

**PREFACE AND PRAVESH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WILLIAM  
WORDSWORTH'S 'PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS' AND  
SUMITRANANDAN PANT'S '*PALLAV PRAVESH*'**

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**Abstract**

William Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1798)' and Sumitrandan Pant's '*Pallav Pravesh* (1926)' are considered to be milestones in English and Hindi literatures respectively. While Wordsworth, in collaboration with Coleridge, broke away from the preceding trends and propounded new theories of poetry and poetic diction, Pant made an in-depth analysis of the poetic tendencies of his established predecessors and argued for similarity between the language of common speech and that of poetry. Both the poets defined the function and purpose of poetry in their own way and received criticism and appreciation from the critics and anthologists. While Wordsworth is remembered as the propounder of 'Romanticism' in World Literature, Pant is considered to be a leading exponent of the '*Hindi Chhayavad*', to give new directions to '*Hindi Kavita and Hindi Alochana*'. This paper aims at an overview of what necessitated the writing of these relatively longer introductions 'Preface' and '*Pravesh*', how these were justified and the critical reactions afterwards.

**Keywords:** Preface, *Pravesh*, Romanticism, *Chhayavad*, Poetry, Function, Theory, Critical, Reactions, *Hindi Alochana* etc.

## INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth's 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1798)' and Sumitrandan Pant's '*Pallav Pravesh* (1926)' are considered to be milestones in English and Hindi literatures respectively. The present essay aims at addressing four main questions:

- I. What occasioned the writing of Preface and *Pravesh* or, what prompted Wordsworth and Pant to write these long introductions to their maiden efforts?
- II. What purpose were these masterpieces supposed to serve and whether were successful?
- III. Relevance and Justification to Criticism
- IV. Comparison in the light of the points stated above

### I

It is undoubtedly true that William Wordsworth and Sumitranandan Pant were great trend setters who broke away from their preceding trends and advanced arguments for new poetic theories in their respective domains. If Wordsworth is considered to be the propounder of Romanticism, Pant is one of the leading exponents of the *Chhayavadi* School of Poetry. While Wordsworth, in collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, wrote down the advertisement to the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) he had a clear cut idea that he had to justify his *experiments*. His 'Preface' came in real form in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) in which he presents his views on nature and function of poetry. His experiments were general in nature and he intended to demonstrate the fitness of the language of common man for metrical composition or poetry. On the other hand, Pant wrote down his '*Pravesh*' to *Pallav* as a reaction against what may rightly be described as blatant criticism of *Chhayavad*. Though pant did not label his *Pallav* poems as experiments, his purpose was more or less like that of Wordsworth. He also advocated for similarity between the language of expression and that of poetry. He earnestly believed that the language of mind and mouth i.e. thought and expression should be same. Thus Pant in his *Pravesh* establishes the significance of *Khariboli* and justifies its fitness for metrical composition.

### II

While Preface acted as a poetic Manifesto for Wordsworth, *Pravesh* steered the wagon of Hindi criticism towards a new direction and gave dimensions. In the beginning of the Preface itself Wordsworth declares the purpose of his venture and stresses that the common man's language is also capable of rendering delight in poetry. Wordsworth says,

- a. ....It would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country.
- b. ....to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved.
- c. ....Could not be determined without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and react on each others, and without retracing the revolutions not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself".<sup>1</sup>

Wordsworth further declares that he does not want to write a long essay; instead he wants to justify how his poetry is radically different from that praised by the modern readers of his time. He wants to show the manner in which “we associate ideas in a state of excitement”.<sup>2</sup> According to René Wellek these beliefs of Wordsworth symbolise his revolt against the canons of Neo-classicism.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Wordsworth in his Preface independently declares the freedom of poetry. Thus to Wordsworth Feeling<sup>4</sup> is more important and for him poetry is the expression of feeling. Poetry originates through a process of imagination in which Feeling acts as a catalyst. Wordsworth never believed in any contradiction of poetry and prose but the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact or Science wherein feeling is negligible. According to M. H. Abrahams, “much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradiction.”<sup>5</sup> To Wordsworth neither there exists any elementary difference between the language of prose and metrical composition, nor could there be any. He says, “The same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.”<sup>6</sup> He presents a long elaboration in defence which is severely criticised by Coleridge in Ch. 17-20 of *Biographia Literaria*. George Watson treats Coleridge’s criticism of Wordsworth as, “positively graceless in its determination to pursue its quarry to the end”.<sup>7</sup> Many critics have expressed their individual opinion in relation to the theory of Wordsworth. Herbert Read finds a non-elementary difference between the language of poetry and prose. Wordsworth himself makes an attempt to explain this non-elementary difference when he asks himself why he composes poetry in metre. He then himself declares that poetic delight rests on metre. He finds no difference between the language of metrical composition and common speech as the poetic experience is related to common life and this experience could better be expressed by the proverbs of common life. M. H. Abrahams explains, “In Wordsworth’s theory the relation between the language of Tintern Abbey and the speech of a Lake country shepherd is not primarily one of lexical or grammatical but of genetic equivalence. Both forms of discourse, he would claim, are instances of language really spoken by men under the stress of genuine feeling.”<sup>8</sup> Authenticity of Feeling is more important to a poet as it determines the choice of words and infuses poetry with taste and makes it delightful. Delight to Wordsworth is a strong feeling which opens man’s mind and heart to the beauty of the universe. This feeling is ever present in man. Wordsworth believes that this delight brings a poet closer to the divine. He says,

