

**REMAPPING SONG : A STUDY OF SELECT PROTEST  
SONGS BY BOB DYLAN**

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**Submitted**

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**DECLARATION**

**Mizoram University**

**May, 2018.**

**I, Vanlalpeki Sailo, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for research degree in any other University/ Institute.**

**This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English.**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that “Remapping Song : A Study of Select Protest Songs by Bob Dylan” written by Vanlalpeki Sailo has been written under my supervision.

She has fulfilled all the required norms laid down within the M.Phil. regulations of Mizoram University. The dissertation is the result of her own investigations. Neither the dissertation as a whole nor any part of it was ever submitted by any other University for any research degree.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Situating Bob Dylan in the Context of the American Song Tradition**

This chapter will situate Bob Dylan in terms of his life and work within music and the American song tradition. In doing so, it will analyse his projection of certain identities, including his identity as a folksinger and a protest musician.

The history of American music and song dates back to the time of the Native Americans, the first people to live in North America, whose music was varied in form, and was most religious in purpose. Colonisation brought about changes within the music of America and has resulted in the creation of certain new genres and styles. Folk music in particular, remains as one of the most traditional styles of American music. It encompasses both traditional music that has been brought to America by previous immigrants as well as the genre that evolved from it during the twentieth century folk revival. These traditional folk songs have often been transmitted orally and according to Bob Dylan, are “handed down songs”. (Dylan 8)

American folk music is a combination of numerous music genres, and often known as traditional music, traditional folk music, contemporary folk music or roots music. Many traditional songs have been sung within the same family or folk group for generations, and sometimes go back to such origins as Great Britain, Europe or Africa. The genre’s popularity and its place in popular music and culture may be credited to the American folk music revival, a phenomenon in the United States that began in the 1940s, reaching its peak of popularity in the mid 1960s. The revival brought about the emergence of various styles of American folk music and also led to the development of other genres including country and rock and roll music.

The folk revival that began in New York city gave birth to what may be called contemporary folk music, with artists like Bob Dylan being one of its most

prominent artists. This revival of folk music can also be explained as a period of renewed interest in traditional folk music, transforming folk music, and the songs produced within it often include a social activism component, social awareness about the events taking place then within the paradigm of America, as well as globally.

To situate Bob Dylan within the context of the American song tradition, particularly within folk music, and to draw out his role in it, his life and his beginnings as a musician may be looked at. The 1960s in America was undeniably a decade of liberation for music, way of living, public opinion, art of all forms, invention and certain political and social issues. This generation thus produced the greatest musical artists of all time including Bob Dylan, who may be considered as one of the greatest influences on popular culture of all time. With a closer study of his childhood and the environment that he grew up in, it may be suggested that his legacy is a result of his surroundings. He initially emerged into the art scene, particularly music, as a folk singer and when asked what folk song really is, his reply was that it means “handed down songs”. (Dylan 8). However, perhaps due to being affected by various historical events such as the after-shocks of the world wars, improvement of certain technological inventions in the society, Kennedy’s assassination, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Civil Rights Movement, many of his songs may be categorized as protest or rebel songs, but always with a folk undertone, which evoked changes within the society itself.

Robert Allen Zimmerman, later known as Bob Dylan was born on May 24, 1941 to Abraham Zimmerman and Beatty Stone Zimmerman. This was a period when the Second World War was already raging in Europe. Bob Dylan recalls



this period in history, saying, “If you were born around this time or were living and alive, you could feel the old world go and the new one beginning.” (Dylan 28) and also talks about his experiences as a schoolboy where they were trained to hide and take cover under desks when the air-raid sirens blew since this means the Russians were attacking with bombs. Such experiences are also reflected in many of his songs where he writes about peace, life and humanity as a whole. In fact, before he decided that he wanted to be a singer, he had also even thought about joining the army and says, “I’d always pictured myself dying in some heroic battle rather than in bed.” (Dylan 41). Such an influence and attitude indeed shaped Dylan as a person, his views as well as his contribution to music and literature. His close association with his roots and folk music thus comes as no surprise and he himself admits, “The madly complicated modern world was something I took little interest in. It had no relevancy, no weight. I wasn’t seduced by it.” (20).

