

## Original Paper

# Optimal Use of the Sixth Sense in Devkota's Poem "The Lunatic"

Lok Raj Sharma<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Makawanpur Multiple Campus, Hetauda, Nepal

\* Lok Raj Sharma, Makawanpur Multiple Campus, Hetauda, Nepal

Received: November 3, 2021 Accepted: November 15, 2021 Online Published: December 4, 2021

doi:10.22158/wjeh.v4n1p11

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjeh.v4n1p11>

### Abstract

*"The Lunatic" is one of Devkota's widely read and intensely discussed poems by critics, teachers and university level students in Nepal. It has already been studied from structural, thematic and contextual perspectives by other writers, but this article writer attempts to pinpoint the poet's optimal use of the sixth sense to perceive the people and society mentioned in the poem. The article writer underscores some poetic lines that reflect the utilization of the sixth sense which implies an extra-sensory perception beyond ordinary senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting. These five natural senses are not sufficient to grasp the meanings and messages of the poem. This poem will be better understood if readers are capable of examining the poet's sixth sense with which he perceives the persons and their deeds in society.*

### Keywords

*Laxmi Prasad Devkota, the lunatic, natural senses, perception, sixth sense*

### 1. Introduction

Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909-1959) is one of the most prominent Nepali poets honored with the title of the Great Poet (Mahakavi) in Nepalese literature. He was born as the third son of his parents, Teel Madhav Devkota, and Amar Rajyalakshmi Devi in Dhobidhara, Kathmandu. He achieved his elementary education from his father, who was a Sanskrit scholar. Later, he studied Sanskrit grammar and English subjects at Durbar High School in Kathmandu. His popular poetical works are "Muna Madan", "Sulochana", "Kunjini", "Shakuntal", "The Lunatic", "Lunee", "Beggar", "Gaine's song", "The Farmer", "Woods", and "Clouds" and so on. Concerning Devkota's writing, Baral (2009) claims that "the struggle done against his society and himself is a gist of Devkota's writings" (p. 15). Poudel (2009) expresses about Devkota's poetic feature as "Devkota is primarily a poet of sentiment" (p. 417).

Devkota's poetic creations are borne from the throbbing of his heart.

*Pagal* translated into English as *The Lunatic* is Devkota's popular poem which presents his abstract concept of having the sixth sense to perceive his society and human affairs. Bhandari (2009) asserts that "The poem is an excellent poem of Devkota" (p. 192).

This poem reflects domination, injustice, inhuman and unfair behavior, and all evil activities that affected the innocent people of his time in society. Upadhyaya (2009) affirms that "it is difficult to find out anyone to raise a strong voice of revolt against treachery, but he is Devkota's lunatic who does so boldly" (p. 405). The poetic persona is a man whom people consider insane as his sense of perceiving and deciphering things is utterly different from others. Therefore, he ironically tells his friend that he is surely insane. It is not clear whom he addresses as a friend, but according to Jagannath Tripathi, it is Kedarman Vyathit (Bhrikuti, 2009, No. 6, p. 129). He asserts that he visualizes the sound, hears the visible, and tastes the fragrance. Although people who use only their five senses behave with him in an odd and eerie way, he desires to express his strong notion that he is sane as Tripathi (2009) clarifies that the key term "The Lunatic" is employed in the poem ironically to infer that he is not insane" (p. 122). The poetic persona declares that he works with his sixth sense.

## 2. Literature Review

Diverse views and outlooks regarding this poem and the sixth are embraced in this section.

### 2.1 *The Lunatic*

The poem "The Lunatic" reveals the poet's strong dissatisfaction against his society which is unkind, dull and vain. Dhungel (2020) expresses his view regarding the poet's wish and mentions that "the poet reverses the existing world and truth and tries to establish his own world with humanity, morality, equality and liberty which the society doesn't accept easily" (p. 320). The society has some corrupt people. Such corrupt and supposed to be intellectual persons do not use their sixth sense, and the people with the sixth sense are taken as mad. Thapa (2011) writes that this poem is "a dream of the poet interpreted by exposing the corrupt world that has surrounded him" and "this world is antithetical to the ideal dream of the poet who wears the persona of a lunatic" (p. 19).

