

Documentation Of The Soviet Soul: An Evaluation Of The Works Of Svetlana Alexievich

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Abstract

The present research focuses on the evaluation of the works of Svetlana Alexievich in context to the subject of representation of the Soviet man in her texts. Alexievich writes non-fiction and has written five major works that are collectively called the Voices of Utopia. The soviet soul which remains unrepresented because of the political oppression they faced find a voice in her texts. These texts inherently are in the form of documentation of the narratives of the people who were a part of the Soviet Union, and focuses on the major historical events and their impacts on the lives of the people. Following the Russian tradition of writing, the historical events coincide with the people getting majorly affected in their personal and collective lives. These collective documentations give us an understanding of the struggles of the common man which do not find representation in any of the history text books. There are only grand narratives of the nation available in various texts, but nothing in the sort of Alexievich's representation. The history of the common people is under consideration in this paper through the works of Alexievich.

Key Words- Documentation, Representation, Voices, Soviet Man.

1. INTRODUCTION

Svetlana Alexievich is a documentarian of the voices of the people that she hears on streets and through the interviews she conducts. Her approach towards her writing is to present the readers about the details of the lives of a soviet man, the man who has continuously been at the war front because of the social and the political structure of the nation. After winning the Nobel Prize in literature in the year 2015, Alexievich gained immense popularity and her works got the attention of the international reader fraternity. In her journey of writing which began, with her writing in the Russian texts and her native Belarussian language, the books have been translated into different languages over a period of time, that has paved way for the representation of Alexievich and analysis of her works with regards to various contexts. The excellent pattern of the Voices of Utopia is an accumulation of the Red man's life i.e. about a Russian man. Alexievich demonstrates her place of composing narratives through cementing of the writings that she has created, relating with the precision of the circumstance the people have endured. The battle of almost thirty years, that too by performing an on-field research isn't normal in the field of traditional writing. Svetlana Alexievich is a Belarussian columnist and an author. She can be named as a contemporary history specialist. Making another imprint in the scholarly composition in literature is that, she has opposed the customary classifications, to introduce the tales of individuals in an unexpected way. Instead of

fictionalizing the characters or in a straightforward manner composing personal histories or diaries, she has formulated alternative method of portrayal of the voices, by creating an awareness and formation of expounding on their lives, not through the individual view point but as a training for the network linked to the community as a whole. Her artistic roots are arranged in the methodology of planning the accounts of declaration of people's tragedies. Being site explicit in nature, she offers herself in the process of hearing somebody's life and afterward composing the story setup in the place of happening and compiling the pieces of the man left behind in the journey. Her position of extension of sympathy and cultivating joint efforts for her voices and the subjects which are involved in the process of revealing their personal truths is significant for this paper, paying special attention to the proportion of viability of her works.

In her keynote compiled in the text, *In Search of The Free Individuals* (2018) she says: "For over 30 years I chronicled the Red Empire. This unprecedented communist project spanned a vast territory and affected an enormous number of people . . . The Red Man that I write about is a creation of the soviet idea, the builder of communism, as he called himself." (Alexievich 3). Alexievich is assertive in her stance of writing about her subject matter. Her chronicles of the Russian man, which is unique and opens about the debate of a need for the representation of the history parallel to the narratives which talk about the quests and conquests of the nation. She is writing about everyone involved in the society, from a man who has fought the war, to a woman who is a sister, a mother, and a wife and even about the young children affected by wars and other traumatic events in their life being a soviet person. She understands her subjects as she shares a common heritage with them, her documents may carry the name of the narrator, but her involvement in the texts is indispensable, she writes, what she evaluates, not the exact words of the narrator, presenting the story. She picks up lines, cut pastes the paragraphs which she thinks are important, hence she is too the subject in the representation, in every story she is a participant as well as the one who documents the actions of the others.

