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Anti-War Messages in the Songs of John Lennon

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Abstract

This study endeavors to explore Lennon's songs as an expression of rage and rebellion of the common Americans against the bitter realities of the contemporary American war politics of the 1960s and 70s and of the prevailing socio-economic and cultural injustices. It illumines a reality that alternative cultures like drugs, alcohol, homosexuality, nomadism and mystic vision, perceived reprehensible by the contemporary mainstream culture, were in fact manufactured out of harsh American socio-political context. By projecting the painful experiences of the victims during the time of war, the research engages with the extraction of themes like terror of the nuclear arms race and poverty, racism, prison and war, buried in Lennon's compositions and thereby revealing Lennon's association with such subcultures to counter and to subvert the mundane, the rationality and material hunger of the mainstream culture in the then America.

Keywords: Bagism, Counterculture, Disenfranchisement, Nutopia, Peace.

John Lennon as a Countercultural Icon: An Introduction

This research is an attempt to explore the role of popular culture in establishing subculture in America. The anti-war songs selected for this research are the solo songs of John Winston Ono Lennon which made him a countercultural icon. The songs that have close inclination with anti-war spirit and thirst for peace that serve to frame counterculture in America are "Give Peace a Chance", "Imagine", "Happy Xmas(War Is Over)" "Instant Karma" and "I Don't Want to Be a Soldier Mama". The songs portray the mechanism of disenfranchisement when American Evangelicalism and her engagement in Vietnam War had crushing effects on general public of America and the people around the world. During the 1960s and 70s when the United States of America was considered a political and cultural heavy weight, Lennon's songs came to question the policies and practices that contributed to the

subjugation of people other than American Upper-Class whites. This paper looks upon John Lennon as not only a musical but also a counter-cultural phenomenon.

Lennon was an English singer, songwriter, musician and peace activist who achieved worldwide fame as the founder, co-lead vocalist, and rhythm guitarist of the Beatles. Lennon as a political and peace activist continued to speak out about the war in Vietnam and was vocal about his pacifist beliefs, “if someone thinks that love and peace is a cliché that must have been left behind in the sixties, that’s his problem. Love and peace are eternal” (qtd. in Mitchell 3). Lennon was a constant advocate of peace and insisted that peace is not hard to imagine if everyone focused on humanity. The Hippie movement which started in the early 1960s protested against the war in Vietnam. Thousands of young men refused to join the army. Mitchell substantiates that the Hippies left their homes and lived in communities with other young people where they wanted to live in peace and love:

The center of Hippie culture was San Francisco, California. This movement influenced a lot of artists. The Hippie culture was generally connected with drugs and sexual revolution by promoting free love. Two drugs which are regarded as the sixties drugs are cannabis (marihuana and hashish) and LSD. Marihuana was widely used among the young who wanted to experience something new, to escape from their parents’ world. LSD opens a field of new experiences to the user, perception is much more intensive, colors and sounds are distorted. (9)

These lines show that the countercultural movement brought about a hunger and search for peace. Lennon’s song resonated the same contemporary dissident voices against American aggression and fundamentalism as is vivid in Vietnam War and racial apartheid towards Afro-Americans. He recants American and political hegemony over the rest of the cultures and nations.

More than a form of entertainment, Lennon’s lyrics were created to get the public aware of what was going on in the world. Lennon during this time assembled with various musicians and literary figures who attained to the oppositional block: a group of anti-war activists who sang for the general amelioration of people around the world, particularly for American citizens. He held a “Bed-in” for peace campaign. The idea of bed-in was derived by a “sit-in” in which a group of protesters remains seated in front of an establishment until they are evicted, arrested, or their demands are met:

John and Yoko were newlyweds and they knew that their marriage would be a huge press event, so they decided to use the publicity to promote world peace. So they invited the media to cover their honeymoon at the Hilton hotel. On March 25, 1969, after they got married, they invited the press to their honeymoon room at the

