

Youth Problems in Modern Sinhala Poetry from 1970 to 2000: A Marxist Study

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Abstract

Present-day modern Sinhala poetry generation is originated through Sinhala poems in 1970. The prominent issues occurred during that era were act as the subject for these poems. Basically, revolt in 1971 and open economic policies in 1977 were highly influenced on it. Youth suppression, unemployment, life struggle of laborers, educational inequalities, open economic policies, youth abuse and ethnic conflict can be identified as some significant issues during that era. The present study focused on the qualitative analysis in occurrence of youth problems which are appeared in Sinhala poetry, the types of youth issues in contemporary era and the factors influenced on them. The objective of this article is to study the way of aforesaid factors appear in Sinhala poems in the modern era. This also attempts to illustrate poetic techniques used by those poets in their literary point of view. The study on the youth problems appeared in modern Sinhala poetry is a literary and sociological research. The "Conflict Theory" which is introduced by Karl Marx was used as the major tool. In addition, it directly involves with the fields of sociology, psychology and biology as well. It is revealed that, studies were conducted to identify biological differences, to realize the mental background among youth in their growth Freudian psychology was associated respectively. The youth problems were found to be initiated at point where interaction between youth and the society. More sensitivity was laid towards the suppressed class in the society by those particular poets when illustrating youth problems in their poetry. It is obvious that economy has influenced on youth problems in contemporary era. It can be concluded that the class difference and class conflict have been mainly affected on youth problems. Economy has been one of the major factors in making differences which was interpreted in poetry written by many poets namely; Monika Ruwanpathirana, Parakkrama Kodithuwakku, Buddhadasa Galappaththi, Rathna Sri Wijesinghe and Kumara Hettiarachchi during the 1970-2000 period. Amongst them, poems written by Kumara Hettiarachchi exhibit highest aesthetic value.

Key words: Poetry, Youth Problems, Class, Marxism

1.0 Introduction

The investigation of youth problems which are appeared in modern Sinhala poetry written during 1970-2000 year period was carried out. In this regard, mainly framed problems were the types of youth problems appeared in the contemporary era, the factors influence on them and how these problems are illustrated in poetry etc. Sinhala poems written from 1970 to 2000 were analyzed in this study with respect to the nature of youth problems occurred in poetry. Youth problems during that era were identified as youth suppression, unemployment, and reality of life in labor class, educational inequalities, class inequalities, open economy policies, youth abuse and ethnic conflict.

The newest version of modern poetry generation is originated among modern Sinhala poetry in the decade of 1970. Occurrence of Materialistic issues during that period was the main reason for the originality. This generation has represented youth problems approximately for five decades. More recent social revolutionary factors were youth revolt in 1971 and open economy system in 1977. Not only that but also Black July in 1983, youth revolt in 1989 are very significant. On the other hand, ethnic conflict lasted for three decades is another issue. While poverty increased in the country, social problems such as social injustice, class inequalities, labor exploitation were emerged. Youth expectations were disappointed and those were not able to fruitful even through the education they gained. New younger generation was emerged as a result of free education but they used to follow revolutionary path as the politicization was another influential factor during those days.

In this phenomena youth problems are very important as they are being yet experienced by the contemporary society. Those poets are the artists of literary work who expanded their subject scope as a mirror. As a responsible artist, it is his duty to make public aware on such issues through his creativity. The most important contribution of art is to understand one's own self and others very sensitively by

developing the power of imagination and individual psyches. This ability cannot be inculcated without art. [1]

There are several attempts on sociological and political literary investigations based on youth problems. *Present social conflict and Youth Peace* (2004) and *Sustainable Development* (2002) by S.T. Hettige and *Globalization, Social Change & Youth* (1998) by the same author are very important publications. *Revolutionary Campaigns in Sri Lanka* (2002), *Political and Social Opinion* (2005) by Gamini Samaranayake are resourceful issues. *Innocence and Revolution of Aggression* (1993), *Social background of modern rebellions in Sri Lanka* (2006) and *Riots in 71 April* (1979) by Victor Ivan is also important. Moreover, publications namely, *South riot and the future of Sri Lanka* (2000), *Conflicts, civil war and peace* (2008) written by Jayadewa Uyangoda and *Feminism in Sri Lanka during 1975-85 decade* (2008) written by Kumari Jayawardane play major role in this context. *Marxist Essays* (2003), *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (2010) written by Prof. Desmond Mallikarachchi has followed a Marxist influence in his book. David Resen's critical article on poetry was based on youth problems. *T.S. Eliot and the Lost Youth Modern Poetry* (2003) is a quantitative investigation. Among the contemporary poets who created their poems based on youth problems, poets like Parakkrama Kodithuwakku, Monika Ruwanpathirana, Buddhadasa Galappaththi, Rathna Sri Wijesinghe and Kumara Hettiarachchi can be highlighted.

