

The Theme of Revolution in Susanna Collins The Hunger Games Trilogy

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Abstract

Katniss' approach of defying the Capitol's power is an important aspect in creating a strong rebellious character. Throughout *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, Suzanne Collins' protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, remains as an important element for the social change. If a person experiencing dissatisfaction in his/her circumstances, is able to stand up for the individuals in the

society, then he/she can react against the rules of the society. An appropriate situation is necessary to push a person actively defy the system. Scherzer argues that in the present world, there are wide variety of social issues that has to be changed. He also points out the importance of questioning the system. The concepts imbedded in the novel are very important for a person's understanding of creating social justice. It is clearly evident that through rebellion, Katniss brings a change in the world system.

Key Words : Rebellion, Revolution, Susanna Collins

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Rebellion is an act that is committed against others in an oppressed state. The term "Rebellion" is defined as an aggressive battle structured by a group of people who are trying to change the political system in their country. It refers to an open resistance against the orders of an established authority. Actually the concept of rebellion originates from the feeling of indignation as well as dissatisfaction of situation in an oppressed society. The rebels fight against the government to bring a change and development in the life of the people. Rebellion arouses in different ways. They may be individual or collective as well as peaceful or violent. Therefore, rebellion is a refusal of obedience towards the totalitarian society. It is a kind of protest against the system which disturbs the peace of the society. These rebels always remain as threats towards the society. Moreover, the rebellion or resistance is an expression of individualism and independence that implies a degree of freedom from the authoritative government. Freedom may be the ultimate goal in the minds of the revolutionaries. Through these revolutions, some may lose their life and some may achieve self emancipation. Albert Camus claims the significance of

rebellion in an oppressed society. He says “The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion”. He points out that existence itself is rebellion. Therefore, the most important factor for rebellion is existence.

The struggle and rebellion portrayed in *The Hunger Games Trilogy* gives a clear idea of class exploitation. The class struggle and exploitation is narrated through the female character named Katniss, who lives in a poorest section of Panem under a totalitarian government. During her childhood in the impoverished District Twelve, Katniss began to develop her own understanding of the necessity to change the society. However, she engages herself in acts of defiance that grew out of necessity. In the beginning of the novel, she passively questions the nature and the authority of the governmental structures of the district. Katniss’ first acts of disobedience grow out of a necessity for survival, not out of a desire to rebel. However, without these necessary acts of passive defiance, Katniss’ later successful rebellion would not have been possible. Katniss’ desire to rebel against the government develops from her early relationships with the structure of governmental power in district twelve. The strong dominance of the Capitol over the district twelve of Panem leads the residents of the district to work for low wages as miners and is cursed by a scarcity of food and other resources. The only opportunity to receive any support from the government is in the form of tesserae, which is “a meager year’s supply of grain and oil for one person” (*Hunger* 13), but only in exchange for children having their name entered additional times into the lottery for the Hunger Games. Therefore starvation is common in the district. These circumstances are in sharp contrast to the life in the Capitol, the headquarters of the district, where “food appears at the press of a button” (*Hunger* 65). The inequality between the districts is maintained by the Capitol through the yearly Hunger Games broadcast. Katniss experiences the inequality, when her father dies. The death of Katniss’ father

is fundamental to know how she distinguishes the government and develops her first instances of passive rebellion. Her father's death is the result of a mine explosion, a catastrophe that causes Katniss's mother to have a mental breakdown that prevents her from being able to take care of Katniss and her seven-year-old sister Prim. Therefore, Katniss finds herself having no other choice but to take over as the head of the family to keep Prim and herself alive. On the other hand, Katniss sees the children from the same district suffer from poverty. She observes, "the sadness, the marks of angry hands on their faces, the hopelessness that curled their shoulders" and vows that she could "never let that happen to Prim" (*Mockingjay* 27). The decision to keep her family alive is Katniss' first instance of rebellious attitude against her society. Scherzer claims that the nature of rebellion arises from her desire to protect her family, and survive without the governmental support (10). In *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, Katniss starts to rebel for the survival of her family members. Therefore, it is understood that in an oppressed society, struggle for survival marks the beginning of rebellion.