Amsterdam Hilton telling them that something big was going to happen. The press, expecting sex, came to the room only to see them in bed fully clothed. (Mitchell 28)

Lennon and Ono were holding a week long bed-in to protest all of the suffering and violence in the world. Many countercultural figures of the time like Timmy Leary, Rosemary, Tommy Smothers, Bob Dylan, Tommy Cooper, Derek Taylor, Norman Mailer, Alan Ginsberg and Hare Krishna devotees from ISKCON sang “Give Peace a Chance” along with him which was a peace anthem for stopping the war in Vietnam immediately. This way of protest changed the ways of writing lyrics at that time and many singers started to follow Lennon’s way.

Lennon punched American expansionist and hegemonic policy right on its face. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the policies of the government specially the Vietnam War. He warned the politicians that nobody has the right to subjugate another human being in terms of nationality, gender or color. Parallel to his anti-establishment outrageous expressions that spurred from his experience, Lennon was also influenced by other non-conformist activists like John Sinclair. Lennon was involved in the “Free John Sinclair” campaign. Poet John Sinclair has been described as a pioneer in the counter-cultural movement that began in the 1960s. He has been on at the forefront of the underground publishing movement, managed rock bands, organized concerts and was also founder of the White Panther movement- a group of white left wing activists united in sympathy with the radical civil rights organization, the Black Panthers: “In 1969 he was imprisoned by possessing a small amount of marijuana. His plight and legal appeal challenging the constitutionality of Michigan’s draconian marijuana laws inspired a freedom rally and concert” (Mitchell 22). Sinclair was released after a 29-month campaign to gain his freedom climaxed in the mammoth, “John Sinclair Freedom Rally” at Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor, Michigan on December 10, 1971. He sang a protest song “Free John Sinclair” which helped John Sinclair’s release from the prison possible. His argument for “decriminalization of marijuana” was seen by the government as an anti-nationalistic campaign and was often arrested for marijuana possessions. In the song he writes, “They gave me ten for two/ what more can the bastards do” (25-26) arguing on the unjust marijuana laws of America.

Review of Literature: Counterculture and Music

The American government saw counterculture as self-indulgent, pointlessly rebellious, unpatriotic, and destructive of America’s moral order. So, they charged false crime against the counter culturists and shackled them in prison. Theodore Roszak, in *The Making of a Counterculture* (1969), claims that it was horrible to make sense of these new developments. “To escape the wasteland,” says Roszak, “we must cease to censor our dreams, annihilate the stopwatch and open the doors to perception” (8). Roszak calls for a communitarian approach to work, a participatory democracy that could not be blueprinted but would certainly involve de-urbanization, a return to Mother Earth: “with the help of dissenting technicians and dropped out

professionals, a new kind of society would combine modern knowledge with ancient animism” (69). Songs of Lennon incorporated the theme of rejection of U.S. mainstream culture and a retreat to suburbia as a personal escape from shared social problems about the city life.

In January 1967, twenty thousand people gathered in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park for a Human Be-In, where they listened to the acid-rocking. Some tried “Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) or mescaline for pleasure as well as (so they saw it) for opening their minds to the intuitive truths of life” (Roszak 14). Together with student activism and protest, new forms of cultural expression emerged among the nation’s youth. In an amazingly short period in time, youth’s clothing and hair styles changed radically. At Berkeley’s 1964 Free Speech demonstrations, young men wore coats and ties, women skirts and sweaters, Jackson Wilson writes in *America’s History* (1990) on the nature of fashion adopted by the then youths, “by the time of the antiwar protests, just three or four years later, youths defiantly dressed in a ‘unisex’ fashion that featured ragged blue jeans, tie-dyed T-shirt, beads, and other adornments” (40). Even the boys kept long, unkempt hair and the girls cut the hair short and walked bare chest which symbolized this cultural revolt.

