

Portrayal of Indian Landscape in Shiv K.Kumar's Poetry: Reflecting Post-Colonial features

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Abstract

The present article tries to analyze, interpret and discuss in detail the depiction of Indian landscape in Shiv K.Kumar's poetry with post-colonial features. Post-colonial authors take a responsibility of representing themselves using literature and poetry in a criticism form or by celebrating the emerging national identity. Shiv K. Kumar's writings, especially poetry remain rooted to the soil, depicting the true India. His poetry engages with the Indian nation in different socio-geographical contexts with the theme of postcolonialism. So this article will help one to understand the nature and impact of inherited power, relations and their continuing effects on literary writings that get reflected in the poetry of post-colonial writers like Shiv K. Kumar.

A number of literary works appeared in English by Indian writers on princely India depicting different aspects of princely India. It is not just reflected in the language as imagery of literary texts or just like a backdrop but the oppression about the colonized people related with their identity, relationships and culture. They are expressed with liveliness. The desire of the post-colonial writers is to recover their lost pre-colonial identities as they no longer want to be confined or subservient to the colonizers.

In post-colonial writings mentioning of Indian landscape is one of the most prominent themes. Shiv k.kumar presents his native land in the form of nostalgic memory to glorify his nation. Sometimes he wants to have some identification with his nation. The vigorous search for identity gives a feel so protective when some nation's monuments or some important places are portrayed.

In lieu of presenting the darker side, poets like Shiv K. Kumar concentrate on exposing the enrichment of their native lands and positive things too. The poets feel it is better that they share some valuable information of their native country with other countries. World Literature Today comments on his poetry thus: "Today we seem to be poised for a breakthrough and something that may be truly Indian is being written" (Qted Dwivedi 183).

As a great lover of Indian landscape the poet has paid a glorious tribute to India with simplicity in his anthology *Trapfalls in the Sky*. In the first section *On Native Grounds* is a living testimony to a sensitive soul. The description of Indian landscape through images affords certain joy of recognition to the native readers and opens the cave of Ali Baba to the foreign reader. Through writing poetry the poet's desire is to show the beauty of his native land to the west even sometimes by using Indian English. English is Indianised to show the adaptability of Indians.

Shiv K.Kumar's poetry presents the Indian experience more vividly and makes it exotic. The poem *Dal Lake: Srinagar* gives a graphic description of the Dal Lake which is in Srinagar. The description of the lake gives the real enviable picture. The poet is struck by the wonderful morning and it is brought out vivaciously in these lines:

"It's daybreak- the moment of embrace
between rose and briar, dream and reality,
faith and negation(8-10).

.....
as though this morning has just been midwifed
out of the womb of time." (14-15)

The impressive song of the birds are so lovely enough that it

"...breaks into this hushed moment,
The symphony of birds, still drunk
On some dreams of luscious orchards."(21-23)

The poet by giving beautiful description makes the reader travel lively over Dal Lake and if the reader of the poem had been there already he relives in the experience of being there.

Indian landscape has inspired Shiv K. Kumar by which he creates newer and more fascinating images. The way it has been extolled is undisputedly an appreciable one as Indian landscape is littered with landmarks of history. The landscape Delhi is presented by the poet in the poem *O Delhi!* mainly highlighting the present and the past Delhi with patriotic sentiments. He regrets for the present Delhi when he compares it with that of the Delhi of yesteryears. Though he is regretful he records with satisfaction in this poetry exposing the hospitality of Indians in the lines:

... still I felt redeemed
as you threw open your gates- Kashmiri and Ajmeri –
to welcome indoors a fugitive from another land.
I savoured your hospitality. (6-9)

The purity that lies in the past in Delhi does not exist in the present. "In Shiv K. Kumar's poetry historical monuments, a landscape and environment are often viewed with a savage irony as part of his own sexual desires, anger at incongruities" (Qted King 120). The poet with the mild satirical anger uses the word "vasectomy" (58). This is to show that the city is corrupted in sexual ways too. The city is so defiled that it is hard to rise again to the status which it was once. It is shown as with biblical references.

I prophesy that you too will fall
Like Nineveh and Babylon
And no new indraprastha will rise
From your barren ashes. (60-64)

Some landscape images like "DDA flat(25), Jama Masjid(30), Rajghat(41), Jamuna River(46), Najafgarh drain(47), mandi house(51), NDMC Tower(52) all give the reader closeness with the poem.

Shiv K. Kumar uses feminine imagery to show the picture of streets of Delhi in the poem, *O Delhi*, as:

your streets and alleyways were like the contours
Of a virgin's torso-taut and scented. (16-17)

A trace of humour is used by the olfactory image 'scented'. It is used to convey as it is the contaminated society. To drive off the decayed odour of the streets scent is used. Shiv K.Kumar uses irony to make the people think over and also to give a delight to the readers.

