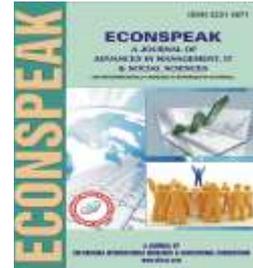




The Journal of Sri Krishna Research & Educational
Consortium

ECONSPEAK: A Journal of
Advances in Management, IT and
Social Sciences



Internationally Indexed & Listed Referred e-Journal

IDEA OF DISCUSSION IN SIEGFRIED SASSOON'S POETRY

Dr Aarti Gangan - posted at Govt College ,Ajmer.

Abstract; In contrast to other writers, Siegfried Sassoon's poetry show a startling difference in his perspective on war. This makes it possible to divide his poems into two groups: those written before the war ever began and those written after it ended. Sassoon's opinion on the war was profoundly changed as a result of his personal experiences throughout the conflict, going from a nationalistic viewpoint to an anti-war statement. Sassoon's exposure to the profound impact of these events was the primary cause of this transformation. Through the prism of Michel Foucault's concept of discourse, the current research will attempt to analyse Sassoon's pre-war writings and his literature depicting conventional combat, in particular his poems "Absolution", "The Effect", "Suicide in the Trenches", and "The Dug-Out". Because this research will examine Sassoon's pre-war writings and his poetry that reflects total war, this background is crucial. The results of this inquiry will demonstrate how easily, as was the case with Siegfried Sassoon, a patriotic language can change into an anti-nationalistic lexicon based on first-hand experience.

"Siegfried Sassoon, World War I, discourse, poetry, metamorphosis" are some related keywords.

Introduction

Discourse, which is crucial for the dissemination of knowledge and the transfer of power, allows for the development of new ideas as well as the validation of preexisting beliefs. It may engender particular feelings and thoughts through speech and nationality, which can subsequently be used to justify particular harmful acts. War is a prime illustration of this. As a result of this shift in discourse, people may start to view the world through a new lens or they may start to dislike a different ideology's discourse. Siegfried Sassoon, who is regarded as one of the poets of the First World War, wrote poetry throughout the fight that reflects both the nationalistic rhetoric and the anti-nationalistic vocabulary of the time as a result of his first-hand combat experience. His poetry emphasises the importance of words in the process of creating understanding and truth through doing this. In order to do this, this study will use Michel Foucault's concept of discourse to three of Sassoon's poems: "Absolution,"

"The Effect," and "Suicide in the Trenches." This will allow us to examine both Sassoon's pre-war writing and his poetry of the battlefield. Additionally, "The Dug-Out" will be covered. This inquiry will finally show how a nationalistic discourse can change into an anti-nationalistic language when it is conducted in light of the original sources as well as the relevant secondary data.

Siegfried Loraine Sassoon was born in the English county of Kent in 1886. He was the son of Alfred Ezra Sassoon and Theresa Georgiana Thornycroft Sassoon. The New Beacon School was where Siegfried Sassoon attended from 1900 to 1902. He then registered for Marlborough College. He started penning poems down after developing an interest in them at that point. He enrolled in Clare College in 1906, but he eventually left Cambridge without receiving a diploma from the institution. He really relocated to Weirleigh after leaving Cambridge after being convinced by the idea that Edward Marsh had first presented to travel to London so he could engage with Rupert Brooke. He was able to start a relationship with Brooke when he was in London. Sassoon enlisted in the Sussex Yeomanry Brigade on August 2, 1914. He was promoted as a captain in the Royal Welsh Rifles two years later, in 1915. He was dispatched to France in 1915. He was in Gallipoli at the time of his death, together with his younger brother Hamo. He received the Victoria Cross in recognition of his bravery in April 1916 when he saved injured team members from "no-land," earning him the nickname "Mad Jack" from his fellow soldiers. He had to be transported to England for medical treatment after falling ill even during the Battle of Salamis. He was wounded in the Battle of Arras after rejoining the front lines in 1917, and was sent to a hospital in the heart of London (Campbell, 1999: 11–22). "Thanks to Robert Graves, he was moved to the Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh because he was experiencing shell-shock: After Sassoon made a public statement against the war, Graves started a series of deceptive communications and favour requests to set up a medical board hearing that would spare him from a court-martial for desertion (Presley, 2010: 273). Sassoon returned to the front lines because he did not want to stay in England when his fellow men were suffering. The author of *Sherston's Progress* discusses it and makes the following comment on it. It was preferable to be in the trenches with individuals whose experiences I had understood and shared than with this assortment of civilians who, when one made intolerant generalisations about them, appeared to be either being shattered by the War or enriched and made important by it (Sassoon, 1983a: 43). Sassoon spent three months living in Palestine before relocating to France. On July 13th, he was accidentally shot and murdered by one of his soldiers. He married Hester Gatty in 1933, and the two went on to have a son named George. Nevertheless, the marriage was annulled in 1936. September 1, 1967 marked the passing of Siegfried Sassoon.

