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K.N.Daruwalla's Contribution to INDO-ANGLIAN Poetry)

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Abstract: K.N.Daruwalla is considered among those writers of Indian English poetry who have really worked for the growth, development and furtherance of modern creative poetry right from the seventies and since then have been contributing to it to enrich with the poems of a new standing and tenor tendered to us from time to time. Daruwalla is certainly one of the major voices in Indo-Anglian poetry. So far as the themes of Daruwalla's poetry is concerned, it covers a wide range. The judgement of the critic, Vilas Sarang, has expressed the view that Daruwalla stands out amongst Indian-English poets for bringing to poetry a range of experience generally outside the ambit or scope of poets. Daruwalla's contribution to Indo-Anglian poetry is his enlargement of its themes and his widening of its range of subjects. His poetry derives strength equally from his use of symbols, images and metaphors as also from a craftsmanship which is intensely creative and flexible rather mechanical.

Index Terms - Themes, Imagery, Irony, Free Verse, Diction, Phraseology.

The jurisprudence of K.N.Daruwalla's poetry has an immense and scintillating influence on the Indian scenario. His craftsmanship has an impeccable and highly vibrant quality and very much endowed with aesthetic appeal. His themes are varied in nature. His poem ranges from the greatest expression of Indian thought to the clever dwelling on mundane experience coupled with reality. His poetic endeavour is superior and excellent in terms of the quality and the poetic device he employs. As a poetic craftsman Daruwalla occupies the unique position in the matrix of Indian poetical spectrum.

Indian poetry in English is very much indebted to Daruwalla. His contributions to Indian writing in English especially, verse is remarkable. He has enriched Indian poetry in English through his range and craftsmanship. His poems have thrived to bring the undercurrent of Indian life. His corpus of poems has echoed the Indian spirit and its sensibility. His poems are deeply rooted in Indian idiom. His poems are quintessence of Indian sensibility and Indian life. Violence is the foremost theme of the poetry of Daruwalla and it pervades his works both thematically and technically. However, it depicts the multi ethnicity of the Indian experience. Indian poetry sans Daruwalla is unimaginable as his poetry has become an evitable force in the annals of Indian writing in English. His poems are devoid of any inferior poetic utterances. His images are so sound that they strike the head at the right time. His poetic exuberance is matchless. Among Indian poets writing in English Nissim Ezekiel is comparable to Daruwalla. At times, Daruwalla even outwits Nissim Ezekiel. Daruwalla's poetry broadens the imaginative range of the reader with thematic universality with a multiple array of significance. Its import has deeper impact on the psyche of the connoisseurs of poetry.

Speaking of the themes first, we find that Daruwalla's poetry covers a wide range of subjects. He has a very broad outlook and, in the capacity as a police officer, has had many opportunities for observing life in India in almost all its manifestations. He has responded to almost everything that he has witnessed by writing a poem about it. He has put his experience of active life to good use in the poems like Curfew. In a Riot-Torn City; Poems from the Tarai; Routine; Curfew 2 and Walking to the Centre. According to Vilas Sarang, Daruwalla brings to life the world of riot and curfew, sirens, warrant, men nabbed at night, lathi blows on cowering bodies, "the starch on your khaki back", soda bottles and acid bulbs waiting on the rooftops, and press communiqués. Daruwalla has portrayed the contemporary Indian socio-political world-not merely of the city, but also of the small town, of the village and of the countryside - with heavy strokes, laden with savage irony. And this critic, Vilas Sarang, has quoted the following three lines from a poem entitled 'Notes' to illustrate the irony :

No end to hoarding !

Breaking open to the lockers they find a briefcase full of rice.

Another critic, M.K.Naik, has also noted the variety and range of the themes of Daruwalla's poetry; and he mentions among those themes the rioting mob, the tub-thumping politician, Evangelical Eva, Rotarian Renu, the Maulavi who dies of tongue cancer, the leper at the Taj, the ledge-walker, the epileptic woman and the bandit chief. Daruwalla's favourite images, according to this critic, are those of violence, disease and fire. The gun goes off on many pages of his poetry; the Taj is depicted as arthritic and the river is depicted as being dark like gangrene. His attitude to fire is, of course, a by-product of his Parsi heritage.

