Stylistic Deviation in Devkota's "The Lunatic"[*]

Mohan Kumar Tumbahang, PhD

Associate Professor of English
Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan
mkt2019@gmail.com

Abstract

This article explores the linguistic deviations especially on two levels: semantic and syntactic levels. Out of few Devkota's intricate poetic compositions, "The Lunatic" is considered to be the daunting poems to the average readers, students, and even teachers. Not only its English version "The Lunatic", but its Nepali version "Paagala" also can pose an equal degree of toughness to the Nepali readers. The article seeks the answers to the questions as: what sorts of semantic and syntactic deviations are there in the poem "The Lunatic"? How do these deviations occur in the poem, and why have these deviations been used there? The article focuses on the main words which have distorted the meaning system in terms of the ordinary norms of grammar. Similarly, it also points out the syntactic patterns which have overtly flouted the grammatical norms. Furthermore, it aims to discuss the motives behind the deliberate break of the rules. This article is mainly based on stylistic approach to literary theory with qualitative design. For the theoretical insights, certain related books by Shklovsky (1987), Leech (1988), and Lazar (1993) were duly consulted. After the analysis of the obtained data, it was found out that there were a considerable number of deviations on the levels of word-meaning and the word-order in the pattern of poetic expression. The sole motive of deviant text is the stylistic purpose and enhancement of the expressive range.

Keywords: Deviation, literary language, practical language, semantics, syntactic
          structure.

Stylistic Aspects of the Poem

The term 'stylistics' is one of the branches of linguistics which generally refers
to the way of how a text gets told or presented. In the field of language use, stylistics is
characterized by different linguistic techniques and devices. Of the various devices,
'deviation' is one of the significant linguistic aspects which changes the way of
expression over other possible ones. In this regard, linguistic deviation is one important
kind of concept of style. "A very common view of style is that it is a matter of careful
choice of exactly the right words or phrases," (Haynes 3). Here Haynes provides the
similar view as Jonathan Swift's good style "proper words in proper places". The
selection of particular linguistic forms or patterns out of other choices can be conceived
as 'style'. In this regard, Thornborrow and Wareing opine as, "style is usually
understood within this area of study as the selection of certain linguistic forms or
features over other possible ones" (3). The systematic study of the linguistic style is
stylistics which is defined as:

> A branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally-
> distinctive uses of language, with particular reference to literary language, and
> tries to establish principles capable of accounting for particular choices made by
> individuals and social groups in their use of language. (Bullock and Stallybrass
> 45)

This definition hints at the point that the style arises essentially from the situation. It
means that the language user is forced to use the kind of linguistic form or feature by
the situation or the context. Stylistics is also viewed as the method of interpreting the
literary texts. According to Simpson, "stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in
which primacy of place is assigned to language," (2). Giving the reason of why
language is so important to stylisticians, he states that the various forms, patterns, or
levels that constitute the linguistic structure are an important index of the function of
the text.

In course of literary interpretation, or even more specifically in the poetic
analysis, 'deviation' is considered as one of the most important indicators in terms of the

stylistic concept. Literally, the term 'deviation means' to divert the direction from one to another or to draw attention of someone from something. More or less in literature also, deviation takes up the earlier meaning as it changes the course from one direction to another. This means the poetic writing does not necessarily follow the rules which have been prescribed in the standard language grammars. The 'deviation' in the poetic language is a very long tradition yet it was best realized and brought to the surface during the Russian Formalist's movement (1910-1930) led by influential Russian and Soviet scholars. Their revolutionary literary movement was able to establish the priority and autonomy of poetic language in the study of literature.

Commenting on the Formalist movement, Selden states, "The Formalists technical focus led them to treat literature as a special use of language which achieves its distinctness by deviating from and distorting 'practical language'" (10). He further says that it is only the constructed quality that can distinguish between what is 'art' and what is 'non-art'. One of the pioneers of the Russian Formalism, Victor Shklovsky (1893-1984) argues that the technique of art is to make object 'unfamiliar' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. The artful language should give a pleasant shock to the audience and by that it is able to draw the attention of the reader/listener.

