemies in New Era* perceives the lost innocence, eruption of dry, formal culture and disintegration in relational fabrics. He accepts and expresses it without making much hype of it. He bleeds silently as a poet. He is aware of new era and all the changes that proved to be enemies are inevitable part of this process.

His poetry has acute sense of ecocritical understanding. He writes about different environmental problems and relates it to the different human activities. His poem *Ghatati Hui Oxygen (Oxygen Depletion)* is an example of ecological concerns. Deforestation leads to the oxygen reduction and global warming. Depletion in Ozone layer caused natural and health problems due radiation of U. V. rays. The complete natural cycle and biodiversity is in jeopardy. Dabral's poetic sensibility lies in the correlation between decline in natural oxygen and rising demands in oxygen in health services. Poet links environmental oxygen depletion with the increasing demands of oxygen cylinders in the hospitals in this poem. It also suggests, how people cut down trees that release vast amount of oxygen to everyone free of cost. On the other hand, people buy an oxygen cylinder in a hospital paying huge amount. He writes this dichotomy as:

Asptalo me dikhai dete hain oxygen se bhare huye cylinder
Nimhoshi me dubte-urate marijo ke muh par lage huye mask
Aur unke pani me bulbule banati hui thodi-si pranvayu (109)

English translation reads it as

Oxygen cylinders are seen in the hospitals
Mask covered dozing patients' mouth
And the bubbles formed in their bottles due to the little
Oxygen

Larger space on earth is occupied by slums, unhealthy habitats for human beings. Population explosion has caused encroachment in natural habitats of wildlife and damaged biodiversity resulting in increasing pollution too. Deforestation has caused decline in oxygen. Dense human habitats, unhealthy surroundings have become the centre for the spread of diseases. Population explosion results into the environmental pollution. Polluted air is the reason for their ill conditions. People suffer from respiratory diseases like asthma due pollution. It causes demands in oxygen cylinders:

Jagah-jagah pranvayu ke mangnewale badh rahe hain
Unhe bechnewale saudagaro ki tadad badh rahi
hain(110)

English translation reads it as

Oxygen demanding patients increase everywhere
So, in the increase of Oxygen suppliers.

This poem can be read in the context of COVID-19 pandemic scenario. It underscores the contemporaneity and relevance the of poet's vision transcending the barriers of time and place. The zoonotic diseases are extreme interference in natural cycle. Human beings are still unable to overcome the carnage. The loss of human sensitivity, lack of oxygen plants, consumerism, and debris of human corpse have proven the negative changes that have taken place in new era. Thus, man has become his own enemy in new era, his excessive hunger for materialistic pleasures and compromising with nature's flow at the cost of his own existence has proved suicidal. Poet writes about the inhuman behaviour of greedy oxygen providers. He questions about humanity during the pandemic situations. Sellers increased the prices of medicines and essential things for their greed. It expresses the predator-prey relationship between oxygen cylinder suppliers and patients. Mangalesh in his poem entitled *Naye Yug Me Shatru (2012) (Enemies in New Era)* portrays the difference between the old culture and new culture. He mainly focused on changing lifestyle and its effect on the modern society. He satirized the new technology by calling it as an enemy of the modern world. He portrays that how new technology, fashion, and lifestyle become the part of daily routine life:

Antataha hamara shatru bhi ek naye yug me pravesh karta
hain
Apne juto kapdo aur mobile ke sath (111)

English translation reads it as:

Finally, our enemy too enters a new era
With our shoes, clothes, and mobile.

People are behind expensive and luxurious lifestyle. They turn blind to identify their needs in this materialistic life. New threats are entering into normal life through mobiles, computers, and virtual life. Human beings have become cyborgs. Social life is no more private in this age of social media. Just a casual click may drag one into the judicial or legal procedure. It may pave way to the financial crisis through social media culture and online payment apps.

Hamare shatru ke paas bahut se phone number hai dhero
mobile
Wah logo ko suchana deta hai aap jeet gaye hai
Ek vishal pratiyogita me aapka naam nikal aaya hai
Aap bahut sara karja le sakte hai bahut-sa samaan kharid
sakte hai
Ek akalpniya uphar aapka intejar kar raha hai
Lekin palat kar phone karne par kuchh nahi sunai deta
(111)

English translation reads it as

Our enemy has many phone numbers and mobiles
He informs people that you are the winner
Your name is selected in a lucky draw in a big competition
You can take a lot of loan and can buy many things
An exciting surprize is waiting for you
But no one responds when redialled the phone number.