Allen Ginsberg and writer Jack Kerouac pioneered in articulating the personal alienation that was at the base of much of the rebelliousness of 1960s: “they experimented with drugs, and helped revive interest in folk music” (Wilson 940). What really defined the emerging youth generation was its music, as Jackson Wilson writes in *America’s History*, “rock and roll sprang forth in the mid 1950s, it developed from the white country and western music, black rhythm and blues and other sources” (42). Throughout the 1960s, as English journalist Godfrey Hodgson noted, “popular music coincided uncannily with the changing political moods” (qtd in Wilson 40). “Tune in, turn on, drop out” and “Make love not war” became catchwords for youthful alienation. Lennon resonated those ethos in his musical creations. By 1970, the youth culture had revolutionized life-styles and cultural expression. Even as political activism and rebellion waned, their spirit was absorbed and marketed by consumer culture: “symbols of cultural defiance were co-opted and homogenized by the mass culture” (Wilson 42). Lennon’s “Give Peace a Chance” became the peace anthem which protested on the warmongering tendency of the politicians.

According to author and music critic Barney Hoskyns, who documented San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district during the second half of the 1960s in his book *Beneath the Diamond Sky*, “this early hippie lifestyle of the Merry Pranksters was fueled by the music of the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, and other rock groups” (qtd. in Perone, 4). Hoskyns writes that members of the San Francisco Beat scene in the North Beach area referred to the “Merry Pranksters and other LSD-taking, longhaired, young people as hippies, a pejorative term originally used by African-American jazz musicians to describe the white beatnik hangers-on in

the jazz scene” (5). Originating in the North Beach area, the hippie scene found a more hospitable home in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the flourishing of an American counterculture that affected many walks of society. “The movement’s music provided the soundtrack for this bellwether time in American cultural history,” Smith et.al. in “The Counter Cultural Rebellion” contend, “such performers as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Phil Ochs, Arlo Guthrie, The Doors, John Lennon, James Brown, Jimi Hendrix, and The Grateful Dead ushered in new sounds, as well as new attitudes and philosophies for an emerging generations” (958). Smith et. al. further reiterate over the musical contributions on the formation of counter culture:

With vibrant narrative chapters on the role of music in the anti-war movement, the Black power movement, the women’s movement, political radicalism, drug use, and the counterculture lifestyle, James Perone details the emerging issues explored by performers in the sixties and seventies. A chapter of musicians’ biographical sketches provides an easily accessible resource on significant performers, recordings, and terminology and history. (59)

The *American History through Music* series examines the many different styles of music that have played a significant part in the nation’s history. While volumes in this series show the multifaceted roles of music in culture, they also use music as a lens through which readers may study American social history. The authors present in depth analysis of American musical genres, significant musicians, technological innovations, and the many connections between music and the realm of art, politics, and daily life. Lennon’s music encapsulates the overall contemporary sentiments of the then society.

Problems, Objectives and Methodology

Several postwar conditioned fostered an unprecedented sense of independence and even rebellion among American youth. “Many failed to understand in such prosperous times the frugal ways of their parents, who survived but not forgotten the Great Depression and years of wartime austerity” Jean Ferris puts it in *America’s Musical Landscape*, “military families experienced frequent relocation, particularly unsettling to children and teens, whereas youths in more stable conditions often had mothers working outside the home, filling jobs vacated by men still in the military” (214). These and numerous other social and economic conditions caused a serious, unprecedented gap in communication and understanding between adolescents and their parents.

The spirit was waxed strong among youth African Americans returning from war to find the equality they had experienced on the battle-field bluntly denied them in the domestic workforce. Spurred by the injustice of the social discrimination, the civil rights movement

steadily gained momentum, and black power became a force to be reckoned with. This generational gap resulted in the involvement of youths in countercultural music, as Ferris puts it:

Meanwhile, popular music after World War II became increasingly diversified, generally moving away from instrumental music back to song. This youth generation perceived swings bands as too polished, the Performers' dress too formal, and the shows too structured to please them. Mainstream pop's sentimental ballads, suitable for the slow dances popular among young adults, could not satisfy the restless teenage audience, and the complexity of modern jazz primarily instrumental, often dissonant, intended more for listening than for dancing simply antagonized them. More and more young white people preferred the vital, stirring sounds of black *gospel* music and *rhythm and blues* to the music their parents had enjoyed. (215)

