

Stylistic Dynamics of K.K. Srivastava's Poetry

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Abstract: This paper pores over the stylistic dynamics of K.K. Srivastava's three poetry books. It is the spell of distinctive style that carves out a niche for a poet in literature. Stylistic dynamics alludes to the gust of varied thoughts in a poet's mind that demands felicity of expressions. Poet's thoughts smack of interior monologue. There is an abundance of lexical and semantic deviations, emotive foregrounding and eclectic standpoints that are incompatible with the selection restriction rules. The niceties of linguistic choices available in poems are explored by exercising the technique of stylistics.

Keywords: interior monologue, lexical deviation, semantic deviation, foregrounding, imagery, stylistics, critique, selection restrictions.

K.K. Srivastava's poetry deserves critical appraisal inasmuch as his third, latest poetry books "Shadows of the Real" (from Rupa Publications) showcases his poetic maturity. In this research critique, I have pored over the stylistic dynamics which highlights poet's dexterity in patterning effectively the varied linguistic choices in his poems. Abrams (2008:52) states that "Critique is often used to designate an especially robust and searching kind of criticism; it suggests a rational analysis of an intellectual position, or of a work incorporating that position, with a sharp eye for errors, confusions or harmful implications". Srivastava has produced three poetry books so far, and his poems are devoid of harmful implications, even then, some poems are marred by excessive padding and confused musings. It is discerned that the poet could not put a check upon his unruly infatuation for verbosity in his first poetry book. "Inelutable stillness" (2005) which contains some bombastic words, such as "*pusillanimous, hebephrenia, groovy, wonky, objure, twizzling, arcana, tonk, bonky*" and others. The poet holds that his poems carry "a farrago of cryptic truths of life". Srivastava's poetry treasures the metaphors of loneliness, frustrations, trauma, elaboration of abstract sensibilities. Effusions of varied standpoints embedded in the poems bespeak an undertone of interior monologue—a term inter-changeable with stream of consciousness. Abrams (2008:308) determines the symptoms of interior monologue in these words; "In interior monologue, the author does not intervene, or at any rate intervenes minimally, as describer, guide, or commentator and does not tidy the vagaries of the mental process into grammatical sentences or into a logical or coherent order. The interior monologue, in its radical form, is sometimes described as the exact presentation of the process of consciousness."

Undoubtedly, Srivastava's poetry sustains the attributes of interior monologue. Besides to it, certain sentences, phrases, unusual collocations of words and the terms of linguistic deviations, foregrounding and selection restrictions rules require explanation. Style is the soul of poetry. Style is an aggregate of the distinctive linguistic choices systematized effectively in poetry. Deliberating upon the salient features of style, Gleason (1965:428) states that "Style is the structuring of choices (choices of types of sentences, clauses, phrases, words, morphemes, tunes, images and graphological markers) made within the framework of a language and a literary forms". The poet has cluttered up plentiful poems with adjectival phrases and prepositional phrases to express his feelings. Depraved vices of the political recidivists are catalogued in these lines by repeating prepositional phrases in the poem "Languid Glories":

In lingered vacuum, in mourned fortunes,
in trembled stiffness, in abhorred deliverance,
in solemnized hatred, in discomfited hopelessness,
in pierced damnations, in steely barren rulings,
in direct savagery, fell they asunder,
under mounds and mounds of suffocating villainy
(Ineluctable Stillness, p.10)

Almost all poems compiled by the poet in his first poetry book "Ineluctable Stillness" are padded out with excessive abstractions that account for insipid reading. The crowd of strayed standpoints lacking coherence of facts in these lines wear out the interest of readers - Myopic Fascinations (p.118):

The apathy minimized indispensable wonderments,
Inculcated uprisings of mutinous silence implanted eminency
assured flourishing of uneven mentors eulogized trivialities....