Hence, the objective of this article is to study the ways and means of interpretation the causes of youth problems appeared in contemporary Sinhala Poetry during 1970-2000 period. Secondly, through this study it also tries to evaluate the poetic techniques, language, form, symbolism used by poets in their literary point of view.

1.1 Literature Survey

The major youth problems occurred during that era were identified as youth suppression, unemployment, and reality of life in labor class, educational inequalities, class inequalities, open economy policies, youth abuse and ethnic conflict. The observations collected through the present study, following poem which was written by Berty B. Kudahetti, shows how the class inequality interpreted in modern Sinhala poetry. As he addressed in this poem, he tried to discuss the inequality in labor class.

ජීවත්වීමේ අයිතිය?
කුසට බොජුන්?
ගතට ඇඳුම්
ඉඳුම් හිටුම් කෝ
කයට සුවය
රස්සාවක්
ලෙඩට බේන් කෝ? [2]

Further, Kudahetti used this following poem to show the power of high class over the labor class. It further mentioned that the asset of high class is this labor class.

මේ අහපන් ලොකු අයියේ
ධනපතින් සතු ලාභ
අපේ දුප්පත්කම යි
ඔවුන් දේපළ අපේ
දැවෙන කුස ගින්දර යි [2]

දිනා ඇති සම්මාන සහතික ද එකතු කොට
 රටා පැදුරක් වියමි මගේ දැනින් ඔහුට
 කවරදා හෝ දිනෙක මා සොයා එන ඔහුට
 එපමණකි ඇත්තෙ මට දෙන්න තිලිණයක් කොට [7]

Moreover, Galappaththi addressed the improper of education qualifications that affected to the youth. It interpreted the useless of the educated personnel in the current country situation.

සිල්ප නොම	දත්තෝ
පවුරු පැන ජය	ගත්තෝ
සොදින් සිප්	දත්තෝ
අහස දෙස නෙත් යොම	ඇත්තෝ [8]

Rathna Sri Wijesinghe also addressed the same issue yet in more creative manner.

අජාතේය ඉස්කූට්ටු තුරඟු	පිට
නැඟී වාත වේගෙන් ඉගිලෙන	කලට
බදා හිමි දෙවුර ඉස්සී බලන	විට
වැටේ ද යි කිරුළ සිතූණි ය	බිසවුන්ට [9]

While, in following poem which was written by Ven. Ananda thero, shows the female youth youth who struggles to live with the minor job.

ඔතන ඔතන සුරැට්ටු ටික	විකිණියන්
දුං කොළ කුසිල සිරුරට විස	නො වියන්
මුදලාලිගේ ගිජු බැල්මෙන්	මිදියන්
නංගියෙ අපේ දුප්පත්කම	රැකියන් [10]

In 1977, the introduction of open economy policies highly affected to the society as well as to youth. Ruwanpathirana discussed about the labor migration due to open economy policies and its' effect on their families through following poem.

පවුලේ බර අඩු කරන්න ගෙදරින් පිට වන්නට පෙර
 මතක ද අම්මේ උඹ මට ඇමතුවෙ පොඩි දුවේ කියල
 ජීවිතයේ පළමු වරට තනිවුණු කල ඇත රටක
 එහි මිනිසුන් හුඟ දෙනෙක් ම මට කිව්වේ ලිසි කියල [11]

Further, in here it discussed about the sexual harassments and youth which was another major problem of youth.

උඹ කිසිදා නොදුටු පියා අද මෙහි ඇවිදින් ඉන්	නේ
නැත උඹ ඔහුගේ පුතු බව පුතුනේ ඔහු පිළිගන්	නේ
උඹ මැදිකොට ඇති නඩුවට අද අප දෙපසේ ඉන්	නේ
හඳුනාගන්නට වත් පුත ඔහු වත දෙස බලපන්	නේ [11]

Moreover, these following poems also addressed the same issue in another way.

