

Keki's Kaleidoscopic Poetic Canvas: A Vast Range of Themes in the Work of K.N.Daruwala.

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Abstract-Keki.N.Daruwalla has a phenomenal range of themes captured in his poetry. He exhibits exemplary poetic skills and a great variety is his poetry. Evidently his vast range of work is an outcome of his experience in direct dealing with the people and his keen observation of almost of all sectors of society. His services rendered as an IPS officer, cabinet secretary and as the director of RAW also contributed its influence on his writings. He was fortunate enough to get opportunities to mingle with various segments of the society within the country and globally. The most importantly his affinities to literature and experimentation with diverse poetic themes give him commendable stature in English-poetry writing his work encompasses almost everything and things ever existed under the sky. He has significantly widened the scope of Indian English. He has enriched and enhanced t Indian Literature in a variety of ways. He stands out among Indian English poet for bringing the poetry a range of experience generally outside the gambit of any other poet. Moreover his thematic variety also permitted the Indian features.

Keki.N.Daruwalla's supremacy lies in exploring almost all spheres of life giving a way to valuable and a vivid range of themes in the poetry. His writings are charged with ironic stances, capturing various emotions in varied vistas. His contradictory realities, sustain narrative drive, diverse cultural, historic and mystic landscapes give a universal appeal, which captivates human hearts. Despite producing poetry of high order for over three decades and journeyed over nine books, he has surely suffered an eclipse for many years for unaccountable reasons and remained inaccessible to the most of the literary lovers. His poetic themes traverse from the innermost recesses of hearts to the outer world, where he has capacity to combine an epic canvas with a miniaturist's eye for detail. He is not only supple, subtle, sublime, sincere in his style but also super-specialized in sustaining in subject suiting his structure, which soothes us and provides solace to our souls. He inspires numerous readers to behold his themes with rear view of inspecting, investigating and inscribing all his idiosyncrasies in his poetries. His poetic themes are overwhelmed with sympathetic feelings, the most compassionate emotions and genuine gestures. Therefore it is acclaimed that his magnificence lies in incredible variations of the poetic themes, which he discovered.

His vast range of poetic themes expands from a unit to the universe. They are also realistic and profoundly grounded in both urban and rural surroundings. His poetic themes often rise from individual desires leading up to the composite society. As well as there are poems which are biographical portrayal and character explorations in perfectly placed settings. He brings alive the world of riot, curfew, sirens, warrants, lathi blows and acid bulbs attacks, which are the reflection of his professional experiences. - “The starch on your Khaki back

Torn soggy, the feel of things is queer

You wish to forget it all

The riot, the town, the people

-that mass of liquefied flesh

Seeking in fear.” (Curfew in Riot Town City, 15)

His keen and curious eyes scroll through social, political, economical, historical, religions and cultural milieus. And they become the source of his realistic poetic themes. The corrupt debauch, criminals and anti-social elements are basking in the light of freedom: He portrays the ugliness of metropolitan city, Bombay: “Freeing rapists and robbers

On Republic day,

And the amnesty adds:

“We’ll review with sympathy

The cases of the following

Pimps, pederasts, poets

And further.”(Craft)

“Black yeast/ from here, and black

Salt, a wall of rotting muscle” (Mandwa, 193).

Keki himself asserts “It is fashionable to say so, but I feel that even in poetry content is more important than form. For me poetry is firstly personal-exploratory, at times therapeutic and an aid in coming to terms in one own interior world. At the same time it has to be gesture, because an occasion I feel external reality bearing down on me from all sides with a pressure strong enough to tear eardrum.”

“ My troubles start
When I think of hope
That thin smoke of mist
Over the iron grey water of dawn
Icy water he said
But you are with me always
Like a spring of underground water
Like the murmur of a spring of underground water.”
(Migration, india.poetryinternationalweb.org, 2)

His many poetry highlights contrast, comparison, unparallel parallelism and subtle symbolism. And mind gathers sharp images by the use incredible imageries and other figure of speeches. Daruwalla's famous images are those of violence, rivers and diseases for instance the Taj is “doomed to leprosy”, rain is “arthritics” and the river dark as “gangrene”.

