



**TRUE LOVE VERSUS BETRAYAL IN THE SELECTED POEMS
OF SHIV K KUMAR
(‘Face’ and ‘Waiting’)**

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Abstract

Love, nature, history, religion, and death are some of the most common poetry themes in nearly every type of poetry. Love is possibly the most popular of all poetry themes. Nearly every poet endeavors to write about love in his poetry. Love is one of the most universal themes in literature, as in life. Love can be a force for good that inspires people to sacrifice themselves for others, or a toxic force that drives people to madness or violence.

The present research paper deals with True Love Versus Betrayal in the Selected Poems of Shiv K Kumar. I have tried to study the different shades of love in the selected poems of Shiv K Kumar. Here, two poems ‘Face’ and ‘Waiting’ are under study.

Key words: *Scythed curls, Leibniz’s Monad, emphatic cry, trapped fly, flurried buzz,*

One of the major themes in Kumar's poetry is Love. He never romanticizes or celebrates the lust element of sex, but talks about the purity of love. There are poems which are inspired by love and woman and his failure in the married life. Through his poems he also gives the reason(s) for the failure of his pure love. With a kind of self-analysis in his poems, he allows his inner conflicts, anguish, frustration, confrontation and other such experience to come out as projections. On the surface, he perceives every reality with his apt use of ironical mode. The imagery become symbols through which he shows his inner self.

The first shade of love in Kumar's poem ‘Face’ is that of a true lover. It is the sixth poem in the first volume of Shiv K. Kumar's poetry, ‘Articulate Silences (1970)’. It is a poem of 24 lines divided in five stanzas of uneven length and lines. It is in free verse. Here the poet, a male lover describes the beauty of his beloved. This poem is not easy to understand. Kumar

is an academician, a scholar. As such he uses farfetched imageries. His selection and coinage of adjectives is very scholarly. He uses references from all world literature. It makes his poetry very hard to understand for common readers. Here, the poet is intimate with his lover in a romantic mood. He asks his beloved to come closer to him. He wants her to bend over his face. He asks her to sit close to him because he wants to see and appreciate her beauty completely. Presently, he is mesmerized by the beauty of his beloved's hairs. He is outwitted by the 'wealth of her hairs'. Her beautiful hairs drive him crazy. He could not see anything other than her beautiful hairs. He wants her to come closer so that he can see her completely. The academician in him wants to study and understand her by all means. He says,

Let your face arch over mine
so that my eyes,
outflanked by the wealth of your hair,
may seek clues to
an academician's l'idees fixe.

In the second stanza he appreciates her 'two scythed curls'. The curls in her hairs adds to her beauty. Those two curved curls hang calmly in a self-assured manner on her face. They 'inact the Hegelian dialectic', This imagery depicts peaceful, harmonious relationship between them. Actually, 'Hegelian dialectic' is an interpretive method in which the contradiction between a proposition i.e. thesis and its antithesis is resolved at a higher level of truth. This method of discussion refers to coming up with answers through the medium of the logical and reasonable discourse of arguments, keeping in mind that no disrespectful arguments are made. It is a discussion between different entities about their point of view. Here, the poet wants to suggest that the love-birds are two individuals with their own views and opinions. Everyone has different mindset and way of thinking. But love binds them together. When you love someone whole-heartedly you become one entity. Love brings two different individuals together physically, mentally and emotionally. They may argue with each other but it is always assumed that they must respect each other. They may have differences in opinion but one must listen to what other wants to convey. One must try to understand the second side of the point in discussion. Here, Kumar urges for an emotional support from the opposite sex i.e. his beloved. He wants his partner to be his secret sharer, counselor and guide. He wants to discuss his life with her. According to Kumar true love is an acceptance of who you are as a person. Even when your partner doesn't agree with you, they don't try to change you. When you found true love, you often feel you can talk about anything with your partner. You can trust them with your deepest dreams, your hardest memories, and your biggest fears. He wants her to advise

him like a friend. Both may have many problems in their life. But being so intimate to each other they must share their problems to each other. Moreover, it is the duty of the partner to listen to the problems of one another and to have a good discussion with each other and if possible suggest a possible solution to the problem faced. He wants both the lover and the beloved to be true friends to each other. He wants to live in harmony with his partner. Love is a commitment. Being there for someone is what a real relationship needs. When we neglect to put in the effort is when things don't work out with someone that could have been perfect for us. If you put in that extra effort for someone that can reciprocate it, love can be the greatest feeling one can ever feel.

