



RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Heightened Character of Sensuality and Sexual Images in the
Poetry of Shiv K. Kumar**

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ABSTRACT

Shiv K. Kumar is a notable poetic genius. He is famous for his thoughtful and scholarly poetry. Recurrence of sexual images in his poetry sometimes beguiles his readers who initially begin to understand him a poet of cheap sentimentality. But a larger view of his poetry helps us open the layers of the sound meaning of life hidden behind them. Shiv K. Kumar was impressed by D.H. Lawrence's theory of the religion of blood and Bergson's theory of instinctive memory as the best source to know the Truth. In this research article attempt has been made to understand the real motive of Shiv K. Kumar behind the recurrence of sexual images and portrayal of sexual urges in his poetry. Kumar considers sexual urges of a living being as the beginning of a grand life. Perfect realization of the life of blood opens the floodgates of the dazzling light of intuitive vision. Humanity is at a loss in disallowing the properties of sexual life to come in open expression. The game of hide and seek in the society of the so called moralists, religious thinkers and law framers has always harmed the people. Shiv K. Kumar's attempts to know the truth of life in the blooms of blood consciousness are valuable notions in his poetry.

Key words: Sensuality and Sexual Images, Shiv K. Kumar

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THE LATE BLOOMER IN POETIC CAREER

Born in 1921 in Lahore, Shiv. K. Kumar grew a genius in the Post-Independence period of India. He did his M.A. from Forman Christian College, Lahore in 1943 and having come to Delhi after Partition he opted for Ph.D. on Bergson at the University of Cambridge in 1950 and completed it in 1956. He learnt his early lessons from his father, Shri Bishen Das Kumar who was an Arya Samajist and had great faith in *Satyarth Prakash*. But at times he also reacted against the lessons of his father in the light of his received new ideas. With his superior talent and brilliant academic career he achieved high places in academic circles and finally became the Vice-chancellor of Hyderabad University. In his maturer years he pursued the career of a poet in English language and was called "late bloomer". With his several poetic volumes like *Articulate Silences*, *Cobwebs in the Sun*, *Subterfuges*, *Woodpeckers*, *Trapfalls in the Sky* and *Woolgathering*, he was recognized a leading poet of Indian English literature in 1980's. In his poetry we find sensual images in abundance, and, therefore, a proper examination of them is the necessity of the critical approach to his poetry. Kumar's predilection with the images of sensuality and sexuality has an undercurrent of some greater thought in the total view of the cosmos.

Shiv. K. Kumar realizes that sexuality is the master passion in the universal scheme of creation. All inhibitions related to the acts of sexuality is a kind of negation to the reality of the male female grandeur in what has been provided by Nature. Despite the claims of humanity to have achieved the apex of civilization, we are still ignorant about blissful grandeur that lies behind the male female touches in the universal scheme of creation. So, Kumar tries to view natural human dignity in the acts of love and sex. He contemplates human life and the related acts of love and sex as the representation of the divine scheme

of natural human bliss. The acts of love and sex provide mysterious bliss and pleasures leading to unknown realms. It happens under the compulsion of the religion of blood. Pettiness of human intellect is unable to calculate why it happens.

GRAND REALIZATIONS IN SEXUAL DETAILS

Kumar's eagerness for erotic descriptions is visible even to a casual reader of his poetry. But his approach to sexuality is not guided by cheap sentimentality. It is governed by the universal scheme of natural passions and supervisor cult of sensations. Kumar was deeply influenced by the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz, D.H. Lawrence and Bergson. His strong faith in sensational delights as part of heightened sensibility comes out of the psychological principles of human wealth of physical touches of the two poles as enunciated by D.H. Lawrence in the writings of literary beauty. Bergson's theory of sub-conscious reality also created deep imprints on his mind. Compulsion of the religion of blood propels a man or a woman to have delights of untold descriptions in each other's sexual touches. Let us mark the following lines from a poem of Shiv K. Kumar:

*I can't tell you why I love you
I do not know does the protoplasm
choose which tissues to burst first. ("Always A Question" Articulate Silences)*