Sassoon's poetry is divided into two periods: before and after the war.

It is possible to evaluate Sassoon's private life's effects on his poetry and divide them into two groups: poetry before the Army and poetry after the War. His poems fall into both of these groups. Georgian Writing, which advocated that "the writer should aspire for honesty, life, and truth by duplicating honestly and authentically what he observed and felt," served as Sassoon's literary inspiration prior to World War I. Before the War, Sassoon's poetry shows

this motivation (Moore, 1969: 200). Sassoon initially supported the war because he thought the outfits were extravagant. His opinions shifted, though. He initially viewed the dispute as a chance to have some excitement and thrills (emphasis added). He also believed that combat poetry shouldn't be written in a style that is overly realistic. Sassoon wrote "A Soldier's Declaration" on June 15, 1917, in opposition to the war. He had harsh words for the citizens who were providing support at home. In support of this assertion, Sassoon offers the following justification: *"I am making this statement as an act of willful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defense and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow-soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation. I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust"* (qtd. in Ferguson, 1972: 217).

Because Robert Graves intervened on Sassoon's behalf, he was spared from both a court-martial and a sentence of jail for his actions. Because he was suffering from radiation sickness, he was taken to Craiglockhart Hospital in Edinburgh. In his proclamation, he voiced his vehement opposition to the war and sharply chastised those individuals who did not participate in the conflict.

Sassoon's beliefs evolved throughout time as a result of the impact of these situations and as he gained additional experience in the real world. Sassoon said in Sherston's Journey that he had come to the conclusion that the war had "remade" him and eliminated a great deal of the notions he had previously held (1983a: 101). His plans from before the war were ruined. During the conflict, death was almost inescapable, and everyone may have been murdered at any time. Sassoon, who was aware of this truth, wrote as following about the feelings that certain troops had:

"About 150 strong and healthy men, all wondering how soon they'll get killed and hoping it will be someone else (Sassoon, 1983a: 112). He started questioning the War more and more. Sassoon, who initially saw war as an adventure, changed his approach, on which he comments as follows: ,The War is outside of life and I'm in the War . . . in the darkness where I am alone my soul rebels against what we are doing" (Sassoon, 1983a: 113-122)

In this aspect, Sassoon came to an understanding over time of the unfairness of the Wars. On the one side, there were a large number of individuals and soldiers who passed away, but on the other side, there were individuals who lived in luxury and security while the conflict went on, which represented a striking contrast to Sassoon. Sassoon depicted the horrors of war as well as the mental degeneration and physical decay that accompany it. His sense of patriotism

had vanished. As a result, he describes how he is thinking in Sherston's Progression in the following manner:

How else could I start my life afresh after having no convictions about anything other than the fact that the wars was a cruel joke which had been put on me and my production? I don't even know where to begin. That, at any case, was an issue to be furious and furious now though since everything had come to pieces, the mind was in a tangle, and the emotions all were on strain. That was a reason to be enraged and enraged about (1983a: 149).

