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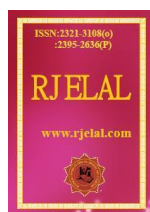
2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

The Poetry of Chhayawad – A Thing of Beauty

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DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.14.3.173](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.14.3.173)



Article info

Article Received: 16/07/2026
Article Accepted: 19/08/2026
Published online: 23/08/2026

Abstract

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness. (Endymion)

The poetry of Chhayawad is a thing of beauty and gives a new joy after each reading. Its loveliness has been increasing day by day because it depicts the beauty of nature, of common man, of individuality, of mysticism and several other charming issues. The Chhayawadi poets have basically composed literary works on Beauty and Love which is further divided into three classes - First Feminine beauty and depiction of love, Second Natural beauty and symbolism of love and the Third is related to Mysticism. The present research paper aims at finding out the elements of beauty in various forms in the poetry of Chhayawad.

Keywords: Chhayawad, romanticism, beauty, nature, mysticism

INTRODUCTION

Chhayawad also known as Romanticism and the Shaded age was the age of Neo Romanticism in Hindi literature commencing from 1922-1938. The age was characterized by a remarkable sense of representing the humanist and romantic expressions in the form of literary compositions. There was renewed sense of personal and self expression that was quite obvious in the poetry, essays and novels of the age. From the rigid rules and norms of the medieval literature that was constrained to certain specific topics related to God, earth and heaven, the focus shifted to an intelligent

representation of beauty, love, nature and others concerns of the human life related to modern man and common people of the society. It made the social issues of girl child, girl education, feminism, caste discrimination and other social evils as its central theme. There was an individualistic reappropriation of the Indian tradition in the new form of mysticism which was rendered a subjective voice.

The advent of Chhayawad dates from 1918-1937 which was preceded by the Bhartendu Yug (1868-1900) and Dwivedi Yug (1900-1918) which was followed in succession by the Contemporary modern period from 1937

onwards. Chhayawad that continued till latter half of 1930s was also known as the Golden age of Hindi literature and in particular the Hindi poetry whose continuing themes of social and moral didacticism now got replaced by the uprising nationalist fervour. However Chhayawad is regarded as a romantic upsurge in poetry where much emphasis was laid upon the Romantic and aesthetic elements instead of imposing didactic preaching and formalism. Poetry started flowing as smoothly as a river flowing swiftly with the continuity of expressions coming and going in human mind, in fact poetry was composed for the sake of poetry and nothing else. The poetry started provoking the human emotions and humanistic concerns leading to the purgation of soul by generating the feelings of kindness, empathy and emotional outburst which became the characteristic feature of Chhayawad. The poets of Chhayawad broke all the chains of idealism and restricting ideas that made them completely overlook the consciousness and presented them just as poets who were the composers of human emotions in the best words they could find to express. Chhayawadi poetry had certain uncommon characteristic features and they were marked by a sense of expression of love in particular the use of Shringar Rasa that highlighted the presentation of erotic love, romance and an attraction for beauty. It laid more emphasis on individualism and expression of personal experiences in which the poets honestly presented their feelings of love, sadness, pain, agony and aggression.

The picturization and depiction of nature through the poetic diction of Chhayawad was unique of its own kind. The Chhayawadi poets imagined nature as a feminine form and presented its intricate beauty and delicacy. The poetry of this time redefined beauty in a different way and laid more emphasis on the internal beauty of nature and heart rather than the influence of external beauty that has been described as superficial and short lived. The concept of beauty pointed towards inner beauty

and qualities that defined inner beauty like kindness, sacrifice, modesty, intellect and liberal thoughts which were considered as the mark for everlasting beauty that never faded with time, as they were the qualities of an inner beautiful soul. The literature of Chhayawad abounded in the qualities of kindness, sympathy and love for nature and mankind which was interpreted through the central themes of maternal love, love for nature and its beings.

However there have been various perspectives on Chhayawad and a large number of Hindi literary figures and scholars have tried to define it in its own way. In this respect Pandit Mukutdhar Pandey (1920) was the pioneer who endeavoured to define Chhayawad and in his article "Hindi me Chhayawad" Pandey mentioned that the term Chhayawad originated from Mysticism and that it was difficult to choose an idealistic accurate diction to define Chhayawad. However, he could analyze Chhayawad as a condition in which the words and their meanings have less connection with each other because the meaning of a composition comes out to be entirely different from what has been written. Acharya Ramchandra Shukla confirmed that the term "Chhayawad" originated from Bangla literature. His idea was debated by Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwivedi who claimed the term "Chhayawad" to be entirely of new origin, and it is just an illusory vision to think that the term originated from Bangla literature. It is worth noting that first Chhayawad poet in Bangla literature was Rabindranath Tagore and in Hindi literature it was Pandit Mukutdhar Pandey.