The poet was not happy with the so-called intellectual persons who neither esteem the opinions and feelings of ordinary folks, nor do they value the voice of divinity. Nissani and Lohani (2013) assert that the poet through this poem gives "a memorable expression of his own deepest personal feelings and events of his life along with a clinically accurate indictment of the hollowness of the so-called intellectual aspirants and leaders of the time, and maybe of any time" (p. 160). Devkota always wished for human goodness in his society. He believed that serving the helpless and the sad is serving the Almighty God. Duwadi (2011) describes Devkota's works as tinted with love and goodness and further asserts that "Devkota's works are filled with the love and belief in human goodness" (p. 23). Devkota does not prefer the irrational and pompous mores and affairs of society. He employs a bold and dauntless poetic persona to revolt against such irrationalities. Phuyal (2020) enunciates that "Devkota's

poetic persona dismantles the quotidian irrational mores of society in quest for a just society in the poem (p. 28). There are a few versions of translation of this poem. The translated versions are unable to hold the essence and heart of the poem. Kafle (2010) states that “The Lunatic” has lost its original meaning in the subsequent translations” (p. 97). The same intense personal allusions may be unavailable in the translated versions. This article writer has experienced the same reality, as Kafle pointed out, in the course of reading translated versions to prepare this article, therefore this article writer consults the poet’s own translation into English of his Nepali poem “Pagal”.

## 2.2 Sixth Sense

We use our five natural senses to gain information about something in the world; however these natural senses sometimes provide us with a distorted and partial view of our situations and conditions. We need an extraordinary sense to attain real and complete view of reality. This extraordinary sense can be termed as the sixth sense. Prabhupada (2008) in the interview with a noted Irish poet Desmond O’Grady remarks that “our senses are not sufficiently elevated to understand the Absolute Truth” (p. 261). Christianity takes faith as the sixth sense, and faith, according to Hebrew. 11:1 in the Holy Bible is the substantiation of things hoped for, or the conviction of things not seen. In the view of Richet (1928), the sixth sense can be described as a manifestation of an innovative enigmatic sense that perceives the sensations of reality. Similarly Brent (1919) views the sixth sense as “the Mystic Sense, or that inner perceptive faculty which distinguishes man from the highest below him and allies him to the highest above him” (p. 13). Furthermore, he mentions that “it differs essentially from the bodily senses though we are justified in thinking of it as a sense because its function is, like them, to perceive and to afford food for thought” (p. 13). The sixth sense is a special ability bestowed upon human beings. Talking about the importance of the sixth sense, he expresses that “it gives wings to the intellect, making it creative” (p. 17). Brown (1993) defines the sixth sense as “a supposed faculty giving intuitive or extrasensory knowledge” (p. 2878). Soanes and Stevenson (2003) describe the sixth sense as “a supposed intuitive faculty giving awareness not explicable in terms of normal perception” (p. 1655). Fabrian (2020) points out the benefit of having the sixth sense as he believes that “for some people, a given sixth sense allows them to gain advantages by communicating with the supernatural—this is considered as a gift” (p. 1).

Reviews regarding the sixth sense depict that the sixth sense is a unique ability of persons to perceive things or phenomena differently and enigmatically resulting in difficulty for ordinary persons to understand and experience.

## 3. Optimal Use of the Sixth Sense in the Poem

There have been accusations and rebuttals in society since time immemorial. The ruthless think the emotional are lunatic, and the emotional think the ruthless are lunatic. Similarly, the person who uses his sixth sense and the one who just uses his five natural senses consider each other lunatic. The poetic persona declares himself to be lunatic in an ironical manner:

Surely, my friend, insane am I Such is my plight (pp. 1-2) An ordinary person visualizes things, hears sounds, smells fragrance and feels tangible things, but a person with the sixth sense can perceive things differently and mystically as the poetic persona asserts:

I visualize sound. I hear the visible. And fragrance I taste. And the ethereal is palpable to me. (pp. 3-6) An ordinary person can touch concrete things. He can feel only thick things. It is true that the things which are thick are less powerful than the things which are thin. An atom is more powerful than an element. Only the person with the sixth sense can touch the unseen thin thing, but the people deny its existence and cannot measure its shape. The poetic persona affirms:

I touch objects Whose existence the world denies, Of whose shape the world is unaware. (pp. 7-9)

A stone is just a hard thing in which an ordinary person sees no creation and possibility. It is an inanimate thing hard, infertile and unproductive, but emotion and imagination make the stone a god and the inanimate become animate, the infertile turn to be fertile, and hard pebbles turn soft. It is possible due to the sixth sense. The poetic persona visualizes:

I see a flower in the stone--Smoothed by wavelets at the water's edge, (pp. 10-11)

Heaven is supposed to be a place of complete pleasure, contentment and fulfillment. It is beyond a normal person's sight, experience and perception. A very charming fairy looks at the poetic persona and smiles unto him from heaven in the seductive moonlight, but such eerie, nifty and my sticthings are absolutely impossible for an ordinary person. But the persona uses his sixth sense to see heaven and an enchantress smiling unto him. He says: In the moonlight, While the enchantress of heaven is smiling unto me. (pp. 12-13)

