

A SATIRIC REFLECTIONS ON SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTION: A NIHILIST STUDY OF SELECT POEMS OF T.VASUDEVA REDDY, AN INDIAN SPIRITUALIST

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All systems and institutions – religious, political, social, educational, etc. have been established at various stages of human life in the world in order to improve the condition of life and make man perfect. But, on the contrary, in course of time man has begun to exploit the systems, meant actually for social welfare, for his own selfish ends, Because of the misuse of various institutions, social order and decorum got disturbed. The stronger group thrives well while the weaker section of society suffers severely. Wrath, greediness, enmity, rivalry, fight, war and revenge make all established institutions meaningless. They become either the tools in the hands of powerful people or become powerless and hence purposeless. In such a situation, instead of peace and prosperity, only chaos, riot, natural calamities prevail in the world. Man has become corrupt and his corruption creeps over the system and Vice Versa. Integrity of life gets disintegrated. Man with moralist temperament feels disillusioned. And sensitive poets become satiric and sarcastic.

T.Vasudeva Reddy is one such a poet who observes the happenings in the contemporary world, which with all its developments in the field of science and technology has encountered two world wars and a number of natural calamities such as tsunami and earthquakes which have swallowed the lives of thousands of people. Ancient history has portrayed the lives of the kings who, in spite of being monarchs, sacrificed their life for justice and devised plans for the welfare of the public. The contemporary politicians while approaching the public for votes seem to be very simple and humble. Once they get power, they begin to swindle money and become themselves rich making the public poor. In the same way, in the field of religion, the priests instead of leading a pure and sacred life are lusty and run behind women and money. It is the responsibility of the priests to make the physical world a holy one. But they actually make the innocent world an immoral one. This negative impact of institutions on the world and human life. makes a profound imprint on the poetic mind of T.Vasudeva Reddy who elaborately discusses the political, religious and social evils persistent in the various

institutions ironically, bluntly, philosophically, humorously as well as seriously.

While Reddy describes the negative side of each institution he seems to be nihilist who does not believe in the values of system that does not strengthen the foundation of life, But, the Indian spirit which lies at the bottom of his consciousness makes him see the positive side of reality.

One of the ancient of the noblest systems that was established with an aim of making man a God is religion. Religion is meant for mining the divine spirit hidden at the bottom of the human personality which has different dimensions and various layers – physical, vital, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. When the divine inside him comes up, man becomes complete in consciousness. His heart is filled with selfless love making him consider his fellow beings his own brothers and sisters. A universal brotherhood is, thus, fostered by religion. Man becomes free from greediness, pride, selfishness, anger and enmity by the preachings of religion. Religious institutions were established in order to bring order and peace in a society. But, on the contrary, instead of sharing love and compassion, men begin to fight in the name of religion which ends in terrorism. India has become the victim of religious terrorism since the intrusion of foreign powers particularly from the time of Ghori Mohammed during the twelfth century. The fanatic fundamentalism of the Muslim rulers who invaded India did not stop with robbing the wealth and torturing the people of India but also destroyed the inexpensive art and architecture. T.Vasudeva Reddy has filled his pen with tear instead of ink while describing the condition of the palace and the last capital of Vijaya Nagar Empire destroyed some thousand years before by the Muslim Rulers:

As beauty with truth disintegrates
in mausoleum fancy hibernates;

.....

that stands now in ruthless ruins;
the sight squeezes the heavy heart
with the horrible wreck of art
a moving image of concrete fall

the ruined circuitous fort wall,
temples razed to the ground,
the broken rock – cut entrance

.....

The hooting of the owl spells doom
with the reacting deafening bark
Piercing the eerie desolate land
deserted king's palace tower,
a relic of sculptured splendor
an aggrieved soul of bloody wars,
monstrous greed and callous neglect.
The gory hands and fanatic heads
that wrought havoc with blind hatred
left the stage untraced into dust (11-12)

It is a pity that a system established for constructive purpose has become a destructive force. One of the main reasons is that instead of developing love in the heart of man, religion causes hatred which Vasudeva Reddy points out bluntly. Other attributes of religion include simplicity, celibacy and morality in character. Vasudeva Reddy elaborately describes how a religious persons transgress all these frontier lines of a holy life in his poem "Ashram" To Reddy, the saffron robe is not a sacred attire for a false priest but only a mask to hide his lust and greed for wealth. With poetic rhymes Reddy describes the false priest's life style.

