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LANDSCAPE AND MANSCAPE IN THE POETRY OF KEKI N. DARUWALLA

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**Abstract:** Keki N Daruwalla is a leading figure in Indian Poetry in English today. He is the recipient of Sahitya Akedemi Award and the Commonwealth Poetry Prize. His poetry is its ability to vividly materialize its abstractions, to strike a creative tension between image and statement. His poetry has the narrative energy and sweep to paint, for instance, a vast portrait of post-independence India as a landscape of meaninglessness. His landscape extends from the ancient kingdom of Kalinga under the reign of the great Indian Emperor Ashoka to the seething contradictions of modern metropolis. His prodigious corpus offers some idea of the range and formal variety of his work.

**Keywords:** Poetry, materialize, creative tension, narrative energy, vast portrait, kingdom and landscape.

Daruwalla's poetry stems directly from life around him. His use of landscape gives typically Indian flavor to his poetry. It is not merely ornamental but a living entity whose presence touches the heart of the reader. Such is the intensity of expression in his poetry that he feels. Writing a poem is like a clot going out of blood. Daruwalla's poetry is of course not an outburst of sweet sentimentality, but a criticism of life that draws the reader's attention to some harsh realities of life objectively and impartially. His poetic goals are to reveal some inner most recesses of human nature with no ideological axe to grind. The physical and human landscape of our country appeals to him and various aspects of contemporary Indian find expression in a controlled rhythm and in a language evocative and precise. Landscape has been a characteristic feature of Daruwalla's poetry.

Another aspect of Daruwalla's poetry that has been often associated with landscape is 'manscape'. This association is right because Daruwalla portrays variety of characters in his poetry. This picture gallery created by Daruwalla can be rightly

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described as 'mandscape'. Both of these important aspects of Daruwalla's poetry can be discussed as follows. Daruwalla has written very powerful and vivid poetry about places and that is why he is often called 'a landscape poet'. However, the phrase 'a landscape poet', describes Daruwalla only partly. This is because landscape is one of the many elements found in his poetry. However, it is true that Daruwalla depicts fine landscape in his poem. It is notable that he has published his sixth volume of his poems as Landscape. This volume paints various landscapes taken from home and abroad. The Landscapes of Daruwalla are of great variety.

In 'Vignette I' 'the Ganga as flows swollen with hymns', the leprous beggars, gibbering monkeys, bathing women and a host of palsied and blind men complete picture of an enormous 'Ganga'. It is harsh day. The poet describes the keen picture of the activity on the bank of the river and in the river. The title of the poem itself is identical of the fact. The day has come out. The priests and devotees fill up the river Ganga with the day chanting of hymns early in the morning. Then, the scene is shifted to the routine of the people living near the river.

The beggars who are outcaste because of their disease are busy to start their work. Their faces are black like a

burnt thing. They are walking in the street like small bushes are there in the pathways. Then the second description is the man who is much smaller than a normal size. The man with a grown beard is jumping like a gape. He is trying to attract the attention of the people. On the trees, monkeys are jumping and trying to snatch the things from the hand of the people. The women have bathed in the holy water of Ganga. They are performing their daily religious rituals of dropping a coin in the coconutshells. They want something a glory, wealth, prosperity happy life etc. So they are doing such. In the midst of all these noises and crewel, Ganga is steady:

The river is a voice  
In this desert of  
human lives

In the river, the sailors have started their works. Like the beggars, they have also begun their daily routine by noising the boats into the river. They earn money by taking passengers from one side of the river. In such a hustle and bustle, Ganga is flowing silently through the land of people and things. The river is flowing to show the reality of the people, reality of the life and above all the truth of life:

The Ganga flows through the land  
Not to lighten the Misery But to show it

Dwivedi rightly observes: The Ganga does not mitigate human miseries or sufferings; it only shows them, exhibits

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them to public gaze. The poem 'Boat-Ride along the Ganga' is a realistic poem based on live details of the river Ganga. The Ganga plays different roles like a mother, divinity, life giver, and river of salvation. But the Zoroastrian poet, Daruwalla, views it differently and stated the dark side of the river. On the banks of the river, he finds death, disease, deformity and staleness. The poet utters his awkwardness to see things in the river and its banks, while he is riding up a motor boat with a bat rider at dusk.

In the Crossing of River, sums up:

Slowly the ghat -  
amphitheatre unfold

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.

In 'Pestilence' the poet shows an urban landscape with a hospital, doctors and nurses. However, he also says that people have left villages because of the danger of cholera. The beggar described in the poem of that title too suggests the urban place where such beggars are seen.