This can be seen, Sassoon went through a significant change by the time the war was over, which is what caused him to refer to the conflict as a deception. His anti-war beliefs had a significant impact on both the poems he wrote while serving in the battlefields and the poems he wrote after the war, particularly in this regard. This demonstrates that Sassoon's writing expresses both patriotic and anti-nationalistic ideologies simultaneously.

An Exposition on the Poems of Sassoon: "The Effect, Absolution, Suicide in the Trenches, and The Dug-Out".

Michel Foucault places a strong emphasis on the significance of speech since it is whatever defines individuals and what individuals use to define other things. People are able to converse from different points of view because of something called discourse. Discussion is also what generates information and what is impacted by information. It also influences the development of nationalistic, patriotic, jingoism, and chauvinism, in addition to having an effect on the formation of social and other behaviors. The relationship between discourse and power, understanding, and the development of the truth is quite tight. The formation of knowledge and the discovery of the truth are both influenced by power. The connection between authority and reality, as articulated by Foucault, is described as follows:

The truth is neither independent of power nor devoid of it. The myth that knowledge is the benefit of free thinkers is not true. The origins and functioning of this myth might benefit from additional investigation. . . nor the prerogative of those individuals who have been successful in achieving their own independence.

"The only way the truth can be formed is if several types of constraint are met. The reality is a thing that exists in this universe. In addition to this, it produces electricity in a consistent manner. Every civilization has its own system of truth, often known as its general politics of truth. This refers to the sort of speech that the culture tolerates and allows to operate under the guise of being true (1980: 131)".

As can be observed, the language and economics of reality in each civilization are distinct from one another. Under the impact of power dynamics, this economics or regimes of truth selects what should be included and what should be left out of consideration.

As a result, discourse is formed in a manner that is consistent with power structures, and the production of truth and speech is influenced by a number of diverse elements. In addition to

this, relations are perpetuated via particular institutions including schools, universities, and households. The following are some of Foucault's observations on the influencing role of power: Power needed to be able to regain access to the minds of individuals, as well as their deeds, emotions, and typical patterns of conduct in daily life (1980: 125). As a result, the nationalistic language is developed via the operation of many institutions. Its authority establishes its regimen of truth, which it uses to convince people to feel a deep passion for one's nation, and it uses this to its advantage. These sentiments of patriotism are also capable of being conveyed via the medium of poetry. Sassoon tends to reflect such a patriotic discussion in his pre-war poems, which implies Sassoon's "upper-class affinities and youthful conformism;" however, once he undergoes the Battle, Sassoon's later discourse shifts from being ethnocentric to being anti-nationalistic. Sassoon's pre-war poems implies Sassoon's "upper-class affinities and youthful conformism" (Matalon, 2002: 27-28).

This pre-war poetry by Sassoon, titled "Absolution," demonstrates Sassoon's early nationalism, which is influenced by the patriotic rhetoric of the day. Sassoon was a British poet. Because discourse provides or imposes a viewpoint on individuals, and because a reality is produced through into the lens of this viewpoint, it drives people to respond in a certain manner when they're confronted with a dilemma. In addition to this, it instructs individuals on how to respond to the circumstances and how to comprehend what is going on in front of them. As a result, it is easy to see the effect of the patriotic language in "Absolution," which claims the innocence of England's position and the glorious elements of the War. This is because the discourse asserts that the war was just and that England's purpose was just. The nationalistic speech that instills an intense love of one's nation in its residents is reflected in the poem in a way that is reflective of that language. The label is another piece of evidence that such a discussion has had an impact. Absolution is derived from the Latin term *absolutio*, which could be translated as either "acquittal" or "absolvere" (absolve). *Ab* may be translated as "away," and *solvere* means "to untie." Additionally, the term "absolution" may refer to "the act of forgiving someone for having done something wrong or wicked... a remission of sins announced by a priest" (Merriam-Webster).