As in many movements throughout history, music of the Vietnam era served as a rallying cry and a cause for action. However, it was not necessarily the music but the message there was in the music. It was a form of communication that served as a uniting factor for a population that felt disenfranchised, much like the blacks during the civil rights movement. The message brought out emotions that made you feel angry. While the war had a numbing effect on everyone under the age of 30, the music would bring out the emotions of fear and anger that brought about the need to do something about it.

Anti-war music focused mostly on the war abstractly along with the possibility of nuclear annihilation, which reflected the fear and anxiety Americans were feeling at the height of the Cold War. Early anti-war music came in the form of newly composed folk songs by artists such as Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan. The first commercially successful anti-war protest song of the era was Pete Seeger's 1961 composition "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" Many referred to it as perhaps the best-known song of Vietnam. John Lennon's "Imagine" was another widely popular anti-war song that made a tremendous commercial impact more than once during the Vietnam conflict.

Message of Peace and Reconciliation in Lennon's Songs: Result and Discussion

Working on rhetorical analysis, the purpose of this research is to understand rhetorical processes through the study of symbolic artifacts of John Lennon's songs. At the height of the Vietnam War "Give Peace a Chance" became an anthem of peace movement in America. Lennon insisted that peace should be given a chance: "All we are saying give peace a chance" (1). "Give Peace a Chance" is a declaration representing the common people of U.S urging to settle things peacefully in Vietnam and stop the bloodshed. It is a timeless anthem for much of what is happening in our world today. The readers/listeners feel deeply connected with the

simplistic lyrics and rhythmic quality of the song. Moreover it is the plea by Lennon to the U.S to stop war in Vietnam and alludes to the urgency for the United Nations to end this war, “Integration, Meditations, United Nations, Congratulations” (15). In the first verse, Lennon lets the reader know his stance on the political issue of war. He demonstrates this through the line “All we are saying is give peace a chance,” (1) telling the readers/listeners that he or she should strive for peace not war. Additionally, in the lines “Ev’rybody’s talking about/ Ministers, Sinisters, Banisters and Canisters” (7-8) Lennon shows the involvement of ministers, sinister, and canisters during this time of war. The term “Minister” reflects how religious preferences, most commonly Christianity, had an effect on a person’s view of war. The next term, “Sinisters”, is referring to the evil and menacing people who were involved in the war. Finally, the mention of the term “Canisters” is showing the technology and weapons of war; a canister held many shells, or bullets, that were contained in a gun to be used in the war. In the last verse, Lennon mentions numerous well-known countercultural figures, “John and Yoko, Timmy Leary, Rosemary, Tommy Smothers, Bobby Dylan, Tommy Cooper, Derek Taylor, Norman Mailer, Alan Ginsberg, Hare Krishna,” (19-21) who vehemently attacked on the U.S foreign policy and the useless war that had been fought in Vietnam. They created a term “Bagism” in this song: “Bagism was their way of showing the importance of ideas over appearances by concealing themselves in bags” (Solt 149). According to Urish, Lennon was always against the discrimination that the U.S government did for the colored people and focused on treating people with equality despite of their race, color and class: “Lennon refers to wearing a bag over someone’s head. He further explained his idea that if a person wore a bag over his or her entire body, a person could not be judged by others on the basis of race, sex, or other physical attributes” (23). Lennon was a true countercultural icon who believed on love, peace and harmony. This song reflects Lennon’s views on the Vietnam War and war in general.

