



# Metaphorical and Mythical elements in Rajinder Singh Bedi's Art and Style

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to explore the metaphorical and mythical elements in Rajinder Singh Bedi's Art and Style. As we know that Bedi started his writing almost at the same as the two great writers like Krishan Chander and Manto. The difference is Krishan Chander includes romantic flair and Manto preoccupation with sex soon caught the reader's attention. From very beginning Bedi must have realised that he could not write florid and picturesque prose like Chander and Manto. Whatever he wrote, he wrote with greater care after weighing each word. The art and style of writing had become second nature with Bedi from very beginning. On account of his obsessive thinking what he lacked in spontaneity he more than made up by using the language creatively with its attendant graces.

**Key Words:** Metaphor, Mythical, Art, Style, Stories.

metaphor and mythical elements are of basic importance in Bedi's art. Quite often the inner structures of his stories are based on allusions drawn from the ancient Indian pantheon. But at the same time, it would be far from correct to infer that Bedi consciously raised the superstructure of his stories on these foundations. Evidently, there is something spontaneous about these stories for the structures evolve themselves as if on their own, taking a cue from these mythological allusions. In a manner of speaking, both go hand in hand, one taking its inspiration from the other. Bedi's creative process seems to be something like this: he tries to delve into the fathomless mysteries and secrets of life through the psychological build up of his characters.

He does, not look at the natural dispositions of man, his instincts, the carnal demands of his body, the spiritual urges of his soul, at their superficial conscious level. On the other hand, he goes to their subconscious depths which have the ring of centuries behind them. In Bedi's writing an event is just not an isolated event but is a link in an unbroken chain of numberless events, all carried forward in one sweep. Since in this creative process his journey is from the concrete to the abstract, from the event to the limitlessness of action, from the finite to the infinite or from the mundane to the metaphysical, he again and again resorts to the metaphor, symbolism, mythology & copious references to the Indian pantheon. In this respect Bedi's creative process is very different from Manto. He has the penetrating eye to look behind the events. But Bedi is different from them in as much as, though his feet remain planted on terra firma his head soars in the sky. Bedi's style is most complex and thought aggravating. He also used great number of similes and metaphors. His smiles are not only one or twice but many facetal whose one feature is real and the other archetypical. It is evident in his creative process, that time and spaces have no bearing in the conventional sense. In his psychology one sees the shades of millennia of human thought. In this respect a moment stretches itself into centuries and a small house encompasses an entire universe. Bedi's men & women are not bound down to the present time but they represent the primeval men and women who have been undergoing human suffering since aeons and simultaneously enjoying the boon provided by this earth. Due to Bedi's multitudinal metaphors, the problems, loves, hates, joys and sorrows of his characters are not just their own as individuals but in them one can also see the suffering of mankind and the feeling and emotions which have been man's lot from time immemorial. These metaphysical over tones which lend his stories a kind universally are the main characteristics of Bedi's art.

As I have explained earlier the metaphorical and mythical traces of Bedi's art can be discerned in this earlier stories. He has successfully used these literary devices in this earlier story, *Grahan* (Eclipse). But at the same time Bedi was not aware of the reach and power of his artistic virtuosity. After independence the story, *Lajwanti* must have firmly set him on this track although for all one knows his instinct and unconscious awareness might have played no mean part in it.

*Kokhali*, the story which provides the title to one of his later volume of stories was published in 1949. But most of the stories included in this volume were written before independence. But this style shows at its best in his story *Apney Dukh Mujhe De Do*. After that Bedi seems to have come into his own; he had become fully conscious of his strength. *Ek Chadar Maili Si* was also written around the same time. After this novel there is no mistaking his forte as delineated in the effective use of myths and metaphors in his writings. Limitations of space preclude me from dilating on this theme any further and I will content myself by making passing references to some of his stories.

In the story, Lajwanti Bedi has drawn upon the episode of the washer man and the fate of Janak Dulari Sita in the Ramayana to give significance to his story. In *Jogia* he has played upon a range of colours to create psychological effects. In *Babbul* to save the honour of the female character he has associated her name with Sita. Babu, the small boy is himself the naughty lord Krishna who in a way saves Sita, the young girl from Darbari's lustful overtures.