Bob Dylan was born in Duluth, Minnesota and his family moved to Hibbing, Minnesota when he was seven years old. Growing up in a small town like Hibbing must have been a difficult task for Dylan and he recalls how the small-town life never quite provided him with the opportunities he needed. Nonetheless, at an early age, he had already showed signs of natural talent. The stark contrast between his upbringing and what he was destined to be is seen from Dylan’s recollection of his father and the differences between them, as well as his detachment to the life in Hibbing;

“Growing up, the cultural and the generational differences had been insurmountable- nothing but the sound of voices, colorless unnatural speech. My father, who was plain speaking and straight talking had said, “Isn’t an artist a fellow

who paints?” when told by one of my teachers that his son had the nature of an artist. It seemed I’d always been chasing after something, anything that moved- a car, a bird, a blowing leaf- anything that might lead me into some more lit place, some unknown land downriver. I had not even the vaguest notion of the broken world I was living in, what society could do with you.” (Dylan 108)

Finally in 1959, Dylan left home to attend the University of Minnesota. Here, he tried out for a gig at the Ten O’ Clock Scholar Coffee House where they were auditioning for folk singers. When asked for his name, he simply replied “Bob Dylan”. There are a number of theories regarding Dylan’s reasons for choosing this name and he himself has no solid explanation for it. However, he has mentioned his decision to shorten his name to Robert Allen as soon as he left home. After coming across a story about a West Coast saxophone player named David Allyn and some poems by Dylan Thomas, he was conflicted between the names Robert Dylan and Robert Allyn, and since people had already often called him Bobby, perhaps came up with a cross between the three- Bob Dylan.

Dylan’s versatility is evident from the thirty seven studio albums, eleven live albums, compilation albums and numerous singles he had released between the years 1962 and 2016. These albums comprise of folk music, blues, rock n’ roll, electric, country music and gospel music. It has often been said that Dylan’s goal was to become a famous rock n’ roll star and many believe rock n’ roll to be his first inspiration. However, it was actually country music that he first loved and his “first idol” was country singer Hank Williams. According to Mckeen in his book *Bob Dylan : A Bio-Bibliography*, “Hank Williams sang about the world of railroads, the pain of loss, and the need to move. His restlessness echoed Bob’s own.” ( 5).

However, being inspired by the music of Little Richard, Buddy Holly and Elvis Presley, Dylan decided that he would also become a rock n' roll star. The lyrics of these artists "crystallized all his feelings of ambition, rebellion and individual identity. . ." (Heylin 8). However, despite his ambition to become like them, he initially became well-known as a folk singer. Folk music definitely provided him with the platform he needed. After his arrival in New York, he started playing at the Café Wha?', where the kind of music he was playing and the kind of songs he was singing "either drove people away or come in closer. . ." (Dylan 18). He admits there were better singers and better musicians playing at the café but also acknowledges that there was not anybody close to what he was doing. So, he stuck to folk music and claims, "Folk songs were the way I explored the universe, they were pictures and the pictures were worth more than anything I could say." (Dylan 18). By this time, folk music had indeed become Dylan's speciality and preference. He was aware of the changes taking place within the country and how these changes affected the music scene but was adamant to stick with what he knew best and admits, "'50s culture was like a judge in his last days on the bench. It was about to go. Within ten years' time, it would struggle to rise and then come crashing to the floor. With folk songs embedded in my mind like a religion, it wouldn't matter. Folk songs transcended the immediate culture." (Dylan 27).

Most of Dylan's influences were from country, folk, rhythm and blues and his biggest role model was folk musician Woody Guthrie. One tradition of folk music is borrowing from other artists and Dylan too, borrowed from just about every blues or folk performer he liked. He also admits to copying and borrowing from Guthrie and one of the first songs he wrote, which was of a substantial importance

according to him, was written for Woody Guthrie. This song, “Song to Woody”, was actually the song that initially associated him with Leeds Music, the label that started his own career. According to him, the song is “an homage to the man who’d pointed out the starting place for my identity and destiny. . .” and stressed, “My life had never been the same since I’d first heard Woody on a record player in Minneapolis. When I first heard him it was like a million megaton had dropped.” (Dylan 229). Woody Guthrie indeed gave Dylan a perspective on music and guided him to become what he became. Dylan recalls his first experience of listening to Guthrie as an “epiphany. . .” where he “discovered some essence of self-command. . .” and even exalts him as somebody who “divides the world between those who work and those who don’t and is interested in the liberation of the human race and wants to create a world worth living in.” (Dylan 245).

