

## **A. D. Hope as a Poet of Australian Reality**

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A. D. Hope is counted among the foremost poets of Australia. His poetry consists of profound patriotic emotions and everywhere he praises his country. But his descriptions quickly attract the attention of the readers because he is not simply a blind patriot and nationalist but is also equally aware of the glaring weaknesses and shortcomings of the Australian society which he has frequently pointed out in his works. This is why his poems are remarkable for their realism. He exercised very profound and powerful influence on contemporary Australian poetry. Another remarkable feature Hope as a poet is that he has not broken away from the traditional Australian poetry. He uses the traditional forms and rhythms to depict the contemporary Australian reality still we realize something of novelty in them because the treatment of theme is his own. Instead of following the old customs and patterns of thought, he has given a new mould to the ideas in Australian poetry and thus has widened the scope of treatment. He is not confined to the popular traditional praises as the other poets sing but he breaks this hollow and touches the evils of contemporary society. So, his poetry becomes a mirror of the prevailing conditions and a source of inspiration for the people to improve them. It is, in a way, a comment upon the contemporary values. He is wonderfully successful in this effort by his passion for reality, his experiences of unfulfilled love and a strong sense of isolation. With a deep searching insight he analyses everything impartially which has imparted universality to his poems. In fact, singing of Australia, he sings of the

weaknesses of human beings in general. This is why frequently his tone is didactic and grave along with being serious and painful. He often becomes bitter and satirical at those follies of human beings, particularly his countrymen when they are not easily prepared to mend their ways. In *Australia*, he is very bitter when he tells that the Australians are not much interested in their originality, rather they are happy in imitating Europe and particularly England in every sphere of their life.

The famous poem entitled *Australia* begins with his bitterness though his love for his country is unmistakably perceived. He looks at his country from the point of view of a countryman who has returned to his homeland after a long time and is shocked to see what has become of his nation. So, the poem begins with a shock of disgust and disappointment. He finds that nature also does not create any sentiment of pleasure rather it looks as fearful as the uniform of a soldier in the battlefield. This is the realistic expression of the poet's inner feelings. The country seems to be completely destroyed where there is no hope for future progress. This seems to be like the big paws of the sphinx that has clutched everything and the destruction is quite imminent. As a matter of fact, the sense of disappointment has become very deep in the poet. Like a visitor he has his own views for Australia and disagrees with the common countrymen who consider that their country is young. He says that it can be called young only in the sense that it was discovered very late but otherwise there is everything quite obsolete. So, those who say that Australia is like a Youngman are wrong since it lacks vigour and freshness of the youth. Here everything seems to be dead and lifeless. There is widespread desolation and loneliness which causes a strange fear in the heart of everyman. Everything, all the resources, human and natural seems to have been completely exhausted. There is no youthful activity anywhere but slackness and lifelessness like those of the old. This is why the poet disagrees that the country is young. Another idea also develops in the heart of the poet simultaneously. He feels that though the country is largely populated, it looks to be deserted and desolate. He compares his largely populated; it looks to be deserted and desolate. He compares his country to an elderly woman who has no hopes left in her

life. All her youth and beauty has withered away, though she is still prepared to feed the baby. The country can still yield great culture, but the people are hopeless and dead. In fact, Hope's disappointment is quite obvious. He is a patriot but it is not blind patriotism rather a realistic appraisal of his country. The poet laments the paucity of a distinct Australian culture and identity. The simile of youth, the women and feeding the baby is quite remarkable. There is a little touch of nature but even this is discouraging and gives the impression of hopelessness. In order to have a clearer understanding, it is necessary to quote a few lines from the poet:

*They call her a young country, but they lie:*

*She is the last of the lands, the emptiest,*

*A woman beyond her change of life, a breast*

*Still tender but within the womb is dry;*

As Hope looks at his country, he finds there nothing but completely widespread desolation where the people are no better than the dead. They are not the living beings with vigour and energy; rather they anyhow pull on with their life. This is why Hope calls them second hand Europeans. They have failed to establish any identity with Australia but still look at European countries and England for everything. So, they have lost all their originality. In fact, Hope is particularly angry at the fact that though, the Europeans and Englishmen have been living there for centuries there is no love in them for the country. They think that they are quite strangers and so in every field of life, they have become merely imitators. Naturally, there is nothing original. They have established five big cities for their habitation but even here the atmosphere of alienation is quite easily perceived. They think that they are not the aborigines and so the feeling of strangeness is very deep seated in their heart. This attitude is particularly responsible for the present miserable conditions. Consequently they are still there in the capacity of the colonizers.

