

## NATURE AND PASSIONS IN K. N. DARUWALLA'S POETRY

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### **Abstract:**

Keki Nasserwanji Daruwalla is certainly one of the major voices in Indo-Anglian poetry. He won the Sahitya Akademi award and he writes with obvious Indian elements in his verses, especially in his use of the landscapes, nature and human passions. His realistic vision of human life and his personal observation are his subjects. His personal observations are not fully facts; they are amalgam of myth and reality.

Nature and landscapes occupy a vital place among the themes of Daruwalla's poetry. He has written many poems on places with most powerful and vivid imagery. Through his poems, he brings out the present reality of nature, and states how the modern man has manipulated it. In his poetry, he interknits both the nature and human passions. The images he uses are very common but the ideas, which the images contain, are very intellectual with a broad sense.

**Key words:** Myth, Reality, Images, Human passion, Landscapes.

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Keki Nasserwanji Daruwalla is certainly one of the major voices in Indo-Anglian poetry. He won the Sahitya Akademi award and he writes with obvious Indian elements in his verses, especially in his use of the landscapes, nature and human passions. His realistic vision of human life and his personal observation are his subjects. His personal observations are not fully facts; they are amalgam of myth and reality. The myth he uses do not take the reader far away from the reality, because they are an outcome of his observations and extensive consciousness on environment. Nature and landscapes occupy a vital place among the themes of Daruwalla's poetry. Unifying the nature and human passion together is distinctiveness of his poetry.

Keki N. Daruwalla has written many poems on places with utmost power and vivid imagery. This made his critics call him a poet of landscapes. Many romantic poets like Wordsworth, Keats, Shelly and Indian poets like Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Arun Kolatkar, and Daruwalla also took many symbols and images from nature and landscape. Daruwalla's sense of landscape is not just presenting the beauty of the places, but it also brings out the bare reality of the environment. He translates the picture of landscapes in words with his emotional, intellectual and moral response to his readers. And he quotes the words of the poet to assert his preoccupation with landscapes, "My poems are rooted in landscape, which anchors the poem. The landscape is not merely there set to the sense but to lead to an illumination, it should be the eye of the spiral, I try that poetry relates to the landscape, both on physical, and on the plane of the spirit" (*Two Decades of Indian Poetry* 21).

"Mandwa," is an excellent poem on landscape and seascape. Through various images and symbols, he portrays the nature. The season in the coastal area was summer, the sun was scorching and it was like "an egg-yolk frying in the sky." And the coastal area was arrayed with fish-scales, "The beach white with fish-scales." Daruwalla puts all these things very beautifully,

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. (191)

Then he portrays the nature, which is appearing outside from his window and the mild wind as, the wind shuttered slats as if a lung of the night was pierced by glass silver. In the next stanza, the poet calls the commotion caused by a baby-whale in the sea, and the wave team causes stink in the city as,

The night passes in baby-whale talk,  
A baby whale which came in  
with the foam and out stank the city,  
Till the fire-brigade cut it up.  
And threw it back into the ocean. (191-192)

Daruwalla humorously comments on seawater and the boat disturbed by a mild wind show the light side of the serious poet. The image of somnambulist is commendable; it refers to the Islands in the sea. As a man who walks in sleep, the islands also are scattered in the vast sea, away from the main land. Other images like, “concave” and “giant wings” refer to the sea and the sky and just the risen sun, respectively. The use of contrasting images and symbols are a peculiar trait of his poetry.

He states the ugliness of metropolitan city, Bombay as, “black yeast / from here, and black salt, a wall of rotting muscle” (“Mandwa” 193). The usage of artificial things to denote nature is a peculiar speciality in the poet’s imagery. The image concave mirrors is a fine example of that which is stated as,

The sea and the sky, two concaves  
mirroring each other  
two giant wings of a purple moth,  
a rose-pink oar/ looking for a boat,

a lilac axe-blade looking for a tree line (194).

In the poem, the poet sketches the scenic beauty of seascape with its various moods realistically. The images, symbols and description bring a vision before the eyes of the readers.

“Rumination at Verinag,” is notable poem on scenic beauty of the place, Verinag. He recollects his experience of finding infinity and eternity join together one, as Shiva and Parvati being one in the site. The poet expounds the nature and landscape,

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 ... (205)

When the water unwinds its coils and hissing in turmoil, the poet compares it with the serpent image, so he calls the spot in the stream as “Serpent-water”. Along with the eyes of describing nature, he pinpoints the ill-natured process of water pollution, which takes place in the same stream “terraced water mixed with murky light” (205).