Fishing, online frauds have become routine things. The schemes of competitions, prize winner, lucky winner and jackpot winner are designed by fishers and hackers. On mobile consumers receive variety of tempting, promising offers. People trapped in financial crisis and waiting for change of situation through *deus ex machina* are victims of such offers. These companies demand advance money from the would-be winner as a processing charge. Once the amount is paid, company's mobile number is out of reach automatically. Such fishers, scammers, frauds have no face, no identity. But their ruthlessness and cunningness destroy the life of innocent people. These tempting offers are mirage in the desert. But the network of such fishers is so strong and widespread that to be alert is only solution. It becomes impossible to understand the skull beneath the skin. The enemy comes in the guise of friend and before one can understand, he changes the place. No one can trace him or catch him though foes are just around. Poet writes it in his poem as:

Achanak kisi mahangi gadi ke bhitari uski chaya najar aati hai
Lekin waha pahuchane par dikhta hai wah waha nahi hai (111)

English translation reads it as:

Suddenly, its shadow appears in the expensive cars
But it disappears when you reached there

It expresses the changing forms of human needs. Consumerism creates new unnecessary needs and traps people in the illusion of luxurious life. Banks promote '*Loan Culture*' to celebrate the festivities of life. So, debt, loans are another form of enemies in the new era. It results into anxiety, frustration, low self-esteem as they are under the debt that can't be paid. Unnecessary things become a necessity due to a changing lifestyle. They are not satisfied by their possessions. Thus, temporary enjoyment becomes a permanent headache.

Mangalesh Dabaral wrote about his mother in his poem *Bachi Hui Jagahe (2012) (Places Remained)*. He depicts his mother's teachings and lessons that still guides him. It helps him to survive in a hostile and insensitive world. His mother told him about maintaining relations with humans, animals, and things. A particular thing or human beings have its own place, and a position in the world that one should always be respected. The thing or person would not be there, but their place would always be occupied as:

Maa kahti thi chize jaha hoti hai
Apni ek jagah bana leti hai aur wah asaani se mitati nahi
Maa ab nahi hai sirf uski jagah bachi hui hai (112)

English translation reads as

Mother says that wherever things are
They occupy their own place and can't be easily wiped out
Now, Mother is no more but her memories are there

It hints at the relations built up in course of life. The wisdom that poet's mother has shared with him reflects how life, people, things bind one with each other. Even in their absence their echoes, presence can be felt warmly. The places where things are kept, or people live leave their traces in the life of human being. Memories remain there after the destruction

also. Flood, Tsunami, cyclones destroy the human life, but they can't wipe out the memories. Even after reconstructions, the traces of destructions can be experienced. These things are present as a scratch in the mind of people. From that scratch they again stand up and construct new memories for their future generations. This is how things occupies places even in their absence.

In the new era, slavery is fashioned in new forms and styles in different mannerisms. All over the world, in the age of multi-national companies, neo-economic colonialism, post-truth world, ideology has been used to make the well-educated people slaves to fulfil the hidden agendas. World has witnessed it and India too is not exception to it. Blind followers of religious, political, or social, cultural leaders are brain washed in the illusion of revival of glorious past or making of golden future. The fire is kept alive in the minds to conquer the mental as well as geographical spaces. Mangalesh Dabaral in his poem *Gulami (2011) (Slavery)* shows this tendency of ideologues:

In dino dimag par pahle kabja kar liya jata hai
Jamino par kabja karne ke liye log baad me utarte hai
Is tarah nayi gulamiaya shuru hoti hai (116)

English translation reads it as

Now a days, first brains are captured
And then people struggle to capture the lands
This is how a new slavery begins.

Mangalesh Dabaral also underscores the changing dimensions of public organizations like banks and their place in human life. Old banks were the organizations to be trusted, banked upon. People used to rely on banks for their financial security. But the new trends, computerized banking, Foreign Direct Investment, indulgence in materialistic progress, excessive belief in give & take policy has also changed the banks. His poem, *Naya Bank (2011) (New Bank)* focuses on this difference between new bank and old bank. Mangalesh wrote about the old bank as human aspect of life. He writes about the pension information and calculation that old bank employee kept very secure. It created the bond between banks and people. But new bank on the other hand, only keeps the record of loans given and interest to be collected. It only threatens, and charges penalty on the instalments not paid:

Naya bank sirf diye janewale karz
Aur liye janewale byaj ka hisab rakhta hai (118)

English translation reads it as

New banks keep the information about the given loan
And the interest to be taken from the customer

New bank is more interested in loans, interest, processing fees, monthly instalments, compound interest, late payment charges, and penalty than the maintain proper records of pension. Poet understands that the pension is most important for old customers. The new bank should cooperate with the pensioners. Employees from the new bank should take care of these type of customers. Pensioners should be treated with respect and their work should be done on time.