It is a general fact that even within the literary language (writings), the poetic language is essentially distinctive from the rest. It is because there is much deviation from the practical (ordinary) language as well as prosaic language. On being distinctive features from the prosaic language, Shklovsky gives reference to Aristotle in which Aristotle points out that, "poetic language must appear strange and wonderful; and, in fact, it is often foreign" (27). About the strange features and the motive of being so, Selden maintains as, "Poetry exercises a controlled violence upon practical language, which is thereby deformed in order to compel our attention to its constructed nature" (10). Like Aristotle's view, both Lazar and Widdowson maintain the similar kind of thought about the poetic language. They opine as, "The language of poetry is regarded as deviant." Breaking the established norms of grammar has been a general convention of the poetic language. In this regards, G. N. Leech puts his remark as, "Poetry has been described as deviating from the norms of language" (5). From these definitions it is

inferred that poetic language imposes the violence on the practical language or more specifically the rules and regulations prescribed by the grammar.

Regarding the poem "The Lunatic", many Nepali literary figures have commented on its literary voices, themes, figures of speech and common mentality of the contemporary society. In this sense, Mohan Kumar Tumbahang in his article entitled "Teaching Devkota's 'The Lunatic'" discusses on the poem from the pedagogical point of view. He has focused on distinctive features of the poetic language used in the poem. Jagannath Sharma Tripathi has highlighted on the reason of obscurity of the poem and he has also suggested some specific ways to overcome the problems of unintelligibility. He assumes the poem "The Lunatic" is one of the most daunting poems to make out its meaning. Rishiraj Baral finds vehement satire and the spirit of rebellion in the poem. He happens to assess the poem as an example of the highest intellectuality and imagination. Likewise, Jagadeesh Chandra Bhadari opines that the poem "The Lunatic" is the strong protest against hypocrisy, cruelty, and injustice imposed by the bourgeois cum capitalist system established after the people's movement in 2007 BS. Durga Prasad Bhandari states that Devkota's "The Lunatic" is undoubtedly a unique creation in the field of Nepali literature. He points out that Devkota's poem was misinterpreted, and is still being interpreted wrongly not because of intention but because of ignorance. He appraises that the poem's creation was out of extra-ordinary genius possessed by the poet.

From the above reviews of different personalities, none is found to be focusing on the poem from the stylistic point of view. This stylistic aspect is one of the basic points to analyze and interpret the literary text in general and poetry in particular. Considerable issue about linguistic complexities that are encountered in this poem is due to the 'deviations' in the different levels and forms.

Stylistics in the Poem

Language is used to serve different varieties of discourses. For the purpose of this article, the language type is divided into two major groups that is, the language used in the day-to-day communication to which is termed by Mukarovsky the "practical language" and the special language used in literature. Within the literature, there are two major variations such as the prosaic writing and the poetic writing. What

fundamental features are there which differentiate the poetic language from that of the prosaic language is the major concern of this article. More specifically, the article focuses on the two major linguistic aspects i.e. semantic system as well as syntactic structures employed in the poem "The Lunatic" by the great poet Devkota.

Semantics (Meaning) Deviation in the Poem

Semantics, as Crystal refers to is "a major branch of linguistics devoted to the study of meaning in language" (428). He further states that in linguistics the emphasis is on the study of the semantic properties of natural languages. The definition infers that the term 'semantics' is to deal with the meaning structure of a language. With the practical (day-to-day communicative/ordinary) language, typically the literal or dictionary meaning is used but, in the poetic, (literary) language, the figurative or associative meaning is used most often. The question is as how the meaning is deviated in the poetic language. The simple reply to this question is that when the word (lexical item/lexeme) leaves its primary/ordinary or verbal meaning and activates the secondary/literary or specialized meaning, there is the meaning deviation. Here, to deviate means to flout the ordinary norms or convention. The breach of linguistic norms can occur in both the lexical (word) level as well as syntactic (sentence) level.