Lennon’s “Imagine” was written during the height of the war in Vietnam, the first Nixon administration and the peace movement. Lennon was trying to point out what measures can be taken to prevent war and other unhappy realities. The view of the song is of social reform and very political. It was a protest song that was written in 1971, during the Vietnam War:

Imagine there’s no heaven

 It’s easy if you try

 No hell below us

 Above us only sky

 Imagine all the people

 Living for today. (1-6)

In the song Lennon expresses the idea of religion, heaven and life after death. He asks us to imagine that there is no heaven or hell, no countries, and no possessions, painting the picture of a peaceful world. People would live for today and not for where they may be tomorrow. In the second verse he asks us to imagine having no countries, so that there would be no war between them. Lennon is trying to point out what measures can be taken to prevent war and other unhappy realities. His song "Imagine" shows his opposition in America's involvement in the Vietnam War. The song insists on social and political reform. A protest song during the Vietnam War, it was meant for a large audience of not only hippies, but anyone who supports peace:

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace. (7-12)

This song reflects Lennon's belief, and those were that there should be one world without division between countries without religion, and without materialism. It was Lennon's idea of a perfect world. The chorus, "You may say I'm a dreamer/ But I'm not the only one" (13-14) points out that although his ideas may seem far-fetched, there are others who have the same ideas.

It is hard to miss the fact that this is a song aimed at peaceful relations with such phrases as; "Imagine all the people/ Living life in peace," (11-12), "A brotherhood of man," (20), "Imagine all the people/ sharing all the world," (21-22) and "I hope someday you'll join us/ And the world will live as one" (25-26). The theme is that if we all change the way we divide ourselves from each other we can live together in a better place. This song contains simple words yet it is so profound.

The song is asking the listener/reader to give up discrimination based on ethnicity, social class, religion and nationalism. Lennon argues that these prejudices can be eradicated when we stop believing in these categories that separate people. Almost any war ever fought had to do with religious beliefs. It wouldn't have happened if everyone could practice tolerance or even thrive with theological debate. There has been ethnic cleansing and genocide prevailing in the whole world and Lennon is trying to make clear that it can all stop if one has the courage to spread hand with the people of the world. In Geoffrey Giuliano's book *Lennon in America*, Lennon sarcastically explains his songs revolutionary ethos, "Imagine was an anti-religious,

anti-nationalistic, anti-conventional, anti-capitalistic [song], but because its sugar-coated, its accepted” (32). During the late 1960s and early 70’s, the controversy over America’s involvement in the Vietnam War resulted in a counter-culture, driving political and societal change. John Lennon became a major influential symbol through his music and peace activism. His song “Imagine” shows his opposition to America’s involvement in the Vietnam war. This song attempted to create a world in which everyone lived in peace and harmony.

In 1973, Lennon and Yoko created a conceptual country called “Nutopia” that was supposed to “live up to the standards set by “Imagine”, no land, no boundaries, no passports, only people”, The “citizenship to Nutopia can be obtained by declaration of one’s awareness of Nutopia,” (Rolling Stone 21). As Lennon believed in Zen Buddhism and Zen-like tranquility. This is reflected in “Imagine” song lyrics:

You may say I’m a dreamer
But I’m not the only one
I hope someday you’ll join me
And the world will be as one. (13-14)

Lennon became an important symbol of counter-culture by “Imagine”. The American government feared Lennon’s extent of impact on the American people. In 1972, the Richard Nixon administration tried to silence him by attempting to deport him from U.S. His radical thought and his clarion call to all the citizens of the world to pressurize the U.S government to join him stop war in Vietnam made him an enemy to the Nixon administration.

“I Don’t Want To Be a Soldier Mama” is an emotional indictment of the military-industrial complex which in 1963 was preparing to widen the war in Vietnam, hence it is a protest song. Even today these lyrics are being used as an anti-war tactics in protest. The lyrics in the song are so powerful that the message goes on and on:

Well, I don’t wanna to be a soldier mama,
I don’t wanna die
Well, I don’t wanna be a sailor mama,
I don’t wanna fly
Well, I don’t wanna be a failure mama
I don’t wanna cry. (1-6)

Lennon is trying to describe how all the politicians and government officials are willing to start the war and the killing yet they are not involved directly. Rather they send the young soldiers in

the front and let them die in the battlefields. The government is not risking their life in the war but are the one who only create useless jingoism. This song on the surface level seems to portray a reluctance of a young man to go in the war. He is trying to pursue or plea to his mother that he does not want to get involved in the war. But on the deeper level Lennon is trying to convince the motherland that he doesn't want to go to the war in general and in particular to the politicians and the government. Lennon is trying to go against the establishment and the current political upheaval of America giving the message of anti-war through the song.