Perhaps due to being part of the teenage rebellion era of America, many consider that he mimicked the looks and attitude of James Dean “the rebel”. However, he pleads that it was only Woody Guthrie who had the deepest impact on him and that he influenced his every move, what he ate, how he dressed and who he wanted to know and not know. He argues that this teenage rebellion of the late 1950s and early 1960s did not really appeal to him and believes that “It had no organized shape. The rebel-without-a-cause thing wasn’t hands on enough even a lost cause. . .” (Dylan 247). However, many of his songs are often still labeled as rebel songs and if this is taken into account, his transition from folk songs to rebel as well as protest songs may be something substantial to look at.

Dylan’s dreams were becoming a reality by 1961 when Columbia Records offered him a contract, and in March 1962, he released his first album Bob Dylan

which was produced by John H. Hammond who signed him to the label. The songs in this album were pure folk and included two original compositions, "Talkin' New York" and the one he wrote for Woody Guthrie. His second album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* was released the next year in May and this album is regarded to represent the initial stages of Dylan's writing contemporary words to traditional melodies. Eleven out of the thirteen songs in it are Dylan's original compositions and includes "Blowin' in the Wind" which became an anthem of the 1960s, as well as other well-known songs like "Girl from the North Country", "Masters of War", "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" and "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" which all became classics of the 1960s folk scene. Although these songs may be characterized as folk, the lyrics embody what may be defined as "protest songs" and Dylan's inclination to write about the occurrences of the world, about humanity and life itself is evident. Dylan himself had said that "Folk songs are evasive- the truth about life. . ." (Dylan 71) and thus, have a close relation with what is called "topical songs", songs that Dylan sung a lot. These topical songs may be defined as songs about real events where the point of view of the songwriter is embedded. As such, the songs in *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* are basically a merge of folk and topical songs. Some are of the opinion that this album was the start of Dylan's protest songs, songs that are also called "finger-pointing" songs- sincere expressions of frustration towards leaders who opposed change.( Heylin 87) For instance, the song "Blowin' in the Wind" which has been described as an anthem of the 1960s Civil Rights movement is regarded to capture the frustration and aspirations of those affected by various injustices like racism and wars. The song poses a series of rhetorical questions about peace, war and freedom where Dylan questions;

“. . .how many times must a man look up,

Before he can see the sky?

Yes, and how many ears must one man have,

Before he can hear people cry?

Yes, and how many deaths will it take 'til he knows,

That too many people have died. . .?" (Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985, 7)

Dylan's reply to these rhetorical questions and the refrain of the song, "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind" is quite ambiguous wherein there is no clear-cut solution and yet it suggests that there is one. However, according to Dylan, "Topical songs weren't protest songs. . .I tried to explain later that I didn't think I was a protest singer, that there'd been a screwup. . ." and it appears as though for him, there was a clear cut difference between protest songs and rebel songs and that he was more inclined towards the latter, the kind of songs that "really moved. . ." him. (Dylan 83). Locating Dylan as a protest singer and his songs as protest songs, when he himself is in denial is a substantial factor to look at.

"One of the trickier difficulties in appreciating Dylan's art involves distinguishing it, as far as is possible, from his carefully crafted, continually changing public image." (Wilentz, 11) and this statement may imply the problematic situation that arises when looking at Bob Dylan with the motive of examining his role and identity in the American song tradition, especially within the protest music paradigm. Dylan's music indeed has connections to the 1930s and 1940s, through the influences of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and other folk musicians. However, there are other connections, to a broader world of experimentation with American music as well as with cultural and political events which eventually add up to the creation of his identity as a musician.

If there is a clear cut distinction between a folksinger and a protest musician or singer, Dylan's growth, or rather metamorphosis within the realms of the two may be examined in order to highlight his identity and role within American music as a whole. Whether Dylan did mean or never meant to protest through his songs, he nonetheless became a voice and his songs became the most influential protest songs of a generation, particularly for the era of the Civil Rights movement. Historically, there were several events that led up to the movement. The integration of major league baseball that took place in 1947 and Truman's initiation to integrate the armed forces were both catalysts in starting the movement. The integration of schools in 1954 was also a major event in the history of America where the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" in schools was no longer tolerable. An event took place the next year also tremendously changed the course of the movement. On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, a Civil Rights activist named Rosa Louise McCauley Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat for a white man which was a violation of the busing segregation rule. This caused a great effect that finally led to the creation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, whose president, Martin Luther King Jr., as well as many activists and advocates started boycotts, protests and marches that eventually led to many positive changes within the society. All of these caused Dylan to write some of his most influential songs that are regarded to be protest songs.

