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Genesis of Adam and Eve: A critique of Shiv. K Kumar's select poems

Abstract: Shiv.K Kumar, one of the prominent modern poets, is not only an illustrious writer but also a preeminent academician. He writes poems on varied themes like death, love, sex, and pain etc. This research paper focuses on two major poems "Birth of Adam" and "Birth of Eve", one of the three sections, entitled *Genesis* from his Sahitya Akademi award winning work *Trapfalls in the sky*. During his study in Cambridge University for his PhD degree, the poet read the Holy Bible and with that influence he created his own Adam and Eve and presented it as if God is telling about his creation.

Key Words: Genesis, Monologue, Creation, disinheritance, chastity

British rule is the root cause of many developments and changes in India. It revamped the economical, cultural and literary climate of the country. Along with them the language, English also made its entrance with no exit. India which was accustomed to Hindi and Urdu, started to learn the language of white who intended to teach English to natives for the administrative purpose. Indians began to learn the language with utmost sincerity and interest

that leads to the production of literary works in English by Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sarojini Naidu, Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose etc. They became scholars of English and produced literary works of their own.

. Poets like Henry Derozio, Ghose etc., started to imitate Romantic poets to create their literary works. Since English is not the mother tongue, Indians were compelled to imitate the literary works of Whites. The act of imitation didn't stop with the first generation writers alone, the successors also were influenced by the English writers to produce their works. M.K. Naik writes,

When the head monkey in London puts on a new literary thinking cap, all the descendants of Shri Hanumanji in India dutifully do the same when the Indian first started lisping in English numbers came from lyres strung mostly to romantic tunes. Kashiprasad Ghosh's Shair in *The Shair and Other Poems* was obviously an Indian avatar of Sir. Walter Scott's Minstrel in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. (30).

Like his predecessors, Shiv. K Kumar is a follower of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, prominent members of Imagist movement and hence he supports free verse. He is fascinated by English literary works especially Shakespeare. His works like "Hamlet", "Death of King Lear", and "Lear to Cordelia" stands as a proof of it. During his study in Cambridge University for his PhD under the guidance of David Daiches, he read the Holy Bible and with that influence he writes a few works on Adam and Eve, who are the main stream characters of 'Genesis'.

His Sahitya Akademi winning work *Trapfalls in the Sky* is divided into three parts, "On the Native Grounds", "Under Alien Skies" and, "Genesis". The last chapter consists of six poems and it deals with God, Adam, Eve and, Satan. This paper deals with the poems

“Birth of Adam” and “Birth of Eve”. Adam and Eve, first man and woman of this Earth were expelled by the God for their sin of consumption of the forbidden fruit. Many blames Eve for that sin and some blames Adam. When they were created by God, they were pure and chaste but after they had eaten the forbidden fruit, they lost their purity and chastity. In the Holy Bible one can find few lines about what God thinks before creating Adam and Eve.

According to the Bible, God thinks as follows before he created Adam:

Then God said “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1. 26-27)

“Birth of Adam” and “Birth of Eve” is a retelling of the creation of Adam and Eve with a little imagination added to it by the poet. God is the speaker here and the poet mentions it as God’s monologues. Kumar begins the poem with the Biblical verse, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, / and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, / and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7).

Kumar starts the poem by stating the uniqueness of God’s grander creation, Adam. He calls Adam, the first man as a sensible being who is created by God as an imitation of himself. Made from clay God gave his breath and rose him alive. Prabhat K. Singh in his work, *A Passage to Shiv. K Kumar: From Agony to Ecstasy*, remarks that in “Birth of Adam, the supreme creator justifies the necessity of creating man in His image” (144)

It was the urge to commune

with a sentient being

not just cattle, fish and flora –

that I breathed into this lump of clay'

moulded in my own likeness (1-5)

From the lump of clay, there emerged Adam in an impressive state as an impression of God. He is praised by the poet as "There, he now rises stately/ thought out of my canvas board, robed in chaste nudity" (6-7). The term 'chaste nudity' has its own significance. When God created Adam, he was nude but there was chastity in that nudity. He was not aware that he was nude so the author mentioned nudity as 'chaste nudity'. But once they eat the forbidden fruit, they lost the chastity, and hence they were aware that they were nude. In the Holy Bible it is mentioned as,

Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

So he said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

And He said, "who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that should not eat? (Genesis 3:9, 10)

God is pleased even by the voice of man, whom he thinks as His masterpiece. He says that the voice of man is not a loud one, instead it's a low pitched voice. With that sweet voice, he sings praises to the God, his creator. Unlike the sound produced by birds and wind, man's voice is a combination of sound and word. He didn't give the boon of using both sound and word to any living creatures, before man.

A bass voice chants its first paean –

a collection of sound and word,

not just a bird's amorphous warble,

nor a wind's gibberish rustle (9-12)

In the next stanza God insists on the responsibility of man in this Earth. He wants man to respect the creation of God and he has to continue his process of creation.

I wonder if he'll divine

the design behind my artefact,

the latent correspondences from whose groins

may spring forth metaphors. (13-16)

God's creation and its beauty is discussed in the next stanza. It actually reveals Kumar's poetic imagination. The wings of the butterfly is stated by the poet as a painting made by the God. It is like a mini painting of the cosmos. Sparrow's nest is the best instance for his architecture and cow's loud noise in a deep voice is referred as genesis of chant. He says that moon is created by Him as a night watchman for the sake of human race. This shows the concern of God towards human race.

God himself says that in spite of all these things, one day Adam will disobey the ways of God and once he disobeyed Him, He will not help anymore and he will not be a puppeteer hence forth. Man must think on his own and act as he wishes. He regrets in the final lines of this poem, "And isn't every parent an easy prey to revolt?" (27-28).

"Birth of Eve" is a monologue of God about the creation of Eve, the first woman of this world. This poem is also started with Biblical reference.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon

Adam, and he slept: and he took one of the ribs,

and closed up the flesh thereof. (Genesis 2:21-22)

The poet begins the poem by praising the obedience of Adam. God says, during waking hours, he listens to the words of God with utmost sincerity but when he sleeps, he dreams about a strange creature. God describes the appearance of the creature as follows

a bosom with two moons,
Shoulders like mute doves,
lips like two petals peeled off a gold cup,
eyes that spellbind a pansy –
and in her gait the swing of a dancing peacock. (6-10)

Adam when imagines about the creature, God creates it for his sake. Through this description one can easily understand that the creature is Eve, a woman. God never considers the dreaming about woman as a violation of law instead He understands how Adam suffers because of his loneliness, and He wants to relieve him from that. So one day he takes off a rib which is near his heart, and created Eve to save him from his loneliness.

After the creation of Adam and Eve, they both follow the ways of God properly. They pray unitedly and respect God. Even though they move together they never have any lust in their mind. It is mentioned in the following lines as

Two pairs of eyes tamed by a code,
two pairs of hands that may rise only in prayer,
two bodies that may move only in concentric
circles, never converging on desire. (20-23)

The concluding lines of this poem is very significant. Gods says that Adam loves Eve a lot and this beautiful creature, a blend of honey and vinegar, lead not only Adam but also

the whole human race to disinheritance. But does Adam know this? God ends his monologue with this interrogation.

But does he know that this creature

of honey and vinegar

may someday lead him

Into disinheritance? (24-27)

The poem “Birth of Adam” and “Birth of Eve” stands as an instance for the poetic creativity of Shiv. K Kumar who elucidates the God’s perspective about the creation of first man and woman.

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