One might make the case that "absolution" in this context refers to not just forgiveness but also glory and freedom from one's crimes. It's possible that the warriors' sin is the dread that they feel of dying. It is a kind of motivation for the warriors since it states that if they do not worry, then will have honor in their lives. Whenever they give their lives for their nation, death will set them free since they are making a selfless sacrifice for a worthy cause. They are led to feel that their transgressions would be overlooked. As a consequence of this enthusiasm, some nationalistic emotions have emerged. People may believe that they are conscious of what they are performing as loyal people; yet, it is likely that they are unaware of the fact that while they "know and control themselves, they are also known and controlled" (Love, 1989: 281). Therefore, people may be controlled by their words and behavior through the use of patriotic speech. Therefore, the things that the troops encounter may provide them with momentary pleasure and a certain level of knowledge; nevertheless, once the warriors are really in combat, the value of these things is significantly diminished. As a result, residents are put in a certain frame of mind as a result of the already formed discourse.

Humans have this artificially distorted glass via which they see the universe, which stops them from perceiving the world as it really is. As a result, this poetry focuses attention on Sassoon's nationalist rhetoric from before the war, as well as his vision of the conflict and his glorification of the conflict.

As can be observed, the patriotic speech is given considerable weight and importance throughout the poetry. Sassoon argues that individuals become more mature and intelligent as a result of fighting for and achieving their independence during wartime. The loss is substantial, but time will heal these wounds, and the joyous legion that is England will once again bask in the warmth of the sun. There are occasions when the troops don't want to give their lives for their nation because they do not wish to be separated from their friends and family. Nevertheless, since they bear the legacy of England and battle for their nation, they need to be proud and willing to give their lives if it comes to it. The following remarks made by Hall in regard to this subject might be helpful in gaining a perception of the situation: "Knowledge, which was formerly used to manage the behavior of others, necessitates the constraining, regulating, and disciplining of other individuals" (2001: 76). As a result, having knowledge of both one's own nation and of patriotism might demand self-control and compromise, as is the case with the patriotic rhetoric.

On the other hand, after Sassoon had seen and lived the battlefields for oneself, he felt less content with this poetry. This caused him to engage in an anti-nationalistic speech when he had personal contact with the war. Since of this change of events, he ultimately made the choice not to include it in any anthologies because the feeling it conveyed was utterly fake (Moore, 1969: 206). The following are Sassoon's remarks in response to this:

"The significance of my too nobly worded lines was that they expressed the typical self-glorifying feelings of a young man about to go to the Front for the first time. The poem subsequently found favour with middle-aged reviewers, but the more I saw of the war, the less noble-minded I felt about it (Sassoon, 1945: 17)."

After Sassoon was transported to a grand scale and he witnessed the horror of the War, that was no anymore pleased of this poetry, and he took another speech, which would be anti-nationalistic as well as anti-war. Sassoon is credited with writing some of the first examples of anti-war poetry.

The poetry "The Effect," which is quite distinct from "Absolution," is a poem that portrays Sassoon's anti-nationalistic thoughts about the Army after he saw the severity and the realities of the War for himself. The battlefield is described as having yellow sunlight and has conditions comparable to hell. There really are dead bodies strewn everywhere in every direction. The information that such locations, which formerly included a road, have now become unusable shocks the narrator. The decomposing bodies are writhing about in the wet. The definition of the term caper is "a frolicsome jump" (Merriam-Webster). This is a term that Sassoon employs to refer to the corpses that capered in the shower. Under normal conditions, it is difficult for the bodies to caper; yet, Sassoon brings this picture to awareness

via his literary imagination. Sassoon is known for his work in the field of drama and poetry. There are corpses hopping about and sentences that are bouncing, while there are so many dead people that it is impossible to count them all. The transformation of Sassoon's nationalism speech into anti-nationalistic language may be shown by all these pictures and depictions to some extent.

Another poem by Sassoon that demonstrates his anti-war sentiments is titled "Suicide in the Trenches." This anti-patriotic poetry also makes a few passing references to the pointlessness of the war. Since he does not have any goals or ambitions for the future, a young lad with little life experience makes the decision to enlist in the military because he thinks it is a decent choice. As a result of the fact that he doesn't have a purpose in life, Sassoon writes in "Suicide in the Trenches, 1983b: Line 2" that he "grinned at existence in hollow glee." The young man is alone, bereft of any optimism or light, despondent, and filled with nothingness. You might convey to the reader the impression of being in a gloomy place by using rhymes like "dark" and "lark." These pictures add to the overall style of the poem and bring attention to the profound change in Sassoon's point of view about the dialogue.