Now, let us come to consider as how Devkota's poem "The Lunatic" breaks the rule of ordinary grammar in terms of meaning system on lexical and syntactic levels. The following are the words or phrases which have left their basic meanings and have embraced the metaphorical meanings:

Semantic Deviation on Lexical Level

Words/Phrases (and literal meaning)	Figurative/metaphorical meaning in the context of poem
Stone (solid hard nonmetallic mineral matter/rock)	flower
language (means of communication through vocal or written symbols)	rhythmical sounds of waves
strong prose (written or spoken discourse without metrical structure)	harsh, rough or asymmetrical pattern/behavior

liquid poetry (poem that flows freely with melody)	friendly, sociable and gentle manner
freeze (turned into solid)	hard and uncompromising nature
melt (turn into liquid from the frozen form)	ability to adapt with the changing context and situation
muddled (in a state bewildering confusion or disorder)	deceptive nature, vague, sucking/sticking person to death
clear (easy to perceive, understand or interpret)	open and transparent manner
mute mountain (dumb, speechless mountain)	no communication at all
orator mountain (eloquent mountain)	ability to communicate fluently
streak of frost (line of frost)	gray hair suggesting old age
tempest (storm)	stressful or infuriated situation
blood (red liquid that circulates through vein)	earnings through extremely hard working
corpses (dead bodies)	life without dignity, morality, and common sense
arch of praises (curved roof, bridge)	unnecessary admiration
moon-struck (moon-hit/affected)	lunatic/mad/insane
platform of lies/ black lies (lies with dark color)	harmful or false statements
fire (combustion or burning)	rage, violent or uncontrollable anger
storm (forceful wind)	uncontrollable power, destructive force
gnash teeth	show (signal) extreme fury or wrath

The above table shows that there is essentially different meaning between the literary language from that of ordinary communicative language. For instance, the term 'storm' in its ordinary sense denotes 'a forceful wind' whereas in the figurative level it denotes 'an uncontrollable force or power' that can destroy or blow off the existing situation or construction. Discussing the different features of the poetic language, Jefferson states, "poetry differs from ordinary language in that it activates the secondary or collateral meanings of a word simultaneously, a strategy which disrupts ordinary communication which depends on the absence of ambiguity through there being only the functional meaning for a word" (38). She further says citing Eikhenbaum's (1965: 129) statement," as words get into verse they are, as it were, taken out of ordinary speech. They are surrounded by a new aura of meaning." When the words are used in the figurative sense, the notion of deviation is bound to occur there. In this regard, Dave et al. cite Bain's views on figurative language as, "a deviation from the plain and ordinary mode of speaking for the sake of greater effect." This statement is0 about to point out the aim of using the language of deviation in general.

Semantic Deviation on Sentence Level

The following sentences' meaning feels like absurd from the literal sense. Each sentence includes specific word which deviates from the literal meaning and the whole utterance's meaning becomes different from the ordinary language. Let us consider the following syntactic structures with deviated meaning: "I see the flower in stone" (l. 10). The special word in the sentence is 'flower' which has made the sentence meaning unusual. The word 'flower' has the relation with preceding and subsequent items; so that, it has motivated the other rest words to go along with its meaning pattern. The possible meaning is that a highly imaginative fellow with genius can see flower in stone. On the contrary, the person with no feeling and emotion may see stone as stone. "I commune with them as they do with me" (l. 19). The word that is breaking the ordinary sense is 'commune'. In an ordinary common sense, the term 'commune' suggests a group of people living together and sharing possessions and responsibilities. But here the persona is not living with other people rather he is living with an enchantress of the heaven (supernatural being) and moon-birds. The pronominal object 'them' does not refer to human beings.