This song portrays the general mistrust of people against government that flounders the hard won dime to kill people. He is asking why the general people should trust the leaders when it is not their sons or fathers getting killed. They just see the families dying. War is a great loss. It is not only the attacked country that suffers but also the country which has started the war against them. The state machinery doesn't function properly because the war costs a lot of money and the business or economy of the country gradually dwindles:

Well, I don't wanna be a rich man mama,

I don't wanna cry

Well, I don't wanna be a poor man mama,

I don't wanna fly

Well, I don't wanna be a lawyer mama

I don't wanna lie. (11-16)

These lines show Lennon's thirst for peace because the war had caused a lot of trouble for the American people. The various profession of the people had started to fall because it was hard to run and they had no alternatives rather than going to the war. Lennon "spits venom against the greedy war mongers" (Goldberg 12) and by the subtle words he uses in the song tries to threaten the government. His words represent the government as the enemy and therefore his messages are very persuasive. Most people feel that they lose control of their freedom when it comes to an issue such as war and because of that, any acknowledgement of the government turning their back on the people, will get attention.

"Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" was written by Lennon and released in 1971 as a single by Plastic Ono Band with the Harlem Community Choir. It is a protest song against Vietnam War. It was a culmination of more than two years of peace activism undertaken by Lennon and Yoko that began with the bed-ins they convened in March and May 1969, the first which took place during their honeymoon. The song's direct antecedent was an international multimedia

campaign launched by the couple in December 1969 at the height of the counterculture movements and its protests against America's involvement in the Vietnam War:

So, this is Christmas
And what have you done?
Another year over
And a new one just begun. (1-4)

Lennon's ironical statement "So this is Christmas" is making a statement of disappointment that it's Christmas time and the soldiers are at the war front in Vietnam remembering the festival back home. Lennon follows this ambiguous statement with a question "And what have you done?" which is a reflection on the year gone and peace not yet prevailed. This bewildered accusation was to the indifferent American government who was still engaged in the Vietnam War draft. The country was still reeling in the turmoil surrounding the Vietnam War as well as the civil rights movement. Through this song Lennon is earnestly hoping for peaceful times in the coming year.

The protest by Lennon was unique and different. He rented billboard space in twelve major cities around the world for the display of black and white posters that declared "War Is Over! If You Want It- Happy Christmas from John & Yoko". Lennon's view was that Americans were against the war and they want it to stop as soon as possible so every festival or merry making theme had anti war message in it, "Now I understand what you have to do: Put your political message across with a little honey" (Mitchell 56). Lennon conceived this song as a means of elaborating upon the themes of social unity and peaceful change enacted through personal accountability and empowerment that served as the basis of the billboard campaign.

Lennon further sings, "War is Over if you want it/ War is over now" (35-36), which bespeaks the anger resided just underneath the hopes of counterculture activists and civil rights activists for peace to prevail in the world. The racial war had also deteriorated the American society so Lennon wanted a fraternal relation between all the races:

And so happy Christmas
For black and for white
For yellow and red ones
Let's stop all the fight. (17-20)

Lennon had a huge disgust for the government's policy of encouraging racism. The largest left political organizations SNCC and SDS representing black and white youth respectively, were also coming to realization that what they were up against in their quest for social justice was

not just a few individuals but a racist system and that “needed war to survive” (Mitchell 28). Lennon is urging the people not to fight in the issues of race because human beings are bonded by the relation of heart and blood. Lennon wishes that the Christmas festival will bring new hopes and a peaceful society to live in.

