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“Critiquing the Tradition: A protest voice through Social and Literary Movements”

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Abstract:

The theme of protest has acquired an urgency and relevance in Twentieth century literature. Protest movement has been identified in different forms in different countries. It is the result of youth's disillusionment which is also endless with all its materialistic mechanical approaches. As we are all aware, the recent political developments that have been occurring in the last fifty years reveal an unrest among the youth of the world. The theme of protest appeals to the revolutionary aspirations of human being. At this juncture modern poets have felt the responsibility of exposing the hidden implications of social problems. The protest poets have revolted against the disorder and corruption in the society with the intention of achieving the welfare of the common man

Keywords: protest-youth's disillusionment-mechanical approaches-revolutionary aspirations- hidden implications- disorder-corruption

Introduction:

Twentieth century protest in literature is a common phenomenon all over the world. The age of science enabled the man to be materialistic. This materialistic way of life could not provide contentment. This protest movement has come out of dissatisfaction and disillusionment of youth. The phenomenon of protest is unending. It may emerge with cause but may end without cause. “Protest is a word whose meaning has become somewhat twisted through careless use over the years. Its fundamental meaning of course is to ‘witness for’ something to make solemn affiliation of an idea, a cause for proposition. Yet it has lost its

positive connotations almost completely and today protest is usually understood to mean witnessing against something voicing objection strenuously, noisily and conspicuously.”¹

For the last fifty years, political changes have been taking place with revolutionary ideologies. The revolutionary ideas have tremendously changed the modern man and his way of thinking. Indeed, the idea of protest comes first in the psychology of man. The modern poets have taken the responsibility of reflecting the social problems.

Especially, protest literature has been trying to break the chains of

traditions, politics and philosophies of past years. They have made an attack on all sorts of evils of society. These protestors have tried to emancipate man from blind conventions of the society. They have dreamt for an ideal world by rejecting present system. These protesters have taken 'protest' as a weapon to destroy the past systems. "Protest arises when there is a strongly felt dissatisfaction with existing programs and policies of government or other organizations, on the part of those who feel themselves affected by these policies but who are unable to express their discontentment through regular and legitimate channels, and who feel unable to exercise the weight to which they think they are entitled in decision-making process."²

The young protest poets are dissatisfied with the prevailing conditions of society and revolted against the present order of things so full of snobbery and self-conceit. Protest movements did not have strong ideological basis that was the reason why they have been dissolved without fulfilling their aspirations. "A protest movement which is trying to push the social system in a direction in which it has high probability of going anyway is more likely to be successful than one that is trying to push the social system in a direction that has a low probability."³

The basic aim of protest poetry is to achieve welfare of universal man. Though the protest movements emerged

in different regions, their main aspiration was one. They aspired to enable man to live naturally without the impact of mechanical life. The youth of the present generations is trying to find the 'identity of individuals.'

There are more than ten protest movements which emerged all over the world. The Beat Generation and Angry Young Men movements are social phenomenon which have found increasing literary expression.

The Beat Generation:

Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs are the major writers in the Beat Generation. 'Beat' means 'beatitude' coined by Jack Kerouac. In the word of John Clellan Holmes:

The origins of the word 'beat' an obscure

but meaning is all too clear to most Americans.

More than mere weariness, it implies the

the feeling of being used, of being raw.

It involves a sort of nakedness of mind and

ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced

bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means

undramatically pushed up against the wall of

of oneself.⁴

The Beat Generation emerged in 1950s. These Beatniks expressed the internal

unrest of people of post-war America. The basic philosophy of Beatniks is Zen Buddhism. They are mad of jazz music and like bohemians. Beatniks' way of life embarrassed the other Americans more than their literary works. They have rejected the visionary world and created their own imaginary realm.

The Beat poets mainly protested against the American establishment and rejected the norms. These poets honestly confessed to express their deepest feelings. Jack Kerouac's major novel **On the Road** depicts the life and behaviour of Beatniks. The other important novels of Kerouac are *Subterraneans* and *Dharma Bums*. The language of these novels is streamed like flow with surrealistic way of expression.