"Their language laps the moonlit Ganges shore" (l. 23). The special word is 'laps' which has deviated from the common understanding. The term 'lap' literally means to envelope or wrap. The persona intends to convey the meaning that the Ganges shore is enveloped by waves during the moonlit. At such period, the persona thinks that the waves or ripples are conveying their feelings and emotions with him. "In my calculation, one minus one is always one" (l. 29). This expression seems absurd from the general viewpoint or mathematical point of view. In the academic field, when one thing is subtracted from the same thing, the remaining is zero or mathematically it may be expressed as $1-1 = 0$. But the persona claims quite contrary to our general expectation. As his claim, it becomes so when a specific knowledge associated with feeling is subtracted, there remains the same knowledge again. It means there will not be the vacuum of knowledge. The knowledge does not end and becomes empty. In this regard Sharma, Tripathi maintains, "From our lovely heart, as we impart love to someone, our heart does not become empty" (125). Our intellect (brain) is limited but our heart is limitless.

Structural Deviation in Syntactic Level

The term 'syntax' is concerned with "the sentence structure of a language" (Traugott and Pratt 682). The grammar has specified of how a commonly accepted sentence is constructed. In the case of English, a declarative sentence is formed by arranging S+V+O in a sequential order. This structural pattern is the basic pattern and almost every sentence is built on this model. But however, this structural pattern is applicable to the prosaic writing. This means that poetic writing does not necessarily follow this pattern of writing. Basically, "Subject-Verb Adjective-Noun inversions are very common in the poetic expressions" (Tumbahang 119). When a poetic expression or utterance does not obey the norms set down by the grammar, it is the violation of rule or deviation. In this regard, Crystal views as, "poetic language has attracted most attention, and within this there has been a marked predilection to investigate authors who make use of highly abnormal or 'deviant' features of language" (71). The deliberate breaking of the norms has definitely certain motives behind it. It is claimed that poets violate the norms in order to put emphasis on the specific words/phrases, to foreground certain linguistic items or to attract the attention of the audience/reader.

As one goes through the poem "The Lunatic" one can encounter with the utterances being overtly deviated from the norms or accepted standard. Let us consider the following verse lines:

Poetic structure	Ordinary structure
Surely, my friend, insane am I (OVS)	Surely, my friend, I am insane.
And fragrance I taste (OSV)	And I taste fragrance.
Clever and eloquent you are (OSV)	You are clever and eloquent.
Brains you have, my friend (OSV)	My friend, you have brains.
But orators do I call them (OSVO)	But I do call them orators.
Blank-eyed I sat for seven days (OSVA)	I sat blank-eyed for seven days.
The cave-penancer do I find a runaway, the deserter of humanity (OSVM)	I do find the cave-penancer a runaway, the deserter of humanity.
And those claim the platform of lies do I declare to be but shady clowns (OSVC)	And those claim the platform of lies, I do declare to be but shady clowns.
Distorted is my face (OVS)	My face is distorted.
Then gnash my teeth and grind my jaws set with two and thirty teeth VSM	Then my thirty-two teeth and jaws gnash and grind.

The abbreviations used above are: O =Object; S=Subject; V=Verb; A =Adverb; M=Modifier, C=Complement

In the above table, altogether, there are ten different poetic verse lines which have not followed the grammatical norms regarding the sentence structure or the S+V+O pattern. Seven verse lines contain 'OSV' sequence; two OVS sequence and one is in VS sequence.

Now let us turn to the motives of writers using such deviant language in the literary writings or more specifically the poetic creations. Questions may rise as to why the poets (or even the literary writers) are taking risk of breaking the accepted norms of grammar. When the poetic expressions are deviant from the rules and regulations, are

the utterances sensible, meaningful and suitable to prescribe pedagogical perspectives or enhance the linguistic competence? Are such breach of linguistic codes and conducts not creating or encouraging the audiences or learners to create anarchy (lawlessness) in the linguistic behavior?

