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Reflection of Postmodern Sensibility in the Poetry of R.K. Singh

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Abstract :

Ram Krishna Singh (b. 1950) has been continuously contributing to Indian English poetry since 1980s. He gives up the decorum and adds special effects in some of his poems. His Muse touches various parts of postmodern life. He becomes the poet of dark imagination. The poems on his hometown of Banaras / Varanasi reveal filth and ugliness and barren ritualism and moral dirt concerned with postmodern sensibility. His poetry is the voice of post-modern frustrated socio-cultural conditions. His sensuous poems prove to be the places of oasis amidst the desert of postmodern conditions. He faces reality in the vein of surrealist. He tries to figure out the cause of this deplorable postmodern socio-political condition. According to him the broken promises of the politicians push the nation into the quagmire. Hence he devotes a number of poems as a commentary on the contemporary infected socio-cultural and socio-political set up. These postmodern conditions affect his sensibility which vents out in his poems. The postmodern conditions such as, hollowness, meaninglessness and absurdity of human life sharpens his negativity. The absence of spirituality resulted into a melancholic psyche which further leads towards sheer negative attitude towards life. The postmodern man is affected by these contemporary conditions. The study of Singh's poetry has revealed that the postmodern conditions have created inner turmoil in him. He has taken solace in physical union which provides him relief from the anxieties of the postmodern world.

Key Words :

Indian sensibility, Nationalism, modern tendencies, Occidental, postmodern conditions-- hollowness, meaninglessness and absurdity, socio-cultural, socio-political condition, sensuality, sensuousness, sensuous poems, social scene, postmodern hubbub, spirituality, faith and belief, melancholic psyche, contemporary social conditions

Introduction :

Change is the rule of nature and Indian English Poetry is not an exception to this rule. Since its inception Indian English Poetry has been going through mutations. The journey of Indian English poetry was started with imitation but it has reached perfection now. Indian sensibility, at the beginning, was moving on theme of Nationalism and phantasmagoria of Indian way of living. Later on, in late sixties, it acquired the modern tendencies though comparatively much late than the Occidental. Now the postmodern conditions have altered the Indian sensibility completely and changed it into postmodern sensibility. These alterations have made it more vibrant and realistic. They also affect the socio-cultural perspective which is reflected in the Indian English Poetry. The present paper traces the reflection of postmodern sensibility in the poetry of R.K. Singh. The reflection traces the postmodern affectations in his poems.

Ram Krishna Singh: A Dynamic Postmodern Poet

Ram Krishna Singh (b-1950) has been continuously contributing to Indian English poetry since 1980s along with L. H. Rizvi, D. C. Chambial, D. H. Kabadi, Sayed Ameeruddin, Baldev

(An Introduction)

Kamala Das stresses upon frustration where as there is a note of fulfillment of desire in the poems R. K. Singh here –

'Love waves rise and fall
Between our shores of soul
We drink each other's sea'

Subtle change of style is noticed in the mode of expression in the poems of R. K. Singh. His sensuous poems prove to be the places of oasis amidst the desert of postmodern conditions such as sense of defeat, an outcome of an awareness of living in a tragic age. The poet firmly puts out the reaction the suffocation of a conscientious soul forced to live amidst the 'lies of living.'

R.K. Singh with other poets decline to find 'substitute world'. He faces reality in the vein of surrealist. In his poem, he writes,

dust of Alienness
has thickened on my throat.....
my heart lacerates :
I cough wordless Plaints

(Wordless Plaints)

Days come and go without bringing any satisfaction. Hence, life becomes unloving, trapping everybody into its snare, and almost compels us to live in a perverse world. The absence of values worsens the situation. R.K.Singh tries to figure out the cause of this deplorable postmodern socio-political condition. He holds the leaders responsible for the bleak condition of the nation in the present time. He calls them 'blunderers' who are 'trapped by gains' sapping the energies of the country that could build up the nation. He writes.

They are not so much
schemers as blunderers.
blinded by politics
of convenience.....
they are trapped by gains.....
they mar the future
and bury the nation

(My Silence and Other Selected Poems)

R.K.Singh presents the broken socio-political conditions created by the selfish politicians whom he calls, 'Selling dreams and winning votes'. According to the poet the broken promises of the politicians push the nation into the quagmire of fear, uncertainties, hunger, unemployment, etc. Social conditions and politicians' role is addressed by him. He chooses the social scene and the common man as his subject. He expresses exact terms for complex feelings and abstract ideas with felicity. His sensibility gets new tone amongst the poets of sixties and seventies. Most importantly he attends to the social realities like moral degradation. Hence he devotes a number of poems as a commentary on the contemporary infected socio-cultural, socio-political set up.