Allen Ginsberg, Christ of Beat Generation, has written a lot of poems. "Howl" is his masterpiece. It is a long Threnody, which is true reflection of Beats manifesto. "Howl" poem starts thus:

I saw the best minds of my
generation
destroyed by madness,
starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the
negro
streets at dawn looking for an
angry fix,
Angel headed
hipsters burning for the

ancient
heavenly connection to the
starry dynamo in the machinery
of night,
who poverty and tatters and
hollow-eyed
and high sat up smoking in
the supernatural
darkness of the cold-water flats
floating
across the top of cities
contemplating jazz.⁵

William Burroughs's **The Naked Lunch** is another influential beat novel. Burroughs depicted his hallucinatory vision in his novel. Burroughs also introduced a new style 'Cut-up-style'. The other main writers of Beat Generation are Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gregory Corso, Neal Cassady, Peter Orlovsky, Philip Lamantia and Garry Snyder. Lawrence Ferlinghetti has written a famous literary work *Island of the Mind*. Gregory Corso's works are **The happy Birthday of Death** and **Gasoline**. All these Beat writers have acquired their own significance in American literature.

The Angry Young Men Movement:

It is a significant protest literary movement in Britain. These protestors are sons of lower middle and working class who came up with socialism. The Angry Young Men writers produced a number of novels, poem and plays. They

aspired for contemporary universe of good ideas. They expressed their anger and despair but they could not achieve their goals. John Osborne was a major writer of Angry Young men movement. The other writers are John Braine, Kingsley Amis, George Scott, Thomas Hinde, Sillitoe Collin Wilson, John Wain, Bernard Kops and Arnold Wesker.

Look Back in Anger is a major play of Osborne. The term Angry Young Men has been often been applied to John Osborne and he has often been proclaimed the leader. **Look Back in Anger** came to represent the dissatisfaction of young people with society. Kingsley Amis's **Lucky Jim**, John Braine's **Room on the Top** John Wain's **Hurry on Down** are major works of Angry Young Men Movement.

Collin Wilson has written a book on the philosophy of Angry Young Men. **The Outsider** describes the life of the protesters and their basic philosophy

The Gray Generation:

It's another protest movement in America led by famous poet George Kuss. He thinks that poets and poetry will not be away from politics. He believes that poetry has been suppressed by politicians. Therefore, poets must protest against the politicians. They have protested against the administration of Johnson and fire to his effigy in a street. They wandered in the streets by reading anti-war poems. These writers wanted to

make commotion in the society. They tried to make creative vandalism in the streets. They believe in the conception that politicians are committing murders by the name of peace.

The Wounded Youth of Hungary:

Hungary is a small country in Europe continent. By the invasion of Germany, Hungary lost its main economic resources. The Russians have taken the autonomy of Hungarians. In 1956 the Hungarians have protested against the dictatorship of Russians. They have started agitation and writing poetry against Russian Government. Ferenik Baranya has written a poem 'The song of Wounded youth' and send it to poetry competition. It was published in **Koretharas** magazine. But Baranya was put into trouble and he was not allowed to study in university.

The Young Poets of Russia:

Yevtushenko and Vozenesensky are the major protest poets in Russia. Yevtushenko is a powerful poet, he criticized Stalin and his administration. His main protest is against the dictatorship of politicians. He toured foreign countries, namely Paris, Munich, Hamburg and recited his poems. "Bachiyar" is a famous poem of Yevtushenko.

Vozenesensky was also an enthusiastic protest poet. His poetry was no so sensational but satirical. He did not reject

the rules and principles of poetry. “Ballad of the Full stop” was his great poem.

