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Vintage vs Modern: Role of Tennyson and Amit Chaudhuri in an industrial society

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Abstract

It is an important aspect to define the role of an artist in the Victorian society, if Arnold's intellectual aristocracy included the artist as an important component. As a matter of fact, such a definition would form a necessary background to study the Victorian poetry. According to Carlyle the poet is the prophet or seer 'whose eyes have been gifted to discern the godlike Mystery of God's universe: 1. Here, Carlyle had seen artist as capable of moulding the character and influencing the opinion of the age. Similarly, the role of the artist is determined by cultural tensions generated by an industrial society. The society is always governed by rules of profit making and market values. In ancient period, art occupied specialized place but marginal position in society. The position of the artist was determined largely by what he said and how he said. In comparison to that period, today we see a strong role and hold of the artist over the society. This paper is an tribute to two such brilliant writers, Tennyson and Amit Chaudhuri, who wished to create a special place for art and aesthetics. They both try to get their voices heard in a society and their role is of immense importance to the humanity.

Keywords: Victorian, Carlyle, Industrial Society, Industrialization.

1. Introduction

Tennyson and Amit Chaudhuri, both are the representatives of their societies. This paper is an effort to trace out the fact that as artist they only represent the changes brought by the industrialization or did they make place for stability?

Tennyson, came from a rural society, had natural allegiance to the traditional and conservative gentry whose pattern and ownership of land determined status. 2. His condition was very pathetic because his grandfather had disinherited his unstable father. His family was deprived of money and social standing. This led to the development of a kind of identification with middle-class notion of progressivism in Tennyson's heart. But he did retain sympathy for conservative values roots in a traditional social order. A kind of complex personality feeling was developed in Tennyson due to the understanding of class structure. He tried hard to come to terms with the growing power of the ideology of industrialization.

Amit Chaudhuri spent a major part of his childhood in a suburban city culture that increasingly felt the changes associated with urbanization and industrialization. His writings are greatly influenced with increasing population, new modes of production, spreading democracy and the dislocation old old value system.

Through their work, both the writer included in this research paper, have played their role marvelously in drafting the realities of an industrial society.

2. Discussion

2.1 Role of Tennyson in an Industrial Society

Tennyson looked for an opportunity to take part in a larger program for the regeneration of society, not through political change or revolution, but through transformation of the mind of the people. He felt that poetry can play a big role in this regeneration. He experimented new in political, religious and aesthetic matters. He saw himself against aristocratic privileges and was looking for change. He wrote to figure out the position of poor in the mass culture of the times. So, he not only defined the nature of the poetry but also developed new terms in which poetry was to be discussed. He considered poetry as an important platform for his political agenda for change. To him, art revealed an aristocracy of taste but he selected middle-class democratic mode to spread it into the society. He changed his subject matter to include the displaced, the poor, the prison house, the French Revolution and the countryside.

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He understood the fact that poetry dealt with feelings and it had to convey its emotions in a simple way so that it could be grasped by the reader. He wished to transform the society but not through direct political change. Therefore, to him poetry was an important cultural agent of change that sought to rejuvenate the consciousness without really bothering to change the structure of things.

His first volume of poetry titled *POEMS CHIEFLY*, Lyrical in 1832, Westminster Review published a review over it. This review spoke about the growing influence of poetry on the progress made in an industrial society.

It would be a pity that poetry should be an exception to the great law of progression that obtains in human affairs; and it is not. The machinery of a poem is not less susceptible of improvement than the machinery of cotton mill..... 3

To save the humanity, poetry played an important part.

Poets can influence the associations of unnumbered minds; they can command the sympathies of unnumbered hearts; they can disseminate principles; they can give these principles power over men's imagination; they can excite in a good cause the sustained enthusiasm that is sure to conquer; they can act with a force; the extent of which is difficult to estimate, upon national feelings and character, and consequently upon national happiness.....4

2.2 Role of Amit Chaudhuri in an Industrial Society

Amit's writing drew upon a different, more exploratory tradition that saw the mind as changing consciousness in a world of flux. He placed the consciousness in a public context. Here we may see the difference in role played by Tennyson and Amit towards industrial society, while the former saw the art as private, feminine and emotional, the latter see it as general and rational. A Strange and Sublime Address can be rightly called as social saga. It is not favoring anybody, not supporting any gender or caste or class. Rather it is an effort of the writer to raise the voice of common silently. Afternoon Raag, another creation of the writer, is a loose structure of emotions showing the changes due to industrialization on the society. Freedom Song, is an open tribute of the novelist to political and religious issues. Growing political tension and after effects of the industrialization are two important themes of the novels.

All his work oscillates between alternatives of exploitation and dependence thus exposing the relations of power that structures his world. He expressed his thought with reality and without using artificiality. His work ignites an opposition or conflict within thought and feeling which constitute a dialogue. And, dialogue, in turn, give birth to debate. It helps in raising question against the prevailing flaws of industrial society. His objective of writing is life and its minute activities. He very silently spreads the awareness among his reader and contributes to literature. He never act as a preacher or guide to his reader, rather he leaves the reader to bring their own imagination and intelligence to a reading. His ability to accommodate the thought and developing an interpretative power into his readers. It makes him stand in first queue of those artist who are not only writers or artist but can be rightly called as reformers.

3. Conclusion

Hobsbaum point out in his book *INDUSTRY AND EMPIRE* that England had advantages and disadvantages of early industrialization. The social and political institutions of England had their roots in age old-customs, despite its early

economic start. In short we may say that in early industrialization period, progress went hand in hand with exploitation. Tennyson and Amit are representatives of their times for each one of them tried to come to terms with the contradictory demands of the age. Tennyson successfully raised his voice heard by negotiating the conflict between the industrialization and society. He represented the problems faced by the age

On the other hand Amit also raised his voice, using an alternative tradition of exploration in modern Indian literature. He created a literary style that opened an expressive movement in the writing to a wider analysis. He incorporates varied themes and techniques into his writing by using different types of person to convey the variety of views. His writings are emotional, expressive and fabulous. He smartly forefront the conflict that affected life in industrial society. This piece of research ensures the fact that whether it is victorian era or present age, artist never forgets its role and responsibilities towards the society and humanity.

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