R.K. Singh's poetry is deeply rooted in the rhythmic flow of time. His words reveal the feelings and emotions through their tonalities, cadences, intonation and metaphors in search of truth in a postmodern world. The postmodern literature is a search for R.K.Singh's poems. The poet's poetry is a search for truth in a postmodern world. The poet's poetry is a search for truth in a postmodern world.

Poetry is not
Just functional

like brief- case
it is personal
an extension
of myself.

(Memories Unmemoried)

The sensibility of R. K. Singh is completely satiated in postmodern life with its nature of fear, despair and emptiness. He becomes very anxious to find identity and meaning. The restless life of man is brought forefront by the poet. The ephemeral nature of human existence moves him profoundly. The postmodern life is filled with grief and gloom. As a result of this the poet is disgusted with people and himself. This postmodern condition affects the poet's sensibility which is vented out in his *Memories Unmemoried*. The poet's conscience is also deeply affected by the past memories. The socio-cultural atmosphere is such that the poet's psyche is disturbed in negative thought. Besides, the postmodern conditions - hollowness, meaninglessness and absurdity of human life sharpens the negativity of the poet in the lines,

What is life
like the sun rising and dying
someone beginning and someone stopping
without presence being felt
without effect, striking, ending
long rituals of waste ?

(My Silence)

These lines remind us of the contemporary postmodern socio-cultural conditions that lead human life towards nothingness. These are the conditions experienced by the men and women in our postmodern era. Days come and go without bringing any satisfaction. This is obviously the curse of contemporary socio-cultural set up which itself becomes void with positive veins created by the magic of spirituality, faith and belief. The absence of spirituality resulted into a melancholic psyche which further leads towards sheer negative attitude towards life and everything seems to be dispersed. The following lines make clear this attitude,

Everything is falling apart
Every wall is cracking
I too am breaking

(My Silence)

Though the human life is enriched physically but the vibrancy of it is completely lost. Postmodern conditions push the man into the quagmire of nothingness. Artificiality is the new cosmetic applied by everyman to hide his melancholic face. Music is no more food to life, on the contrary, life is starved with lack of it. The poet is profoundly affected by these contemporary social conditions. His postmodern sensibility comes out into the lines of the same poem.

No one sings in these days
songs don't come so easily
life has lost music

(My Silence)

These inner feelings of the poet underline the futuristic and bleak existence in the present postmodern life. The poet's sense of the futility of human existence is further lead towards unhealthy conditions such as unknown diseases and trail of suicides. Though life is painful one has to live it in the lines.

The dying sun says
how alone one is
sinking in glory

(My Silence)

Conclusion :

The above explanation brings to our notice that R.K.Singh chooses the social scenes and the common man as his subjects. The contemporary socio-political scenes also come out from his work. He proves to be the earlier poet in the galaxy of Indian English Poetry who attended to the social realities like loss of spirituality and moral decline. R.K.Singh has exposed social evils with the technique of erotic metaphors. He has realized the changing nature of the world. He has used satire to whip social evils and social repugnance. The study of Singh's poetry has revealed that the postmodern conditions have created inner turmoil in him. The turmoil comes out in the form of burning verse. His poetry has reflected the world which is deceived by the broken promises of politicians. The politicians are described as selling dreams for winning votes. His poetry has reflected the traits of postmodern sensibility as early as 70s and 80s. The present paper has revealed that R.K.Singh's poetry is compact with variety of moods and ideas about love, sex, social, religious and political issues. He has criticized the contemporary coal-culture and futile rituals. He has taken solace in physical union which provides him relief from the anxieties of the postmodern world.

The study of R.K.Singh's poetry has revealed that Nature becomes a constant source of images and symbols to him through which he shows his concern about social issues such as poverty, exploitation and pollution. The study has also revealed that his poetry poses him as a poet concerned about man's existence and identity. He has brought out the impact of plural society on Indian culture. He has explored innovative meaning of nature. His poetry has reflected contemporary postmodern sensibility effectively.

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