This song has the element of social commentary giving the panoramic scene of the American society during the Vietnam War days. It shows how much thirst the people had for peace to prevail. Even though people celebrated festival to move their life on they remembered the soldiers who were dying in the battles. Lennon became a mouthpiece for all the people during the counterculture era and established himself as a countercultural icon.

“Instant Karma” was released on 6 February 1970 as a single from the Plastic Ono Band. Karma is the belief that your actions effect your future lives. Good deeds will have a positive effect while bad deeds bring negative consequences. Lennon shows through this song that peace is what everybody wants and warmongers and politicians are making it hard to maintain. The concept of Karma is popular in the Hindu and Buddhist religions. Lennon’s idea of “Instant Karma” refers to a more immediate concept of accountability for your actions. Basically, what comes around goes around:

Instant Karma’s gonna get you
 Gonna Knock you right on your head
 You better get yourself together
 Pretty soon you’re gonna be dead
 What in the world you are thinking of
 Laughing in the face of love
 What on earth you are trying to do
 It’s up to you, yeah you. (1-8)

The secret of the power of “Instant Karma” is not too far to seek, the music and delivery correspond with raw fidelity to its urgent message that judgment is sure, and glory is possible that as we propagate, we acquire. We are responsible for our own lives but also for the lives of all those we affect and who we can’t affect. “Instant Karma is gonna get you!” (1), this means that the results of what we have done remain with us. This song suggests the politicians will be punished by the time if they do not oppose the Vietnam War and stop it immediately. This song has an anti- war message as well as an emotional appeal by the help of Eastern Religiosity. The U.S government was rigid in continuing the war despite of the loss it was facing and the international pressure and criticism it was receiving through the media. Lennon even despises

the public for keeping a blind eye to the political situation and their collapse of values and mores. Lennon sounds connected to the Hindu and Buddhist teaching in this song. By the help of the message of Karma he tries to draw the attention of the influential people from various walks of life to take note of the state's apathy towards the killing of people in Vietnam: "pretty soon you will be dead/ what in the world you are thinking of/ laughing in the face of love" (4-6). One day everybody will die and there is no such man who is immortal. Politicians are trying to be demi- God and entertaining their power but they will see their ends too. Besides he goes on to sing:

Instant Karma is gonna get you
 Gonna look you right in the face
 Better get yourself together darling
 Join the human race
 How in the world you gonna see
 Laughing at the fools like me
 Who in the hell do you think you are
 A Superstar
 Well, right you are
 Well we all sign on (9-18)

Lennon spits venom against hawkish, greedy, doddering politicians and businessmen, saying that they are to ordering to kill millions of innocent young men and women. If they think they have gained the status of a superstar then Lennon sarcastically remarks that the people will give them the status and they will sign on like stars in the sky. He threatens the warmongers that Instant Karma will get to them and they will suffer even more than they made people suffer through war. He is indirectly addressing the government who essentially has the power over the society and furthermore the world that they are forcing the troops into the Vietnam War without giving a second look to what is actually happening to the American society. He confronts the government through the song "Instant Karma".

Lennon has always been a poet and the voice of the generation. He has been placed firmly in the lexicon of music, performance and politics that marked the period known as the sixties and seventies. He always was the voice of the generation. Although he had a short span of life his songs are still remembered for its anthemic quality which had deep meanings. Unfortunately, the political system Lennon exposed in the sixties and seventies is more

entrenched than we thought because the era began with promises of space exploration and sophistication in lifestyle but jumped into cold war, segregation, and bombing in Vietnam. It is up to those opposing that system to not make the same mistake again.

Lennon is a true countercultural hero for bringing up the voices and opinions of the people and confront the government. This persuasive song wants to the government to stop war immediately and make change. But, Lennon's real beauty in the lyrics is that he indirectly addresses his Mother and keeps the issue which in turn is addressing the government. The lyric is trying to make the listener aware of the issues that are prevailing in the country. He questions the moral and ethics of the government by the professional people like soldier, lawyer and sailor and how has the government made their lives miserable.