“...And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused.”<sup>9</sup>

He further declares, “Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> As a manifesto of Romanticism, Preface details The Poet and the Poet’s Duty:

- a. “A man speaking to men,
- b. “The rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love.”<sup>11</sup>

The poet brings about reconciliation among present, past and future which defies the barriers of space and time. The poet observes the objects and their mutual actions and reactions in his surroundings. He differs from the Neo-classical idea of the Maker Poet. David Perkins says, “Wordsworth would have a poet speak not from the traditions of a craft, but from his full experience and concern as a man.”<sup>12</sup> Thus the poet acts as a guardian of the knowledge and

experience of society. He says, “poetry is the first and last of all knowledge – it is as immortal as the heart of man.”<sup>13</sup> Wordsworth defines poetry as, “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.”<sup>14</sup> According to Herbert Read, “Wordsworth went back for a model to the incomparable skill of Milton; avoided Milton’s artificialities so as to include something of Shakespeare’s freedom, something of Spencer’s felicity, and something of Chaucer’s commonality.”<sup>15</sup> Wordsworth’s ideals of poet and poetry as discussed in Lyrical Ballads find full expression in Ch-13 of The Prelude:

“Dearest Friend!

Forgive me if I say that I, who long  
Had harboured reverentially a thought  
That poets, even as prophets, each with each  
connected in a mighty scheme of truth,  
Have each for his peculiar dower, a sense  
By which he is enabled to perceive  
Something unseen before; forgive me, Friend,  
If I, the meanest of this band, had hope  
That unto me had all been vouchsafed  
An influx, that in some sort I possessed  
A privilege, and that a work of mine,  
Proceeding from the depth of untaught things,  
Enduring and creative, might become  
A power like of Nature’s.”<sup>16</sup>

Wordsworth believes that the poet is able to see everything whether known or mysterious. Through his ‘powerful feelings’ he is able to perceive the inner beauty of life. He unravels the mysteries of life in his works. The poet is a seer and a prophet whose prime concern is to spell life in barren hearts and inject the blood of feelings in the veins of man. Thus we observe that in Preface Wordsworth presents an analysis of general and radical norms of poetry, and adds new ideas to English criticism. The Preface embodies his break-away from the preceding trends.

As Wordsworth’s Preface is treated as a Manifesto of Romantic Literature, likewise Pant’s Preface to Pallav i.e. Pravesh gave new dimensions to the theory of criticism in Hindi literature and assured the readers of his time of the capabilities of Chhayavad. Ilachandra Joshi says, “तुलसीकृत रामचरितमानस के बाद हिन्दी में दूसरी क्रांतिकारी भूमिका मुझे ‘पल्लव’ की ही लगी। उसकी भाषा जैसी मनोहर थी, उसका विषय प्रतिपादन भी वैसा ही सशक्त था। छायावादी कविता की नींव को चट्टान की तरह बबने में इस भूमिका का बहुत बड़ा हाथ रहा है। पल्लव ने तत्कालीन हिन्दी साहित्य में युगांतर उपस्थित कर दिया था, इस तथ्य से सभी परिचित हैं।”<sup>17</sup>

Pravesh may well be divided into three main segments for a close analysis:

1. विज्ञापन
2. ‘प्रवेश-क’
3. ‘प्रवेश-ख’