It is not a comfortable experience to learn about the dreadful mental and physical health conditions that the troops were subjected to. Sassoon illustrates the troops' discouragement, hopelessness, and unhappiness by using the terms "cowed" and "glum" in his writing. In addition, there are detonations, explosions, and flames, all of which make it harder to maintain one's physical and mental health. The troops have bad effects on both their bodies and their minds as a result of this predicament. Even if they drank all the rum in the world, it wouldn't be enough to help them remember the traumatic events and visions of the conflict. All of these circumstances make it more likely that someone may end their own life, just as the youngster does in the poetry. After this moment, patriotism can no longer be considered legitimate.

In this sense, Sassoon directs his criticism on those who attempt to benefit from the Conflict in the third line of the poem. He makes fun of the parents who feel a sense of accomplishment from their children's involvement in the war, pointing out that this achievement is ultimately fruitless. As Sassoon believes that war is not anything to be pleased of, he uses the words "you smug-faced people" to refer to individuals who are hypocrite and chauvinism (Sassoon-Suicide in the Trenches, 1983b: Line 9). Sassoon, Suicide in the Trenches, 1983b: Line 10" He wishes to inform those people who applaud as troops march by that they are truly making a mistake since the men are marching to fire and destruction (Sassoon, Suicide in the Trenches, 1983b: Line 10). Sassoon insinuated, via these words, that parents who send their kids to fight in the war likely do not have a realistic image of the battleground and are oblivious of the reality that they may soon learn of their deaths of children there. Therefore, this poem depicts how language develops power and understanding since people, most likely the judgment, who do not taking part in the War actually establish the patriotic discourse that Sassoon underlines via the poetry. This was composed by Sassoon in the early 20th century.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, our research has shown that first-hand combat experiences caused Siegfried Sassoon to undergo a profound shift in his poetic outlook, moving away from a patriotic approach and toward an anti-nationalistic stance. The assessment of the chosen poems has shown that it is feasible to see the significance of discussion in the creation of patriotic or anti-nationalistic emotions, which can play an important role in people's ability. This was revealed by the fact that it is able to perceive the significance of discussion in the creation of emotions. Before World War I, Sassoon penned a number of patriotic poems, such as "Absolution," in which he expresses the view that fighting for one's country is a noble endeavor.

Sassoon's work, on the other hand, underwent a substantial transformation as he became exposed to and witnessed the brutality of war. He attacked individuals on the domestic front for their apathy as well as those who attempted to benefit from the war despite the fact that they did not take part in the conflict themselves but instead inspired others to do so. His poems, in this regard, have what may be described as a "didactic vibe" (Silkin, 1972: 167).

REFERENCES

- Campbell, P. (1999). Siegfried Sassoon: A study of the war poetry. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland.
- Ferguson, J. (1972). War and the creative arts: An anthology. London: Macmillan.
- Foucault, M. (1980). Power/Knowledge. Pantheon Books: New York.
- Hall, S. (2001). Foucault: Power, knowledge and discourse. M. Wetherell, S. Yates, and et al. (Eds). Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader (pp. 72-81). New York: SAGE.
- Love, N. S. (1989). Foucault & Habermas on discourse & democracy. *Polity*, 22(2): 269-293.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Caper. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved January 23, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/caper>
- Moore, L. H. (1969). Siegfried Sassoon and Georgian realism. *Twentieth Century Literature*, 14(4), 199-209. doi:10.2307/440596
- Sassoon, S. (1983a). *Sherston's progress*. London: Faber and Faber. Sassoon, S. (1983b). *The war poems*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Sassoon, S. (1945). *Siegfried's journey 1916-1920*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Silkin, J. (1972). *Out of battle: The poetry of the great war*. London: Oxford University Press.