ලයිට් කපන ගනුර එන	නගරයට
නොයෙක් භාංගයෝ රිංගති	පෝලිමට
ඇවිත් රැ වැඩට පේ වෙන	රන් කඳට
සාදු සාදු ඇස් ලැබියන්	කළුවරට [9]

සරුවක් කඩේ ලේ විකුණන	සහෝදරී
සව් කරදාසි බටයට ළම රුහිරු	දුනී
නිරුවත් බඹරු හිත වට කොට දබර	වුණි
බඹරුන් අතේ නුඹ සරුවක් බඳුන	වුණි [4]

ඔව්වමක් නොවෙයි මහනුති අසනු	මැනා
පිව්ව මල් වඩම් ගෙල මළ පුඬුව	උනා
පුෂ්පරාග මිණි සේ ගම උන්නු	ළමා
සත්තකින් සෙළව වෙන්දේසියේ	දමා [4]

2.0 Methodology

The study on youth problems appeared in Sinhala Poetry is a literary and sociological research. The most important theory which can be applied on the study is Conflict Theory of Karl Marx. It shows that the Marxist critical method was used in it. The prominent poets were Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams and Terri Eagleton. Nevertheless, as per the Karl Marx described in *Capital* (1952), *The Communist Manifesto* (1955) are important to discuss the theory of Marxism. Karl Marx had a scientific point of view on social expansions. It is accepted that the point of Karl Marx is scientific even by those who refused Marxism [12] (Fonseka, 2005: 65). Marxism becomes different from ancient philosophical methods as it contains class deviation and socially accredited concepts in it [13] (Rodrigo, year not stated: 25). It is believed that those who possess higher income and receive the service of working people on wages are known as the capitalists. Those who sell their own human labor by working since they do not possess any production or property are known as the proletarian class in the society [14] (Publication of communist party, 2002: 40). Pioneers of this working force were the youth.

In addition, the youth problems are connected with sociology, psychology, and biology. The biological differences appear in youth when they grow were studied while mental status of them was keenly studied using Sigmund Freud's Freudian psychology. It is obvious that the youth problems are originated when they interact with the society. Sociological and psychological relationship is also plays an important role in this regards. Hence, this present study was focused on qualitatively analysis of the youth problem facts interpreted in poems written during 1970-2000 period.

3.0 Discussion

Based on the data, basically aforesaid theories were described according to the Literature, Sociology, Political Science, Psychology and Biology. Moreover, the special emphasis on the theory based on Marxism was evaluated using the contemporary modern poetry. The study revealed that the occurrence of the contemporaneous youth problems is basically influenced by the economy of the society. Existence of societal classes and its' related struggles directly proportionated with occurrence of youth problems. Every change happened in society related to the struggles shown in different societal classes and it has been showed in theories reveled by both Marx and Engels in their communist publication [15] (Mallikarachchi, 2003: 36). Through the youth problems interpretation in poems, the poet has showed the more sensitivity towards the labor class than the high class in the society. Amongst them some have showed the continence during the writing of poems.

Furthermore, the most sensitivity towards the youth problems have shown by the poets namely, Monika Ruwanpathirana and Parakkrama Kodithuwakku. Monika Ruwanpathirana discussed the youth problems related to female youth more while Kodithuwakku discussed the problems regarding the youth struggle more due to his direct involvement in this regard. Moreover, majority of youth problems based poems have been written by the Buddhadasa Galappaththi. Also, the proper and well utilization of language and imagery has been shown in the poetry which were written by Rathna Sri Wijesinghe. The poetry written by him showed the best creativity and similes. Accordingly, amongst the all the poets who have written poems based on youth problems, Kumara Hettiarachchi showed the best aesthetic value in his poetry.

4.0 Conclusion

Thus, the findings of this present study can be concluded that the economy factor has been directly influenced in the youth problems and has been interpreted in poetry written by many poets namely; Monika Ruwanpathirana, Parakkrama Kodithuwakku, Buddhadasa Galappaththi, Rathna Sri Wijesinghe and Kumara Hettiarachchi during the 1970-2000 period. Amongst them, poems written by Kumara Hettiarachchi exhibit highest aesthetic value.

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