Imagery is another field in which Daruwalla has made a contribution to Indo-Anglian poetry. Like his themes, his imagery also covers a wide range. His imagery is neither fantastic nor common place. It is realistic and original, often strikingly original. The 'Ghaghra in Spate' is an outstanding example of Daruwalla's realistic and original imagery. Here we are made to visualize the Ghaghra as looking like "overstewed coffee" and then at night like "a red weal across the spine of the land". And the moon is red because she is having menses. The poem entitled "In the Tarai" also contains original and yet realistic imagery. Apart from the imagery in the opening stanza, we have the vivid and perfectly realistic imagery of the bandits working havoc in the land, setting fire to the cottages, chopping off women's fingers in order to get the gold rings which they are wearing and snatching away gold necklaces from their necks. "Railroad Reveries" contains several vivid pictures, some of these unforgettable. There is a sad-eyed bitch which, being tormented by the urchins on the platform, walks away with her head drooping and her eyes bored. There is a blind boy on the platform, walking from compartment to compartment of the train with his begging bowl to whom the poet would like to give a coin in charity but is unable to do so because of his indecision. About Daruwalla's imagery we have also to note that it is not superimposed upon a poem and that it is not gratuitous. The imagery in his poetry is integral to the theme or it arises from the poet's meditations upon a subject or from his thinking over a particular incident or happening. We do not come across many examples of imagery for imagery's sake in his poetry.

Daruwalla has contributed to Indo-Anglian poetry in another way also. His poetry is the poetry of incident and event and his mode is that of narration and description. Even when writing about nature, Daruwalla resorts to incident, as in 'Winter Poems : 5' which is about bees. A poem like Monologue in the Chambal Valley tells us interesting things about a bandit and an informer. But we do not agree that Daruwalla's poems tend to be longish and that they often have a lax appearance, characterized by prolixity. It is true that he has written "longish" poems; but a number of poems, which are not longish but are quite short, is also very large; and the element of incident, event, narration and description in them imparts to them an exceptional quality. The poem entitled 'Routine' describes an incident of confrontation between the police and a mob of agitators, but it concludes with a welcome piece of instruction. The poem entitled Death by Burial contains interesting events and yet it concludes with a valuable moral which is that a communal riot can break out over any issue even if there has been unanimity among both the Hindu and the Muslims in most matters. All this is something special about Daruwalla's poetry.

There are ample evidences of Daruwalla's capacity to supplement the appeal of his poems with suitable imagery which is relevant to the theme. It seems that Daruwalla does not have to exert himself to seek the right kind of imagery but that imagery comes as naturally to him as words for the building up of that imagery.

In the poem Death of a Bird, there is the imagery of the mass of clouds piled on the crags and then of a pony losing its balance and falling down a thousand feet below into the roaring river. Then we love the audio-imagery a passage which describes the jungle-sounds coming supposedly from jackals, wolves and bears. Next, there is the imagery of fire being lit with turf and peat to provide some warmth to the woman who is accompanying the hunter. Almost every passage in this poem contains a vivid picture which at the same time advances the action.