If Dylan were really to be regarded as a protest song writer, his then-girlfriend, Suze Rotolo was undeniably very influential for him. Suze was involved in the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E), an organization involved in the Civil Rights movement. She asked him to write some songs for the organization and the

first was “The Death of Emmett Till”, a song about the murder of a black boy in 1955. Fifteen year-old Emmett Till was killed because he had whistled at a white girl, and the song created a huge controversy. He also wrote “Oxford Town”, which detailed about major events that occurred in the movement. By this time, Dylan became not only known for his protest songs but his career as a writer also began. He began writing for *Broadside*, the first magazine to publish his work and he became one of the most regular contributors.

Dylan’s third album *The Times They Are-a Changin’* released in 1964 includes what is often regarded as Dylan’s one of Dylan’s most offensive songs, “Only a Pawn in Their Game”, which he sang for the first time in Greenwich, Mississippi at a Civil Rights gathering. The song is about the murder of Medgar Evers, a Civil Rights activist. Coming home one evening, Evers was shot and killed on his front porch and in the song, Dylan described the murder as “just a poor dumb white bigot manipulated by powerful racist forces” and also said that “the assassin was also a victim, harmed by a system that teaches hate.” (Dylan 256) Some of the other songs in the album like “The Times They Are-a Changin’” also seemed to show more refinery and sophistication than his traditional work. In reference to his traditional songs, Dylan had said, “The folk songs showed me that songs can say something human.” (Dylan 236) It may be suggested that folk singers did not necessarily show or convince people of something new, but rather, strengthened and reinforced traditional and political views that were already in existence. The way something is transferred and delivered is often as important as what is actually being conveyed, and with Dylan, his approach and his medium also becomes his message and he himself had said, “I don’t think when I write. I just react and put it down



on paper. . .what comes out in my music is a call to action.” (Dylan 187) And it may be a fact to state that his songs indeed influenced the movement, as much as the movement influenced him.

Dylan’s concern with the society, humanity as well as politics started to reveal itself through many of his songs. He insisted that politics were an integral element of his songs’ lyrics and that “social issues are more important than music. . .” (Dylan 242). However, Dylan tends to often contradict himself and his beliefs. For instance, certain political events would often evoke a musical response from him which made his concern for politics quite obvious. One such example was the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1963, America was threatened with the fear of nuclear warfare by the U.S.S.R and in response to this, Dylan wrote “A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall”. The song describes the then - current situation that the public was facing like fear, anticipation, worry, bitterness and dread and he himself said, “. . .it was a song of terror. Line after line, trying to capture the feeling of nothingness.” (Heylin 26) In this song, he parallels between what was happening in the U.S and the imagery used by the Biblical prophets describing destruction and desolation. Such a song as this reflects Dylan’s interest in politics and what it was doing to the world. Yet, later, he describes his song “Political World”, a song with a strong political tone as simply something that might have been “triggered by current events” or a song about “an underworld, not the world where men live, toil and die like men.” (Dylan 166) His self-contradiction is also seen in his views regarding the age of rebellion and rebel music. He had always stated that the rebellious act had never appealed to him and yet, later celebrates rebel music and songs. His celebration and appreciation of it may be what led people to recognize his music as rebel music. If this was so, then,

protest songs and rebel songs indeed would have a very close relation and resemblance but Dylan however, stressed upon how different the two were; “The rebellion songs were a really serious thing. The language was flashy and provocative- a lot of action in the words, all sung with great gusto. . . I loved these songs. . . They weren’t protest songs, though, they were rebel ballads. . . even in a simple, melodic wooing ballad there’d be rebellion waiting around the corner. You couldn’t escape it. . . Rebellion spoke to me louder. The rebel was alive and well, romantic and honorable.” (Dylan 83)

Another feature of Dylan’s music are the anti-war songs. However, to categorize them as a completely different feature would not be valid because these songs too still protested, still rebelled against the injustices done to people by the wars and by those in power. Although he was never a big part of the Vietnam protest, a number of his anti-war songs were written in response to the Vietnam war. Two of the most popular were “Masters of War” and “John Brown”. What is significant to note here is that the song “Masters of War” was actually a part of his second album. This shows that Dylan, whether he regards himself as somebody who writes protest and rebel songs or not, had actually protested against certain injustices from the very beginning of his career. In this song, he finger-points the evil men who make profit off of the war while young men go off and die, and says,

“ . . like Judas of old, you lie and deceive. . .

you fasten the triggers for the others to fire,

then you set back and watch when the death count gets higher. . .”

(Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985, 81).

“John Brown”, on the other hand, tells the true nature and deception of the war, and the negative effects it has on a person. John Brown, the protagonist in the song is sent off to war with honour, and his mother “brags about her son with his uniform and gun. . .” However, when her son returns, she can hardly recognize his face because of the destruction the war had caused. John Brown says that in the middle of battleground, he realized that he was just a “puppet in a play.” Another popular anti-war song is “With God on Our Side” and it reflects upon several wars that the U.S had gone through, including the Spanish-American war and both World War I and World War II, and is basically about how wrong and arrogant it is for people to ask God to be on their side, when it is actually the people themselves who cause the harm. Other anti-war songs of such stature are “Legionnaire’s Disease”, “Let Me Die In My Footsteps” and “Talkin’ World War III Blues”.

A major event in the U.S history and in Dylan’s career was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. After this tragedy, Dylan started to distance himself from politics. Some believe that he was afraid of being assassinated himself, and many had the same fear that he might be, because so many of the nation’s public figures and “heroes” had been assassinated and they feared that Dylan would be next. Although Dylan never actually confirmed his decision to remove himself from it, it can be seen that he restrained himself from being too involved in any kind of political movement going on at that time. Nonetheless, he paved the way and laid the foundation for the activists, mostly college students and the youth who fought against the destruction of the establishment and it may be rightly said that no other artist was able to create the kind of revolution that he did, and he definitely had the greatest impact on that generation;

“The nation was divided in the fall of 1968, by its split over the Vietnam war and social issues such as the continuing battle of integration. As anti-war demonstrations and police clashed on the streets of Chicago, the young protestors chanted Dylan’s words, “The whole world is watching.”. . .” (Mckeen 36)

Dylan, through his music was definitely a factor in the revolution of hundreds and thousands of people. He may not have been responsible for the ideologies behind the movements, but he indeed provided the emotional drive behind the people. Not only was he an influence on the American public, but also on other rising musicians of that era, such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Joan Baez, Eric Clapton, Van Morrison, Jimi Hendrix and others. Yet, Dylan remains the nonchalant, humble person that he is and maintains, “All I’d ever done was sing songs that were dead straight and expressed powerful new realities. I had very little in common with and knew even less about a generation that I was supposed to be the voice of.” (Dylan 115)

For more than five decades, Dylan has made his mark in the world as one of the most iconic and celebrated musicians of all time. He started out as a folk singer but his talent indeed widened as he explored certain kinds of music. The public’s surprise or rather, disapproval at his later transition into rock and even electric can be justified when taking into account Dylan’s previous loyalty and commitment to folk music. He himself had said, “Folk music was all I needed to exist. . .I had no other cares or interests besides folk music. I scheduled my life around it. I had little in common with anyone not like-minded.” (Dylan 236) However, with a talent like his’, it is only appropriate that he emerge as a versatile icon, representing all kinds of artistic aptitudes.

The number of awards, medals and honours he had received tells the artist that he is. Among these are twelve Grammy awards, one Academy and one Golden Globe awards for his song “Things Have Changed” from the movie “Wonder Boys”. Eight of his songs have been included in the Grammy Hall of Fame and five in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He has also been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The award he received that probably caused the greatest stir was the Nobel Peace Prize he received in 2016 “for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition.” With this award, he became the first songwriter and American, since 1993 to win the award in literature. The news of Dylan receiving this award divided social media between those who felt he was not worthy of it, believing him not to be fit to be awarded something for literature, and those who felt he was the most appropriate awardee for it. In defense of the talks circling around, the Swedish Academy’s permanent secretary Sara Danius told the Guardian that the news may be surprising but Dylan deserved it because he is “a great poet- a great poet in the English speaking tradition. For fifty four years, he’s been at it, reinventing himself constantly, creating a new identity.” In spite of whether people felt he was worthy of it or not, the Nobel Committee indeed acknowledged Dylan as a true recipient of the literary Nobel Prize. Their stance as well as Dylan’s capabilities as a literary figure is truly captured by the presentation speech delivered by Professor Horace Engdahl , Member of the Swedish Academy and the Nobel Committee for Literature, on December 10, 2016;

