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POST - COLONIAL ELEMENTS AND SELF EXPLORATION OF SHIV K. KUMAR IN HIS
SELECT POEMS

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ABSTRACT

In Indian writing in English, there were a number of writers who brought worldwide name and popularity to Indian literature. Among, a few won the Nobel Prize and the Booker Prize for literature. They all shaped Indian writings to a great extent and made a great uniqueness in English literature. The writers like Nissim Ezekiel, R. Parthasarathi, Kamala Das and Sarojini Naidu, who took Indian writings into world popularity in the post colonial literature. Shiv K. Kumar is also one among them worked as a professor in Oxford, and he wrote volumes of poems, short stories, and novels. His works were very famous during his life time. He got his poetic talent partly from his own life experience and partly from his studies. He culminated both together and produced good works in Indian writing in English. The present article attempts to scrutinize the post colonial elements and self exploration of Shiv K Kumar's poems. The term post colonialism in Indian literature has made drastic changes and brought a big shift in Indian writing in English. In this article, the researcher makes an attempt to find the post colonial elements that are depicted in Shiv K. Kumar's poems.

Introduction

Shiv K. Kumar after the demise of his mother, "he began his poetic career with a poem titled "An Encounter with Death", which was occasioned by death of his mother" (Bijay Kumar Das, 4). The theme of the poem centers around his personal life experience and especially about the death of his mother. To tune his continuous efforts in producing work of arts and his knowledge in literature, he has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature during his stay in England as Commonwealth Visiting Professor of English at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1978. He is such a renowned writer in English. R. Parthasarathy rightly comments: "One misses this pervasive, ironic humour in Indian verse in English generally. As he says, "In view of my extensive travelling in the West,

I seem to be constantly returning to the theme of cultural interaction. I feel, unconsciously, I guess, that with me contrast is almost a mode of perfection" (53). Most of his writings are talking about his personal experience, and in some other case he could develop the simple matter into a bombastic art. In connection to this R. Parthasarathy aptly states: "Often he takes a simple fact or incident and develops it to a point where it acquires a new meaning" (53).

The term 'Post colonialism' widely refers to the representation of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity in the modern era. Postcolonial has a number of common motifs and themes like 'cultural dominance', 'racism', 'quest for identity' and 'inequality' along with some peculiar presentation styles which are meant the central

ideas of postcolonial literature. There are various reflections of postcolonial literature in terms of theories and conceptions. The postcolonial theorists examine both the colonial texts and literature written after colonialism. These theories have connected postcolonial literature with many fields like history, politics, philosophy and literary traditions and its significance in the present day society. The colonial countries like India have started writing and depicting the experiences of colonization by which many changes brought by independence upon individuals and their respective nations.

Shiv K. Kumar's love poems portray the theme of sex and love, contemporary reality, culture and etc. these concepts prove that he is a post colonialist and thus he has used postcolonial ideas in his poems. Bijay Kumar Das appropriately states: "Love poems embody specific Indian imagery and thereby give authenticity to Kumar as a Post-Colonial Indian English Poet" (5). On the other hand, Shiv K. Kumar has also depicted the theme of failure in love and other frustrations of his life which are dealt in his poems like "Returning Home", "Married Too Long", "To a Young Wife", "My Co-Respondent", and "A Dark Mood". In *My Co-Respondent*, Shiv K Kumar deals his own marriage life experience and failure as a theme of the poem. He is the protagonist of the poem and he has tried to get relieved from his past through writing these lines:

Just this difference though—
while you rose like some giraffe
I slouched over worms
climbing up diamond-knots of wet grass
Each night I limped into my lone self
where the dead croaked like frogs. (54)

Bijay Kumar Das rightly comments on these lines: "Kumar seems to be concerned with the dissection of the failure of love in marriage. Kumar's poem reminds us Lowell's 'To speak of the war that is in Marriage'" (5). In this poem, Shiv K. Kumar has used number of images like as he is the protagonist sacrifices the woman to the Co-sharer and leaves for 'pastures anew'. Thus he says:

Now that I give you the rose to keep,
let me pass through the turnstile

into the open fields
where riderless horses whinny
under the red moon. (54)

The irony in the poem is implicit. The rival in the love is termed 'co-sharer' and the tone of the poem is potentially mocking. The competition in love ends with the protagonist deciding to go away onto the open fields, leaving woman to the 'co-sharer'. If love and sex become the nerve-centre of Kumar's poetry, landscape and social customs prevalent in the country form the heart of it.