Brimming with desire his lustful eyes
greet fairer beauties. frail butterflies;
allergic to austere ways and pressures
he seeks mukti in carnal pleasures,
often at others cost he goes abroad
to bask in pleasures full of fraud,
attends royal night clubs in jeans
and dances with tinsel fairies in teens

.....

he declares himself a living Bhagavan
and goes on a holiday in a caravan;
Lord Krishna suffers in his grinding jaws
while his ill –gotten wealth soars above laws;
Millionaires come and end in mystery
their burnt ashes arrest their history;
His ashram, a palace indeed, invites riches,
discards the poor and distributes ashes;
in the name of implicit faith in God
he makes gullible souls meekly nod;
His sweet nothings and charming lies
capture the rich and searching thighs;
he and his tribe to real sages are a blot....(35)

Thus, Reddy brings into light the characteristics of a fraud priest. A religious person, in India, is expected to consider woman an incarnation of Sakthi and should lead a austere life. But, the false sage is lustful towards women and the saintly life is "allergic" to him. He realizes divine wisdom in physical pleasures. He goes abroad to enjoy the beauties of life by exploiting the foolish blind believers' money. He participates in the activities of night club wearing the attire of the modern youth. He is a stain to the holy life of sages. Terrorist activities and immoral way of irreligious priests make any socially conscious person lose his confidence in any system. Yet, in spite of observing all these atrocities diligently and recording them sincerely, Reddy does not seem to lose his hope and that is why he optimistically and metaphorically declares: "but dark clouds can never eclipse the sun?" The system –religion is like the sun stationary, permanent full of light but the false priests are like the clouds which may come and go and also can never hide the sun.

As Reddy traces the lapses in the religious system, he also records the shortcomings in the political system which is meant for maintaining decorum in a human society and governing people and their land in an organized manner. The Contemporary age has shown that political set up instead of bringing harmony among people has become the root cause of chaos in the society. The politicians become corrupt instead of being perfect in their obligations. They are hypocrites who preache one ideology and follows the opposite. They are supposed to stand for the welfare of the people but swindle and exploit them. T.V.Reddy without any mercy, peels off their skin in this poetry.

Ours is a democracy ruled by capitalist,
where the booty share our psedo-communists,
we are stripped of our land and victuals
and whipped to cast our votes to criminals ;
on the voting day we have no choice,
suppressed is our chained voice.

These leaders, in fact bandicoots, rule
on the ruins of our living skeletons
from the mazy mists of callous cities
encircled by burning barren landscapes;
Their plunder marches with a thunder
from land to industries, road to mines,
unhindered, kith and kin share the look
like foul foxes at tiger's prey en route (31)

Reddy is not afraid of listing out the various corruptions, malpractices and bribes that took place in the

Indian political field. In a spontaneous and a casual way, he condemns the politicians directly:

Our leaders leave no place or field
 Untouched, they disrobe and rob
 with political power, a licensed shield
 and a troop of thugs, a hired mob;
 let us defend our defense from before
 bullet proof jackets are a farce;
 in the wider field of corruption cricket
 a sportive one is always a fallen wicket;
 bridges, dams and stadiums collapse,
 Governments wink at the cruel lapse,
 the wink of our beaucocratic eye scores
 and swallows thousands of crores;
 inadequate are all the elements five,
 not content with the endless grabbing
 of land and mines extends their drive
 to skies and clouds and rain harvesting
 if these sordid souls are banished to hell
 Even the underworld they are sure to sell (61- 62)

Vasudeva Reddy, Who has Portrayed the contemporary rulers as robbers and looters, does not spare the hypocrite writers whose voice is one and behavior is other. He calls them ironically "revolutionary writers". Their favorite topic is human rights but they themselves endanger human life. These hypocrite writers will shout aloud while terrorists are legally punished but when the innocent people and duty conscious constables are killed by the terrorists, they will never rise their voice against such an atrocity:

With the press he makes a hue and cry
 at the death of a long wanted terrorist
 a record killer, a pseudo - communist

when innocent persons and cops die
 with bullet shots and in bomb blasts
 champions of human rights seal their lips....(33)

Religion and politics are like eyes of a man to enlighten him. But both are rotten. Reddy writes sharply:

These leaders, political and spiritual,
 fake and fraud, play roles effectual,
 one in white and the other in saffron,
 prowling wolves in lamb's skin.....(50)

Like fake religious people and fraud politicians, these, 'revolutionary' writers are also money - minded. They deliver lectures on class struggle. These lectures are considered free lectures but ironically these lectures earn him rich dividends which include "a few sites at the golden hills in the capital and a high rise elegant residence" (33)

Thus writings or literature in the contemporary age is not a system to enlighten the mass but only meant for entertainment. Moreover, the literarians are weighed not by their merit but only by their caste and money. Thus literature too loses its sanguine nature.

sycophants heap eulogies on poetasters
 who shine with caste and cash sans taste.
 the latter flatter our flawed prose masters.
 some struggle to find a seeming image
 while for others merit is a distant mirage (44).