In the next lines the poet talks about other beauty traits of his beloved. He glorifies his beloved's mole on left cheek. He says it an indivisible part of her personality and beauty. He calls and compares it to 'Leibniz's monad'. "Monad" means that which is one, has no parts and is therefore indivisible. Leibniz, was a German philosopher who first talked about Monad theory which talks about indivisibility. Again the academician in Kumar makes him use a highly scholarly rather vague imagery to convey the idea that both lover and beloved are one entity.

He says his beloved is the core of his living; she is the source of his living. His love for her is unchangeable. She is the universe for his small beautiful world of love. He uses the metaphor of 'tulipped mouth' to express his kissing scene with her. He says,

And when your tulipped mouth
puckers for a kiss,
the gaping wound in Marad's naked body
pleads for forlorn causes.

He says he eagerly waits for her advances for kissing. He seeks for love like an orphan. He desperately wants to be intimate with her for reasons beyond his control. His physical urge are very strong. Here, he wants physical satisfaction from her. He wants her to make advances first. He wants her to be initiate in the romance. Towards the end, in the fourth stanza he further portrays his romance with the beloved. Now, he talks about her 'shell involuted ears'. He says her beautiful ears are like shells. There are complicated patterns in it. He imagines that he ticks her ears and make whispering sounds in her ears to incite her for sex. He uses very striking sexual imagery when he says,

Down your shell-involuted ears
plunges my forked tongue,
only to hear the echoes of the Flood,
Heralding a new cycle of life.

These lines may be interpreted as the reproduction through sex where mating of two opposite sex leads to birth of a child which is a symbol of their togetherness and love. Here, both the lover and beloved wants sex as it is a natural urge. The flood of emotion for sex arouses strongly in both and it leads to regeneration. Therefore, love leads to life.

In the concluding fifth stanza the poet praises the face of his beloved as the driving force of his existence. She is the purpose of his life. He says a glimpse of her face drives him crazy. It excites him. It gives him a boost. She is the reason of his survival. He writes,

This is the face that launches
a thousand paper-boats
Down my blood stream

The poet says her beauty and charming personality creates sensation in his body. When he thinks about her the soft feelings like 'paper-boats' excites his imagination and make his life worthy and purposeful.

To conclude '*The Face*' is a poem where Kumar presents emotions expectation and bonding of a true male lover for his beloved. The title is apt as the poem revolves around the main theme of the beautiful face of the beloved. The use of the definite article 'the' in the title before the noun face brings an autobiographical touch to the poem where the poet is not talking about a general face but it's the face of his beloved for whom he expresses his strong desire. Here, Kumar shows love as trust, friendship and companionship. True love is a unique and passionate bond that connects you as couple that wants the best for the other person regardless of what that means for them. It is the foundation for a healthy, loving relationship. True love is authentic and genuine. He wants lovers to be harmonious to each other. He wants both of them to be truthful and honest to each other. Kumar wants the females to make advances for showing their love for men. Both need sex. It should be reciprocal and satisfying. But along with this he wants both to respect each other's individuality. Kumar is an academician therefore his language, use of imagery, adjectives selection of words is somewhat erudite, far-fetched, and heavy to understand for the common readers. But in my opinion, this farfetched imagery is pregnant with meaning. Every single word conveys a lot more than it actually means. It's a delight for readers to come across and understand the beauty of language. His pen bears the mark of a well learned scholar.

The second shade of Shiv K Kumar's love poetry is gloomy. 'Waiting' is another love poem. It deals with the darker side of love i.e. frustration anxiety caused by loneliness. The poet is angry and sad. He is not in good relationship with his wife. His wife is out of home and

she is yet to return. The poet is worried and suspicious about his wife. Night is approaching soon. There is no sign of his wife returning back. Many bad thoughts are haunting his mind.

He says he has been waiting for the door-bell to ring which is a possible sign of his wife returning home. But she did not turn up. Its night time. Darkness is all around. The silence in home is troubling him. Meanwhile he hears the sound of 'the trapped Fly's Flurried fuzz'. It's a very effective imagery. He compares his condition to that of a trapped fly. He says both he and his wife are also trapped in marriage-bond. Both are unhappy. Both does not respect not love each other due to various reasons. As such their condition is just like a trapped Fly who is nervous, agitated, and anxious. It can flutter its wings in fear and anxiety. It tries to come out of the trap out all this is in vain. It cannot escape the doom.

In an interview given to Shyam Asnani, Shiv Kumar confirms that for him Irony is an important tool while writing poetry. He says "Ironic Perception or irony as a mode of perception is there in all my poems".¹

The poet says it may be possible that this fly is alone and wandering to find another companion for sex. Same is the situation of the poet and his wife. He and his wife are not at all emotionally attached and therefore the poet doubts that his wife must be out wandering to find a new boyfriend who can satisfy her. But as a husband the poet cannot let it happen. He cannot allow his wife to remain outside whole night. Such thoughts of his wife's frivolity and betrayal of his faith disturb him a lot. There are a lot of changes in his mental conditions. One the one side he is not happy with his married life. He does not want to live with his wife. He wants to get rid of her. But on the very next moment he becomes nervous and agitated by the thought of his wife's frivolity.

