

Indianism in the poetry of Keki.N.Daruwalla

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ABSTRACT:

Indianism is such a term which at a time creates controversies and on the other hand provides so many things in a broader sense. Indianism means everything about India including socio-cultural, political, spiritual, economical and political ideas. Even in relationship there lies man-god relationship with nature and myth associate with it in India. In such scenario, if any one writes sometime it is obvious that these deep rooted ideas affect one's mind and heart. Naturally writings in such context will surely portray various aspects of Indian society. A close study of Indian English poets shows that in so many poets we can trace these Indianism or images of India in their works. Keki.N.Daruwalla is no more exception in this aspect. His works also shows us the very Indian images. This paper attempts to highlight the true picture of India that we find in Daruwalla's poetry.

KEYWORDS: Corruption, India, Myth, Nature, Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION:

In terms of excellence and fecundity, Indian English Poetry, the oldest form and significant part of Indian English Literature attained a status. Poets are seen experimenting with various themes. They are shown freedom in using language, tradition, and expression of thought, poetic form and content. All these are seen especially in post 80s' poets. But they never forget to present the images of India. One such poet is Keki. N. Daruwalla. Indian landscapes, religion, contemporary socio- cultural, political and economic condition influence him very much. He is such a conscious craftsman that he shows his love for everything about India without using traditional Indian themes. He shows a very credible and authentic picture of India and it is also true that his sensibility is modern and at a time Indian also. Indian attitudes, sentiments, perspectives and ethos are seen in his poetry. Not only this Indian myth and legends, India's rich cultural heritage is shown in his poetry along with his use of local Indian words.

With his use of powerful and vivid imagery he has shown the landscapes of India on a large scale. Somewhere he shows the river Ganga and somewhere he shows temples and other

landscapes in a broad way. India is the country of temples and Gods but the so called spirituality is now in a worst condition. In his 'Dawn', he shows the pitiful condition of the city with the conch's cry. Here he shows the picture at dawn:

"There is a clang of cymbals
like brass beating against brass.
A conch-cry pierces the receding fog
like a shaft of light." (Dawn)

His 'Mandwa' is affine poem where he shows nature, Indian landscape and seascape. The time is summer and sun is providing enormous heat and sunlight. The coastal area and sea – scales are shown also. Here he shows:

"Mostly when I arrive at places, it is Winter. Here it isn't
The sea pants, the islands smoulder,
the sun is an egg-yolk frying in the sky.
And so to this anointed strip of coast,
dark with shrub,
the beach white with fish-scales,
girdled by islands that seem to float
like pieces of a broken carafe." (Mandwa)

In his 'Ruminations at Verinag', he shows the place Verinag, its scenic beauty, its landscape and nature. Here he also shows the Indian Gods Shiva and Parvati myth and theme. But his description of the place is really commendable:

"Across the road, mustard-stalks lie heaped in meadows
and pear-groves.
The eye is used to this now, the fields layered

with water
and mountains axing down two thousand feet deep
across the wet sheath.
The eyes drugged with willow and waterscape can take
no more.” (Rumination at Verinag)

In a lot of poems he has shown his love and concern for the river Ganga. The Ganga is the pride of India and often considered as life giver, salvation river and mother for the Hindus. He has shown Ganga, its current condition, reality surrounding the places and bitterness and ugliness of picturesque elements around the river in ‘Vignette I’, ‘Vignette III’, ‘Vignette III’, ‘Boat-Ride Along the Ganga’, ‘Dawn’ and many other poems. As a Zoroastrian poet, he wants to show us the real picture, the sad and tragic picture of Ganga. In the following lines he shows the river at dusk time:

“Slowly the ghat- amphitheatre unfolds
like a diseased nocturnal flower in a dream
that opens its petals only at dusk.
Palm- leaf parasols sprouting like freak- mushrooms
brood over platforms that are empty.”

(Boat- Ride Along the Ganga)

Not only this he shows the indifference in the words of pandas. His disenchantment and uneasiness sometimes his misunderstanding regarding rituals are also shown in his poetry. Actually he shows very little trust and easiness about the Hindu culture. Here he shows the pandas, their hypocrisy, the pyres and the ultimate reality and truth about death in a vivid way:

“And while the *pandas* calculate
the amount of merit that accrues to you
at each specific ghat you cross the pyres
bowing your head to the finality of fate.