Education is one among the major systems that determine the moral strength and decorum of any organized society. But the contemporary period has transformed a discipline oriented, moral based educational institution into a money - making commercial set -up. Education should enlighten and empower people. It is an unprofitable department in a welfare country. The teachers in Indian Society are called *gurus* considered equal to God. But they, instead of imparting knowledge to students, allow them to copy in the examination by getting bribe: "Students proud of copying in the examination for a grade/ teachers indulging in that trade" (29). Reddy angrily utters: "Shameless schools look parents 'anxiety and rob with a rare scholastic piety" (61). He frankly says without hesitation:" education is a commodity to sell in open hell" (57).

Knowledge and wisdom imparted by educational system should improve the condition of human life. But, science and technology associated with the educational field has, of course, enriched material profits and improved the physical comforts of human life but they are solely responsible for environmental pollution leading to the extinction of fauna and flora and natural calamities like tsunami, acid rain, earth quack and flood:

Our modern princes play
 The licensed game
 of ploughing hills and seas
 for mines and oily riches,
 explode ranges of hills
 To export precious ores.
 Furrow waters dark and deep
 To extract billions in oil and gas;
 ...

This is the road to death (55)

In addition to satirizing the institutions sarcastically, T.V.Reddy has also sung of the plight of individuals, places, beliefs, etc. In spite of himself being a man, he having feminist concerns laments over the plight of a busy working woman who balances her life between her home

and work place where her pains and emotions have never been considered. He considers woman "patience personified"(51). Reddy recognizes the woman who spends her whole life as a slave and she is never shown any gratitude. In the same way, in a humorous way, he describes the beauty parlour:

Doors opens and closes their pristine liberty;
On the revolving chair sit the high priestess
Ready to perform the rituals of sacred duty
To propitiate the invisible beauty's goddess
By singing fragrant songs and psalms
And ready to scan devotees' palms (52)

Reddy devotes one whole poem to describe the unhygienic condition of the Indian toilet in a comical way:

In public places, trains and theatres
Still they are foul forbidden zones
Unless we arrest our dear breath
By practicing pranayama or yoga
Or just postpone the urgent mission, (47)

Reddy, at the same time, does not forget to mention that a toilet is transformed into AC room for one hour stay of the Prime minister. The description of the toilet can be considered a satire on the condition of local government administration as well as the irresponsible nature of individuals too.

Reddy mocks at the superstitious belief of the people through the voice of a crow who wonders at people who offer them food on the death anniversary of their ancestors identifying the dead ones in the crow.

He further laments over the foreign country's influence in the field of commerce and trade: "dragon's wings cover the subcontinent/no field is free from its deadly dent". (610 Dragon's wing can be symbolically

associated with the Chinese influence. The Chinese products are very low in their quality yet they are popular among people because of their external attractiveness. Moreover, he finds fault with the influence of the west, which actually considers the East its spiritual guide:

Today weather is west-bound
Where plenty of wealth is found;
In fact the West looks to the East
As a guide for spiritual light (57-58)

Of course, the post-independence India influenced by the West, which is characterized by scientific thinking, involvement in physical life and development of the materialistic world, has forgotten its traditional and cultural values and hence the Indian systems and institutions seem to be disintegrated and hence purposeless. But Reddy firmly believes that recovering the traditional Indian spiritual heritage of the country India will regain its glory. He further says:

Spiritual quest is the common bond
That binds all the people of this land
From the seas to the northern snows;
It has the gravitational pull to attract
While in the Ganges eternal dharma flows (60)

Yet, with all development in the field of science and technology and progress in the field of religion and philosophy, he feels nothing in life.

When we come we bring nothing
When we leave we carry nothing.... (102)

Reference

1. Reddy, T. Vasudeva, *Echoes*. New Delhi; GNOSIS, 2012.