The Chhayawadi poets reflect an extraordinary attitude towards objects and situations, and this is the reason why their compositions seem to be unique. Chhayawad was an important movement in the Indian literary scenario in the context of Hindi literature.

The Pioneers of Chhayawad Movement

The pioneers of the movement were Sumitranandan Pant and Suryakant Tripathi Nirala with other flag bearers including Mahadevi Verma and Jaishankar Prasad. The Chhayawad literature dealt with the minute aspects of the human life and connected literature with the routine day to day activity of human life, its social, religious and cultural aspects. Sumitranandan Pant, the literary giant associated with Chhawaad poetry during this period published his landmark with Pallav Pravesh or The Bud and The Beginning which explores the subtleness and complexities of human nature and a probe into the human emotions, spirituality and an unending search for truth and meaning of human life. The simplicity of his language and his style to capture the subtleness of human life and interpret in simple language was a remarkable aspect that coincided with Neo Romanticism or Chhayawad age when juxtaposed with Romanticism. Pant is regarded as one of the four pillars of Chhayawad or Shadowism and he explores the themes of love, beauty, spirituality and human mind through his works. His poems are remarkable with vivid imageries, philosophies of human life and rhythmic meter. His work Pallav Pravesh signifies the truth of life which itself means budding of the new and so representing the embryonic phase of life it sings the multiple possibilities of human life and a man's destiny that lie in a dormant state and so it must blossom to get a new life. The imagery of a bud in the blossoming process conveys the entire idea of interdependence and close association between man and nature. The allegory of Pallav or new blossom employs the indication of the cycle of life, death and rebirth and signifies the idea that change is inevitable in human life and it is futile to resist it, however it is important to see at the same time that how one takes and accepts it. The idea is very much similar to the western thought of Existentialism which implies the same concept. In the poems of this collection Pant has established a close

connection between man and nature and he has taken this theme to the heights of transcendence wherein he has also incorporated the philosophies of the Indian scriptures and its intellectual traditions which tries to unite the human soul with divine. In accordance with the modern themes of Chhayawad the poems by Sumitranandan Pant explored the innovative styles of poetic interpretation in which the traditional form of the poetry was fused with the contemporary. A simple language was employed to present the complicated thoughts of life, its mysteries and transience of all things. There was a connection built between the human soul and the universe. Wordsworth's aim in Romanticism was to make the poetry available for everyone and so his poetry depicted his basic idea behind the composition which said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. Similar was the trend followed in Chhayawad which also laid emphasis upon the use of simplified language and conveyed the day to day life happenings of a common man, so in this sense the poems of Chhayawad can also be regarded as the poems of Common man.

Apart from other flag bearers of Chhayawad Mahadevi Verma was also one of the four pillars. She had a noteworthy contribution in the era through the revolutionary voices in her poetry significantly of the feminine issues and was the one who regarded the Chhayawad age as the Age of Awareness, and in all her works Verma has presented herself as the Modern Meera. Eminent Poet Nirala has regarded Mahadevi Verma as Goddess Saraswati seated in the shrine of Hindi Literature. Through her poetry she has tried to bring about change in the social strata of Indian society and her diction portrays the themes of social upliftment, welfare and development of women struggling against the orthodoxy of the social norms and restrictions. Verma established a delicate vocabulary in which she borrowed words from Sanskrit and Bangla to introduce them in her Hindi

compositions. There was a kind of distinctive rhythm and simplicity in her songs that embraced the Indian Philosophy with the use of unique symbols and pictures that produced visual imageries in readers' mind. Through her works she made a significant contribution in the field of Chhayawadi poetry. Her works were painted with the elements of truth and compassion and spoke the subtle elements of heart.