“She is over stewed coffee
At night under the red moon in menses
She is real weal
Across the spine of land.” (Ghagra in spate, 9)

There are well polished, chiseled and carved words are woven in the straight metric lines of poetry. There is occasional use of words from dialects and archaic words, which creates a sense of discovery till we comprehend the poem. Regarding his poems, AshaViswas comments, “Daruwalla's forte is imagery and the lines present a collage of shape and form by colours and nuances. There is perfect harmony between impression and expression” (51). He also uses Indian words and themes denoting varied manifestations of Indian sensibility. Words like Allah, khaki, panda, Moharram, dasaavamedh, ghat, mallah, zamindar, parijat, yoga, asans, tarai, ashram, ardh- kumbh, Gayatri, mantra, pindadan, panchtirtha, karbala etc. He also used modern expressions and situations in quick changing society. -

“Rock' roll around Ravi Shanker

Modes around Maharishi Mahesh

And Beatles around both.” (Collage 1, Under Orion)

His poetry is an emotional output with the sense on nature. R.N. Sinha calls, “His poetry is a response to the reality and as a result of that transaction between Nature and the poet’s mind, a certain kind of poetry is born” (91). -

“The sea and the sky, two concaves

Mirroring each other

Two giant wings of a purple moth,

A rose-pink oar/ looking for a boat,

A lilac axe-blade looking for a tree line.” (Mandawa, 194)

In this poem, the poet excellently mixes the human passion and nature through the outer world seasonal change; he brings out the human passion for life and fear of death.

“At night the wind

Still hacked at doors

Bristling with knife,

And nail and fang:

But this was dusk;

Vespers had a human ring:

The wind was a rhyme,

A chime, an echo.”(124)

Daruwalla’s poetry depicts nature with its full vibrant color and movement along with the human passions. Regarding this M.K. Naik writes, “Daruwalla’s mind is continually busy in establishing meaningful relationship between Nature and Man, in various ways and in different contexts and it is on the working out of these relationships that the success and failure of these poems would appear to hinge” (65). There is also a vein of sarcasm and irony perennial in most of his poetry. His tone is colloquial but has an ironical hue on it:

“Beggars hoist their deformities

As boatmen hoist their sails

Ganga flows through the land
Not to lighten the misery
But to show it.” (Vignette 1)

The Ganga has become the living embodiment of countless miseries of the people of India. Mark of ironical angle in the lines below:

“What planes of destiny have arrived at
Where corpse fire and cooking fire
Burn side by side.

.....

Slowly the ghat-amphitheatre unfolds
Like a diseased nocturnal flower in a dream
Palm-leaf parasol its petals only at dusk
Sprawling like mushrooms

Brood over platforms that are empty.”

(Boat Ride along the Ganga,97)

“Vignette-II” also pictures the devout rituals and sacred rites on the banks of river Ganga. H.L. Amga observes that his poetry “reveals his new direction in which he gives the landscape a subjective component and character. Moreover, the Ghat described in the poem is not just a panoramic riverside scene, but is a part of the poet’s integral, inscape” (112). He calls the river “a soundless interior monologue” that never speaks but “thought itself.” That is, the river is a witness to all that goes on its banks, without uttering anything. The poet’s deep anguish at the institutionalized corruption in free India finds expression in Hunger-74, Monologue in the Chambel Valley, Hawk and Food and Words. Profiteers and hoarders make capital out of people’s sufferings in drought and famine: -

“No end so hoarding
Breaking open the lockers they find
A briefcase full of rice.” (Hunger-74)

In these Poems, his bias against the Hindu rituals is revealed. He calls the rituals “spider thread”, which symbolically states the rituals are out-dated and unpleasant. R.N. Sinha treats the line, “All is spider-thread ritual” in a different aspect, that the rituals are designed to trap the unsuspecting pilgrims (79.4). He gives a firm pedestal to his poetic themes to stand on and convey what poet conceals. Diseases, dismay, death, decay, move us and take us on another plane. Which balms tormented, tortured, toiled and troubled souls that is his therapeutic concern. He acclaims that poet often aesthesia his pain to the point of anesthetizing in the poem, choosing them as decorative over the sordid and beautiful over the bloody. To him the purpose of poetry is cathartic. “Writing a poem is like a clot going out of the blood.” (The Tragedy Talk). He is incredible expertise in handling vivid and vast range of themes. His themes begin from interior and extend to the exterior world. He brings forth his poetic potentialities an emphatic manner. Themes have pictorial amalgamation of flora-fauna and picturesque stretches of landscapes, ghostscapes, riverscapes, mountainscapes, cityscapes, ghatscapes, pyrescapes, seascapes, nightscapes, windscape with suitable scenic seasons, scenario and subject matters. His rare sensibility to hold many reins in hand, canter on without a falter. He outshines and outstands from all the blames related to his poetic plethora.

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