He says this marriage bond had forcefully kept them together in house. They are merely living together. Though they are in the same apartment but still they 'remained bottled up'. This is a striking sexual imagery. It symbolizes their failure in sexual symbolizes their failure in sexual attraction towards each other. Though they are married they are not intimate physically and emotionally with each other. Their living place is simply a structure of four walls 'a house'. It lacks emotions of love, care & affection which turns a house into a home. It only an apartment with a name.

The masculine ego of the poet makes him announce that he will not let the bird fly according to its will. He will not allow the freedom to fly away. Here the imagery of the Fly kept trapped is very agitating and nerve stopping. He knows he cannot control his wife now but still he wants to control her. This futile play of emotions is very disturbing.

Initially he tries to Control his wife. But suddenly he realizes things are beyond his control. He says though he wants her to come back early still he knows she is not going to come back tonight. Moreover he knows she must be with her boy Friend. He says.

“tonight, For She’s surely with
that LSD’d dreamy eyed,
goat-bearded, supple-handed
stranger in town, who’ll touch
her into the fift dimension
that I can only dimly conceptualize.”

Here, he surrenders and accepts that his wife has found another man for herself. She has a new secret sharer with her now. This man has access to all her body parts which only a husband can have. He cries in agony that he is dying to be intimate with his wife but she is roaming around. Although he is her husband. He can have sex with her in thoughts only.

In the last stanza he is in utter confusion. His state of mind is abnormal. He is out of his senses. He says he sees a signboard blinking outside the kitchen window. It shows the sign, ‘Drink Strohs Brewed in Brimstone and Fire’. The idiomatic English translation of ‘Fire and brimstone’ is found in the Christian King James Version translation of the Hebrew Bible and was also later used in the 1917 translation of the Jewish Publication Society. It represents “burning sulfur”. When used as an adjective, Fire-and-brimstone often refers to a style of Christian Preaching that uses vivid descriptions of judgment and eternal damnation to encourage repentance especially popular during historic period of Great Awakening. The Hebrew Bible uses the phrase “Fire and brimstone” in the context of divine punishment and purification. It refers to God’s wrath to the fate of the unfaithful.

Here the poet calls the God to punish his wife for frivolity and infidelity. He knows his wife is out of control. She does not hear him nor does she fulfill his physical and emotional desires. So he wants the God to punish her with his wrath and give him justice. This unfaithful behavior of the sexual partner hurts him a lot and drives him crazy. It frustrates him and drives him mentally and physically unstable. His emotions swing from one direction to another varied thoughts occupy his mind which is creating an unbearable situation of ‘to be or not to be’. He says the night is darkening. The time is slipping through his hands like the sands. The thick heaviness of negativity over powers him. He surrenders before the destiny and the poem ends without a proper close symbolizing his state of continuous waiting which untimely becomes the title of this poem. He surrenders before loneliness, unfaithfulness and anxiety.

A wait never ends for a love never felt. It is a never ending wait for love. He keeps waiting till eternity. Couples do and can stay together after an affair, but it takes a lot of work to repair broken trust. Most couples don't recover when one cheats. Some people are incredibly understanding and willing to move past their spouse's indiscretion for the greater good of their relationship or children, but others aren't quite as able to forgive and forget. Both physical and emotional cheating, and infidelity, is often at the root cause of damaging relationship. The emotional flooding created by the trauma of infidelity by the sexual partner hurts a lot. It creates an unbearable and disturbing pain. It creates great lasting impacts on partners. Grief, strain changes in behavior pattern and falling mental health conditions like anxiety, chronic stress, and depression can result.

On the whole it can be said that on the one side is depiction of true love in his poem 'The Face'. It is a beautiful poem by Kumar showing his urge for trust and harmony in love. He believes in purity in love. On the other side his poem 'Waiting' is his personal experience of love as betrayal. He wants pure love life but his wife betrays him. He is bold enough to speak out the truth. He does not hesitate to talk about his failure in personal love life. It can be said that Kumar is true to himself. He does not want to hide anything from his readers. His personal pain in a failed married life can be seen and felt while dealing with his poetry. He presents a mirror to life. He writes what he lived, felt and gone through. He wants purity in love but the betrayal was his destiny. Kumar says, "Dilemmas of sex and love remain unresolved".² He knows though he wants true faithful love but his fate forces him to live with an unfaithful wife. He accepts destiny.

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