Emotion and imagination create flexibility and infinity of existence. The mathematical calculation of the sixth sense is utterly different from that of the five natural senses. There is no reduction of existence even if we try to reduce some portion from it. The poetic persona addressing his friend asserts in an ironical tone that his friend is clever and perfect. His formulas are fixed and correct. But the formulas and calculations of the poetic persona are dynamic and creative. One minus one is always one. If it is so, one plus one is always more than two. The mathematical formulas of the poetic persona are created by the heart, not by the rigid mind as he expresses:

Clever and eloquent you are! Your formulas are ever precise But in my calculations one minus one is always one. (pp. 27-29)

The poetic persona articulates that his friend works with his five normal senses, whereas he works with his sixth sense that is extraordinary and mystical. He declares:

You work with your senses five, With the sixth I operate. (pp. 30-31)

The brain is the abode of wisdom and conscience, but the heart is the abode of emotion and imagination. The heart gives birth to the sixth sense. Wisdom and conscience are finite, whereas emotion and imagination are infinite. Five natural senses can perceive just limited things and events, whereas the sixth sense can behold and perceive infinite and unseen things. A rose is not only rose for him. It is much more than a flower. He affirms that he sees two beautiful ladies Helen and Padmini in

the rose. He states:

Brains you have, my friend,  
But the heart is mine.

To you a rose is but a rose,

It embodies Helen and Padmini for me. (pp. 32-35)

The poetic persona uses a metaphorical expression to compare him with liquid poetry and his friend with strong prose. Poetry and prose are two genres of literature. Poetry is more emotional and more musical than prose. Poetry takes birth from the heart, whereas prose takes birth from the mind. The heart is soft, emotional and generous, whereas the mind is hard, rational and cruel. He compares:

You are strong prose, But I am liquid poetry. (pp. 36-37)

The poetic persona differentiates his world from that of his friend. His world is thin and of vapors, but his friend's world is thick and of solids. Ordinary people believe that solids are more powerful than liquids, and liquids are more powerful than vapors. From theological, philosophical and scientific points of view, the thin are more powerful than the thick. Liquids are thinner than solids and vapors are thinner than liquids. So naturally, vapors are more powerful than solids. Such philosophical essence is only realized by the persons with the sixth sense. It indicates that his world is more powerful than that of his friend. He mentions:

You have a world of solids, Mine is one of vapor Yours is thick and mine is thin. (pp. 41-43)

A stone is a hard concrete thing that can be touched and caught. For ordinary persons, it is taken as a hard reality. The poetic persona seeks to catch a dream that is just visionary. He takes the dream as a reality. It is his sixth sense that perceives the dream as a concrete object as he asserts:

You take a stone for hard reality, I seek to catch a dream, (pp. 44-45)

Persons who use only five natural senses consider the mountains dumb or speechless. Their ears can't hear the spontaneity of live voice of the mountains. Their ears can't hear the celestial words of the mountains, but the poetic persona finds the mountains to be speakers. He can hear and understand their live voices and celestial words. He states: You call the mountains mute, But orators do I call them. (pp. 49-50) Ordinary persons bask in the sunshine. They can perceive the pleasant warmth of the sun, but he basks in the light of the star. His sixth sense experiences the warmth of the star. By seeing him basking in the light of the star in the winter month, people called him mad. He describes:

In the frigid January month, I basked in the first white heat of the astral light. They called me crazy. (pp. 54-56).

The term "Nawab" refers to a sovereign ruler. The poet uses it in a symbolic way in this poem. It stands for the persons with high power and positions. They live luxurious lives. They are pompous and hedonistic. They enjoy drinking wine. Although ordinary people admire their wine, the poetic persona considers it lethal and profane. He thinks that living a characterless life is like becoming a living corpse. He affirms:

I have called the Nawab's wine all blood. And the courtesans all corpses. (pp. 80-81)

The poetic persona does not value the things which people value. They value gold and money. They want to earn more money by doing any work whether it is sinful, illegal or immoral. They believe that money can make their life comfortable and respectable. They are rearing a false notion that the money can expand their world. But he announces that their universe is a hair to him. In his view, they have shrunk their universe because of their arrogance, selfishness, jealousy, injustice, inequality, inhumanity and violence. He expresses:

Such is the upsetting of values, friend, Your universe to me is but a hair. (pp. 96-97)

The poet by using symbols like “tiger”, “deer”, “big fish”, and “small fish” expresses his strong wrath and abhorrence against violence, suppression, injustice and disharmony created by the powerful and rich persons in society. On the other hand, he uses “Dadhichi” as a symbol for sacrifice. Dadhichi, a great sage, is a central character in Hinduism, primarily known for sacrificing his life. The Devas (gods) made the weapon called “vajra” from his bones, defeated the Asura (demons) and reclaimed heaven. The poetic persona is ready to sacrifice his life for the well-being and betterment of the ordinary persons by defeating evil-doers of society. He wills to be used for a good purpose. He describes:

