

Oscillating Between Being and Non-Being
A Review of Swati Pal's poetry collection Forever Yours

Sanjeev Kaushal

Professor

Department of English

IGIPSS, University of Delhi

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Poetry resides in the realms of existence and non-existence. Swati Pal's poetry collection *Forever Yours* captures poetry in its entirety. Traversing through these poems is like experiencing the anguish of a woman who has endured the pain of losing someone dear. This pain flows through words, penetrates the reader's soul, and immerses him deeply.

A poem dwells in a specific moment, radiating the entire narrative from there. If a poem maintains its details and continues to grow, it becomes even more beautiful. Swati Pal's poems emerge in a similar fashion. Her attention to detail enhances the beauty of her poems. She possesses a skill for articulating thoughts gently, a vital attribute for the art of poetry.

Today, love is disappearing most noticeably from life. Individuals are slipping into the abyss of loneliness. In such times, Swati Pal's poems instill the belief that love will endure beyond the final boundaries of time. Regardless of what happens in life, love will remain. The title poem seems to fill us with this conviction.

There may come

A time

When time

Will be

Of no essence.

And through it all

Till the end of time

I will be Forever yours

My darling.

These poems are love poems—of a love that demands nothing extraordinary, a love that is ever-present, like air, water, sunlight, and shade. Love yearns to be present in moments of joy with loved ones. We find it intolerable to live through any moment without our beloved. The more love fills the heart, the greater the capacity to endure, embrace, and withstand sorrow. Mary Oliver, in her poem *In Blackwater Woods*, writes:

To live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal;
to hold it
against your bones knowing

your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it go,
to let it go.

Is letting go so simple? This question echoes through the soul of Swati Pal's poetry.

Many poems in the collection are steeped in deep shadows of grief and silence. This grief is so profound that crossing it feels almost impossible. It is often said that time heals all wounds. Perhaps a man said this. Ask a mother, and her answer might be entirely different. She seems to wait endlessly, witnessing and enduring the terrifying scenes born of this waiting.

A poem becomes truly poetic when it transports its readers so completely into its world of experience that they lose themselves. *Sleep No More* is such a poem. Its words fall like invisible arrows, piercing our souls and bodies. Each word expresses the pain of a mother who has lost her son.

My eyes
Are open
In shock
And pain
And five years
Have made no change.

More than someone's absence, it is their memory that troubles us. It confronts us daily, pulling us into an ocean of sorrow. Some of the poems echo what W. S. Merwin conveys in his poem *Separation*:

Your absence has gone through me
Like thread through a needle.
Everything I do is stitched with its color.

Swati's poems encompass diverse memories. In *All That I Have*, a person transforms entirely into a memory. How painful it is for someone to become nothing more than a memory. On one hand, the poem depicts a mother's joy before her child is born; on the other, it portrays the emptiness years later when she loses that child. She struggles to comprehend what is happening to her. The portrayal of the anticipation before the child's birth is immensely touching. The ending is heart-wrenching. Reading the poem reveals how grief and sorrow shape life.

And tonight
I remember
That night
And I know
That tomorrow too
Memory is all I have.

When there is peace within, only then does the peace outside attract us. When there is turmoil within, external peace begins to terrify. But in Swati's poems, it feels as if everything inside has been emptied out, as if someone has taken it all away. What remains is silence—a profound quietness. This silence is now her companion, the one she lives with and speaks to.

She hovers
Over me
A dark Angel

And thus
Am I
Alone with silence

At the end of the collection, there are a few haikus, which are exquisitely beautiful, inviting the reader to pause and reflect.

rain...
sailing paper boats
tears flow down

The imagery in these poems is woven so naturally that it becomes part of the emotions. Familiar images like trees, the sky, and clouds reappear with new meanings. One of the most remarkable features of these poems is their simple and effortless language, which has the ability to gently embed deep emotions in the reader's heart and mind.

At first glance, the collection seems small, but as one journeys through it, its size becomes irrelevant because the poems completely engross the reader.

If love transcends time, grief too is not bound by it. It slips away from the grasp of time as well. May Swati Pal's poems receive the love they truly deserve.