The five cities are no more a national glory but they are quite like deep wounds which is soaking the whole life giving energy of the country so they are no better than the dead. They consider that England is their real home and think in terms of England as if in Australia, they are outsiders. This is natural that a secret fear scorches them all the time which has made the national life miserable. As a matter of fact, Hope feels that until a sense of harmony is developed, there is no future. The poet's dislike for his countrymen is quite obvious. They are the expression of the poet's contempt for his countrymen and so oft-quoted in literature. To quote a few lines in this connection:

*And her five cities, like five teeming sores*

*Each drains her, a vast parasite robber-state*

*Where second-hand European pullulate*

*Timidly on the edge of alien shores.*

The poet expresses his profound disappointment at the miserable state of his country. He is pained to see that the people have lost their life energy and originality. There is no harmony between them and the country and they look at England for everything since they still consider themselves foreigners in Australia. Even nature seems to be devoid of any colour or pleasure. The culture and civilization which they consider to be great is nothing because there is nothing original in them. The five big cities are like five sores which pain and suck the whole vitality so they are here nothing more than simply second hand Europeans. Though the poem is extremely pessimistic but at the end in the last two stanzas, Hope's optimism is realized. He consoles by saying that though the whole country is deserted, desolate and devoid of energy, yet there is still a ray of hope. After the presentation of the dismal picture of his country, the voice of the poet softens and he adopts a tone of consolation. He abruptly changes his attitude and thinks that in the world, everything has something great to offer. Even if the country is wild and deserted,

it does not matter much since many great thinkers and great civilizations have developed in the wild deserts. The country has always remained an attraction. Since prophets arise even in deserts, so there remains great hope for Australia also. It might also produce great prophets and great culture. Other civilized societies are merely 'lush jungles' in which intellectualism grows but no the prophets. The modern intellectuals develop their ideas but they are not really great. They grow only in the lonely places like the Arabian deserts and evolve a philosophy which is not an imitation but totally new and original. So, their contribution to humanity is immense. Therefore, great thoughts and culture will emerge in Australia also one day. Mention can be made to some of the lines of the poem:

*Yet there are some like me turn gladly home*

*From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find*

*The Arabian desert of the human mind,*

*Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come.*

Thus by means of his poetry, he comments on contemporary values and conditions and seeks to provide insight into human experience. If we analyze the whole poetic creation of Hope, we will find that it is replete with the element of intellectualism, it is not simply a narrative or description but that the poet wishes to say something to the readers through his poems. They are a peculiar amalgamation of intellect, experience and wide spread frustration. So, they are marked with a spirit of challenge and fearlessness. He points out the folly of Australians who boast of their great achievements but in fact it is nothing. He calls the modern civilization as worthless and misleading 'the lush jungle of modern thought'. But this tone of satire and bitterness is not visible everywhere. In poems like *The Death of the Bird*, his praise is of a different kind in which he is all praises for the mysterious attraction in the Australian land that:

*For every bird there is this last migration.*

He tells that the memory of this country haunts the visitors like the ghost and his heart is ever burning to come here again, 'Going away, she is also coming home'. Thus, his poetry is noteworthy for its diversity and thoughtfulness.

Hope has often been criticized for his classicism. He certainly possesses some classical traits in being a traditionalist in his poetic form but he has not adopted the classical pattern of thought or complication and artificiality of language. He is a poet who says everything quite directly. He has no desire to hide his reactions or say anything in round about ways. This imparts a touch of autobiography to his poems and they become a part of his own personality. In fact, a study of his poetry is the study of his nature and thoughts. Some people feel that there is paradox in his poems. He begins the poem with the realistic picture and closes it with great optimism. Thus, he inspires for more and more work and a bright future. The description of nature in the poems of Hope brings him near to the romantics and to some extent he is certainly the Australian romantic. The description of nature in *The Death of the Bird* and a few other poems prove this inclination of the poet. Nothing can be more graphic and romantic than the scene of the Australian sands:

*The sands are green with a mirage of valleys;*

*The palm-tree casts a shadow not its own;*

*Down the long architrave of temple or palace*

*Blows a cool air from moorland scraps of stone.*

However, along with this beautiful scene of Australia, his poetry is marked with

experiences of frustrated and unfulfilled love, destructive passion and the inner conflict and a sense of loss and guilt. The poetry, therefore, reveals this conflict at the centre. He is concerned with mental and psychological working of man particularly of Australians and warns them against such evils and so he often adopts the didactic tone. There is a sense of how we can progress and make our life great. He seems to be searching for some truth of life which he wishes to share with his readers. At the same time, there is a warning against the prevailing guilt. Thus, on the one hand, he depicts the horror and on the other hand fortitude to face life bravely and be prepared to mend our ways. This makes him the greatest of the Australian poets and he is always attached to his motherland.

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