Behind the heat -haze rising from the fires,
objects shimmer, dance, levitate.
You face reality on a different plane
where death vibrates behind a veil of fire.”

(Boat- Ride Along the Ganga)

Different rituals and rites are performed on the banks of Ganga. He again in his poem ‘Vignette II’, shows these and in a broad sense it can be said that his comment on the poem and on the ghat in a subjective way reflect his integral inscape also. He gives a new dimension and view in these poems. He shows how the river silently witnesses all the incidents occurring in its’ bank. Here in this poem he shows the ghat, myth and nature in a beautiful way:

“You go the rounds of the *Panchtirath*
starting from the ghat where Durga
had dropped a sword
to where she dropped an earring
and the Panchganga Ghat where four rivers
are said to meet the Ganga,
like this river of faith going down
the stone-steps to meet the river.” (Vignette II)

He shows nature in a vivid way in so many poems also. In his ‘The Round of the Seasons’, he shows all the seasons and mix it with human passion to give more depthness in it. Through this poem, he shows how people react in different seasons and their love and life change in every season. In the very first stanza he shows ‘Vasanta’ season and the flowers like Asoka, Tilaka and Bakula. He shows the superstitious belief in India and later he calls the season as ‘season of illusion’:

“It is the season for illusions:
night mists turn to dawn haze,
frost becomes dew, though sharp.
. . . .
The blackbird is heard sometimes
but she hasn’t been seen.
The scent of the mango- blossom is there
but not the mango- blossom.
A bird alights on the leafing lotus bed
Thinking it is an island.” (The Round of the Seasons)

Here in this poem he shows the images of mango-blossom which indicate that winter comes to an end and summer is about to begin as spring is going on. In every season human passion and its intensity change. As when ‘Grishma’ is coming, the scorching heat is seen and the poet compares it with Hindu love God, Kama. Again nature, myth, human passion are seen in his poem along with his touch of Indianness:

“If you need tapers at your altar, kama,
let her ardour burn.
Let thoughts burn within the cool forehead.
(The Round of the Seasons)

Most of the Indian English poets use Indian myth, legends and philosophy in their poem. But as a postmodern poet, Daruwalla changes and modifies it a little to fulfill his purpose of using these. As myth is described above I want to show how he uses the stories from Mahabharata in his poems like ‘The Parijat Tree’, ‘Carvak’ and in ‘Karna’. In his ‘Karna’, he shows the glory of Karna, his birth history, his childhood, abandonment and many more:

“Karna- lover of battle
kings of anga
slayer of ghatotkacha
vanquisher of kambojas
and the kirats
and the girivrajas
we can't forget you in a hurry.” (Karna)

In his poem we can find allusion to Hindu philosophy on a large scale. Hindu philosophy deals with karma, maya, and nirvana. One will get the result as one's deeds and often he shows his inclination in search of reality. In his 'Charity- 3 Faces', we find this allusion to Hindu philosophy:

“I would believe in Karma itself and afterlife
if only her misery were not a caricature
If only I didn't associate
nirvan with that toothless grin
and those sockets smiling at the absence of the eyes.”

(Charity- 3 Faces)

Daruwalla presents India and its cities in so many poems in his 'The Keeper of the Dead'. He shows that now the so called ideal pictures of India have gone as it is distorted. Also the Western influences are also shown here. In his 'To Writer's Abroad', he shows how the poverty and real picture of India are giving opportunities to others to criticize us and hence the poet wants to draw attention to all from and outside of India to know about the real picture of it. Here he shows different problems relating to India:

“You wish to write on India, Sir?

This way please!

Let’s trail the alley cat down the drain
choked with ash and eggshells. Have a care
the scum and the slime may soil your shoes!
Would you care to photograph
those urchins lost in their laughter?
You’d prefer, I think, a hangdog look
assertive ribcage, and mouth
caked with snot and grime.