Initially Pravesh was divided only into two segments i.e. *विज्ञापन* and *प्रवेश-ख*. It seems evident from various literary discussions<sup>18</sup> that Pant wrote '*प्रवेश-क*' in reaction to Ratnakar Jee's speech at the Annual Convention of Sahitya Sammelan in which he had literally condemned '*खड़ीबोली*' and '*Chhayavadi Kavita*'. On top of it, Ratnakar Jee had requested the Sammelan to provide scholarships, prizes and for writing poetry in Brajbhasha. Pant vented out his frustration.<sup>19</sup> By the time Pallav was published, Critics had already accepted *खड़ीबोली* for prose; however, there was no unanimity about the same being used for poetry. In Pravesh Pant made a comparative analysis of the poetic powers of Braj and *खड़ीबोली* and through his arguments on Sound, Music, Gender Scheme, Case system, Metre etc. established *खड़ीबोली* as a language fit for poetry. While in *Vigyapan* Pant throws a sharp light on the linguistic fitness of his poems and in *Pravesh-'Ka'* he makes an overview of the mediaeval poetry and proves the appropriateness of *खड़ीबोली* for poetic language. It is surprising to note that by this time the Acharya Shukla's psychological analyses of literary criticism had not come and the reference manuals on literary criticism could be counted on fingers like: Bhanu Jee's '*Kavyaprabhakar*', some essays of Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi and some odd books on figures of speech. On practical criticism only Mishrabandhu's '*Navratna*' and '*Vinod*' were available for reference. Dr Nagendra says, "हिन्दी साहित्य में पहली बार काव्य के वाह्य उपकरणों का- भाषा, अलंकार, छंद आदि का- मनोवैज्ञानिक विश्लेषण किया गया और इतनी सूक्ष्म मर्म-भेदी दृष्टि से! उस समय तक हमारे आलोचक इन उपकरणों के वस्तु आधार से ही परिचित थे।"<sup>20</sup> In Pravesh-'Kha' Pant discusses the matter of '*काव्य-स्वरूप*' (the Poetic persona) and presents a fine psycho-analytical account of the appropriateness of छंद (Metre), अलंकार (Figure of Speech), भाषा (Language), संगीत (Music) and लय (Cadence). He gives the reader an insight into the nature of language and its relation to poetry. To Pant language is a resonating entity. He says, "भाषा संसार का नादमय चित्र है, ध्वनिमय स्वरूप है।"<sup>21</sup> Pant clarifies the concept and purpose of language and lays emphasis on the acceptance of speech in a new form in a new age. He further adds,

"नवीन युग अपने लिए नवीन वाणी, नवीन जीवन, नवीन रहस्य, नवीन स्पंदन-कंपन ले आता और पुराना जीर्ण पतझड़ इस नवजात वसंत के लिए बीज और खाद स्वरूप बन जाता है। नूतन युग संसार की शब्द तंत्री में नूतन ठाट जमा देता, उसका विन्यास बदल जाता।"<sup>22</sup>

Pant's attitude towards *Brajbhasha* seems to be somewhat sarcastic though he advances a logical argument for denying its fitness for poetry on grounds of phonetic intricacy,

"वैसे भी ब्रजभाषा की क्रियाएँ भी- 'कहत', 'लहत', 'हरहु', 'भराहु',- ऐसी लगती हैं जैसे शीत या अन्य किसी कारण से मुँह की पेशियाँ ठिठुर गयी हों, अच्छी तरह खुलती न हों।"<sup>23</sup>

Thus he declares the phonetic ease of *खड़ीबोली* (Standard Hindi). Pant advocates the concept '*राग*' (melody) asserts that it is the life blood of language; especially the language of poetry, and *राग* to him means *आकर्षण* (attraction). It has a magnetic prowess which draws us towards the soul of words. For Pant every word is a complete poem in itself which adopts and changes meaning in compliance with the context. Thus if we treat a poem as a linguistic or poetic entity, it is that of an amalgamation of countless poems. In Pant's words, "लक्ष और माल द्वीप की तरह



कविता भी अपने बनाने वाले शब्दों की कविता को खा-खा कर बनती है।”<sup>24</sup> According to Pant, words are on one hand chained in lexical rules, while on the other words are like independent birds in the sky of melody. Pant firmly believes that an adroit artist moulds his vocabulary as per his feelings so that the artistic beauty is created through poetry. He further believes that synonyms enrich the language of poetry by virtue of their musical difference. Pant stresses the use of figurative language in poetry,

“शब्द---जो अपने भावों को अपनी ही ध्वनि में आंखों के सामने चित्रित कर सकें।”<sup>25</sup>

It is mandatory to have a synchronisation of भाव (emotion) and भाषा Bhaasha (language). Stressing this synchronisation of language and emotion Pant asserts that where there is no such agreement,

“स्वरों के पावस में केवल शब्दों के ‘बटु-समुदाय’ ही, दादुरों की तरह, इधर-उधर कूदते, फुदकते तथा सामध्वनि करते सुनाई देते हैं।”<sup>26</sup>