Sexuality in love has always remained a prominent creative force in all the poetic scenes of the world. The ancient classical poetry, whether Sanskrit or Greek or Roman or Persian or Arabic, took into consideration almost all those details of erotic excitement which occur between sensually and sensuously charged male and female who come together, talk together, see each other, hear each other and then sensually touch each other. The great songs of Helen's beauty in the ancient epics of Greece and Rome and similar descriptions in the subsequent writings are the high watermarks of sensuous poetry based on eroticism. Almost all great poets of all times and all climes have taken special curiosity in mentioning female figures in the moments of their excitements and beauty. Kalidas has achieved distinction in painting and picturing the sensuous beauty in his great poetry in the drama, Abhigyan Shakuntalam and epical poems like *Raghuvansham* and *Meghdutam*, Ovid's *Ars Ametoria* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* are full of high aesthetic merit even in erotic descriptions. Bharat Hari's graceful century of quatrains, *Shringarsastak* which lead from sexual love to wordly wisdom and finally to renunciation are the notable examples of erotic poetry. Hinduism has recognized a passive and female principle in the universe and the mythological sexual relations of the gods have been understood to represent the interaction of spirit (male) and matter (female) in creation and creative force. The pre-Islamic poets in *Ars Arabia* set a standard of grace and restraint in the sweet pleasures of high eroticism. *The Mullakat* coming from ancient Arabic poetry creates impressions of high poetic sensibility in erotic touches. In Islamic poetry, the Prophet promises sexual joys in heaven and Sufi mystics used symbolic sexualism (Ibn-Al-Fariad and Rumi). The great Persian poet, Jami wrote brilliant version of Talmudic Tale and Potiphor's Wife "Yusuf and Zalaikha" with great erotic details.

INSTINCTIVE URGES

Kumar's eagerness for sensual details in the matters of love and sex is really a point on which a lot of research is expected. He wants to create real poetry on the basis of those feelings which figure into the imagination of a male individual, while looking at the vital portions of a female persona. In this respect, he works on the theory of better human relations on the nucleus of love and sex. He was influenced by the previous writings of both the east and the west and developed his own theory of erotica by rising above hitch and hesitation. He carried his research on Bergson whose differentiation between "me moire involuntaire" and "me moire volontaie" is the raw material for this creative artist. Kumar considers Involuntary Memory more fruitful for creation and calls it the easiest

way for the poet. He believes in instinctive calls of involuntary memory, which are free from all intellectual calculations of losses and gains.

*The easiest path to renunciation
Is to paralyse memory cells
So that when confronted with a face
From the reservoir of time
The mind blinks like an idiot
Lacking recognition.* ("Renunciation" *Articulate Silences*)

Kumar thinks in terms of the involuntary function of memory which helps him express the experiences as felt in the blood. His experience of his first love surges up in his mind quite naturally and effortlessly. He speaks like this:

*Yet the first born
Sometimes cries in the autumn evenings
for that little island in the sun
round which cluster fledge lings
after the summer rain to
splash about
in mysteries.* ("Renunciation" *Articulate Silences*)

It was perhaps the influence of D.H. Lawrence's sensual vision as an indispensable reality of living, loving and mysteriously rising high in feelings that made Kumar extend his affirmation in the language of love. M. Shyam Asnani makes the point clear in strong words thus:

*Perhaps the impact of Lawrence looms so heavy on the poet's psyche that the
obsessive sex imagery fails to resuscitate the menacing fear of perdition
although the poet protests.* (Shyam, Asnani "The Poetry of Shiv K. Kumar")

Sex is the leit motif in his poetry. He realizes sex as a thing of beauty and a sacred experience in which body mind and soul act in harmony.

FROM BLOOD CONSCIOUSNESS TO INTUITIVE VISION

The body is almost a mode of perception in the opinion of Kumar. Sex to him is something not to be ashamed of, but to be enjoyed for heightened feelings. The idea that soul is not distinct from body goes to form basic idea behind Kumar's poetic expression. In his opinion, body is the dwelling place of soul and the way to its realizations opens with the natural play of bodily passions. The practice of thinking about the matters of soul by suppressing bodily claims runs only in half truths. That is why, he finds the nun at the convent moving like "a swan on white mute waters – insurgent breasts chained with silver crosses." (Subterfuge) He also announces the truth of his feelings:

*I peer at those
sacramental lips
and wonder if the fires
have been silenced.* ("At a Whore House")

Kumar seems to have drawn conclusion that to deny or to hide flesh's existence means to neglect the divine gift, a voice heralding into the realms of the soul. The consummation of marriage and the loss of virginity take the form of a ritualistic initiation. The prostitute in "At a Whore House" is asked thus:

*Can you rock me into forgetting
a woman who once promised me
manna in the tulip of her mouth.* ("At a Whore House")

Kumar believes in the free play of imagination picking up raw material from the instinctive energy of bodily passions. At one place in "Subterfuges" he describes a man,

who under the impulse of passion having been spell bound by the beauty of the woman, jumps into the fine act of sex:

*Rhythm and Fire
this riotous sea of novels, breasts
and lips will never break
into prevarication.*

Kumar realizes that humanity has devised so many ways to derive physical and emotional pleasures under instinctive urges but certain stereotyped moralists require to put restraint on them. His purpose is to understand that even in those lax morals of physical pleasures certain things go to awaken soul if they are viewed properly. Cabaret dancer is an important being who awakens physical pleasures of the man around her and the same may lead to heightened feelings if treated properly. Let us see the poetic expression about the gestures of Cabaret dancer thus:

*A frenzied moan curl up
from Hades and all
the animals are unleashed
A scramble for a closer
scrutiny of the deity.*

The drummer produces the blooming sensation for entertainment by introducing the dance on the stage.

*... suddenly the drummer jobs
into revelation
The moon rises for everyone
to break the fast
A haloed vision quivers
on the arena's edge:
a partner is let loose.*

The words "revelation", "moon" and "fast" are used for the expression of pure sexual vision. The feeling of lust takes birth in the blood and it will rise higher in emotional gratification. In this manner, Kumar touches upon the borders of the physical vibrations of blood in the languages of sexual urges and spirituality emerging from it as the high watermark. The whole affair awakens truth felt in the pulse and felt along the heart.

ESSENCE OF LIVING-COSMIC TRUTH

In the opinion of Shiv K. Kumar, blooming of blood is the portion of ultimate reality operating in the universe. It is not exclusive to human life; rather it is the operating principle in the entire living world, whether flora, fauna or animal. It is the sad fate of humanity that the selfish motives of the religious authorities and social moralists dictated terms to suppress the claims of the blood under the fear of discontinuance of their propaganda. Blooming of the blood is the natural property and its proper realization is the essence of living. Kumar wants to open the merits of the people by producing the development of the living organism from the garbage to the golden cherry in his poem "Revelation".

*It will drop
some day, somehow, somewhere
May be from some
garbage can when it is
hurled on top of
the town's refuse;
or from a boozier's lips when
in the midst of his wooly
confabulations, he gazes*

*transfixedly at the golden cherry
sitting at the bottom of
a Manhattan decanter.*

(“Revelation”, *Articulate Silences*)

The “boozers’ lips” touching the nectar like alcoholic product create vibrations of the blood. It is the product of the cherries which themselves are the outcome of the vegetational growth from the garbage. Finally, the whole blooming matter will also turn into garbage. It is the sudden revelation of reality of life under the moments of sensuous joys. Only involuntary memory helps us reach this stage of realization. The poet reads total meaning of life in sexual delights. He is an intellectual academician and so he has his own “I’dees fixe” and he wants to see clues of this “I’dees fixe” in the purely intuitive face of his beloved.

*Let your face arch over mine
So that my eyes,
outflanked by the wealth of your hair
May seek clues to
an academician’s I’dees fixe.*

Kumar considers sex a purely intuitive activity. It is the time of surrender without any verbalization or any intellectual activity. Of course, no intellectual calculation is needed during the moments of love. We murder to dissect it and “beauteous form” is misshaped.

*What shall I ask this
little exhibit of the muses
whose poems have been sucked
bored and flattened
in the creative writing courses
and whose sex-life has been laid bare
by zealous psychoanalytic researches!*

(*Articulate Silences*)

CONCLUSION

In this way Shiv K. Kumar has deep meaning of intuitive vision behind the recurrence to sensual and sexual images. To him, sexual appetite is quite natural in the intuitive mode of human life. Logic, reason and rationality, all are artificial thoughts which the humanity has imposed upon itself in the name of sociological structure or theological conceptions. It is irony that a particular human being, howsoever intelligent he is, does not dictate those things which he prefers to practise in his intuitive mode. When he is subjective, he desires the fulfillment of his instinctive urges but tries to impose restrictions on others around him. This falsehood of behaviour has resulted in a lot of frustration, dilemma and agony in human life. If one thing is true in the subjective mode of a person, then why does that man go astray in his objective mode? Kumar wants to remove this dichotomy of human behaviour. He wants to realize truth as it is present in the scheme of the universe. Sexual appetite, sexual urges and sexual games in the unconditional surrender in the baptism of fire by male and female beings have in them the basic truth of life. Uninhibited love begins to open the better layers of mind for bigger realizations. In sexual terms, Kumar speaks a language of blood consciousness, which is the gift of nature in the scheme of the universe.

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