Abstract thoughts that are intangible can be made delightful if they are collocated with concrete objective correlatives. The first poetry book does not win the applause of readers inasmuch as the poet offloads the heap of his varied abstractions in turgid language. In his other poetry books, the poet refines upon the flaws of expression. Srivastava seems to be obsessed with a predilection for writing extremely large preface in his second poetry book "An Armless Hand Writes" (2008), the Preface begins as briefly as its first passage contains 15 lines and 160 words, and the second passage carries 20 lines and 189 words. Enormously lengthy preface cluttered with effusive experiences and exhortations exhausts the patience and dulls the understanding of readers. Mostly poems in the volume are patterned on the angled views of foreign writers and poets, such as, Barabas, Kafka, Addison, Edward Said, Eliot, John Scotus, Carl Jung Poe, and they reflect poet's wide reading. On the contrary, an abundance of eclectic allusions in poems drain away the interest of readers as they lack knowledge of the origin, context and import of allusions. The poet appears in his best elements when he explores his own genuine feelings in several poems. "Mother (p.31-33) is enriched with

poignancy, but lengthy description of mother's virtuous and affectionate life dotted with sufferings dilutes a little its urgency of emotive appeal. The contrast of recurring pronoun "she" for mother and "I" for the poet himself in present tense reveals untouched, unshared agonies of an austere mother :

and that rarity of sanity is what she waits for
she waits for the virtues people have forged,
she waits for that angel
that has blinded for
to the enigmas of her day dreaming.

She is dead/having lived an answerless life and with her are dead. the angel/ the stares/ the pains/ the day-dreaming". Vividly the poet has painted in these lines the panorama of a self-centred, vicious, false life people live nowadays:

We are fictitious people/ we are feeble people
We have by ourselves alone.
We are crippled people/ we live by our holes.
We are inverted people.... (p.88)

The symbolic poem "Seeking Solace. In An Empty Room" (p.111-112) is replete with connotative words :

I stood in an empty room/ but couldn't find sun rising,/ air flowing,
rains falling,/ winds blowing, sands flying,
leaves drying, birds singing.../ there are many other rooms more/
empty than this room./Why? Can it be so? Yes./ Because the ones in
those rooms are/ more emptied than the room.

Post-modified by present participles (rising, falling, flowing.....), the underscored nouns as head words of participial phrases connote the following notions:

sun rising signifies optimistic mindset brimmed with bright prospects; air flowing suggests an awakening of selfless feel for others.
rains falling connotes a downpour of positive thoughts, attitudes
winds blowing typifies the outburst of reciprocal feelings
sands flying connotes the cleansing of vices
leaves drying suggests dissociation from superstitions and orthodoxy.
birds singing signifies selfless, sweet interaction among people.

The poet has made an effective, symbolic use of the word "room/rooms" two times. The adjective phrase "many other rooms" carries nice nuance with the sense that orthodox introverts are potty about their fusty ways of self-centred hollow life. It is obvious that symbols encapsulate multiplicity of meanings in poems. The significance of a symbol is explored in the "Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics (1986:833) in these words:

An idea which would be difficult, flat, lengthy or unmoving when expressed prosaically and big itself, may be made intelligible, vivid, economical and emotionally effective by the use of symbols." Short poems of the second volume grip the attention as the poet has eschewed the fad of stuffing poems with the plethora of incoherent abstract ideas without concrete imagery.