Eventually, Katniss succeeds in keeping her family alive. However, this leads her to hunt outside the district's fence, which is an illegal activity. Yet, Katniss' choice to break the law is not a revolutionary action; as it is ignored by the law enforcement within district twelve because it is never be the threat to the authority of the governmental structure in the Capitol. Moreover, Katniss' actions register as passive defiance as she survives in the established governmental structure of the district, but she avoids direct opposition. Even though, Katniss passively defies the governmental control within district twelve, the life she lives there prevents her from a more powerful movement towards questioning or revolutionizing. On the other hand, Katniss is aware that voicing her dissatisfaction against the government could put her family and herself in danger. The government's considerable control moves Katniss towards the warning for open

rebellion and controls herself on discussing such rebellious topics : “District Twelve. Where you can starve to death in safety,’ I mutter. Then I glance quickly over my shoulder. Even here, in the middle of nowhere, you worry someone might overhear you” (*Hunger* 6). Within the confines of the district, Katniss is always on periphery, fearing that she will be taken away from her family for speaking up against the governmental structure. In the woods, away from the district, Katniss allows herself to discuss about her dissatisfaction of the governmental control to her best friend and hunting partner Gale. Gale is also a silent rebel and Katniss often finds herself agreeing with him but she is aware of the fact that there is only a little chance to get success. So, she always disagrees with him. This shows that Katniss had a rebellious spirit within her, but she never exposes it fearing for the survival of her family members. She knows that the act of rebellion must be shown at an appropriate time to change the society. If it is performed in a wrong time, then it will affect her family. From this it is clear that Katniss is waiting for an opportunity to expose her act of rebellion to the whole society.

Even though Katniss shows her dissatisfaction within the society, she tries not to find any explanation to act upon that dissatisfaction as she knows that active defense towards the Capitol would be a huge risk that would put the survival of her family in danger. So she always maintains a passive defiance to protect her family. Till before reaping, Katniss acts as a silent rebel. Everything about Katniss’ ability to question her society changes after the reaping ceremony, when her sister Prim’s name is chosen as the next participant in the Hunger Games. In order to protect her family, Katniss must react instantaneously and volunteer as a tribute to take her sister’s place in the Games. However, the other citizens of district twelve consider her action as an act of revolution because as per the rule, people hardly ever volunteer for one another. Surviving the reaping can approximately be associated with overcoming the government,

particularly for those who have their names in the bowl for numerous times. The action of standing up for another person against the controlling government motivates the people of district twelve. In the eyes of her district, Katniss has become a revolutionary, standing up against the Capitol, not permitting them to take an eleven- year old child to be killed in the butchery of the Hunger Games. Through the act of standing up for her own sister, Katniss has made an open move to question the power of the Capitol.

The Hunger Games is actually about a system of government that displays their effectiveness as well as their power in controlling the citizens of Panem. The Hunger Games is an essential aspect of the Capitol's controlling nature. Every year, the Capitol uses the Game to provoke horror within its citizens and assert their power. Before the Game begins, the Capitol televises the story of the previous Hunger Games which characterize the significance and strength of the Capitol. The Capitol also telecasts the brutal deaths of the children in the arena to frighten the common people. The government still needs to prove their ability to control. Therefore, they always remind the history of rebellion to show the discontent and the inability of the district people.

Moreover, the government considers the act of Katniss as a revolution. Entering into the Hunger Games is a crucial moment for Katniss. Initially, Katniss' desire to volunteer for her sister moves her rebelliousness from something more passive to something more active. In the initial moment, Katniss is only concerned with protecting her sister, however, later Katniss begins to realize the strength behind her action. Unlike other districts, in district twelve the Game indicates nothing but death. Katniss volunteers in the Game out of necessity, but the action immediately changes into a revolution. Katniss' action turns into a revolution because no one in the districts will volunteer for another. Therefore, the Hunger Games put Katniss' necessity into

the direction of defiance. However, the government did not consider her action as an act of survival, but her ability to stand up against the Capitol.

Moreover, the Hunger Games put Katniss on a platform to challenge the Capitol in a public way that is observable throughout the entire country. When she is rebelling in district twelve, her actions are only seen by a small number of people and most of them consider her actions in terms of survival. Her actions of defiance in her district have no effect on the Capitol, but in the platform of the Games, even the basic thought of surviving becomes revolutionary, and Katniss begins to understand that her actions are actively defying the Capitol. In developing her surviving strategy, Katniss begins to place her act of defiance within the circumstances to defy the Capitol's rules and regulations. Katniss develops her survival skill for the Games, but now she actively works to challenge the power of the Capitol through the same skill of survival.

Katniss' approach of defying the Capitol's power is an important aspect in creating a strong rebellious character. Throughout *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, Suzanne Collins' protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, remains as an important element for the social change. If a person experiencing dissatisfaction in his/her circumstances, is able to stand up for the individuals in the society, then he/she can react against the rules of the society. An appropriate situation is necessary to push a person actively defy the system. Scherzer argues that in the present world, there are wide variety of social issues that has to be changed. He also points out the importance of questioning the system. The concepts imbedded in the novel are very important for a person's understanding of creating social justice. It is clearly evident that through rebellion, Katniss brings a change in the world system. Rebellion is needed to bring a change in the world. Katniss is an inspiration in bringing a change in the world system through personal evolution

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