

Humanitarianism: A social propoganda in Vihang A.Naik's poetry manifesto (new and selected poems)

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Abstract

Vihang A.Naik's works in poetry are one of the most original and complete productions of Indian English poetry. We debate ourselves in wonder as we read his poems and the interest of the readers gradually accumulates and advances towards the conclusion of the series of poems. His poems are a source of powerful and profound emotion. The elementary feelings of the human mind are exposed to view and the pictures of social life and domestic manners are presented in the most simple and attached matter. His poems are actually an exhibition of the intellectual and imaginative power which any reader may acknowledge. They are one of the productions of the post-modern literature with its astounding style of caricature and exaggeration of modern life. 'Humanitarianism' is the commitment or an obligation to improve the lives of other people and is the ability to accept other human beings regardless of their social views and race. It is mainly a tenet of kindness, magnanimity and sympathy stretched universally and objectively to all humans. Technological advancement has come to a stage where human society finds itself at crossroads and this as a result has put humans into a situation of flux and confusion in the modern society. Therefore, this paper mainly points out the negative effects of technological advancements on social, cultural, economic aspects in the life of modern society in terms of humanistic approach. His role in Indian English poetry holds both repulsion and fascination to the number of readers behind his writing by offering a spectrum of social responses which are more thoughtful and psychologically oriented. His poems suggest a quick survey of socio- psychological reasoning and they deal with the passage of a social cross- over from rural agrarianism to urbanization as the society started turning to an urban- centered society.

Key words: Urbanization, Environment, Deforestation, Virtue, Pollution.

Introduction

river turns

Into a gutter. There is humming

Of vehicles. The city mumbles

U grapple for meaning

In the traffic of noises" (Poetry Manifesto, p.14)

The old ways of living and the present circumstances made the society bound in oppressive shackles of sophistication and technological progress. The poet therefore, upholds the mechanized mode of life and the anxiety of a politically tensed ambience of the newly evolving modern lifestyle. In his poems we find a picture of social unrest and he had keen interest in the study of natural philosophy. While appreciating the poetry of Vihang A.Naik, Binod Mishra writes:"Vihang A. Naik as a contemporary Indian English poet adapts himself to the new trend of writing poetry regarding structure and themes and he experiments with technical terminologies in his poetic world and one can find plenty of irony with a realistic touch in his verses" (Mishra, Binod. "Introduction." Exiled Among Natives: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry. Eds. Charu Sheel Singh and Binod Mishra. New Delhi: Adhyayan, 2013. xvii-xxix. Print). Technological developments had a remarkable impact on the social life of people endangering the traditional ways of living. This situation is very much reflected in his poem 'New Websight':

"Your vision

Makes an inductive

Leap

The fear grips

An e-age as the century

Turns" (Poetry Manifesto, p.12)

A brief study of his poems of the comparatively postmodern phase of literature shows that this period's works are more intricate, more thoughtful, more serious and more sophisticated. Thus a comprehensive study of his poems makes it evident that his poetry was catering to a trend that deserves some appreciation. The various angles of social awareness can be read and very well understood and the theme of his poems, juxtaposes a great deal of contrary and contradictory ideology. His poetry definitely have a covertly or overtly take in the ethical, moral and humanistic aspects of technological developments. Professor Satish Kumar comments "The new poetry is remarkable for its fecundity, experimentation and the vivid presentation of contemporary reality and situation. The traumatic political situation which resulted in the partition of the country, the disintegration of village community, and problem of cultural, economic and political values attracted the attention of writers and poets during the period"(Kumar Satish, 2001, New Poetry. A Survey of Indian English poetry, p. 8).

