

Phase 2-SOCIAL REALITY IN RIZVI'S POETRY

by

Ghosiya Nusrat,

Research Scholar

Singhania University, Pacheri Bari(Jhunjhunu)

Email- ghosiyanusrat@gmail.com

The given research is a glimpse of Rizvi's work. Rizvi is extremely conscious of contemporary Indian life and exposes the ills growing in society.

The poet expresses the general degeneration of man in the following lines:

" O God:

You have no chance of becoming a man

Or to incarnate him

Gone are the days

When you appeared in the form of a man:

A hermit or a saint

A farmer or a woodcutter

with face aglow or beaded brow

He will not give you room,

For he's busy with doing things

Which you had not even dreamed of."

- ' NO ROOM' (P.1) 'UNFADING

BLOOMS'

Thickly populated cities like Bombay and Calcutta are overwhelmed with falsehood. The poet strikes at holy looking monasteries:

"Where virtue is entrapped with ease
In saintly looking monasteries
Where prospers vice in charity's garb."

- '*CITIES*' (P.19) '*UNFADING BLOOMS*'

' *THE CURTAIN* ' is a poem which throws light on the life of a nude stage dancer who evidently dances with gay abandon and seems to be bubbling with confidence. The other side of her life is that tears are hidden behind her smiles:

" With waning beauty, drooping soul
And life - force oozing legs
How long can she possibly go ?

- '*THE CURTAIN*' (P.21) '*UNFADING BLOOMS*'

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'*IN THE CONNAUGHT PLACE PARK*' (*Delhi*) portrays the picture of life running at a hectic pace. Death seems to be at hand.

After reading this poem, P. Raja says, "To say that Rizvi's poems smack of sardonic social commentaries, stingingly dismissive of this bureaucratic, utilitarian and '*WHO CARES ?*' Society is far from exaggeration:

"O'er cautious men hold on their breath
To find a few seconds
To cross the road."6

'IN THE CONNAUGHT PLACE PARK' in 'UNFADING BLOOMS'

(P.31)

His *'ON WAY TO BIKANER'* beautifully portrays the landscape of the desert as seen from the train on way to Bikaner, Rajasthan and the lot of nature is compared to human lot:

"Trees crooked and old
like beggars leaning on their staff...
Bushes prickles, weeds and grass
Like unwanted babes."

- *' ON WAY TO BIKANER' (P.37) 'UNFADING BLOOMS'*

Reviewing *' UNFADING BLOOMS '* , Nar Deo Sharma writes, " Most of the poems parade poet's acute perception in giving an outlet on the multifarious aspects of human living focussed on love, hate, sex, political and social hypocrisy, social depravity" 7

To portray the utter deterioration in human norms, the poet makes good use of symbolic diction in the poem *'STONES'*. Rizvi hails from the modern generation of interpid candid poets. In the symbolic poem *'WEEDS'*, the poet penetrates into the agonies of the poor.....In pungent tone the poet exposes the debased life of city people in the poem *'CITIES'*.

Rizvi is also urban poet. His poetry is fully urbanized. He deals with the life of people living cities and towns. He deals with their problems and also lays before them the way to overcome the difficulties.

' *THE MURDEROUS CYCLONE* ' (Nov 19,1977) is an extremely touching poem which depicts how thousand of men were devoured by the tidal waves in the cyclonic storm and how dead bodies become morsels of the marine life.

" It was the most dreadful nightmare
For survivors too shocked to speak
with no food water or refuge
Foul stiffling stink of rotting bodie
Ripped through their grievous trembling souls."

The poet asks a question in deep sorrow at the end of the poem:

" What of the homeless, fatherless
Who chill our souls and blind our eyes?"

