

Aesthetic Beauty in Postmodern Gujarati Poetry Translated into English

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Introduction

Narsinh Mehta (15th century) is believed to have been born in Talaja, near the town of Bhavnagar in Saurashtra. But he spent most of his life in Junagadh, also in Saurashtra, a town perched on the *holy* Mount Girnar. In Gujarat, Narsinh Mehta is revered as the *Adi Kavi*, or “First Poet” of the region’s language – not because no one else came before him, but because his lyrics were the first in the vernacular to be widely shared among its speakers. Conveying messages of love, compassion, self-reflection, and human dignity, his poetry has a universal quality that has enabled it to flourish over the centuries and develop into something beyond popular religion. Narsinh Mehta is a pioneer poet of Gujarati literature. He was a poet of wisdom, wit, vision, and devotion to God. Many of his poems highlight the love of the ‘gopis’ – milkmaids – for Krishna, and the love of Jasoda – Krishna’s foster mother – for Krishna. He is known for his literary forms called *pada* (verse), *Aakhyan*, and *Prabhatiya*. One of the most important features of Narsinh’s works is that they are not available in the language in which Narsinh had composed them. They have been largely preserved orally.

Most of Narsinh Mehta’s poems are aesthetic, natural and reflect Hindu Philosophy. Among them *On Waking I See* is one of the poems translated into English language. In this poem, the poet talks about God and the five elements. There are other such poems of his which were written in the 15th century but have been translated into English in the modern era. Some examples of his poems are *Be Still, Be Still, O Moon, Do Not Make The Dawn Yet...!*, *I’ll Tie You My Bed With Garland of Flowers*, *In this entire Universe, You alone exist*, *Shri Hari* etc.

Narsinh Mehta connects the World with natural beauty. The world is an illusion and God is the creator of illusion. The Poet says that God has created the universe and has created different natures in it. Man is attached to greed and illusion, but all that is created by Shiva, that is, God. In the World, God has expanded the living world by his.

Everything that man can see, has been created as his door. It includes all five elements; Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Sky.

Born of the Supreme five cardinal elements are
with the sublime twined and bonded together.

*Fruit and also flower are of the tree, know
nor is the bough detached from the bole. (lines 5-8)*

(Mehta)

These five elements are essential for the creation of life. It also adds aesthetic beauty to the beauty of the Earth. All these play an important role for living things. Earth is the most beautiful gift of God. Water provides the most essential need of man and enhances the beauty of nature. Fire is also a natural gift given by God to human beings which stays with human beings from birth to the final time of death. Air is also essential for living creatures like all other elements. The sky's the most beautiful aesthetic gift of God, in which the beautiful scenes of day and night captivate us. The Poet shows the beauty of the five elements, and how they are connected to God. Here some words in the poem are in Gujarati only, which are not fully translated into English which include words like *shruti, smriti, jiva*.

Thus, the entire organism - creation is called by the poet as the aesthetic creation of God. Narsinh Mehta connects life with nature. Most devotional literature consists of poetry or especially poems. So this aspect is very important. The characteristic of this literature is that it is devotional, religious and aesthetic. The abundant devotional literature in these modern Indian languages is often referred to as *Bhakti literature*. Although it is Hindu religious in outlook, it expresses more aesthetic beauty.

Having said that in *JAAGINE JOU TO..*, the poet talks about the idea of self-awakening. Narsinh captures the essence of *Upanishad sutra* ‘तवम्असि’ (that is you), by weaving it simplistically in his poem. Until one remains ignorant, one shall be muddled in confusion, described as *Maya* in Indian spiritual teachings. *Maya* means that which prevents a soul from comprehending the true nature of reality. All the prescriptions of the world are *Maya*, they prevent one from realising his/her true nature. But then who is the creator of this *Maya*. The poet argues that the maker of existence is the maker of *Maya* too; hence there is nothing outside the realms of *Parmatma* (ultimate consciousness).

Here the fragrance and beauty of flowers are talked about. Flowers traditionally enhance natural beauty and make everyone happy. Fruits have also been compared to flowers. Its delicious sweetness is discussed here. But the sweetness that was there years ago is not there now. The main reason for this is that people consume more than what they need due to Corporeality in the Postmodern era. In earlier times, people used to consume just enough of it. Which we see in our Hindu religion through this poem. Narsinh Mehta emphasizes that true spiritual awakening comes not through intellect or philosophy, but through heartfelt devotion and the purification of the soul.