In India, there are a number of religions and beliefs which have been prevalent around the country and still the people strictly have been following their respective customs. Shiv K. Kumar views the traditions and rituals of the Hindus in his poem "Pilgrimage" in contrary to the contemporary. He has written this poem satirically and made many notes on these lines:

The trees on either side
would have given us a guard of honour
had our leader not defiled them
with blasphemies. (55)

In relevant to this satirical lines, Bijay Kumar Das comments: "The Hardship on the way due to rough weather and scanty supply of food dampened their spirit. The faith of the pilgrims was in question" (7). Through this poem Shiv K Kumar has depicted the truth that the loss of faith which characterizes the modern mind. The people of the present era have been leading sceptical living in an irreligious milieu. With lack of faith in God the pilgrimage turn out to be an exercise in futility. Thus, Shiv K Kumar writes:

We were out to span the sky's amplitude—
This journey was merely to stimulate the
blood. (55)

Shiv K Kumar's poems are subtly ironical. He examines the paradoxes of modern life very poignantly. His poetry deals with conflict between intuition and reason, love, sex and marriage, modernity, traditions and the East-West encounters. He employs real imagery in his poems. In his poem 'Kovalam Bench' he has used erotic images which are new and appealing. His writing reaches popularity and brings an international fame to him. Bijay Kumar Das says: "With the extension of

thematic range, came the technical accomplishment and Kumar became a major voice in post-colonial Indian English Poetry" (8).

Shiv K. Kumar's volume "Woodpeckers" is published in 1979, which covers his life from the age of four through the years of growing up, sojourn in England for higher education, an unhappy marriage and divorce. The one thread that runs throughout the poem is in opposition between the urges that drive a person towards a full and free life as a human being and factors, such as conventionally morality, established religion, or a bad marriage that conflict with these urges. According to his belief, society controls an individual. In view of this G.S.Amur rightly conveys: "His poems, therefore, are best approached as those which explore the human condition rather than the isolated individual self. For Kumar it is as necessary to come to terms with the world he lives in as it is to come to terms with himself" (131).

In "Days in New York", Shiv K. Kumar searches for an identity and mocks at himself to give an ironical tone to his poetry, besides he writes about the East-West encounters and brings out the difference in cultural outlook between a native and a foreign. As he writes:

Questions catapult in the air:
'Are you a Puerto Rican?
A Jamaican? A Red Indian?'
I look for the feathers on my skull,
a band around my forehead.
And mumble, 'No, a brown Indian,
from the land of Gandhi'. (57)

Shiv K Kumar is against rationalism and superstitions, in his poem 'Kali' he talks about the religious symbols and animal sacrificing. Bijay Kumar Das rightly states: In 'Kali' Kumar uses a profound religious symbol of killing and creating simultaneously. Animal sacrifice is made before gods and goddesses to satisfy the deity can be taken as a form of superstition prevalent in our country. Kumar lashes out such practices in his poem" (9). Shiv K Kumar writes:

Beyond the priest's monotone
a lamb bleats for the knife-edge.
A child clinging to famished

nipples will die anyway,
but your nectar is the blood
that jets from fresh arteries. (58)

Shiv K Kumar concludes:

If the way to create
is the way to kill,
I have hoarded enough blood
in my throat
for all the hyenas to such from. (58)

The tone of the poem becomes sarcastic and the attitude is ironic and ambivalent. Like Nissim Ezekiel, Shiv K Kumar is against superstitions and mechanical performance of the rituals. Bijay Kumar Das aptly comments: "Unlike other post-colonial Indian English poets Kumar writes a number of poems on the West and sees it from the Indian view point. His poetry fits into the definition of post colonial literature which states that the post colonial writer writes back" (12).

CONCLUSION

Thus, the postcolonial literature deals with framing identities, the politics and rewriting, translations, relation between nation and nationalism. It is a most dominant form of literature and it has a great appeal. Postcolonial literature deals with concepts like cultural, political, geographical, and psychological etc. Shiv K. Kumar poems show the search for innocence, the pangs of life, the failure in love, the betrayal of women, the corruption in public life, and the East-West encounters. He portrays life as it is rather than as it should have been. In all his poems, he has used images to show up his own life experiences and through them he proved himself that he is a post colonialist and he uses post colonial elements prevalently in his poems which are proven in the throughout present article.

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