The allurements of Indian landscape and the unequivocal speciality of India are explored so well in his poetry collections also. He very often sexualizes the landscape. He produces it in all beautiful aspects too. The opening lines of *Cleansing Ganges* he presents a nascent picture of innocence:

At nativity all creatures are Chaste, like breast milk-
the downy chick, Pecking its way out
of the shell's prison,
The littlum calf, gravitating on its tottering legs
To the mother's udders
And the undiapered babe thumped
and thrashed into primal consciousness.(1-7)

As the innocent Ganga comes down to the plains of occupied present, the pristine Ganges becomes a dumping ground for waste matter:

It's only when they are carried down the river of time
That iron sinks into their souls.
The waters then get sullied by ritual and dogma-
Ashes and bones,
Wilted floral offerings to the dead,
And the noontime sweat oozing from the saffron-
Striped foreheads of the crocodiles
Whose yawning jaws chant mantras in some obsolete
Tongue. (8-16)

Shiv K. Kumar's use of landscape is an obviously Indian element. His language then becomes equivalent to the base essentials and images emerge concrete and precise. In India nature has been treated so adorable that river is considered as feminine gender and the poet mentions it as "Mother River" (27). The Ganges is a very important river for everyone, especially the Hindus, but they do not take care of it that it gets polluted. The poet ironically mentions the most sacred river, Ganges which purifies the pilgrims of their sins and which is regarded to be the source of miracles, has turned so impure that:

the Ganges' water can work
Miracles like Lourdes',
inspite of the cartloads of dead men's ashes
And bones and the pundit's shit-
Daily offerings to the Mother River!

The poet bemoans for the ruined beauty of their nation's monument or appreciate the beauty to make the readers repent or feel proud of their nation respectively.

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)

An Indian believes in Holy Communion with nature. He worships the Himalayas and the Ganges. He gives much importance to nature. At the maximum he tries to preserve nature. He mingles spirituality with nature. He believes that a dip in its waters or a sip of its few drops is adequate to purify a person immensely. Many of India's religious rites are performed on the banks of her holy rivers after ceremonial bathing. Kumar's poems, *Cremerorium in Adikmet, Hyderabad, At the Ghats of Banaras* fall into this category. The nostalgic expression by using Indian landscape images provides psychological and emotional relief. It accentuates relief for the rootlessness and spiritual agony.

Shiv K. Kumar is aware of the shaping of a national consciousness by the environment of the country, the climate, the background of the tradition. In the poem *A Letter to My Son*, a picturesque description of Hyderabad with all its extremes can be found. Even the climate is brought out so amazingly with much reality. He points out saying Hyderabad as,

But, here in Hyderabad, I have drawn the curtains
To dodge the sun's sanguine eye
Glowing in its lethal anger. (14-16)

The images of India pervade all through his anthology by referring to Hindu mythology or through nature and landscape imagery. Along with explication of some celestial truths, national identity, rituals, landscape form the core of this anthology. He expresses all these by using metaphors and with striking images.

A poem related with Indian landscape is *Cleansing Ganga*. It relates to familiar situation in India. There is a picturesque description of the river Ganges. It is a recipient of countless tributes. So many hymns are sung in praise of the river. The poem is in such a way that the reader can visualize the Ganga riverside. Though they are expatriates they cannot disown the beauty of their native land. This poem is ironical in saying that the human being at the time of birth are innocent as

at nativity all creatures are chaste, like breast –milk-
The downy chick, pecking its way out
Of the shell's prison,
The littlum calf, gravitating on tottering
Legs to its mother's udders
And the undiapered babe, thumped
And thrashed into primal consciousness.”(1-7).

The poet by using the visual imagery shows pictures of the purity of the soul at the time of its birth. Then in a meanwhile they get polluted.

It's only when they are carried down the river of time
That iron sinks into their souls. (8-9)

The beauty of the riverside at night time is painted wonderfully in a poetical way:

The moon will recapture in the river's mirrors
the shop lineaments of her own face
flushed like a bride's
as she walks into the nuptial chamber
holding a lone candle
to be snuffed out
into the Bay's eternity. (23-29)

This beauty is getting spoiled by “ashes and bones” (11), “Wilted floral offerings to the dead” (12), and by the “noontime sweat oozing from the saffron-striped foreheads of the crocodiles”

(13-14). The poet uses a ray of satirical humour to convey that the priests are not truthful in performing the rituals by mentioning them as “crocodiles” (14) which merely act.

In some poems like *An Old Dry Well*, *Trafalgar Square*, *The Taj*, *Sunday Morning*, *Shimla*, *Ruins at Agra*, *Déjà Vu*, the poet refers to the dilapidated monuments and lost glory of landscapes with much aching for the lost beauty which shows that Shiv K. Kumar is portraying without showing any false partiality.

Indian English poetry has affinity with all the features of post-colonial literature. As a post-colonial poet Shiv K. Kumar’s outlet expresses an energetic assertion of cultural identity through the presentation of Indian landscape and its culture.

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