When I see the tiger pouncing upon the innocent deer, Or the big fish chasing the smaller ones, Then even into my corroded bones, my friend, The terrible strength of the soul of Dadhichi--the sage, Enters and seeks utterance. (pp. 123-127)

The poet uses the extended metaphor to presents himself as a violent force and a soothing force. His sixth sense works vibrantly. He is a reformer who attacks and destroys settled unjust beliefs and affairs. He employs a literary device ‘oxymoron’ that is ‘tenderly cruel’ to depicts his both cruelty and tenderness. Presenting his cruelty for destroying evil forces and presenting his tenderness for preserving goodness indicate his vibrant instinct. He is like the bird that flies up in the sky and brings the fire from heaven. It reminds us of Prometheus. In Greek mythology, Prometheus was the Titan honored chiefly known for stealing fire from Zeus and giving it to mortals for their use. The poet’s spirit becomes powerful and forceful like the child of the tempest to sweep the tyrants, suppressors and evil-doers away from society. He is the explosion of a crazy volcano to burn and turn them into ashes as he mentions:

The iconoclast of ugliness! The tenderly cruel! The bird that steals the celestial fire! The child of the tempest! I am the wild eruption of a volcano insane! (pp. 146-150)

Despite several verse lines, the article writer uses only a few major verse lines that reflect the optimal use of the sixth sense of the poetic persona to perceive and view the society and its people. His perception of society and its people is quite different from the perception of ordinary persons.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This poem shows injustice, dominance, inhuman behavior and bad activities that affect innocent people in society. Those who claim to be rational are destroying society and misleading the innocent people. But the poet wants to correct all wrong actions as a reformer. He satirizes aristocratic people and

high-level rulers who lead the country in the wrong direction. This poem can also be regarded as a poem of political protest. It tells us that people who claim to be rational are the real insane in the view of the poet. They can't use their sixth sense and perceive the world just from their five natural senses. Their understanding of the world and worldly affairs is prejudiced and incomplete. The poetic persona uses his sixth sense and therefore perceives things differently, mystically and meticulously; therefore he is called insane. The poet suggests that we should use our sixth sense for observing persons, things or events to understand them in a real and reliable way regardless of people's denunciation.

## References

- Baral, R. (2009). Devkotama bidrohchetana: Mulya nirupanako prayas (Sense of revolt in Devkota: An attempt of making sensible decision of worth. *Bhrikutee*, (5), 10-21.
- Bhandari, D. (2009). Great poet Devkota: A boundless contemplation. *Bhrikutee* 5, 191-195. *Bhrikutee*, 5, 191-195.
- Brent, C. H. (1919). *The sixth sense; its cultivation and use*. New York: B. Whuebsch .
- Brown, L. (Ed.). (1993). *The new shorter Oxford English dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dhungel, N. (2020). Counter-hegemonic consciousness in Nepali poetry: A comparative study of Mukarung's "Bise Nagarchi's explanation" (Bise Nagarchiko bayan) and Devkota's "The Lunatic" (Pagal). *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, 11(6), 307-323.
- Duwadi, E. (2011). The call of Devkota's "Spring" poems. *Devkota Studies*, (10), 23-36.
- Fabrian, R. A. (2020). The sixth sense that gives burdens: Narratives and explanations on the "gifted people's encounters with the supernatural". *ANTROPOLOGI INDONESIA*, 41(2), 1-14.
- Kafle, D. (2010). Lost and found in translation: A comparative study of different translations of the poem "Pagal". *Devkota Studies*, (8), 83-96.
- Nissani, M., & Lohani, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Flax-golden tales* (Shorter ed.). Kathmandu: Ekta Books.
- Phuyal, K. (2020). Beyond protest and poetry: Political vision in Devkota's selected poems. *SCHOLARS: Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 2, 27-36. <https://doi.org/10.3126/sjah.v2i0.35010>
- Poudel, H. (2009). Devkotako kabitayatra, prabriti ra yogadan (Poetic journey, trait and contribution of Devkota). *Bhrikutee*, (5), 408-421.
- Richet, C. (1928). *Notre Sixième Sens*. Paris: Editions Montaigne.
- Soanes, C., & Stevenson, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Oxford dictionary of English* (2nd ed.). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Thapa, I. B. (2011, April). The lunatic: A confluence of Apollonianism and Dionysianism. *Devkota Studies*, (10), 19-22.
- The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. (2008). An awareness of what is best and most beautiful. In T. B. Trust, & T. B. Trust (Ed.), *The Science of self-realization* (pp. 259-268). Mumbai: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.

Tripathi, J. (2009). Pagal kabitama Devkota (Devkota in the poem “The Lunatic”). *Bhrikutee*, (5), 118-135.

Upadhyaya, R. (2009). Devkota ra Lu Sun: Pagalprati dui drishti (Devkota and Lu Sun: Two prespectives towards the lunatic). *Bhrokutee*, (5), 404-406.