Writing about social consciousness in Rizvi's poetry in a review of '*UNFADING BLOOMS*' in '*THE TRIBUNE*', daily news paper, Chandigarh, saturday, October 20, 1984, Surindra Pandit writes, " His (Rizvi's) verses glow with passion, agony and almost, always, contemporary significance..... Here are a few lines:

"The whole sea was afire.
And flames rode on the crest of tidal waves."**8**

To quote Kalyani Dutta, " There is no doubt that the poet takes his responsibilities seriously, commenting on contemporary problems such as Lesbianism or tropical events such as Andhra Cyclone."⁹

-'THE MURDEROUS CYCLONE ' (P.39) 'UNFADING BLOOMS'

This question in the above poem is left unanswered. Money-minded people, dissatisfied with life, indulge in drinking orgies and dances and activities which are a social taboo.

"Carousals noisy where take hold
of their trite, drowsy owners bored
Who dance on madden'd whirling tunes
At the end, they are as dissatisfied as ever."

-'GARMENTS' (P.43) 'UNFADING BLOOMS'

In this world, Rizvi is pained to find the cruelty shown to the poor and the helpless. His heart moves to see " Innocence is flogged; virtue is hanged;charity is crushed; honesty is slain; modesty is dragged by hounds; justice is chained; feigned preachers of religion indulge in unlawful activities and nobody bothers about anything."

-'WHO CARES ?' (P.49) ' UNFADING BLOOMS'

Dr. P. Raja says, "The poems of Rizvi produce the impression of a fertile, lively informed and penetrating mind. They are deeply moving, delicate and conscience stricken pieces. They frighten us for they tell us where

we are. They are thought provoking for they evolve sound a problem, the problem, we witness and sometimes face in our day to day life." **10**

In the poem '*ON LOOKING AT THREE WOMEN*', the three women are the three helpless prostitutes returning home in an overcrowded bus after the night's errand. They look shameless and their behaviour is disgusting.

"Three women jaded, pale and stale
Though had not arrived at twenty five
Did crush a berth at seven in the morn.....
Like weasles, wearied and withdrawn
And spent after the night's errand."

- 'ON LOOKING AT THREE WOMEN' from 'UNFADING BLOOMS'(P.46)

Dr. R.K. Singh is of opinion, "Rizvi presents a picture of real prostitutes, wilfully following their trade and seeking their prey in the most casual way. The poem refers to moral/ sexual corruption."**11**

The general callousness and cringing tendency in the common people are described in the following lines through most appropriate symbols :

"The funeral procession of a fly
Is formed by the disciplined ants
the dogs court a quarrel with the vultures
Feeding on a dead ox
Lying unclaimed, unmourned near the pond."

Here 'fly' and 'disciplined ants' symbolise fresh toad of politics and foolish crowd of followers respectively. The 'ox' stands for the good samaritan.

- 'AT REST' (P.48) 'UNFADING

BLOOMS'

At times sordidness of life around spurs Rizvi to revolt against all humanity as if the whole human-race is contaminated by moral corruption and surprisingly enough the poet wants to remain in illusion that his vituperative attack on humanity filled his lap with 'choicest boons'. In '*STONES*', he says:

"In sheer disgust and rage
I filled my pockets with stones
And reached the place again
And hit humanity hard
with all the stones
I had the wonder of my life
My Lap was filled with choicest boons."

The poem speaks volumes for the fact that his (Rizvi's) contempt for the degeneration of all sensible social norms is not only an important rage but a genuine cry of the heart that feels the sting.

'STONES' IN ' UNFADING BLOOMS' (P.11)

The poet has seen " Vultures picking at / unclaimed and naked dead bodies' and ' Jackals feasting at/ A helpless, wounded dove', a corpse ' falling down/ From old and shaking hands', ' a nightingale with broken wings and

bleeding tongue'." He is in a fix to notice such a chaos in society. He further says:

" Should I feel sad or should I not ?

Is it in the goodness of things ?

God is not only in heaven

but also in the world."

