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Surrealist movement in Literature

Surrealism was a concerted movement which began in France with the publication of 'manifesto on surrealism' by Andre Breton in 1924. The manifesto advocated liberalism in expression, freedom from all restraints and free functioning of human mind. The meaning is that social and artistic conventions, logic, reason, creation by forethought etc. must not be any bar to the creator. The surrealists believed in the unhindered production of human mind. They tried to use the dream materials and the mystery of the unconscious. Surrealism was a revolutionary movement in painting and sculpture but it influenced literature also. Herbert Read has defined surrealism as "a re-affirmation of the romantic principle - a process like that of life, of creation, of

liberation." We may say that it was "The Renaissance of wonder." According to Dr. D. P. Verma a Surrealist Painter, "turns all perceptive faculties inwards, to the realm of his subjective fancies, his day dreams, his pre-conscious images. He replaces observation by intuition, analysis by synthesis, reality by super reality. The dream and the reality resolve, therefore, into a reality absolute, a surreality."

Arnold Hauser describes it thus, "The dream becomes the paradigm of the whole world picture, in which reality and unreality, logic and fantasy, banality and sublimation of existence, form an indissoluble and inexplorable unity."

There are two sources of the Surrealists' inspiration - (i) psychic automation and (ii) the mystery of the unconscious. The first is concerned with the

True process of thought and the second is concerned with the translation of objects into strange, horrible and sentimental forms. Hence the main doctrine of this school believed in three things - (i) higher reality of certain forms of association (ii) omnipotence of dreams and (iii) detached play of thought.

The Surrealists were of the belief that there "hidden springs of the unconscious" can be tapped only if imagination is given free play and if thought is allowed to be automatic. The result will be a new truth arising out of the chaos of the unconscious and the irrational. Andre Breton has called the plunging into the unconscious "a vertiginous descent into ourselves." It is like plunging into the whole force of mental personality. By doing this they take over the psycho-analytical method of free-association that is the automatic develop-

(v) dreamlike in sequence.

It is very important to note that its general influence remained confined to a relatively small group of its professed adherents like Andre Breton, Louis Aragon and the painter Salvador Dali or Andre Masson. The influence direct or indirect, can be seen in many prose and verse writers such as Dylan Thomas, Henry Miller, Thomas Pynchon and William Burroughs.

According to Lawrence Durrell, the work or the endeavour of the Symbolists was greater than those of the Surrealists. This becomes clear when we read Breton. "For where the Surrealists are trying to provoke an emotion, Rimbaud was trying to describe a state. What was this state? We can not say ~~clearly~~ clearly. But we feel it every time we hear those agonised ac-

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ment of ideas and their reproduction without any rational moral or aesthetic censorship. The repressed contents of the unconscious mingled freely with the more conscious images and as a result a new form of art comes before us. man ~~must~~ Ernst had a symbolic vision and as true and enthusiastic realist breaks down all the barriers, then comes a super-reality where real and unreal, meditation and action mingle and dominate. The following points can be deduced from the above elaboration:-

- (i) dependence on dreams and unconscious
- (ii) automatism of creative activity - any form of art must be unpremediated
- (iii) manipulation of the sense of contrast
- (iv) a slow unfolding of the situation giving a nightmarish sensation