(To Writer’s Abroad)

Apart from the condition of India he also shows different places of India. And in most cases he shows Hindu Gods and temples and rituals associated with it. In his ‘Pilgrimage to Badrinath’, he describes the place, its significance, Hindu beliefs associated with it and the journey all undertake to attain ‘Punno’:

“Along the valley of the burning sun;
On flinty bridle- paths which centuries have trod
in penance and anonymous dust.”

(Pilgrimage to Badrinath)

When the discussion is about Indianism in Daruwalla then it is also mentionable that he shares his views on Indian English. He calls it his ‘Mistress’. In the poem ‘The Mistress’, he tells us everything about Indian English including its origin. But a mixed feeling is shown in this poem as one hand he is dissatisfied with the current condition and status of his mistress because of its hardness and outdated words and on the other hand, he accepts it in spite of his uneasiness. Here he shows his pessimistic optimism attitude:

“her consonants bludgeon you;
her argot is rococo, her latest ‘slang’
is available in classical dictionaries.
.
My love for her survives from night to night,
even though each time
I have to wrestle with her in bed.
.
She is Indian English, the language that I use.”

(The Mistress)

Daruwalla in his poems also shows the pitiable condition of Indian woman. They are only the source of entertainment and they are subdued and marginalized. They are dominated by male in this society. They have given no dignity, respect, security and privacy. They are often sold to other countries and only for lust men are doing this day after day. In many poems he shows Indian woman and their sufferings for different issues. One such poem is ‘Monologue in the Chambal Valley’. Here he shows how they are treated as saleable objects. The poet through the chief of the bandit narrates this:

“Do you recall how it was with the women
when we started? taut- breasted ones from the hill
brown ones from Bihar- soft and overripe/
daughter of the desert
daughters of the forest tribe?
And where did we not sell them?
In holy fairs, in cattle markets
to old men- girls younger than their daughters

to the young- one –eyed and the lame who couldn't get a wife.”

(Monologue in the Chambal Valley)

Social- consciousness is also shown in his poetry. He shows his concern for political, economical and social issues. A close reading of his poems show that his poems clearly portray that he is too serious regarding socio-cultural problems. Death, poverty and pestilence are very much present in his poetry. In his 'Notes', he shows hunger, poverty and the policy of the corrupt officers at that time:

“No end to hoarding!

Breaking open the lockers they find

a briefcase full of rice.” (Notes)

Religious and political corruptions are very much present in his poetry. Actually he wants to show the naked picture of Indian society. Political leaders are very eager to take advantages in any situation. They always take trifle issues and make a mess in dealing with it. But actually this is pre planned as by this they want to avoid bigger problems and issues. In his 'Food and Wood, Words and Food', he shows hunger, poverty and corrupted political leaders who always lecture on crisis problem only to gain from it:

“Ahimsa is a positive creed...

We will not submit to aggression...

We condemn the statement made

by the fifth Secretary of Tanzania

to the Bolivian Minister for Urinary Affairs

... We condemn apartheid

...We will not have food

with strings tagged on it...”

(Food and Words, Words and Food)

Actually he is really a hater of hypocrisy and corruption. Actually I agree totally what M.Sivaramkrishnan said about his social consciousness: “this kind of movement not denuding poetry of its contemporary or social relevance, but progressively subsuming these as indispensable components of the basic perception of our tragic existence invests Daruwalla’s poetry with a stamp of a distinct identity” (128). Religious and so called holy people are corrupted in India. In his ‘Graft’, he shows these:

“To legalize a bastard you’ve to bribe the priest
the catechism also has its price.
He’ll wed you to a Turk or a Rabbi’s daughter
even though you may be uncircumcised.” (Graft)

CONCLUSION:

Regarding the above discussion it can be said that Daruwalla remains Indian at heart and he has established himself as an Indian English poet with his poetry deals with Indian images, myth, Indian languages, socio cultural, and socio –political conditions. He has shown all his local themes in such a way that it becomes global and universal at the same time. Indianism is very much present in his poetry and all his descriptions about India are genuine. All the themes that I have discussed shortly lend the real material to the body of his poetry and elevate his poetry to a high status.

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