First of all, this article aims to look into linguistic deviation especially on semantic deviations in lexical as well as syntactic levels. Likewise, it also focuses on violation of ordinary norms in terms of syntactic pattern. The sequence of putting the sentence elements such as 'subject', 'verb' and 'object' is most often flouted in the poetic expression. This deliberate breaking of the ordinary norms can have certain motives on the part of the poets. The obvious reasons might be as follows:

Drawing Attention: The usual things cannot be attractive to the beholders or the audiences. But when the usual form is changed by presenting the item differently, it is really attractive, it draws the attention of the listeners/readers. For instance, the usual sentence pattern is 'SVO' but when it is reversed as 'OSV', it, in the Russian Formalists' principle, gives 'a pleasant shock to the readers', thus they consider it (unusual expression) seriously. Likewise, for another example, as one writes 'Rima is a girl' it is an ordinary expression. But when one writes as 'Rima is a potato', all of sudden, the reader/listener feels a shock and tries to find out as to why 'Rima' has been called a 'potato'! In these two examples, the first one SVO vs. OSV is the structural deviation and the latter Rima is a potato' is semantic deviation.

Foregrounding: The typical concept is that the matter placed in the front part is the attention grabber. The poets, keeping this point in their mind, usually put the important items in the front part of the expression. The matters put in the foreground suggest that such fronted matters are being emphasized or stressed by the author. For instance, Devkota writes: 'Insane am I'. Here, he means to highlight the term 'Insane'. While foregrounding the term 'Insane' he does not seem to care where it is supposed to occur in the sentence.

Expressing Freshly, Vividly and Sharply: "Metaphor is a deviant or paradoxical use of language that is meaningful while being logically meaningless"(Byram 410-411). Metaphor is one of the important figures of speech, helps expressing an abstract idea in the concrete form. e.g. Devkota states, "I am liquid

poetry". Through this metaphorical expression he may be conveying the idea that he is sweet, melodious and adaptable in each context and situation because the liquid has the quality to form itself as the container. Likewise, the 'poetry' has the quality of sonority, magic power and easy to recall. To its contrary, he happens to say, "You are strong prose." Justifying how the poetic language gives fresh and original meaning, Lazar explains, "It has been argued that poetry frequently breaks the rules of language, but by so doing it communicates with us in a fresh, original way" (99). He means that the poetry flows quite smoothly with rhythmic melody. In contrast, the prose sounds harsh in comparison with the poetry.

Including two Levels of Meaning: In the context of metaphor, Byram views that metaphors do not always occur in the very clear way expressed in the examples above. He further states that a text may be built itself around an extended metaphor or have a meaning that is both literal and metaphorical.

Conclusion

Poet Devkota's poem "The Lunatic" is a highly stylized poem which has used artistic form and convention to create powerful effect on the readers' mind. The poem is seemingly breaking the established linguistic norms too much and this has led it to the region of unintelligibility. While analyzing the poem through the stylistic concept or viewpoint, the two major linguistic deviations have been noticed so far. The first deviation is concerned with semantic system in which a 'word' leaves the primary or basic meaning, it suggests the associative/figurative meaning. The semantic deviation is perceived in both the lexical as well as syntactic levels. The use of figures of speech in the poem has resulted in the semantic deviation. The next deviation has occurred especially from the unusual arrangement of the linguistic elements in the sentence. The verse lines do not follow the prescribed norms and standard of the grammar. However, the deviation does not necessarily mean that the expressions are meaningless, but rather they are fresh, new and original in terms of their meanings.

The poem "The Lunatic" can be studied in terms of other linguistic issues. The poem can be analyzed from the aspect of pragmatic value, pedagogical significance. The vocabulary used in the poem involves the wider ranges such as mythical, religious references, astronomy, and psychology. The expressive quality has been enhanced through various structural techniques and within this domain a researcher can look into

types of dictions and sentence style as well. Likewise, one can study this poem from the aspects cohesion, coherence and parallelism in the phonic texture, word or sentence structure. In this way, the poem exhibits multi-faceted issues for further studies and investigations.

<div align="center">**Work Cited**</div>

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