



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF T.S. ELIOT AND SUKHBIR SINGH

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Abstract

The twentieth century is considered to be an age of confusion and turmoil. The Comparative methodology has been employed to study the modern age literature through the comparison of T.S. Eliot and Sukhbir Singh. The socio-psychological conditions of a modern society have been observed minutely. How it leads to better understanding of the literary worlds is the crux of the present paper. The purpose of comparing the poems belonging to two different languages, English and Punjabi is to widen the scope of research. By diminishing the linguistic barriers, the possibility of interdisciplinary research could be recognized.

Keywords: Modern Society, Modern World, Psychology, Human Emotions and Twentieth-Century.

Introduction

The social, political and regional condition of Punjab is emerging as a new area of expertise. The present paper proposed to analyze the poetry of twentieth-century poets, T.S. Eliot and Sukhbir Singh. Belonging to the different worlds, their poems were subject to be written in different languages- English and Punjabi respectively. Nevertheless, their approach towards the scientific study of the human mind and the imagination was worthy of comparison. They focused on the psychological range of human emotions, isolation, perplexity, and melancholy. The Comparative methodology is applied here, to examine the texts that belong to entirely distinctive spheres of knowledge. The purpose of placing the text written in English and Punjabi is to create a dialogue between language and literature.

Born in Mumbai, graduated from Amritsar, Sukhbir Singh was an eminent poet of Punjab, known for his radical activities during Communism in India. He took to writing as a medium to portray a Modern society, in which poor people were made to suffer due to an unequal share of wealth and lack of resources. The voice of voiceless could be heard. Influenced by T.S. Eliot, the social conscience is apparent within. Blank verse has been used as a conventional method in their poetry that makes the symbolism all the more reflective and descriptive.

The Modern Age is considered to be of discombobulating nature. T.S. Eliot himself has asserted that the contemporary writing directly or indirectly was influenced by the psychoanalysis, resulting in loss of profundity. A visible impression of the country life has been depicted in a miserable condition. It created the atmosphere of nothingness in the world. On the one hand, World War 1 has disturbed and wounded the whole civilization. The thought of big city brought with it the traumatic illness and false beliefs. The concept of the brotherhood had collapsed. On the other hand, the rise of communism in India was observed. Communism triggered in common people the anger against inequality and social injustice. Vulnerability to post-war depression, Eliot was led into confusion,

“We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!...”
(The Hollow Man, 1-4)
In contrast, Sukhbir Singh sought solace in the cosmos.

“...ਸੁਪਨਕਾਰ ਹਾ ਭਾਵ
ਆਮ ਜਿਹੀ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਹਾ ਮੈਂ ਖਰਵੀ ਤੇ ਤਗੜੀ
ਚਾਨਣ ਨਾਲ ਜੇ ਗੁੰਨੀ ਗਈ ਏ...”
(Nain Naksh)

(Supankar han bhaven
Aam jehi Mitti Han Main Kharrvi Te Tagrri
Channadh Nal Jo Gunni Gayi Hai)



There is a difference in the attitude of the poets. Eliot kept struggling with the spiritual barrenness and cultural uprootedness in the modernized society, shattered by war.

“...What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish?..... “A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter...” (The Waste Land, 19-20, 22-23)

Similar chaos was dealt differently by Sukhbir
“... Channadh di tand naal udaan main...”
(Vann Trinn)

‘Dukh Pahadan Varge’ would never have been meant to discourage Singh’s collective visions. He has a positive outlook towards the social circumstances. Comparatively, Eliot has been failed to cope up with the reality of his time, concerned more about the futility of living. Whereas, Sukhbir believed that the significance of one’s life is found in relationship with the universe.

Considering the dialects and semiotics, the language appears to be highly paradoxical. Broken images, myth, and allusions make it difficult to understand the poems of Eliot. The phrases such as “Unreal City”, “Burning burning burning burning “, repetitive in ‘The Waste Land’, invokes a powerful painting of a decayed European society, surrounded by the evil influence of fires of lust and infatuation. Conjointly, Sukhbir has crafted the image of a twentieth century era with the help of the complex dialects, ‘Vann-Trinn’, ‘bol-kubol’, ‘chann-suraj’, channadh-hanera’. By making himself use contradictory language, he is being suggestive of the quest to go beyond the facts of existence.

Applying the theory of New Criticism, the language seems to be self-explanatory. Many things left unsaid by their writings, is open to interpretation by the readers.

‘...Kohre Khat vich kina kuch keha ja sakda...te oh kuch vi likh deyan jo likheya na jana...’

(Sukhbir’s Poem Recited by Dr. Mohanjit Singh, eminent poet, at Book discussion, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, 2017)
Every line of the poem is complete in its own way. All the elements have been drawn from the Nature, Earth, Sky and Universe. They are relevant in the sense that they illuminate his vision towards cultural and political scenario. What he observes around his surrounding is reflected through his self-observation. The illustration of the impoverished strata of society, labour and women is carved in a prudent manner. The composition of his stanzas feeds the soul of the readers in such a way that they try to hunt for the truth beneath the surface.

Furthermore, the dimensions of human contradictions in Eliot’s poems are dependent upon intellectual’s critical analysis. The man in the post-war era,

‘...Shape without form, shade without color,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion...’ (The Hollow Man”, 11-12)

It embodies the emptiness in the Modern world. ‘Shantih shantih shantih’ is indicative of the period of exhaustion after his poem is completed. That the Eliot is now longing for peace and absolution is another method of pondering over it.

ਸੁਖਬਿਰ ਨਿਰਜਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਮੈਂ

ਉਂਜ ਤਾਂ ਆਮ ਜਿਹੀ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਹਾਂ

ਆਦਿ ਕਾਲ ਦੇ ਚਾਨਣ ਨਾਲ ਜੋ ਗੁੰਨੀ ਗਈ ਏ I

(Sukhbir, Nain Naksh)

(Sapne sirajda han main,
Unjh tan aam jehi mitti han
Aad kaal de channadh nal jo gunni gyi eh)

The writing style is simple and the words are not too much glorified. The close reading of the poem is in alliance with the comfort zone of its pupils.



Different layers of meanings, create a curiosity among audience regarding how the universal aspect of human life should be perceived. What is that the poet can feel is made to be interpreted in multifarious ways by others. How Sukhbir collects essential features of everything in creation- stars, sky and moon, and brings the emotions to the earthly life, and then tries to assimilate it to the sub-consciousness of the human mind. How this association helps him figure out the rational behaviour of mortals. Each line of the poetry has thriven upon the poet's sensibility, with the help of which he finds out the reasons behind the elusive disorientation into the society.

Conclusion

Hence, it has been significantly found that the comparative study of Eliot and Sukhbir Singh benefitted in bringing out the psychological nature of the mortal world in the twentieth century England and Punjab. The methodology helped scrutinize and contemplate the language and structure of the poem. Unlike Eliot, who wept for the disorganized and fragmented landscape, Sukhbir searched for comfort by delving into the Universe. The burden of modern life created by Eliot, find its deliverance in the poems of Sukhbir. He brought a new sensibility to the Punjabi poetry in the Modern era. Hence, the comparative approach is capable of making this research interdisciplinary.

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