His poems are filled with striking imagery, symbolism and structural economy with a vivid prediction of social life. His poems consist of technical innovations with a common purpose and philosophy to give an intellectual standing. He was born in Surat, Gujarat on September 2, 1969. Four collection of his poetry have been published including 'Poetry Manifesto: New and selected poems' (2010), 'Making a poem' (2004), 'City times and other poems' (1993). His Gujarati collection of poems entitled

'Jeevangeet' was published in 2001. His poems become a symbolization to subvert the society's stereotypical and repressive attitude towards modern human existence representing the values of society. Thus his poems wind up a social message with a vivid description of social life. His poetry shows the desperate plight of the environment where environmental conservation should be taken as an annually proposed plan for every individual in a society. The term 'social-consciousness' actually means a type of consciousness shared by individuals within a society and a certain productive or economic relations that lead to a form of a social consciousness. In his view of the social propaganda of life, people rather enter into a particular relation with the society that corresponds to a definite stage of development of the material forces of production. His poetry constitutes the structure and the real foundation of society. The modern way of material life determines the social, political and intellectual life process in general. His poems indicate a sense of responsibility or concern for the problem and injustices done to the social environment. He relates on moral conduct in our day-to-day lives with respect to individuals focusing upon the fact of the working in a modern society as in his poem from 'City times and other poems' he states:

"You

Become a touch,

Letters of words;

A perfumed card

In

A changed city" (Poetry Manifesto, p.87)

One can notice the poet's capacity to effectively navigate and negotiate complex social relationships and environments. He holds that social intelligence should be a means of self and social awareness should evolve social beliefs and attitudes to manage a complex social change. He presents the human composition of societies that change over time where technologies and ideologies expand and values undergo reshaping. Therefore, no society remains complete static and this incessant changeability is very inherent nature of modern human society that he reflects in his poems. He speaks about the social structure that is the root of the present relationships. Human beings try to maintain it as he exclaims about futility of love in his life in his poem 'Love song of a journeyman', and is mainly concerned with happiness and an ability to apply our love for ourselves and to the world around us. The existing social structure is influenced by many factors and forces that is a subject to continuous change. He refers to the modifications which take place in life pattern of people where there is a web of social relationships. These include the mutual activities and relations working in the various parts of society. He throws light upon the structure of society and the environmental values and social norms which is treated separately in his poem. The destruction of the environmental beauty has been realistically presented by him. Man is an integral part of the environment yet he is considered to be the arch enemy of it and for centuries man has been thriving its generosity by destroying the natural beauty in order to build infrastructural buildings that is very much required in modern city life as in his poem 'The Banyan City', he remarks about trees being replaced by buildings stating:

"The old banyan

Is no more. You can no longer click

That tree at the crossroad" (Poetry Manifesto, p.14)

To construct roads, trees are chopped and the expansion of cities requires more land to establish housing and settlements that leads to a crowded city due to urbanization. Society manifests itself in different stages of human history. The poet reflects on the fact that technological advancement has affected human life both positively and negatively. There are indications of several threats to environment and society in the future due to this development. The nature and extent of progress that the human society had experienced by now is leading towards crisis in future. He upholds the fact that this development had taken place with the advancement of technology but not without leaving a scar to threaten the human society bringing radical changes in the social and cultural spheres of society.

Transformation of rural society into urban society where urbanization had destroyed the domestic system of production is what has been projected in his poem. This sociological enquiry is very significant in the life of an individual living in today's modern society. He describes the variations in social interactions, processes and social organizations of the modern society in his poems. He points out the effect of globalization in society to describe the increased movement of people, knowledge and ideas. He thinks that due to this, it brings knowledge and information to people in the world as a process the changes take place in the society. He focuses on today's society where materialism takes part in every person's life no matter what social class they are and it is the tendency of the people to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual or moral values. "Life is a hollow word for him and he finds it equal to an absurd play. Same feelings are expressed in The Final Act. Striking imagery, captivating metaphors and subtle use of other figures of speech add a fresh glory and grace to his poems. The first half of the book is devoted to concepts such as versification, poetic language, and tradition, the second half is organized along genre lines and examines, nature poetry, sociological experience" (Dixit, Dr. Kalyani. "Colossal Range of Experiences and Philosophical Vision of Vihang A. Naik in Poetry Manifesto: New and Selected Poems, Research Scholar 1.4, 2013: 1-4). The contemporary world is full of people who possess materialistic trait. People in modern society believe that owning and acquisition of the properties are the vital ingredients of happiness. But actually the consequences of pursuing materialistic lifestyle are the inability to reach the state of happiness in one's life. This is what the poet had reflected in modern city life. Jitendra Aroliya very rightly remarks that: "The poetry collection is based on many themes like religious, social, cultural, and political and economic and personal history. The first half of the book is devoted to concepts such as versification, poetic language, and tradition, the second half is organized along genre lines and examines, nature poetry, sociological experience"(Aroliya, Dr.Jitendra. 'Kaleidoscopic Vision in Vihang A.Naik's Poetry: Manifesto' published in Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Exploration. ISSN 23206101, Vol. I Issue II, May, 2013).