Using the mythical reference of the union of Shiva and Parvati, and the origin of the place, the poet expresses his experience of love and human passion for sex,

I too struck home and the waters of your body rose to engulf me.

We came here in the late summer of our love, the sky above  
blue and benign. Your hair trailed over my face and pieced  
together the bruised

bits of my being. No rheumatic heart ailed me,

but the soul’s gout. (206)

To the poet, the place of his visit with his love raises vitality in him. He feels more potent in the place than the last summer, “For me it is your thirst-killing, thirst-renewing passions / flowing from under the rock of your love” (206). R.N. Sinha says regarding his snake image, “Throughout the poem, there is the image of a snake suggesting both the uncontrollable flowing movement of water and physical passion. The reader is reminded of Freud’s dream symbolism in which snake suggests sexual passion” (140).

“Boat-Ride along the Ganga” is a poem on the other side of the reality of the river Ganges. For the Hindus, Ganga is a mother, divinity, life giver, and river of salvation. However, the Zoroastrian poet, Daruwalla, views it differently and states the sad reality of the river. On the banks of the river, he finds death, disease and staleness. Through the lines of the poem, he utters his embarrassment to see things in the river and its banks, while he is riding upstream a motorboat, with a boat rider, at dusk,

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. (97)

He expresses his indifference with the words of panda and the things which he happens to see while rowing, “I listen avidly to his legend-talk/ striving to forget what I changed to see: / the sewer-mouth trained like a cannon / on the river’s flank” (97). These lines show his sense of uneasiness and disenchantment. It may be due to his religious background, or misunderstanding of Hindu beliefs and rituals or his ignorance. Bruce King writes that, he seldom appears at ease among the passivity, fatalism and rituals of Hindu culture (as qtd. in R.A. Singh 82).

Like the poem “Boat-Ride along the Ganga,” “Vignette-II” also pictures the devout rituals and sacred rites on the banks of river Ganga. H.L. Amga comments on the poem, which reveals his new direction in which he gives the landscape a subjective component and character. Moreover, the Ghat described in the poem is not just a panoramic riverside scene, but is a part of the poet’s integral ‘inscape’ (112). He calls the river “a soundless interior monologue” that

never speaks but “thought itself.” That is, the river is a witness to all that goes on its banks, without uttering anything. Here is description of both the nature and myth:

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. (101)

Again, in this poem, his bias against the Hindu rituals is revealed. He calls the rituals “spider-thread”, which symbolically states the rituals are out-dated and unpleasant. R.N. Sinha treats the line, “All is spider-thread ritual” in a different aspect, that the rituals are designed to trap the unsuspecting pilgrims (79).

Women do not take off their saris  
as they enter the water;  
men leave their clothes behind.  
The dead leave their bodies. (102)

In the above lines, the poet states the environment in a sarcastic tone. And in the last two lines, he ends with a bizarre illusion and ridiculously puts the situation, “A blind man’s fingers gripe across my face./ A sadhu eyes me unblinking from his navel” (102).

In the poem, “The Round of the Seasons” Daruwalla effectively portrays each and every season and the climates in India. Moreover, it is a special poem, peculiarly delineates the human passion with the five seasons. Through this poem, the poet brings out the seasonal effects in the lives of the people in India and his personal experience of love in those seasons. He assesses them chronologically. At first, he delineates on the spring season, which is called as “Vasanta,”

the season of flowering. In the first stanza, he celebrates the common superstitious beliefs in India, which are related with some of the flowers like Asoka, Bakala and Tilaka. In the second part of the section he calls the season as “season for Illusions,” because during this period of even the natural things do not appear, as they should be.

It is the season for illusions:

night mists turn to drawn haze.

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. (210-211)

“Grishma” (Summer) is the next section of the poem and it deals with the scorching and sultriness of the hot sun, through the mythical figure Kama, the God of lust. In this season, Kama does not allow his beloved to touch all the parts of his body, like eyes and aromatic hair. Here the poet portrays the human feeling like sex and passion together with the symbol of Kama and the hot summer.

Kama, in this torrid summer

Let some things remain cool:

Her eyes, reflecting the waters,

The smell of jasmine in her hair,

Her body dripping with the cold river

As she steps out on the ghats. (211)

The same tone continues in the second section. He assumes himself with an antelope, caught between the forest fires, who do not know where to go, as the antelope, the poet misses the direction or path of pleasure with his beloved. “Such is my fate beloved in the forest of your limbs / under the black rain of your hair” (211).