Daruwalla, as a great master of the weapon of irony, has written a large number of poems which are satirical and which are intended to expose the evils and the malpractices prevalent in our country. Irony is a powerful weapon which a great satirist can use with a devastating effect. Daruwalla has undoubtedly written masterly satires in which he has wielded the weapon of irony most effectively. Irony makes a substantial contribution to the effect of a satire and such indeed is the case in Daruwalla's poetry. Leaving aside a few poems which are serious, sombre, grim or too melancholy, almost every poem by Daruwalla shows his use of irony. Thus important contribution which Daruwalla has made to Indo-Anglian poetry is his ironical and satirical treatment of certain social evils. The poem entitled 'Graft' is a master piece of irony and satire. Not only have bribe-giving and bribe-taking been condemned in this poem but also the adulteration of food stuffs and certain other malpractices. "To legalize a bastard, you've to bribe the priest", says Daruwalla. People indulge in all kinds of fishy deals and even decent chaps indulge in adultery. But the stars, under which people were born, indicate that they would have long lives and would flourish in every respect. The lifetime of such persons extends to the elbow almost; and, as for children, each of the corrupt men would be blessed with nine! 'In the Tarai' is another poem in which the poet says that bandits are of course everywhere and that their occupation is to burn the homes of the villagers, to cut off the fingers of the women in order to get the gold rings which they are wearing and to snatch away the gold necklaces from round their goitered necks. In describing these brutalities, Daruwalla uses his characteristic irony. The poem entitled 'The People' is another of Daruwalla's triumphs in the field of irony and satire. The very opening two lines are an example :

*Between their raillery and applause
I found no difference.*

In this poem Daruwalla has given us an interesting, satirical portrait of the behaviour of the people, particularly towards their leaders.

Like Nissim Ezekiel and several others, Daruwalla is a master of diction and phraseology. His diction is not of the plain, common place kind. It is the diction used by a scholarly poet. We can even call his diction erudite. Not only does he have an unusual capacity to combine words into striking phrases, but he has the capacity to construct striking clauses. There is many a felicity of word and phrase in his poetry. 'Half-cooked limbs / bore witness to the fire's debauchery", he writes in Fire-Hymn. The use of the word "debauchery" here shows some daring on the poet's part just as the earlier line" and wondering ghost-lights frightened passers - by" does. in "Routine", he conveys to us the range of the abusive terms employed by the agitating mob for the police in the following words : "Their gamut ranges from mother to 'sister-seducers'". In the same poem, an officer by the name of Karam Singh deplores the fact that youngsters should indulge in this kind of agitation and should come into conflict with the police. And Karam Singh's lament over this fact finds utterance in the following words which though somewhat indelicate, convey his idea most effectively :

*I have children older than them,
these kinds whose pubes have hardly sprouted.*

Of course, grammatically Karam Singh should have said "I have children older than they", but he is a policeman and is not expected to be conversant with the rules of grammar. In "The Beggar", we have the following example of the felicity of word, phrase and sentence :

*Maggots, moments, worms
crawl like changing seasons.
He is a straw Buddha with sperm.*

As far as Daruwalla's use of free verse is concerned, we find a large variety of rhythms which go to the making of his poems. It is true that non-metrical poetry does not meet our requirements or our expectations as readers of poetry. The use of free verse has become a fetish with the Indo-Anglian poets and we deplore this trend. But as this mode of writing has become almost universal among the Indo-Anglian poets, we have got to accept it as an accomplished fact. And here again we find Daruwalla's contribution to be substantial. No two of his poems are written in the same kind of free verse whether we look at them from the point of view of line-length or stanza-formation or rhythm. The poem 'Graft' is written in an entirely different kind of stanza and according to an entirely different rhythm by comparison to "Collage II" and "The Ghaghra in Spate" is written differently from "Death of a Bird". In this respect again Daruwalla is a master craftsman.

Daruwalla's distinctive technical skills, the special subtlety in his adaption of a very personal colloquial mode to the demands of tight forms, are not immediately to be seen outstanding; but his strength as a craftsman have increasingly come to be regarded as one of the hallmarks of his talent. He is an extraordinarily accomplished poet, a poet who uses the devices of metre and rhyme for specific effects. His language is never flat, unless he intends it to be so for a particular reason and his diction is never stereotyped. He is always ready to reach across accepted literary boundaries for a word that will precisely express what he intends.

With the help of his elegant poetic diction, brilliant craftsmanship coupled with the Indian sensibility, Daruwalla has contributed immensely to the Indo-Anglian poetry and made his poetic presence inevitable in the Indian context.

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