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THEME OF THE LOST GENERATION IN HEMINGWAY'S THE SUN ALSO RISES



Satpal Verma

INTRODUCTION:

The novel is the life story of a few individuals who had lost hop in their lives being affected by the war. It revolves around Lady Brett Ashley and the helpless Jake Barnes in an age of moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, human illusion and unrealized love. Lady Brett Ashley stands as a representative of the new women and appeals as a victim of the World War-I. She has lost her first husband who died

ABSTRACT

The term Lost Generation indicates to a period, which had lost its morality and ethics. It was coined by Gertrude stein to refer to a group of American Literary Notables who lived in Paris from the time period which saw the end of the World War-I to the beginning of the great depression. Earnest Hemingway popularized it quoting Stein You are a lost generation as a epigraph to his first novel The Sun Also Rises (1925). It encapsulates the angst of the post world War-I generation known as the lost generation.

KEYWORDS: morality, ethics.

SHORT PROFILE

Satpal Verma is Working as an Assistant Professor at Department of English in Shah Satnam Ji P.G. Boys' College, Sirsa (Haryana). manly qualities but the war has made him an unsatisfied soul of sexual relation with any women. In the hotel Georgette made certain advances to make sexual act with Jake but he stops her and expresses his despair before her, "everybody's sick, l' am sick too"² Thus Jake's wound and his incapacitation is an inerasable mark of a generation which was a victim of the First World War. Brett Ashley is a

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dysentery during the war and she was twice married and divorced by her lovers. Now she is 34 and seeking love in a lost world. In this context Jackson Benson remarks: "In response to her negative challenge, Jake, Mike and Cohn all to measure their manhood against her as a kind of catalyst. And their manhood is not measured by conjoins... but on the basis of the strength to see themselves clearly and the strength to bird themselves to an ideal worth living being"¹

Jake Barnes is another victim of the war. He is wounded in his genitals and is unable to make sex. He is injured in such a manner that he neither suppresses his desire nor satisfies it. He is full of symbol of the modern women. She is a transitional figure between the protected and idealized wife and a modern self reliant woman. She has been introduced in the novel in a very strong fashion. She enters the dancing club with a group of homosexuals. Jake is sitting with a harlot, Jake describes their arrival:

"A crowd of young men, some in Jerseys and some in their shirtsleeves got out. I could see their hands and newly washed away hair in the light from the door. The policeman standing by the door looked at me and smiled. They came in. as they went in under the light I saw hands, wavy hair, white faces grimacing, gesturing, talking

Asstt. Professor (Department of English) Shah Satnam Ji P.G. Boys' College, Sirsa (Haryana).

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Theme of the Lost Generation in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises

with them was Brett. She looked very lovely and she was very much with them."³

Brett's association with the homosexuals depicts the miserable conduction of Brett and her lust for sex. Sex for Brett was a more physical activity and no longer a medium for union between two persons. She is one of the lost spirits exploring the pleasure of the time with its new social relationship and conducts.

Along with Jake and Brett, the novel presents us with a group of expatriates such as Robert Cohn, Mike Campbell and Count Mippi Populous. He is a hollow man. He is introduced to Brett in the café by a Greek portrait painter, Zizi. The hollowness of Count is reflected at the very beginning of his introduction with Brett. He is immediately fascinated by Brett's beauty and offers her ten thousand dollars to go to Biarritz with him but she declines his offer. He tries to impress her by telling her his brave stories. He shows her the scass in his body. But Brett suspects him in values:

"Doesn't anything ever happen to your values?' 'No, Not anymore.' 'Never fall in love?'

'Always,' said the Count. I am always in love.'

'What does that do to your values?'

'That, too, has got a place in my values.'

'You have not any values. You're dead, that's all."⁴

Mike Campbell is another superficial character in the novel. He is known for his drunkenness and bankruptcy. He offers his marriage proposal to Brett but his love for Brett is merely a funny implication.

Home, family and religion have no meaning in the world where the expatriates live. Jake himself is vaguely from Kansas city but he never mention his family. We only know that the lover of Brett is dead in the War but nowhere in the novel, it is clear about her family or her law's family. Cohn gets money from his mother but never shows obligation towards her or the family. The Sun Also Rises also depicts the perversion in the religious belief of the people. None of the character sustains any religious belief. Jake is a nominal Catholic, but the church has not been much help to him. Brett Ashley in her garlic necklace down caller in Pamplona became a pagan alternative to true religious worship. In the end of the novel, Brett pleased with not behaving like a bitch says:

"It is sort of what we have instead of God"⁵

The way of work of the characters is also defective. The spirit of hard work for which American people were known is temporarily out of fashion on the left bank of Paris. Almost all the friends of Jake, except Pedro Romero, depend on other for their money. Mike Campbell and Robert Cohn receive money from their mothers. Brett's money comes from alimony payments. Nothing has been mentioned about the income of Bill Gorton.

Jake is the only person who has a regular Job. Yet he conveys the impression that he is not sincere towards his wok. At Burguete, Bill Gorton joking tells Jake:

"You are an expatriate. You have lost touch with the soil. You get precines. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become observed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You're an expatriate, see? You hang around cafes."⁶

But his sense of reasonability as a journalist proves that he is sincere person.

Brett's dealing with the characters and her personal character tell that she was a conformed member of the lost generation. She does not like other women and she is not, even, having female friends. She couldn't even imagine herself to the wife of a Spanish bull fighter. Social tradition and familiar finding has no meaning for her. She gives much importance to the long hair than her love to Romero. Observing Brett's behavior Leslie Fiedler says: "Brett never becomes a woman really;

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Theme of the Lost Generation in Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises

she is mythic zed rather than redeemed. And she is the most satisfactory female character of Hemingway; this is because for once she is presented not as an animal or a nightmare but quite audaciously as a goddess, the bitch goddess with boyish job, the Lilith of the Twenties".⁷

But other than this outer surface where we find perversion of love, loss of morality and erosion of human values, there is an inner surface which still shows hope and faithfulness. When there occurs a conflict between Romero and Brett, taking the affair of long hair Brett decided to leave Romero, she could have gone to Robert Cohn or Count Mippi Populous or any other lovers to spend the rest of her life, but she did not do that, she sought the company of Jake. This is, in fact, an ideal decision of Brett and she is very particular in recognizing the true value in men. Although she knew that Jake was emasculated and unable to make any sexual act with her yet she decided to live with him. Earlier also she sought Jake's view before going to other places. This attitude of Brett tells that she was not blind for mere sexual act, she was intelligent enough to choose a true lover in Jake Barnes.

Jake Barnes is an immortal creation in the novel. He understands the value of love and friendship for which Brett returns to him completing a full circle and almost all his friends seek his advice before taking any important decision. Praising him Bhim S. Dahiya says:

"Jake's devotion to his work and his serious commitment to the humane values of love and friendship indicates his active celebration of life".⁸

Thus, The Sun Also Rises clearly demonstrates that at least, Jake Barnes and Brett Ashley are no longer lost at the end of the novel. They do experiment in the beginning of the novel and remain lost for a limited time and when they understand the reality of life they take a firm decision and return to their previous life and their love. They do not remain lost for over like Mike and Cohn. So Hemingway's Lost Generation is not generation. We may conclude with Ernest Hemingway's observation:

"They were as solid as any other generation and the words Lost Generation were a piece of high bombast".⁹

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certainly lost, it is as much lost as any other

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