Provo Movement in Holland:

Provo movement was started by the influence of Beatniks and Beatles. This Provo movement agitators expressed their protest by wearing white clothes. They did not have any strong ideology. These protesters wanted to live adventurously and happily

The Hungry Generation:

West Bengal was the significant state for the different revolutions. The youth of Bengal got disappointed with the political disorder and chaotic way of life. They could not find a way to get peace. Almost behaved like nihilists and protest against defunct system and produced poems with obscene language. These young poets of Hungry Generation are Malay Roy Chowdary, Suchimal Basaak, Sameer Roy Chowdary, Utpal Kumar Basu, Devi Roy, Pradeep Chowdary, Ramananda Chatopadya, Vasudeva Das and Subash Gosh.

These protest poets protested against politics, ethics, immorality, obscenity and anarchism. They have written novels, poems, and stories. Their poetry is the mirror of the society. Since they could not get co-operation from newspapers and magazines, they have published their poems in their own literary bulletins.

Malay Roy Chowdary was the major poet among all Hungry poets. Bydyuthic Chutan was written by Malay Roy with sexual interpretations. He defends his use of obscene language in poetry. He argued that ‘obscene’ word was created by capitalists to suppress the lower -class people. According to Malay Roy Fascists and Communists also Capitalists, they would not become human beings. The manifesto of Hungry Generation was published in American magazine Time and Culture. Time magazine also published an article on the Hungry Generation.

Protest in Hindi Literature:

The modern Hindi poets expressed their protest in their poems, novels and stories. These Hindi poets made use of their creative power to express their wrath in poetry. This poetry was also protest against ‘Chhayavad poetry’. The leading poets of that movement were Gujanan, Madav Mukthi Bodh, Kylas Vajpai and Raj Kamal Chowdary.

Digambara Kavulu:

The emergence of Digambara poetry in 1965 was the landmark I the history of Telugu literature. It was the first protest literary movement in modern Telugu literature. These Digambara poets (Naked poets) are six angry young men who raised their protest voice in poetry and shed their caste, creed, community, indicative names and assumed new ones:

Nagamuni (Manapally Hrushikeshava Rao), Nikhileswar (K. Yadava Reddy), Jwalamuki (Veera Raghava Chary), Cherabanda Raju (Baddam Bhaskar Reddy), Bhairavayya (Manmohan Sahai) and Mahaswapna (Kammiseti Venkateswar Rao). In the manifesto of their first volume, they described themselves as:

“We are six, perceiving our own images

We, loving the men all around, tell them

also, to do the same

For the good in man, for the true man

within, the man, for a society of

blossoming smiles of no deceit...

We raise our voice with souls walking

through days and nights of unextinguished fire.”⁶

The first anthology of poems was a sensational news in Telugu literary world. These poets made an attack on politicians, Babas, Sanyasis and traditionalists. Humanism is the basic theme of their poetry. They have rejected classical and progressive poetry and created their own way of expression. Digambara poets did not

like to call their poetry pro-verse but they created a new word ‘Dik’ which gives direction to the world.

Digambara poets followed a new technique and widened their scope of poetry. These poets expressed their deep concern for man. They started a movement to destroy the present movement in order to create a new system.

Basically, Digambara poets are humanists. Humanism is the basic theme of in their poetry. They write about humanism as the major content in different poems in their three volumes. One of the major poets of Digambaras, Nagnamuni describes humanism with a beautiful description in ‘Sea in the Cell’

What is my age?

How many blind light-

years

Where is the mirror?

Where is the solution,

salvation?

Man, the future man

between you and me

me and this mask

between the diluvian jokes among the countries and continents

between the truth and existence

What is it that is standing?

What is the name of that piece of cloud⁷

These poets made use of obscene words to give true expression to their feelings. They gave shock treatment to their readers through their poems. According to Digambara poets 'Digambara' means not 'physical nakedness' it is 'psychological nakedness.' Digambara poets could not survive for more than five years since they would not have strong ideological base. They have influenced the younger poets of Telugu and Kannada literature.

Thus, the aim of this paper is to show the emergence of different protest movements in literature all over the world. This paper may be dealing with characteristic features of protest movements and how they endeavoured to create an irreparable impression on the society. The main intention of the protest poets is to achieve the welfare of common people and their aspirations

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