The creation of documentary composition is itself a supposition of formation of precision of the life of the individuals. By speaking to the ones who have encountered a particular incident she becomes a distinguishable writer, customarily writing against the comprehended literary models, that is by and large the style and anecdotal qualities exclusive to her. The reality gets demolished and the quintessence of the message of the honesty goes under uncertainty for the ones who have experienced it, if things are not represented the way they actually happened. As it needs be, it gets critical to watch the texts of Alexievich, who is similarly is being presented and considered as an observer, and isn't simply pushing realities of individuals or sentiments of the network of the other people who have encountered certain incidents but is very much a part of it, therefore her role should not be looked in isolated, rather the writer turns into a " guarantor of existential authenticity"(Nycz, 1993) . To take a gander at it in a specialized manner, the method encourages Alexievich to be substantial and be sensible in nature for the readers. Testimonies to understand in the less complex variant are survivors, they have an association with the past incidents and a longing to leave the past, relooking, rewinding his/her character in the performed demonstration of the portrayal of the story and to the resistance to the actuality of the incident, needing to remain in the past in many cases becomes difficult, and the occasions and expressions that have previously happened and are irreversible in nature and have a deep impact. There is a battle to restrict the past, and similarly not acknowledge the change, that the individual has been presented as a survivor, which is basic while drafting her works and the opposition of the words and emotions is evident on analysis. Alexievich's vision can be better perceived when we zero down our standpoint to the Belarussian writing tradition. She follows Ales Adamovich her guide, and tries to create her new style of documentation.

Her first text, *Unwomanly Face of War* is about the representation of the women that have been a part of the WWII and the struggles they have had at the war front and in their family lives after the war, the narrative pattern documents their part of the history as the women of the war have never received the mentions they deserved, not just the women at war, she also documents about the women who had been housewives and got widowed during the war at a young age and raising their children during hard times. The second novel, *Last Witness: Unchildlike* stories are about hundred and one young children who had lost their childhood due to the WWII, many had become orphans and many of them got separated from their families, finding a shelter with unknown people and under extremely difficult circumstances. Her third novel, *Boys in Zinc* is about the Soviet-Afghan war, the war which saw many young Soviet boys die for a cause that was politically motivated, it gives a detailed account of the men that were in the war, their mothers who lost their children. The reception that they received after the war ended in the Soviet Union's defeat tells the partiality and vanity of the lives lost for the political gains. The accounts that even people don't wish to remember are a part of the final product of the text. Her fourth novel title, *The Chernobyl Prayer* is about the change of the lives that took place after the events of the Chernobyl disaster happened. The nuclear disaster that rocked the nation had medical effects on people but more than that it caused a social stir among the habitants of the region, the aftermath of the incident, they way people suffered through the journey being infected losing their loved ones, to the journey of people moving from the homes abruptly without having a formal understanding of the nature of the effect the disaster could cause. The fifth novel, *The Second Hand Time* is about the aftermath of the breaking up of the Soviet-Union into fifteen republics and how the generation which called themselves Soviet people suddenly got divided into natives of different countries. The sense of rootlessness and identity crises is evident in the narratives of this novel. "I LOVE LIFE IN ITS LIVING FORM, life that's found on the street, in human conversations, shouts, and moans. That sort of life is genuine, not yet shaped by someone else's ideas or talents." (3) Therefore, her idea of writing is, about the ordinariness of the life and the events.

According to Alexievich, "It's important not to miss the conversational part of life, which we often neglect, dismiss as unimportant, leaving it to disappear in the bustle of life, in the darkness of time. It seems surprising that this could be literature. But I want to make every bit of our life into literature. Including ordinary, everyday words." (20). It becomes extremely important to understand the soul of the people in her writings. This is her literature, being from a background of journalism and journalistic writings in her life, she wants this to become a part of the mainstream literary writing. More than that the context of her writing manages to capture the soul of the people. Under the crises situation she has managed to interview the people again and again listening to their silences and finding meaning in their ordinary actions. Her texts are living documents which will stay forever in the public space for the people to know about the collective histories and the individual nuances she has tried to capture and note down. Her creativity lies in the nature of bringing the most important and utterly relevant factor that needs to be put forward in someone else's story. She at times becomes a part of the narrative herself and the evidences of which can be seen in the texts. Her outlook towards life and an understanding of the need to document the realities of the people makes, her works extravagant and celebratory. The Soviet man forever stays in her novels even if politically and historically it has been long dead. Her books are representational in nature and narrate the parallel history of the people for the world to understand the collectiveness and the social structure that Soviet Union was actually a part of.

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