In the third section entitled “Varsha” (The Rains), the poet carries on the same spirit of the last section, human desire on sex. He portrays the season of rains as a season of sexual consummation of one’s life. As the sky disturbed by the commotion of thunder, the poet feels the same disturbance with sounds of unfastened the door of his neighbours by some women. In the next stanza, the nature and the environment evoke his emotions. In nature he finds everything very pleasurable and elite, but nothing he can enjoy, because he is alone. At the end of the stanza, he expresses his loneliness and missing the pleasure of passion with his beloved as, “only my flank is empty. Only she isn’t there” (212).

In the fourth section “Sharda” (Autumn), the poet continues the love making as usual like in the season of rains. He questions the reader whether lightning and rains are necessary to make love with one’s beloved.

Is lightning necessary  
For those smitten by lover’s lightning?  
Is rain essential  
For those wet with each other?

He assimilates that nothing is necessary to consume the pleasure of sex, because the passion of love is never concerned for any particular season and any particular requirements. That is why he says the last part of the section “who says lovers must move / only to the beat of rain?” (213).

‘Hemanta’ (Early Winter) is the fifth section of the poem, which delineates the promise of human love. He adds that even nature has gone away from its beloved things to other extent but human love never fails at any stage. In the next stanza, the poet brings out the essence of love between a man and his wife. While the wife asks her husband to take care of his health in the season, but the passionate husband declines her request and finds warmth of love within her and wants to consume it fully as, “you don’t know the fires of our loves / she answered. “For us it is still Shrawan” (213).

The final section of the poem is “Sisira” (Late-winter). The poet continues the tone of lovemaking. He brings out the pleasure of love making through symbols like owl and wild boar.



In this poem, the poet tells that there is a no season for lovemaking; the changes in the seasons never affect the love making life of humans because lovemaking is not just a combination of two physiques but also a compilation of two human eternal passions.

Regarding the poem, Asha Viswas comments, “Daruwalla’s forte is imagery and the lines present a collage of shape and form by colours and nuances. There is perfect harmony between impression and expression” (51). In this poem, the poet excellently mixes the human passion and nature together in his poems. His comparison of seasons with human passion for love is entirely different from archetypal patterns of seasons with human feelings and emotions. In every season, he can find pleasure with his love; such pleasure finding is similar to the enjoyment of every season by the humans all over the world.

“In My Father’s House,” the poet describes about his father’s tomb and the nature around the place. The poem is, one of the best poems of the poet, blending human emotions with nature. The poet calls his father’s tomb a new abode to him, where he resides and never finds any season change, which occurs only outside his residence. His abode is lack of activities, warmth, and light. On the whole, it is lack of life.

Nothing is new  
around this place  
except the snow,  
except the quiet  
monastic vows  
of wizened bark  
on skeleton tree.

The ribs too are a monastery  
when seasons do not change within. (122)

The loneliness is suggested by the use of words like, ‘monastic’ and ‘monastery’, and tomb is desolate is hinted by the words ‘wizened bark’ and ‘the skeleton tree’. Prasenjit Mukherjee comments,

The violence of human passion is suggested through a projection of such passion into the elemental world of nature. This is not so much an example of finding an 'objective correlative' to convey the mental state of an individual, as an attempt to use natural images to serve as a counterpoint to human experience. (57)

Through the outer world seasonal change, he brings out the human passion for life and fear of death. Yet, he symbolically suggests that birth is sufferable than death, by the words, "dawn is colder / than the night." Here the poet not only tells us about his father and his death, but also shows the mystical image of death to the human community. The knoll, the winds, the dusk, the trees and everything around the grave give the impression of ending life.

At night the wind  
still hacked at doors  
bristling with knife,  
and nail and fang:  
but this was dusk;  
vespers had a human ring:  
the wind was a rhyme,  
a chime, an echo. (124)

Daruwalla's poetry depicts nature with its full vibrant colour and movement along with the human passions. Regarding this M.K. Naik writes, "Daruwalla's mind is continually busy in establishing meaningful relationship between Nature and Man, in various ways and in different contexts and it is on the working out of these relationships that the success and failure of these poems would appear to hinge" (65). His poetry is an emotional output with the sense on nature. R.N. Sinha calls, "His poetry is a response to the reality and as a result of that transaction between Nature and the poet's mind, a certain kind of poetry is born" (91). In the poems "Mandwa," "Rumination at Verinage," "Boat-Ride along the Ganga" "Vignette-II" "In My Father's House," and "The Round of the Seasons" he interknits both the nature and human passions. Through the poems, he brings out the present reality of nature, and states how the modern man has manipulated it. The images he uses are very common but the ideas, which the

images contain, are very intellectual with a broad sense. These poems possess a substantial thematic core, clear visualisation of scene, compact and arresting presentation of incident, evocative imagery and an impressive unity of tone and effect.

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