The Chhayawadi poets have basically composed literary works on Beauty and Love which is further divided into three classes - First Feminine beauty and depiction of love, Second Natural beauty and symbolism of love and the Third is related to Mysticism. In Kamayani Jaishankar Prasad has invested all his poetic efforts to create a magical effect in the character of Shraddha. There is a uniqueness in the concept and perspective of love of Chhayawadi poets as according to their concept of love the depiction of inner beauty is more important than the outer or external beauty. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala is ready to accept his beloved only on the basis of unity of heart and thoughts defying all other differences that are merely external. The second aspect of the Chhayawadi poets is the element of Individualism and on one hand some of the eastern poets have relied their concept of love on female characters like Padmini, Urmila and Radha, the Chhayawadi poets have shared their experiences of love and its divinity through personal experiences. The third important aspect is that of subtlety as the depiction of beauty by these poets is not gross but incorporates subtlety of beauty and charm. The fourth important factor is that the love stories by these authors are often unsuccessful stories and this is the reason why their compositions chronicle the agony of failure of love and emotions related to unsuccessful love. The biggest aim of the Chhayawadi poetry is to present the subtlety of human heart and its emotions. The depiction of beauty of nature with the simplicity of thoughts and ideas and the love for nature in all aspects has been one of

the most characteristic features of the Chhayawadi poets. All Chhayawadi poets imagine nature as a feminine energy with divine beauty and fascinating charm, they seem to have an interaction and encounter with a woman in nature and in each and every action of nature they see the feminine forces working upon. In the rustling sounds of the leaves they perceive a captivating song of an adolescent girl, and this is the reason why the Chhayawadi poets have defined nature as a living entity and not something different from the human world, they clarify that nature also has feelings, emotions and passions like humans. The thoughts and philosophies of Liberalism also greatly governed the Chhayawadi compositions and this factor is quite obvious in the works of Shridhar Pathak whose poetic compositions display the liberal thoughts. This aspect can be easily found in the structure of the poetry, its rhythm and meter that did not obey the set rules of poetic compositions and even the formation of stanzas, the mode of expression and the form of nature were also different in the poems of Chhayawadi.

National Awakening

Many critics have specified Chhayawadi to be influenced by Liberalism whereas some of them have opposed the idea. Chhayawadi has always been alleged by certain critics in the sense that despite its origin and emergence during the freedom and independence movements of India it lacked the national consciousness. However, when we look at the Chhayawadi poetry at the gross level, this type of statement can possibly be given but on deep analysis of the works it has been evident that the literary compositions of this time not only presented a cultural panorama in the Indian context but also contributed remarkably in the development of national consciousness and love towards nation. This is because in most of their works the literary figures of Chhayawadi have used the term Jaagran or awareness which is nothing but points specifically towards the cultural and national awareness. As Prasad

reflects in his work, " Biti vibhavari, jag ri". Nirala also says "Jaago fir ek baar" and Mahadevi Verma says , "Jaag tujhko door jana hai" and in all these expressions the term awareness points to the nationalist awareness. This itself shows that how deep understanding the Chhayawadi poets had regarding the challenges related to nationalist awareness and consciousness of the nation.

The Chhayawadi poets understand the value of national instinct and that for raising a national revolution how much it was important to develop the will power among the citizens of India to attain freedom. Through their poems they not only analyzed the national issues but also struggled to develop an inclination towards attainment of freedom and living in a free state.

Social Responsibility

The Chhayawadi form of poetry is connected to certain extraordinary levels in its time which is totally impossible in the context of normal poetic compositions. It is the social responsibility of the poetry and literary compositions to describe and discuss the times in which they were written and constructed as literature is the mirror of the society, therefore literary figures of a particular age must truthfully and honestly convey the social and cultural panorama of their times. In the similar context the poetry of Chhayawad is capable of resolving the socio- cultural issues of the Indian society. In the year 1936 when the concept of non violence seemed to be ineffective, it was Ram ki Shakti Pooja by Nirala that inculcated the idea of Shakti as a tool for gaining independence. In the poem Nirala has directly connected the idea of Shakti or Power to Lord Rama and says that the use of power against power is justified when all the paths of non violence close and do not work. He talks about Raavan's character who being impure was capable of destruction, then why not Ram can destroy such impure and unsanctified power to create peace. Here Nirala throws light on the misuse of power and speaks that it can be destroyed only through the

application of power. Prasad's play Chandragupta is also placed on the zenith of nationalism. Poetry of Chhayawad is the poetry of vitality and youthful energy which is powerful and capable enough to generate awareness among the masses.