Daruwalla can be rightly termed as the poet of 'mandscape' because he has ability to create real living people in his poetry. His poetry can be called a veritable

picture gallery of convincing people who are full of complexity. In his delineation of characters, there is authenticity as well as variety. His wide range of characters include realistic people, mythological figures like Karma, historical characters like king Ashoka and even birds and animals like hawks and snakes. All these characters are placed at the locale or landscape which is created with great care. This makes Daruwalla a poet of landscape and mandscape. Pestilence introduces us with the persons who are affected by the disease of cholera. The patients suffer and make their relatives suffer. People try to leave villages and go to cities. The doctors and nurses are in great hurry. The dead patients are taken out for cremation.

The new modernist poets convey their experiences through proper form with a lot of craftsmanship. Daruwalla is the master of the art of building imagery; and he does not have to work hard to find out the imagery for his poems. Use of imagery is the most original and innovative on the part of the poet. There is originality and innovativeness which keeps himself away from his images becoming stereotyped. Daruwaila's imagery is drawn from the first hand experiences and observations. It is neither fantastic nor commonplace, nor stereotyped. It is often useful and something striking. Most of his images are realistic, personal, natural and concrete and sometimes abstract. Whatever the kind, it

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strengthens and reinforces the impact of his ideas.

The images are mostly pictorial and precise with clarity of perception and expression. Daruwaila's craftsmanship lies in interweaving the images with the language and thought of the text. The images by being descriptive and forming an indispensable part of the poetic texts, help in the discourse formation through the literal translation of emotion, perception and thought. Daruwaila expresses human predicament through nature imagery and we have so many examples to justify our statement. Daruwaila uses new images to express the insatiable thirst for blood of the rioting people in the poem, Curfew in a Riot Tom City:

Barracuda eyes  
Searching for prey.

The poet says that cholera has broken out in an epidemic form. However, the authorities generally deny that it is cholera so that they may not feel horrified. So the doctors would say that the disease is diarrhea or gastro which is less dangerous. Patients suffering from cholera are taken to the graveyard for cremation. The doctors, nurses and ambulances are very busy. People move away from villages where cholera may have broken out because of the infectious disease.

Sometimes, a man who is being taken to a hospital on a string bed for

treatment dies before he reaches there. At this time, the string-bed is removed and a wooden plank is provided to transport the dead body to the cremation ground. Thus, the whole poem is about the contagious disease cholera and hence the title pestilence. In *The Beggar*, the poet paints a portrait of the beggar. His hair is compared with that of a hog. Worms crawl on his body. He seems to be the straw effigy of Buddha. Both of the poems, thus, make people and places alive.

The beggars as the title of the poem suggests is a serious poem life pestilence. It gives us a portrait of the beggar. The poet describes the appearance and miserable condition of the beggar. The poet tells us that the beggars look like a stone statue. He has short and stiff hair like that of a hog. He is a miserable as the wounds on his body. His wounds attract flies and one feels distressed to look at him. According to the poet, the beggar undergoes all sorts of changes but he remains the same. He remains the steady like an oil-patch on the surface of water. He does not undergo incarnations themselves come to him. He sits with tired light in his open eyes. Inspects and worms move around him. Yet, he looks as motionless as the effigy of Buddha made of straw.

Finally, the poet says that there would not be any change after the death of beggar. When he dies, another beggar will

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take his place as one wound of the beggar subsides but another makes its appearance.

Death, disease and fire are the favorite images and themes of Keki. N Daruwalla. The death and violence themes in Daruwalla's poetry may be seen as images showing interaction between the poet's moral choices and the contradictions of the world around him. Bruce King speaks of the 'self-control and repressed dictions of the world around him.'

There are several poems by Daruwalla that deal with theme of death and violence. Pestilence deals with the theme of death, disease and fear. In the very beginning of the poem we are told about death and disease:

Pairs of padded feet  
Are behind me  
Astride me  
In front of me  
The footpaths are

black feet

Converging on the

town

The other feeling is that of movement created by fear. The villagers are seen carrying their sick on string-beds. The poet brings in the analogy of palanquin-bearers but of 'a different sort', the poet writes:

On the string-bed

they carry

No henna-smeared

brides

Prone upon them are  
frail bodies

Frozen body's  
delirious bodies.

The ending of the poem hints at death:

And when of a  
sudden

Cholera turns to  
death

The feet keep up  
their padded progress

Only the string-bed  
is exchanged for plank.

The patient taken to the hospital on string-bed for the treatment dies before reaching there. At this time, a string-bed is replaced with a wooden plank to transfer the dead body to the cremation.

The second prescribed poem the beggar may not be about violence but deals with the themes of death and disease. The beggar is suffering from a disease like leprosy. His body is covered with wounds. The overall appearance of the beggar creates feeling of sympathy and distress. Similarly, the poet says that another one will replace the beggar just as a new one replaces one wound on the beggar's body. This analogy hints at the theme of death. Thus, death, disease and violence are the prominent theme of Daruwalla and the prescribed poems support the truth of this fact.

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