Mangalesh Dabaral minutely observes the changing perceptions of relations. In good old times, people used to visit each other without hesitation or giving any information beforehand. Communication and generation gap is portrayed

in the poem *YAH NUMBER MAUJUD NAHI (2007)* (This Number Does Not Exist). Poet compares old and new generation in his poem:

Un purane pato par bahut kam log bache huye hai
 Jaha aahat pate hi darwaje khul jate the
 Ab ghanti bajakar kuchh der sahme huye
 Bahar khade rehna padta hai (120)

English translation reads as

Few people live on those old addresses
 Where doors were opened with slight hint of arrival
 Now you must wait outside like a frightened stranger after
 ringing the bell

It is symptomatic of cut off relations, least care for others, ignoring the existence of others, excessive self-indulgence. It conveys that people have become self-obsessed, autistic. People live in self-exile. Sharing of space or emotions is prohibited in this new era. It is considered as an encroachment into the privacy. Poet condemns the indifferent response from the people. It also suggests that in the age of communication and technology, real communication is lost in search of hyper-reality. In the new era, all phone numbers are lost as a mean of communication. Every attempt of dialling and redialling is responded into an alien and indifferent voice declaring that '*This Number Does Not Exist.*'

Manglesh Dabaral in a poem entitled as *Taaqat ki Duniya (2006) (The World of Power)* portrays the race of developed nations to become *Superpower*. It havoocked the world wars, enigma of survival, sense of relegated in the backdrop amongst the less powerful nations. He reminds readers, that insane gangs are clubbed together to destroy the world, but only sane and sensible human beings are left alone to suffer and doubted:

Mai koi darinda nahi jo kisi dharti
 Par bam girane chala jaunga
 Mai manushya hu (122)

English translation reads it as

I am not a beast that will drop bombs on earth
 I am a human being

It reminds the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by America. It also suggests the America-Afghanistan, Taliban-ISIS, crisis in middle east, 9/11 attack and atrocities havoocked on Muslims. The occupation of Afghanistan by Taliban and crusaders of America and its mission of saving humanity has been revealed brutally. Poet believes in humanity and condemns the war in his poem.

In the modern world everyone wants peaceful existence. The religious, racial, ethnic conflict prevails across the world. Black people in America have to run the campaign '*Black Lives Matter too*' whereas in India too, marginal sections, minorities, Dalits, tribals, women have to struggle for their human survival. Self-glorification, superiority complex has destroyed the harmonious fabric of civilization. Differences are no more respected or celebrated. The transience of rulers is forgotten. In the poem, *Taaqat ki Duniya*, poet mocks at people those who wanted to create their own world on the Moon. He believes that the moon looks beautiful from the Earth so no need to go there to live.

Life for common people is made miserable by the dictators. Dictators have no caste, creed, religion, ideology, or culture that uplifts common man. On the other hand, they use these elements to subjugate them to establish their hegemony and absolute power. This is aptly reflected in the poem, *Chehara (2006)* (Face):

Gaur se dekhe tanashah chehre tamam ek sarikhe hai
 Bhale hi we alag-alag deshkal ke atyacharo ke nishan ho
 (146)

English translation reads it as

Look closely all dictator's faces are same
 However, they may show signs of atrocities of
 Different countries and times

Poet shows that faces of all dictators are the same expressing the signs of anarchy in their country and different point of time.

Manglesh Dabaral in his poems like *Reality these Days, Globalization, Effective Management, Dead Witness from Gujarat (Godhra Carnage), Shanti Niketan Reportage, Against the Forgetting*, and many more reflects on the cruel change that has overtaken the geographical, emotional, and intellectual spaces across the world in human societies.

Amid such hostile realities, he also educates human beings to believe in innocence, to act upon childish curiosity and naiveness sometimes, to forget the mechanical process that are tuned to technology and merge into the musical rhythm of nature. His poem, *Chhuo (Touch)* encourages to touch physically, emotionally, intellectually with a childlike innocence without any prejudices, without any labels as:

Chhune ke liye, jaruri nahi koi bilkul pas mein baitha ho
 Duri se bhi chhuna sambhav hai
 Kripaya, chhue nahi ya chhuna mana hai jaise vakyao
 Par vishwas mat karo [...]
 We jitani gandagi, jitna malba ugalate hai
 Use chukar hi saaf kiya ja sakata hai
 Is tarah mat chhuo jaise bhagwan mahant
 Mathadhish bhakt chele
 Ek dusare ke sir aur pair chute hai
 Balki aise chhuo jaise [...]
 Jaise lambi ghanse chand-taron ko chhune-chhune ko hoti
 hai
 Apne bhitari jao aur ek nami ko chhuo
 Dekho wah bachi hui hai yan ahi is nirmam samay mein.
 (122-123)

English Translation reads it as

It is not necessary to touch, somebody must be nearby
 It is possible to touch from distant
 Don't believe in the sentences like Please do not touch or
 Touching is prohibited
 The waste, debris vomited by them
 Can only be cleaned through touch
 Don't touch the way God, Mahant,
 Mathadhish touch each other's head or feet
 Rather touch they way grass wants to touch moon
 Go into your inner-self and touch the tenderness
 See whether it is still there in these cruel times.

To sum up, Manglesh Dabaral's acute sense of poetic expression encapsulates the necessity of innocence, kind

heartedness, emotional warmth, universal brotherhood, peace, harmony, co-existence amid the cruel realities of war-prone world, prevailing indifference in cyborg existence. His is the expression of being human in the moment. It makes his poetic contribution more comprehensive and essential legacy for future generation.

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