Deforestation comprises the modern world where there is a desperate need for land in urban needs and developments to contain cities and their growing population. It occurs where there is incessant falling of trees involving the permanent end of the trees to make the

land available for residential, commercial or industrial purpose. But as a result of this, several imbalances come out ecologically and environmentally leading to the change of season with maximum heat in summer season as the poet exclaims in the poem 'Indian Summer':

"When fire is set

Against mid-day. You search

The city, lost

In a mirage" (Poetry Manifesto, p.13)

His poem 'Hero' shows how an important and a responsible person can become a hero to the society. The person's aim should be to expand people's sense of what was possible for a human being to live in a society. The role of the hero in the society should be to lead, inspire, entertain the masses which will be vital to humanity and should influence movements in the society towards the improvement of society by the following statement:

"If injustice

The world then

In his pocket

A postcard size" (Poetry Manifesto, p.23)

The poet had a hope to understand and outline the human condition in the society referring to man's relation to the society in order to present the concept of purpose in life by using the mental and physical faculties. He explores inherently the complex relationships man has with his material existence describing the relationship about man's own desire in his poem 'Desire' stating that:

"The octopus

Of desire

Stirs

Arteries and veins" (Poetry Manifesto p.101)

Virtue is a quality of moral sacredness or excellence and there is a core set of principles that serves our life mission and violation of them violates us. But modern man does not weigh the virtues and does not know how to balance it in a situation that creates a complicated sort of balancing act in an individual. He prays to God to rescue him and to show him some purpose or meaning to life in this absurd city as he states:

"Cities leading

You nowhere

Rescue us

Lord

At once" (Poetry Manifesto, p.41)

The poet entails the meaning of distinction between a person's transient mundane self and their eternal unchanging soul challenging this hierarchy of selves in the society that have emphasized the importance of reaching high awareness. This condition of the poet is found to have a further dramatic expression in his unique poem 'Self-Portrait':

"I wake up to see my self

Discovered beyond thought" (Poetry Manifesto, p.97)

Further, he states that the Ganga River is suffering from river pollution. River water is used to a maximum extent because of its common reach to the biotic community. The water of river Ganga which is considered as nectar to India but it had become poisonous today due to pollution caused as a result of urbanization in modern city life. He mainly talks about this environment pollution stating that:

"An inspired child

Sketches of nuclear war

The world shivers

A polluted planet

The ganga screams for help" (City times and other poems, p.71)

Conclusion

According to the poet, environmental pollution is one of the biggest problems the world faces today and it is an issue that troubles us economically, physically and every day of our lives. He shows how environmental pollution is becoming an increasingly worse problem that needs to be taken care of not only for the good environment but for the better future of society. As Jack Magnus, says, "Reading City Times and Other Poems is a heady and illuminating experience. It's mostly highly recommended" (Jack Magnus, Reviewer for Reader's Favourite, USA, 2015). The environmental pollution gradually impairs people affecting them physically and spiritually in the progress of future. It negatively affects life in the environment. He comes to the fact that almost all the society's gains in the fields of technological progress are found to be the reason for the abnormal behavior of the season and it can be noticed that if one fails to restore the ecological balance then it must lead to severe consequences. He remarks that majority of people should not neglect their responsibility to the society and refuse to fight against it. Hence social awareness about the environment is a recent phenomenon and referred only to the physical, chemical, biological aspects including also the man-made social, cultural, economic and technological aspects and all of it are interrelated in a complex manner in his poems. The poet's efforts and his awareness about environment are necessary to facilitate regeneration of life and environmental resources.

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