“. . .it ought not to be a sensation that a singer/songwriter now stands recipient of the literary Nobel Prize. In a distant past, all poetry was sung or tunefully recited, poets were rhapsodes, bards, troubadours. . .But what Bob Dylan did was not to return to the Greeks or the Provençals. Instead he dedicated himself body

and soul to 20<sup>th</sup> century American popular music, . . . for ordinary people, white and black: protest songs, country, blues, early rock, gospel, mainstream music. He listened day and night, testing the stuff on his instruments, trying to learn. But when he started to write similar songs, they came out differently. In his hands, the material changed. . . he panned poetry gold, whether on purpose or by accident is irrelevant; all creativity begins in imitation. . . Soon people stopped comparing him to Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams and turned instead to Blake, Rimbaud, Whitman, Shakespeare. . . Recognising that revolution by awarding Bob Dylan the Nobel Prize was a decision that seemed daring only beforehand and already seems obvious. . . Chamfort made the observation that when a master appears, the hierarchy of genres. . . is nullified. “What matter the rank of a work when its beauty is of the highest rank?” he wrote. That is the straight answer to the question of how Bob Dylan belongs in literature: as the beauty of his songs is of the highest rank. . .” (Engdahl 1).

Bob Dylan’s place in the American song tradition as well as his position as one of the greatest and most prominent figures in music has indeed been elevated further by the Nobel prize. The Nobel’s stance for Dylan being awarded the prize “for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition” permanently marks Dylan as not just a popular musician or a great artistic figure in popular culture, but as a literary figure, surpassing the line between high and low literature as well as culture and this is clearly captured by Sara Danius who calls him “a very interesting traditionalist, in a highly original way. Not just the written tradition, but also the oral one; not just high literature, but also low literature.”

Bob Dylan's own response to his win is seen in his audio lecture published by the Nobelprize.org. where he himself admits to having wondered how his songs are related to literature. He reflects on the very beginning and how he was influenced by musicians like Buddy Holly and claims that he had picked up the vernacular and had internalized it. However, perhaps his distinctiveness when compared to other folk musicians lies in how he internalized the vernacular, the devices, the rhetoric and the techniques, incorporating his "principles and sensibilities and an informed view of the world". His background of literature and what he had learnt in grammar school serve as important instruments in his "way of looking at life", giving him "an understanding of human nature, and a standard to measure things by". Dylan claims to have taken all these with him when he started composing lyrics and the themes from many books he had read worked their way into many of his songs and announced, "I wanted to write songs unlike anything anybody ever had, and these themes were fundamental". (Dylan 2017)

His protest songs and the impact it had on the American society as well as culture indeed proved that Dylan's songs were different and on a different league. The contents were authentic because he did not restrain himself from describing the controversial events like murders in their actuality. He used his songs as a medium to make the masses aware of how corrupt and deceptive the establishment really is in its governance and in its way of handling wars and the manipulation of power. Through such songs, Dylan managed to assert himself as the much needed voice in the prevailing protests as well as within the whole of the American Song tradition.

## **Chapter II**

### **Song and Culture**



This chapter will analyse how the popular protest songs of Bob Dylan, namely “Blowin’ in the wind”, “Masters of War”, “A Hard Rains’ A-Gonna Fall”, all from the album *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* (1963), “With God on Our Side”, “The Times They Are A- Changin’ ”, “Only a Pawn in their Game”, from the album *The Times They Are A-Changin’* (1964) and the singles “John Brown” and “The Death of Emmet Till” (1962) resonate with the culture of its time by looking at the subjects dealt and the concerns raised by Dylan. In doing so, it will focus on the various events that led to the issues dealt with in his songs and how it affected the scenario of the time.

