

The Relevance of Poetry: 2019

Abstract

Now, in the second decade of the 21st century, it is very important to judge the relevance of the practice of any kind of art. The vast expanses of the Internet have influenced our daily life. The way the new definition of living and product-based culture are coming up with 'ready reference', in any way it benefits the world but it also reduces the imagination of the people day by day. Why 'poems' could have been able to capture and explain our life, why today its power is decreasing, its causes are searched and illustrated in this paper.

Keywords: Relevance, Poetry, Bengali Poet, Utpalkumar Basu, Tagore, 21st Century, Hypertext, Hyper Reality, Society, Android, Modern Age, Poet, Culture

Introduction

Near about ten years ago, Ranajit Das (b. 1949), a modern Bengali poet, expressed his deep concern in the second edition's preface of his *'Shrestha Kavita'* about the abolition of our tear gland in near future as a process of evolution¹. In fact, for the last few decades, the irrelevance of practicing and writing poetry is found to be questioning us, the Indians, as well as the human race standing on the verge of transition of a civilization. Is it really necessary today to read and write 'poetry'? As arises this question, another one comes hand in hand—was it needed ever? This is not just about poetry; this question is always relatable to any and all forms of art.

The Main Text

The Problem/Objective of the study

The 'process' named 'poetry' is a form of art, endangered and almost extinct, into which the reader must delve deep and live its reality if he wants to relate with the essence. A novel, in comparison, carries the wounds of its society, state and the context which has been the reason of its creation. This makes it comparatively easier and less laborious for its readers to conceive of its shades, motifs, metaphors, narratives and significances. And it is truly difficult to choose between the novel and the novelist as to hold responsible for this. But it can undoubtedly be said that a narrative of a fiction is more successful than poetry to communicate with its readers. A play is entirely different in this context as it has the opportunity to act its say in front of its audience. Though, poetry also carries the marks of its society and its life, it cannot always be found to be vivid, overt or immediate. Sometimes, this transcendental quality carries it towards the path of verity from the way of mere knowledge. But, truth sometimes can be apparent, momentary. A poet of the contemporary period may believe in the 'local truth', of 'Post truth'. What that means is, at the time of reading a piece of poetry, the belief and realism of the reader is as same as that of the poet. But when the connection between the poem and the reader is broken, that truth created by the poem may also be interrupted. For a moment, the poet successfully convinces the reader to speak for the poet. As for example, John Keats, one of the greatest poet of romantic age, saying in his sonnet —

"Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise
May we together pass, and calmly try
What are these worlds' true joys, — ere the great voice?
From it's fare face, shall bid our spirits fly"².

Or we may remember T. S Eliot's modern voice in the early decade of twentieth century-

"Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow Ilke a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question..."³



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Many examples like this can be found. But the seed of this observation probably remains somewhere deeper than what we are able to see superficially. The poet and the poem do not have a 'target', 'mission' or a 'goal'. Neither do they have the accountability to present the contemporary in a contemporary form. Even if they have, it is too hidden and disguised for the readers. So we, the readers, scholars, are just cannot able to describe the purpose and its fulfilment of poetry through a linear way.

Review of Literature

Utpalkumar Basu (1939- 2015), a famous Bengali poet of post Tagore age, spoke about the reality created of poetry— "The reality of poetry is created only to be broken. Again it recreates itself from contemplation. This deliberation creates a reality different from the first one. By that time, for example, the sun is set to dusk, the wind has changed its path and the lives in water have found shelter in a deeper region."⁴ According to the poet, put that in a harsher tone- the water has dried up, dry leaves are floating in the air, and the wheels of lively vehicles have fallen apart — broken into pieces. Poetry is creating a type of delusion .The poetry carries the entire essence of it by the words, tones, rhetoric and prosodies.

Probably tranquillity is the only way of attaining a worthwhile experience of poetry. The engraving that establishes the correlation between the poet and the reader -- between one human soul and another. Truly, a poem is a process, and undoubtedly it is a two-way one. An impetus created through the evaluation and the re-evaluation of the correspondence between the reader and the poet. This may come from the life experience of the person or from the knowledge acquired of books. And, in the mirror of poetry, this impetus is examined and estimated, possibilities, conflicts, crises and experiences communicated, only for the reader to be defeated by a great piece of poem, to bow down by accepting the taste of purgation through the defeat.