The Aesthetic Beauty of the Moon and Nature

The moon adorns the moonlight like a tree adorning the entwined creeper, And just as the earthen pots adorn the swan-gaited maids,

Govind adorns the milk-white girls.

Be still, be still, O moon, do not make the dawn yet,

The life of my life has come to my home! (lines 13-15)

(Mehta)

The poet’s poem *Be Still, Be Still, O Moon, Do Not Make The Dawn Yet* also speaks of this same aesthetic beauty. Govinda i.e. Lord Krishna adorns the girls like the milk - white girl. The poet presents beauty like the moon, trees and creepers. The beauty and value of trees can be

known by the rays of the moon, when the rays of the moon fall on them at night, their beauty increases. That poet is talking about Be still, be still on moon, do not make the dawn yet. Because the life of my life will come to my house, that is, my God is coming to my house.

*The sea is adorned by the surging waves;
The waves are adorned by the wavelets,
And gopis adorn our Govind!* (lines 16-18)

(Mehta)

Here the poet compares the natural beauty of the ocean with God by saying that the sea is adorned with waves. Similarly, the gopis adorn our Govind, Shri Krishna, saying that the waves are adorned with waves. Thus, in this line of the poem, the poet shows the beauty inherent in it in natural beauty. This verse poetically describes the beauty of nature and devotion. It compares the sea adorned by surging waves, and the waves further decorated by smaller wavelets. In a similar way, the Gopis (devoted cowherd girls) adorn and enhance the divine presence of Lord Krishna (Govind). The verse symbolizes how nature and the love of the Gopis both express beauty and devotion to Krishna, highlighting the connection between the natural world and spiritual devotion.

You are the Lord with garland of wild flowers and I, a delicate flower vine,

If you can't water me, then why, dear

Did you plant me in the first place? (lines 7-9)

(Mehta)

In this *I'll Tie You To My Bed With Garland Of Flowers* poem, the poet talks about the forest. It says that Lord you are a garland of wild flowers, and I am a delicate flower vine. If you can't give me water, dear, ask why you planted me in the first place? Here the poet talks about natural aesthetic beauty like flowers, wasps, water. Even in this postmodern age, the poet shows the aesthetic by translating earlier

poems. Thus this poem is also famous as translated as all the poems of Narsinh Mehta.

O Sustainer of the Earth! You are the wind!

You are the water and you are the Earth!

You are also the outstretched tree blossoming in the sky!

In this entire universe, you alone exist, Shri Hari,

Yet, in infinite forms you seem to be! (lines 8-12)

(Mehta)

In This Entire Universe, You Alone Exist, Shri Hari in the poem, the poet calls Lord Shri Krishna as the sustainer of the earth among the five elements. It also says that you are the sustainer of the earth and you are the wind. You are the water and you are the earth! Thus you are also the sprawling tree blooming in the sky. In this entire universe, you are alone, Shri Hari, yet you seem to be in infinite form. Thus the poet associates all the aesthetic beauty in the universe with God. The natural beauty like earth, water, wind, sky, and trees is called by the poet as God's creation. Not only in this poem but in all the poems of Narsinh Mehta, aesthetic, traditional and Hindu religious (Philosophy) are discussed. That's why all his poems are famous and heartwarming.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Narsinh Mehta's poetry provides a powerful vision of spiritual awakening where the divine is connected to life and nature in a profound and intimate way. Through his verses, he teaches that nature is not separate from God, but rather a mirror reflecting the divine. The poet ends the poem with the assurance that being aware of the nature of reality will ensure your health. Thus, throughout the poems, the poet speaks of aesthetic beauty, which also highlights the importance of Hindu philosophy. Natural flowers, forests and wasps are also mentioned here with their aesthetic beauty. At the end of the poem, the poet speaks of connecting directly with God and being absorbed into Him. Thus, the poet here speaks of the aesthetic elements that God has created. It is

God who has given us the power to feel Him even without touch. Thus the age-old poems of the poet were translated from Gujarati to English in a post-modern manner and depict the aesthetic beauty, Hindu religiosity.

Works cited

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