“Culture”, a term broadly used and defined, according to Raymond Williams, is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” (Williams 87) and he suggests three broad definitions for the term. Firstly, as a term to refer to “a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development”, secondly, as “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group”, and thirdly, as “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.” (Williams 88) Within this, and due to certain ideologies, popular culture comes into existence. In order to define and analyse popular culture, the ideologies behind it may be looked at. One such example is Marx’s famous formulation:

“In the social production of their existence men enter into definite, necessary relations, which are independent of their will, namely, relations of production corresponding to a determinate stage of development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the

social, political and intellectual life process in general.”(Eagleton 4)

Here, Marx is suggesting that “the way a society organizes the means of its economic production will have a determining effect on the type of culture that society produces.” (Storey 3) This stance may also be further explained as the way in which the various implications of a particular culture, like what is being produced at a particular period may contribute to what is “popular” and thereby, creating a popular culture for that particular group or period. The term “popular” according to Williams, suggests “well liked by many people”, “inferior kinds of work”, “work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people” and “culture actually made by the people for themselves.” (Williams 237) Hence, it may be valid to state that popular culture is a culture that is widely accepted and liked by many people. And within this popular culture exists certain aspects like the fashion, sports, food, music, language, movies and festivals embraced by the masses.

Popular culture may also be explained as the culture that is left over after we have decided what is high culture. (Storey 6) According to this idea, popular culture becomes a residual category, as inferior to high culture. For instance, popular literature is often seen as inferior when compared with canonical or classic literature- of high and low art. This assumption may be because what is regarded to be “high” has to be something that is complex and difficult to understand by the majority of the people, while what is deemed to be “low” or popular is comprehensible to everyone. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that cultural distinctions of this kind are often used to support class distinctions and to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences. Hence, the ideologies of Marxism and how social classes are created may be substantial in the analysis of popular culture and the role it plays within a society. Popular culture is also often explained as “mass culture”,

hence, a commercial culture and therefore, consumerism becomes a key factor, wherein what is popular at a given time period- from movies to books, music and fashion depends upon the consumers. It thus becomes something highly embraced by the working class culture. Under this light, the sub-cultures within popular culture, like popular music or popular literature becomes an important voice for the masses. It gives people the chance to voice their opinions through songs, books and poetry. And since, unlike high culture or art, it is comprehensible by everyone, it becomes a significant aspect in creating a revolution or change within a society.

Popular culture is perhaps most widely embraced in America. Following the Second World War, America experienced the temporary success of a cultural and political consensus- supposedly based on liberalism, pluralism and classlessness. And especially by the late 1950s and early 1960s, the country saw a liberation for music, art, inventions, public opinions and way of living itself. This popular culture embraced the rise of popular art of all forms. Certain aspects like the youth rebellion and the hippie culture signified the youth protesting for peace and liberation in the decade of turmoil, and thus, the period saw the emergence of music, songs and artists who voiced their opinions and protested against certain injustices done to the masses. The civil rights movement and the Vietnam War were among the main causes of great concern to young people. Activities related to the civil rights movement were among the main topics raised and circulated and many optimistic young people of all races strongly believed that all human beings are equal and hence, deserved equal rights and opportunities. The Vietnam War created a huge stir and was a great concern to most young people because young men were required to register for the war once they turn eighteen. Many anti-war protests took place on college campuses and to an extent, such protests became a part of the popular

culture, often carried out through popular music and other forms of art. Since folk music was often topical and political and generally about protests against racism and war, it was the music choice on many college campuses. Hence, even though often considered as “low”, popular culture indeed acted as a tool to bring about a stir and change in the society and in a way, heroes emerged not in the form of elite officials but in the form of the working class musicians, artists and writers.

“They tell me that every period, every time, has its heroes. Every need has a solution and an answer. Some people- the press, magazines- sometimes think that the heroes that young people choose lead the way. I tend to think that they happen because they grow out of a need. This is a young man who grew out of a need. He came here, he came to be as he is, because things needed saying and the young people were the ones who wanted to say them, and they wanted to say them in their own way. He somehow had an ear on his generation. . . I don’t have to tell you- you know him, he’s yours: Bob Dylan!” With these lines, “Ronnie Gilbert of the Weavers introduced twenty- two year old Bob Dylan to forty thousand folk fans in Freebody Park, Newport, Rhode Island, on July 26,1963.” (Lynskey 51)

In order to look into how popular culture, particularly the popular music of Bob Dylan shaped and contributed to a revolutionary change in the American society, thereby becoming what Gilbert called a “hero”, the discourses of popular music may be taken into account. It may be suggested that the meaning of any piece of music is not entirely based on the discourses we have for comprehending them, but more with how we analyse and put the meanings there. According to Simon Frith , “to understand cultural value judgements we must look at the social contexts in which they are made, at the social reasons why some aspects of a sound or spectacle are

valued over others.” (22) Hence, a study on how artists, particularly Dylan in this case, communicate cultural value judgements, referred to here as “discourse”, through attitude, style, voice, lyrics and language can be made.