Among the various poet laureates of Chhayawad Suryakant Tripathi Nirala is regarded as the third pillar of the poetic era. He was the eminent poet, prose writer and essayist who was extraordinary and outstanding in his works. He is credited with the art of developing Mukht Chhand or free couplet in poetry and almost in all his poetic compositions one could witness a lot of experimentation and vividness. His first work Juhi ki Kali (1916) is counted as one of the magnificent works in the field of poetry and in the year 1923 Nirala started the publication of a magazine 'Matwala' which was first magazine on satire and sarcasm in Hindi. Through his poetry only Nirala tries to reflect his revolutionary ideas that conveyed change in the existing system. He was the one who took the social evils very seriously and started his poetic war against it. He was against dowry system and so he got his own daughter married without any dowry.

Depiction of Pain and Suffering

The feelings of pain and anguish of the common people also found its place in writings of Chhayawad and they gave special attention to nostalgia and parting in their poems. The emotional aspects of Chhayawad poets found its expression in four characteristic ways - Pain and anguish in imagination, self actualization and self-evaluation, philosophical discourse, transcendental consciousness and mysticism. The imaginative power of the Chhayawad poets is much heightened due to which the feelings of pain and anguish become more and more intense. The idea of personal reflection and experiences is more in the writings of the poets of Chhayawad and this is the reason why their appeal to pain, agony and sufferings is direct and highly interactive. Their works are basically

the reflections of their own life and experiences whether it may be Nirala or Pant and even Mahadevi Verma whose married life was in odds due to which she suffered isolation and dilemma. Pain, agony, anguish and compassion are the deep feelings of the human heart that are highly sensitive in nature. In this context Mahadevi Verma is regarded as the Queen of tragic heart as her own life was full of tragic moments and incidents. In her lines, "Mai neer bhari dukh ki badli," she conveys the burden of her tears on her sensitive heart where she makes a direct comparison and visual imagery with a cloud burdened with rain water about to shower any time. Once Mahadevi Verma stated that the life of Gautama Buddha had a deep impact on her and just being a disciple of Gautama Buddha from her childhood times she could easily decipher his concept of world as a suffering. However her reflection of anguish and pain lacks depression and there is a willingness to heal, uplift and serve the world despite her own sufferings. It is exceptional that in almost all her writings where she has depicted painful pictures she has kept and maintained a liberal attitude towards pain, sufferings and nostalgia. She reflects this attitude in the lines of her poem, Deepshikha.

The eminent poet and essayist Suryakant Tripathi Nirala's life was also very tumultuous and he faced lots of ups and downs in his life. He suffered losses in his life. His work *Woh totti patthar* describes the hard work of a female labour breaking stones in harsh sunshine of midday. Nirala's autobiographical elements are truly depicted through his poem "Sneh nirjhar beh gya hai" which is the mirror of his own life experiences.

Jaishankar Prasad's treatment of pain and suffering was not just limited to human beings, but he even felt the pain of birds and animals. As per the Chhayawadi trend his feelings of pain and sufferings were the result of his own life experiences. He reflected that on being parted with the loving ones he felt the situations extremely painful. His famous work *Kamayani*

reflects that how mirth and happiness is born out of pain and sufferings. The reflection of pain by Prasad is of the physical, mental and psychological nature and his character Shraddha in *Kamayani* is a representative of Prasad's personal feelings of pain and agony. Shraddha expresses her anguish over the killing of animals as sacrifice and expresses that even alive they are useful, so why they are killed. She strongly defends the idea of protecting birds and animals and having a kind attitude towards them. The reflections of pain and anguish in the poetry of Jaishankar Prasad arouses a kind of spirituality and kindness among the readers.

CONCLUSION

Through exploration of several select poems of Chhayawad, we find that recurring ideas present encompass beauty and love, nature and imagination, philosophical and spiritual quests together with social and political commentaries. Chhayawadi poets exalt beauty in all forms- be it nature or human emotions. This aesthetics is directly connected to the profound sensibilities expressed, which fall anywhere on the spectrum from joy and awe to sorrow and yearning. Human moods in Nature are often sublime and thus poets' inner feelings are always expressed with intensity and extensity. Romanticism and nature, mysticism and symbolism, individualism and subjectivity as well as nationalism and spiritualism decorate the rich tapestry of Chhayawadi poetry which gives a new joy and moral sermon after each reading.

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