

AN UNBROKEN CHORD WITH THE INDIAN SOCIAL SYSTEM IN THE POETRY OF SHIV K.KUMAR

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“Shiv K.Kumar’s western experience has not made him a ‘culturally demoralized educated Indian’ instead, he has imbibed western aesthetics without showing any disregard to the ancient Sanskrit poetics of India” (Qted Singh 35).

Shiv K.Kumar, is a gifted Indian poet in English. Despite being an expatriate for quite sometime he is still an Indian in blood and spirit. He was born in 1921 near Lahore, he received his school and college education in Lahore. He received his doctorate in English literature from Cambridge University. Shiv K.Kumar calls himself “a late bloomer” (Qted Sharma 55). His anthology is a makeup of different themes. All his anthologies are indeed a jewel of post-colonial literature. The poet takes the readers through the life and times of simple people who live in the contemporary period.i.e.post-colonial period in his native land in some of his poems. His work echoes whatever he hungrily consume like information, impressions, sensations, experience.

In “Articulate Silences”, some poems with the power to express more concealed things in life are picturised so artistically well. This anthology is packed with a vast social awareness of the poet. Some of his poems are set in an Indian locale in which they embody a truly Indian sensibility with great delicacy. The onus of bringing the harassment as well as the realistic glorious native land into a picturesque description dawned upon the poet and it is reframed in some of his poems. Shiv K.Kumar gives more weightage to his native land in his poetry. Shiv K.Kumar’s long stay in the western country reshapes his ideas but then the Indian sensibility has not got damaged in any way. As Salman Rushdie observers;

“--- one physical alienation from India at almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of redeeming precisely the thing that was lost, that will, in short, create fictions not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of mind.”(Rushdie, 1991:10)
Shiv K.Kumar tries to defend his native land’s traditional self-esteem. He doesn’t like to encourage the destruction of traditional society by any outside

forces at the same time he is up against all the vices of the society. His poetry unravels hypocrisy, violence, falsehood and double dealing. It harbours a sense of bitterness against immortality that exists in the society. As he cannot be a mute spectator to such ghastly incidents, these ugly incidences that have plagued the society which have been unchecked for a long time found an image in his poetry. So his poetry is in the image of what is inherent in the present society.

Rickshaw-Wallah, a realistic satirical poetry which shows the poverty stricken society with daily wage earners and their famished children. The common man who is battered by hunger, destitution and exile are picturised in his poetry. Poverty as faced by countless million of poor people is skillfully described. For a handful of coins, the Rickshaw-Wallah pulls passengers, "On the cushioned seat behind" (4) beyond the "municipal precincts" (7), which are aptly compared with:

"the mother – hen is gagging
her chicks ' full-throated cries
for a few grains of rice
their last supper".(9-12)

Poems on Indian landscape are integrated with the contemporary life of our society. His beautiful description of the landscape makes each page rich in beauty and splendour. In India nature has been treated so adorable that river is considered as feminine gender and the poet mentions it as "Mother River" (27) in a poem.

The poet feels for the lost glory. India is a country with magnificent buildings. "The Taj" is a poem in which the Indian poet Kumar feels for the ruined beauty of the magnificence monument the Taj Mahal. His sense of disappointment is expressed as:

"Fissures in its rectum-
now a renovator's nightmare.
How long can it withstand
the riverbed's lethal teeth?"(11-14)

Indian women are unquestionably rich with love, care and affection towards their children. Some deep-seated feelings that lie within the Indian mother's heart can be seen in the poem, "An Indian Mother's Advice to her Daughter before Marriage". It is typically based on Indian locale. In this poem, an Indian mother advises her daughter who is going to get married.

"A man's memory is myopic
like a sparrow's ; once filled up
he hardens into a bedrock"(16-18)

She has given some ironic comment on the sexual attitudes and tortures of her husband that it will be like "burning awhile on the hot sand"(12-13). The mother advises her to be patient. She too reminds that the course of life is not easy. Many difficulties may come in the way of life. It may give mental agony. Grief and disappointment may take her to the verge of immense mental torture and so

even during that period patience which is the commendable quality can sustain her. The poet puts it as:

“And often at night you may find
Yourself alone, pulling feathers
Out of your pillow. But be patient.”(19-21)

In another poem, “A Woman Labourer Breast-Feeding her Child during Lunch-Break” an Indian mother who is a labourer showering love on her child is the theme. However hectic the day is the woman labourer who is having a baby child breast feed her child during lunch-break. Without caring the hot sun and sweat she feeds her child.. The poet mirrors the Indian women love and care for the baby as well as their pitiful condition. She is satisfied “When toothless gums / strike milk out of rock” (6-7). She forgets the whole world, “Anger subsides - / the day rests at anchor” (8-9).The proud feeling of the mother after feeding her child is exhibited in this poem. This nature has been deep-rooted in the sub-conscious mind of the Indian mothers.

Shiv K.Kumar defends his motherland. His poetry remains rooted to the soil, depicting the true India. The setting, characters, problems, everything is Indian lending a touch of authenticity to their work. Shiv K.Kumar’s poetry is in such a way that it may pave way to end the disgusting practices that prevail in the society.

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