*Diwala* is the story of a bhabi (brother's wife) and her sister-in-laws (brother's sister) sexual mores in which Bedi has raised some fundamental questions on the institution of marriage. The story's central character is a young man, Ghital, who dabbles in fireworks. On the Gokul Ashtami day he not only breaks the ceremonial clay pot in the role of Lord Krishna but also breaks the pot metaphorically, the obvious reference being to the woman who is enamoured of him. The mythological allusions in "Eucalyptus" are drawn from Christianity. Of Bedi's later stories, in *Maithun* we find erotic element and the concept of sexual unity as in the art of Khajuraho. In this the male and the female aspects of sex are depicted as part of a total reality. The concept of the twin stars as in Gemini also has its parallels in the Egyptian and Greek mythologies. But it was left to the Indian brain to find oneness even in plurality. In this characteristic style, even in sexual absorption Bedi has culled the metaphysical aspect of universal creation which bears testimony to Bedi's unique way of looking at things.

In the second volume of stories, *Grahan*, Bedi wrote, "when something comes within the ken of my observation I do not try to describe it in its mundane, realistic details. ' I try to describe it as emerges from my mind as a blend of imagination and reality."

The habit of finding the inner meaning in the outer reality gradually took Bedi into realms of suggestion, symbolism, metaphor and allusion, in other words, he highly creative use of language. The signs of these early stirrings can easily be discerned in his early collection of stories, *Dana au Dwam* and *Grahan*.

It is often contended that Bedi also gives undue importance to sex. As brought out in the above discussion, the tendency to lean upon the ancient Indian methodology was apparent in Bedi from the very beginning. But after independence it became an integral part of his writing. For instance, one can't controvert the fact that in *Grahan*, seven stories which constitute half the number in this volume are centred round sex. If anything, the involvement with sex of course increased manifold after independence for which his interest in the Indian mythology and the ancient tradition could have been responsible. Bedi was fully aware of the Hindu mind's intellectual involvement with sex which is very different from western sexual concepts. In India these concepts are open and uninhabited, generally free from any taint of hypocrisy. In the west the higher reaches of imagination which sees things in their exalted significance treat the physical aspect of sex as something taboo but not so in the Indian mythology. No doubt, carnal pleasure and sensuality are its stating point. But this condition does not lead us to that kind of sensuality and crudity which are the characteristics of western sensibility. Bedi's mind has also been informed by the other forms of fine art. In the old Indian art, sculpture and music the element of sex is far more pronounced than in similar art forms practiced under other civilisations. Here even the ragas and ragins are assigned different male female images by which they are identified. Whether it is the stone sculpture of khujaraho and Konark or the murals and in images of Ajanta and Ellora, Bagh and Iravati, the erotic element in them has been depicted in a vivid, vibrant form. This expresses supreme joy and jay abandon which are a part of human nature and its cherished endowment. In the Indian tradition physical love is not seen apart from its spiritual aspect. The profane and sacred are not separate, they just form a single whole. For that matter, even obscenity has been shorn of its dross and vulgarity. Seen in this light, Bedi's writings come to assume a different significance.

In the story *Rehman Ke Jutey*, the face of one shoe overriding the other is a portent of journey in the offing. This journey can be from one place to another in the physical sense and also a journey to death in the spiritual sense. Bedi culls an inner meaning from a prevalent social belief or superstition. In the same way the story *Agwa* is symbolic of subduing Rai Saheb's virgin daughter. But in the story *Grahan* in which Bedi

has run the full gamut of a metaphor. Here first time he has blended a myth into a plot so as to transpose them into one another.

#### Conclusion

Bedi have not shown his mastery using the elements like metaphor and mythical only but his language and plots of his short sorties have a specific importance. He presents the sequence of events in such a way that there is no gap left. Along with metaphor or mythical elements, an Imagery has got the basic place in the writings of Bedi. He has served as beacon light in using myth and the metaphors.

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