In this context Pant comments on the functions of Figures of Speech also. He terms the Figures of Speech as special gateway to expression of feelings. To him Figure of speech is an essential substance for the completeness of melody and enrichment of language. Pant denies the separate entity of Word and Meaning and he asserts that these entities of Word and Meaning are assimilated in the process of the expression of feelings. Like Wordsworth pant also believes in the concept of genetic equivalence between the language of poetry and prose. He clearly states that there should be no difference between the language of poetry and prose. The language of poetry should be language of common speech. In this respect he again attacks Brajbhasha and its hollowness in terms of lexical difference. Pant is so annoyed of the uneven vocabulary and intricate structure of the Brajbhasha poetry that he calls Keshav Das, “कठिन काव्य का प्रेत”<sup>27</sup> Pant believes in the concept of linguistic uniformity as he says, “यह अत्यंत हास्यजनक तथा लज्जास्पद हेत्वाभास है की हम सोचें एक स्वर में, प्रकट करें उसे दूसरे स्वर में.....हमारे गद्य का कोश भिन्न, पद्य का भिन्न हो।”<sup>28</sup> It is noteworthy that:

- At the time of the publication of *Pallav* Hindi poetry did not have a language for ordinary man; its language was of pedants and scholars.
- It was not the language like Tulsidas’s; Dev and Padmakar seemed to own it.
- The language was neither fluid nor lucid; it had lost its sweetness for staleness and saturation.

Thus when *Pallav* came, the critics and poets, like Shyambihari Mishra and Surya Kant Tripathi Nirala, initially didn’t welcome it. It is worth mentioning here that the bad taste of Shyambihari Ji, an ardent lover of *Brajbhasha*, was explicable, however, the reactions and accusations of Nirala Ji<sup>29</sup> seem to be personally directed against Pant. As Wordsworth talks about the duties of a poet in his Preface, Pant also discusses the ‘कवि-कर्म’ (poetic duties). As Wordsworth opposes the concept of the Maker-Poet, Pant also believes in the general identity of the poet. Like Wordsworth he also believes that a poet defends human nature and upholds and preserves relationship and love.

### III

Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that from the standpoint of language and feeling Pant propounds new theories which not only mark a rebellion against the established poetic theories of his time but also establish an indication of a new art and criticism. Pant's viewpoint, as expressed in *Pravesh*, established what is known as *Sat Samalochna* (the rightful criticism). *Pravesh* ends with a strong hope, “आशा है विश्वविद्यालय के उत्साही हिन्दी-प्रेमी छात्र, जबतक हमारे वयोवृद्ध समालोचक, बेचारे देव और बिहारी में कौन बड़ा है, इसके निर्णय के साथ उन भावनाओं का निपटारा करने, तथा ‘सहित’ शब्द में ‘स्यं’ प्रत्यय जोड़कर सैट-साहित्य की सृष्टि करने में व्यस्त हैं, तब तक हिन्दी में अङ्ग्रेजी ढंग की समालोचना का प्रचार कर, उसके पाठ में प्रकाश ालने का प्रयत्न करेंगे”<sup>30</sup>

A comparative study of Preface and *Pravesh* reveals that, despite a time difference of 128 years, these introductory notes have a lot in common. The poets in their respective works seem to transcend the barriers of time and place. It is established Poetic Duty was their personal duty and the process of creation was less important to no one. However, one does not find a long discussion on poet and poetic duty in *Pravesh* as available in Preface. However, similarity in the opinions of both the poets cannot be denied, spare the extent of discussion.

### IV

After a close and parallel reading of ‘Preface’ and ‘*Pravesh*’ it becomes evident that Pant did more or less the same thing by writing ‘*Pravesh*’ what Wordsworth did in English poetry by writing his highly acclaimed ‘Preface’ and despite a time difference of more than a century both the poets seem to be closer to each other. It is further established that poetic duties transcend the barriers of time, space and environment. Creativity and poetic duty was individual duty to both the poets. Both the poets seem to be dedicatedly involved in the process of unraveling the mystery of poetry and language.

Pant like Wordsworth believes poetry to be the eternal music and sublime art of the world. Both the poets believe in the significance of musical quality and imagination in poetry. They both accept the significance of the balance of melodious feelings and melodious language and they assert that the prime concern of a poet is to preserve this balance. They agree on the matter of ‘harmonious metrical language’. For both the poets, rhyme throbs with the life of poetry. However, Wordsworth does not give a good account of metres like Pant. The discussion on Aesthetic Delight is less in *Pravesh* though both the poets agree that the prime concern of poetry is to render delight.

Wordsworth and Pant were committed to one common goal:

- Liberation of the language of poetry from the clutch of tradition.
- They advocated a change and justified its need.
- They made successful attempts which remain as milestones in literary criticism.

Research in Comparative Literature has established that Pant's *Pravesh* is neither a copy of Wordsworth's Preface nor it is a translation of Wordsworth's ideas. Undoubtedly there exist many similarities which facilitate sound understanding of the Romantic and *Chhayavadi* traditions of poetry.

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