The 1960s is known for protest music. In the late 1960s and early '70s, John Lennon began to actively endorse a wide variety of progressive and radical political causes. He championed the anti-war movement as well as Native and African-American rights while demonstrating a deepening interest in feminism. Lennon began to forge potent links between his music and the politics of his time. His craft became a weapon of social and political change. Surrounding the Vietnam War, the hippie stage, and the time for free love was arising. Artists were a megaphone and spokesperson for the public who were angry about the war and other happenings like the Civil Rights Movement that was apparent in the 1960s. This music was used as a platform for the opposition from society. Such movements created a sense that everyone was in it together, hence creating an environment that was unified.

"Give Peace a Chance" is a declaration representing the common people of U.S urging to settle things peacefully in Vietnam and stop the bloodshed. It is a timeless anthem for much of what is happening in our world today. The readers/listeners feel deeply connected with the simplistic lyrics and rhythmic quality of the song. Moreover it is the plea by Lennon to the U.S to stop war in Vietnam and alludes to the urgency for the United Nations to end this war.

Lennon's "Imagine" was written during the height of the war in Vietnam, the first Nixon administration and the peace movement. Lennon was trying to point out what measures can be taken to prevent war and other unhappy realities. The view of the song is of social reform and thus political. Lennon expresses the idea of religion, heaven and life after death. He asks us to imagine that there is no heaven or hell, no countries, and no possessions, painting the picture of a peaceful world. People would live for today and not for where they may be tomorrow.

"I Don't Want To Be A Soldier Mama" is an emotional indictment of the military-industrial complex which in 1963 was preparing to widen the war in Vietnam, hence it is a protest song. Lennon is trying to describe how all the politicians and government officials are

willing to start the war and the killing yet they are not involved directly. Rather they send the young soldiers in the front and let them die in the battlefields.

The secret of the power of the song “Instant Karma” is not too far to seek, the music and delivery correspond with raw fidelity to its urgent message of the Eastern concept of “karma” that judgment is sure, and glory is possible that as we sow, we reap. This song suggests for the politicians who will be punished by the time itself if they do not oppose the Vietnam War and stop it immediately. This song has an anti-war message as well as an emotional appeal by the help of Eastern Religiosity.

The song “Happy Xmas(War Is Over)” has the element of social commentary giving the panoramic scene of the American society during the Vietnam war days. It shows how much thirst the people had for peace to prevail. Even though people celebrated festival to move their life on, they remembered the soldiers who were dying in the battles. Indeed, Lennon became a mouthpiece for all the people during the counterculture era.

Conclusion

After the analysis and study of John Lennon’s songs, this research reaches to the conclusion that Lennon’s songs are filled with rebellious and revolutionary spirit which counters the mainstream socio-economic and politico-cultural waves of the contemporary time. Lennon challenged the war-mongering tendency of America with his unique blend of art and peace activism. They are many philosophical themes in the selected songs namely justice, freedom, inequality, oppression, love, family, war, god, personal identity, free will, epistemological skepticism, metaphysics and the philosophy of time. These philosophical preoccupations give the listener a sense of peace and reconciliation.

Anti-war song is important for expressing political messages, because it creates a sense of emotional connection and social coherence worldwide. It does this through the physical link that develops between the singer and the listener. In a way, music functions as a social glue that binds the minds and bodies people. The songs chosen for research purpose have the same countercultural ethos and the quest for peace for which John Lennon strived for his whole life. Lennon in his songs is simply trying to express his feelings of the Vietnam War, drugs, chaos, social injustice based on the class and race, and protest by plunging unflinchingly into the depth of human emotions. The sarcasm he illustrates in these lyrics by saying that he does not want be a soldier of war but rather a soldier for peace, shows that he has ideas about this war that he wants everyone to see and be aware of the ongoing war mongering. The logic he uses in his lyrics shows that he was a great countercultural icon who represented his age.

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