' I HAVE SEEN' in ' UNFADING BLOOMS'

(P.51)

Prof. B. Rangrao says, "Rizvi is capable of depicting realism. He does not remain all the while in dreamland, but comes back to reality and faces them. Poems like '*THE MURDEROUS CYCLONE*' , '*I HAVE SEEN*', '*ON WAY TO BIKANER*' etc. tell of his realistic inclination. He can write, indeed, equally well of 'the fever and the fret of the world'. " **12**

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore had dreamed (in his lyric, '*WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR*' from '*GITANJALI*') of India, free from all vices, but according to Rizvi, after independence, nothing has happened to fulfil his dream:

" But stream of reason have dried up

And do not feed our minds

We strut around on borrowed plumes

with hollowed brains and pockets full

of promises, oaths and hopes."

'TAGORE'S DREAM' (P.52) 'UNFADING

BLOOMS'

Religious hypocrisy is well recognised by the poet in the poem '*THE YOUNG PRIESTESS*'. The poet slaps into the face of the society when he says:

"This is the haunt of pantheon
A leader's charmed abode
A philanthrope's safest refuge
Where things do not come out."

The poem reminds us of Kamala Das's '*DEVADASI*'.

'THE YOUNG PRIESTESS'(P.60) 'UNFADING BLOOMS '

The poet thinks that it is difficult for Indian women to protect their chastity under Indian conditions. The 'goondas' threaten them with direct consequences if women who are sexually assaulted report the matter to anybody. This is a great irony that such women cannot open their mouths while they are blackmailed:

"The game of vultures continued,
And each day virginity passed
Through the same road to keep away
From crowded roads of wicked men,
And met her doom each day
And never told the world.
What had happened to her."

- '*VIRGINITY*' (P.62) '*UNFADING*

BLOOMS'

The poem '*WE ARE QUILTS*' deals with man and woman relationship psychologically. The man says:

"But who can say that I did not
Artfully play the game?
I got more than my money's worth
These were a skilled gamester's words
Designed to give the prude her due."

- '*WE ARE QUILTS*' (P.68) '*UNFADING*

BLOOMS'

Reviewing '*UNFADING BLOOMS*', Dr. R. Sudarsanam says, "Dr Rizvi is true to himself and to our country and his poems though in an alien medium, are true to the varied hue and cry of our experiences...."**13**

According to Dr. S.P. Sen Gupta, prof. of English and Dean faculty of Arts, North Bengal University, Kolkata," Rizvi is a socially conscious poet. He has kept his eyes wide open and identified himself with his fellowmen. He has shared their joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, longing and aspirations."**14**

Rizvi's '*WHO DID IT?*' portrays the brutality of the terrorists. He hits hard at religious fundamentalists who massacre innocent people belonging to the other religion. Life is not secure. It is surrounded by terrorists. The eyes of God are full of tears. The blood falling from us is obstructing our path. The chief cause of this brutality is nothing but religion.

Rizvi is unequivocal in undermining religion which leads to ravaged houses, butchered people and 'uncoffined souls'.

"A million souls
Whose houses had been ravaged, burnt
Who had been butchered by carnage.
Whose sky rending sobful cries
Had failed to win a heart."

-*'WHO DID IT?' in 'THIRSTY PEBBLES'*

(P.10)

His poem '*ACHIEVEMENT*' is also of the same class. The poet raises his voice against the fanatics. Exploitation of general masses is at its peak and " The world in silence looks / And turns away to other things."

The poet wants to ask why the prostitutes are being treated in such a way ?

A. Russell says, " '*TOYS FOR SALE*' is painful, narrating the poor women who " invite manhood to feast/ On wounds of social boons."⁵

'TOYS FOR SALE' (P.16) 'FALLING PETALS'

'LIVING CORPSES' is another poem which deals with prostitution.

The decorated houses of prostitutes are like:

" The living graveyards in dazzling hues
Where rich and poor have equal chance
To dig their graves and sink their souls."

'LIVING CORPSES'(P.32)' FALLING PETALS'

The lot of a leper is lamented in the poem entitled 'A *LEPER*'. The poet saw a leper writhing in pain, " with hands and feet bandaged in rags./He cried and wept and cried." People hardly pay any attention to the doleful cries of a leper.

'A *LEPER*' (P.40) ' *FALLING PETALS*' repeated in '*WOUNDED ROSES SING*' (P.58)

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