Srivastava's third and latest book of poetry "Shadows of the Real (2012, from Rupa Publications) is an apparent insignia of his poetic maturity. It renders us delightful, flawless and contemplative poetry woven out of amazing linguistic creativity. An understanding of certain syntactical and semantic terms must enable us to interpret implicit meanings and nuances concealed in poems. The niceties of linguistic choices available in this book are explored by means of stylistics. Stylistics refers to the application of linguistics to the study of literary style. Foregrounding is an enlightening, exquisite fusion of abstract and concrete thoughts that not only grips our attention but whets it. Distinctive semantic features are inherent qualities of words. For example, 'man', 'girl', 'boy' contain following semantic components or features: man : + adult, + human, + male/ boy : - adult, + human, + male/ girl : - adult, + human, - male. Selection restrictions are semantic rules that require the collocation of words of identical features. See the illustration : *The politician barked in the mass meeting.*

The above sentence violates selection restrictions rule inasmuch as the subject 'politician' carries +human, +adult, -animal features, but it is erroneously associated with the verb 'barked' that contains incompatible features : -human, +animal. The collocational rules require that the lexical items of identical contrastive features should be "*selected in order to form a semantically well-formed combination of two or more syntactically combined lexical elements*" (Bierwisch 1980:193). On the contrary, Leech (1978 : 146) justifies that the "*metaphoric uses of language involve a violation of selection restrictions.*" In figurative sense, the incongruous word "barked" in above sentence suggests the hollow, false and trivial statements in the lecture of the politician. Linguistic deviation crops up when selection restrictions rule is violated. Neological pursuits of a poet contribute to lexical deviation or lexical inventiveness. Semantic deviation is relevant to unusual collocations of lexical items (noun, adjective, main verb and adverb) for the sake of multiple connotations and figurative use of language. In the first lengthy poem : "Our Being Us", the subtle use of two words "being" and "becoming" reflects delicate nuances. The root word "be" compounded with the suffix "-ing" denotes various aspects. The word "being" as a noun indicates present state or existence, and as a passive auxiliary verb it shows continuity. The inchoative verb "becoming" indicates the beginning of change or renewal from a static state of "being".

There is a hard skin/ hiding our being or becoming...../ Decadence
not necessarily an evil / its permanence makes a being a becoming/
and a becoming a being. (p.8)

Above lines are rich in nuances. Nuance means a very delicate difference in shade of meaning opinion or concept. The phrase "hard skin" connotes a rigid, orthodox mindset. It is suggested that a stern, orthodox outlook checks our rational changes in life and we lead stale life under the cover of timidity. Permanent decadence of virtues propels a person for

refinement since a good existence of a person throbs in his creative and rational living (a becoming a being). The first poem is the best, reflective and symbolic poem. See the beauty of the poem "Between Night and Morning" (p.23): Hang heavily/ leftovers of/ hardened hours/ Night has just left me/ morning wears an unwashed dress. The title of the poem is symbolic : night signifies ignorance or blind faith, and morning typifies knowledge or enlightenment. The plural noun "leftovers," having + count, + concrete, + eatable, - time features is deviantly collocated with "hours" as it carries - concrete, + abstract, + time, - eatable features. Although the amalgam of concrete and abstract words causes semantic deviation, this deviant collocation reflects creativity in the figurative use of language. The alliterative use of glottal phoneme /h/ creates music in the poem. The last sentence "morning.....dress" suggests embracing eternal values of life after rational thinking. Poet's novel awakening to linguistic creativity shines in the poems. Instead of hoarding multiplex abstract thoughts, the poet collocates abstract ideas with concrete lexical items in order to transform the intangibility of abstract emotions into their transparent aspects. Pore over the enchanting foregrounding of contrary emotions highlighting beautiful, logical contextuality in these two lines: arranged shoals of happiness/ myriad cascades of gloom (Time's Emptiness, p.25) The word "shoals" alludes to great number of colourful fish and its placement with happiness reveals varied sorts of happiness clubbed together. The word "cascades" connotes continuous flow of water, and it connotes the unceasing flow of gloom. An innovative analogy shines in these two lines: Youth and old age/ like next-door neighbours shunning each other/ (Afternoon Musings, p.81) The poet has made an effective, subtle use of linguistic choices in consonance with the dynamics of his varied strong emotions. Re-readable, enthralling poems of "Shadows of the Real" have carved a remarkable niche for Srivastava in the horizon of literature.

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