Therefore, we must accept this process-centric nature of poetry. The outside element of poetry is its' language—but the poetic diction does not aim at liberating itself from the chains of grammar, yet we feel liberated as all our senses feel re-organised in the hands of poetry. We can open the reason behind the nonconformity of grammatical disposition is to find out the poetic unity of thoughts prior to it. The inanimate becomes lively, human mind finds the centre of universe inside himself, the person spread all over the universe. A scene is converted to words, the words to smell and the smell finally is converted to taste. Poets have realized this transformation as the journey from a particular state to general state. The pace of fiction is more unidirectional in comparison. When a reader is fused with a novel to take the journey the narrative offers, he becomes convergent if the course of the narrative is convergent. When the fiction is flowing in one particular direction, it also captivates the reader infallibly. The question of communication comes later in that process. When the process of reading is over, begins the process of reinterpretation. By that time, the compulsive spell under which the reader has till now been, has broken. So, it can be said that fiction is

more of a magic that lures the reader towards a particular philosophy of life. Literary fictions may also have many degrees of seeming reasonable or probable. According to modern critical term-analysis—"The archaic adjective fictive, revived by the American poet Wallace Stevens, it used extensively in modern criticism to denote the making of fictions which do not suspend the reader's disbelief, but stimulate it, in order to establish particular kind of rhetorical effect."⁵ However, a process of exchange of interpretation is languid in it fictions or novels or short stories. On the other hand, poetry is different. Through the process of living the poetry continues the process of creation and re-creation.

A question befalls. In this unspiritual twilight of 21st century, is there any form of literature the relevance of which remains unquestionable? The reason for saying this is rather simple. Every day, we are becoming more and more comfortable with ready references. Previously we used to read stories, now we watch them. We used to listen to music before, now we are able to watch them. We don't find anything interesting now as long as it is not provided with all the possible audio-visual effects. That is it has been some time already, that we are living the simultaneous life based on scenes and sounds. We, as well as our children, are losing our imaginative capabilities. A fine example of this can be given. When we read Tagore's '*Birpurosh*' (The Hero) in our childhood, we often realized the horrors, sense of freedomal, m s, pride, the narrow borders of belief and disbelief in almost every imagery of the poem. Such as....

"When in the west the sun set
and it was evening
It seemed we had reached
That vast plain where the twin
ponds are.
Wherever we looked
It was utterly empty and dark
There was not even a single man or
beast
And mother, this seems to have
made you afraid"⁶

We often re-created a cinematic vision of Tagore's lines in our mind. But those pictures were lacking. Probably we failed to find the colours with which we wanted to paint. Some parts of our pictures looked beautiful because of their obscurity. We could look at those parts again and again, mesmerised by their vague. The joy of that unfamiliarity has been faded by the over familiarity. We request our readers to trust, when we say that we are not proud enough to over-simplify every fact that everything nostalgic must be good and all the things that are new are bad. But we have all we have. Remembering the social function of an artist, we cannot ignore the responsibility of a poet's also, who can "give visible shape to these invisible fantasies that he has power to move us deeply. But in the process of giving this fantasies material shape, the artist must exercise a certain skill lest the bare truth repel us."⁷ This suggestion of exercise, told by Herbert Read (1893-1968) is still relevant in the year 2019. But the poets'

fruitless exercise of repelling becomes an inner truth of poem itself.

Concepts and Hypothesis

The world comes before us in a new avatar, bringing everything those electronic technologies can offer. This is a world where the necessity of reading literature is decreasing day by day. The widely circulated Android phone, also in this so-called Third World, has been established. A virtual world and virtual reality that has many types of hypertext. These are not allowing people's thinking to be fixed anywhere. One's mind is now diversified and scattered. We cannot live in the past; we must be here in the present. We must try our feelings and emotions by this sense of being in the present, to make us feel alive. But our age of hypertext and hyper reality makes us a kind of gadget. The internet has become saturated with an ideology of violation. Recent developments in our culture are threatening our personal relations, interactions,, stiffing our innovative mind and even changing our personalities and identities. Modern computer philosophy writer Jaron Lanier says – “ The ideology of violation does not radiate from the lowest depths of trolldom, but from the highest heights of academia. There are respectable academic conferences devoted to methods of violating sanctities of all kind”⁸.

Research Design

Actually no specific design or methodology can always be applied to literary criticism. In the present article we have tried to come to a special conclusion by presenting examples of the writings of some particular period writers, analyzing them by literary, philosophical and social theory.

Findings

From this research we explore how technological development and civilization is changing the shape of man's mind-structure as well as their daily life. People's thought process is changing. Imagination and analytical ability are also diminishing. Yet it is impossible for people to survive by rejecting and ignoring technology. There is no doubt that 'poetry' is becoming an unpopular medium of art in this changing lifestyle.

Conclusion

So we must practice poetry to stand in front of our mirrors with our head held high, to pay our due respect to that feeling of 'I have' and 'I am'. Probably, we do not realise anymore the necessity of standing before poetry—we, the human beings conscious of our choice of art, expression, evolution-- the mind that could conspire to recreate the whole world with the power of his imagination. The human mind is now unimpressed to see a handful of ferns from the depth of Atlantic. A meteor from the sky does not bring any conflict in his mind except for mathematical ones. The morning-smooth feelings of success do not create any needless imbalance. This kind of feeling of imbalances and inner conflicts only can rebuilt the relevance of poetry in this age of hyper reality.

Suggestions

In order to attract the reader to the 'poetry' again, we have to change our outlook and attitude towards life. We must move our mind towards simple beauty. Using electronic gadgets as minimum as possible can produce some results.

End Notes

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