The social contexts on which the discourses of the songs of Bob Dylan are based have to do with certain historical events such as the after-shocks of the world wars, improvement of certain technological inventions in the society, Kennedy’s assassination, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War and most of his songs too, contain themes of these events and highlight their effects on society and the individual. To fully examine the relation between song and culture and how the songs of Bob Dylan resonated with the culture of its time, a closer study of what is known as the then counterculture and his role in it may be made.

A counterculture may be defined as a subculture whose values and norms of behavior differ substantially from those of mainstream society, often in opposition to mainstream cultural mores. (Merriam-Webster’s, 2008) A countercultural movement expresses the ethos and aspirations, beliefs and ideals of a certain group of people or population during a certain period and when such oppositional forces reach a critical mass, countercultures often result in the creation of certain cultural changes. Within this context, the counterculture of the 1960s, specifically between the years 1964 and 1974 may be examined. The term “counterculture” is said to have been originated by John Milton Yinger who first used it in his 1960 article *Counterculture and Subculture*, where he suggested the use of the term “wherever the normative system of a group contains, as a primary element, a theme of conflict with the values of the total society, where personality variables are directly involved in the development and

maintenance of the group's values, and wherever its norms can be understood only by reference to the relationships of the group to a surrounding dominant culture". (Yinger 625). To identify Dylan's role and contribution in this counterculture, his first emergence into music and popular culture may be taken into account, and for this, his beginnings as a folksinger is significant. Bob Dylan's influences came from varied genres of music but when he first arrived in New York, beginning his career as a singer in a café, amidst singers who were playing different kinds of music, he stuck to folk music which "either drove people away or come in closer. . .", claiming "Folk songs were the way I explored the universe, they were pictures and pictures were worth more than anything I could say." (Dylan 18) He was aware of the changes taking place within the country and how these changes affected the music scene but was adamant to stick with what he knew best and admits, "'50s culture was like a judge in his last days on the bench. It was about to go. Within ten years' time, it would struggle to rise and then come crashing to the floor. With folk songs embedded in my mind like a religion, it wouldn't matter. Folk songs transcended the immediate culture." (Dylan 27) Perhaps Dylan's choice of sticking to folk music proved to be a wise decision. America, at that time, was "convulsed by the bloody battle for civil rights and the palpable threat of nuclear war, and young Americans, losing faith in the wisdom of their elders, hungered for someone who could voice their inchoate discontent." (Lynskey 52) and since folk music was often generally political, taking positions against racism and war, and Dylan being the main folk music figure of the time, he emerged as the voice and hero for the youth culture.

Many of Bob Dylan's songs defined social issues such as the Vietnam war and the Civil Rights Movement. The 1960s, the time when Dylan started to rise to fame through his music was the time rebellion against mainstream society was rising

among the youth. These rebels adopted a certain lifestyle as opposed to the traditional lifestyle of the mainstream culture as a way of asserting their beliefs, ideals and individuality to an extent and to achieve self transformation. According to James Dunlap, folk music was generally viewed “as a way to understand or promote the common beliefs and aspirations of entire social groups” which provided a way for young people to express their discontent with the mass culture and their parents’ values. (Dunlap 549) As such, Bob Dylan, through his lyrics challenged the accepted beliefs and norms of traditional American society and focuses on individual feelings rather than entire social groups, making his songs a forerunner for the creation of a counterculture.

By 1963 and with the release of his first two albums, *Bob Dylan* (1962) and *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* (1963), a myth that may never be quashed- that of Dylan, the protest singing prophet was born. All of his most famous political songs were written in a relatively short period, but these became the songs which fixed him in the popular culture imagination. In his autobiography *Chronicles: Volume II*, Dylan shudders as he remembers the labels slapped upon him- “Prophet, Messiah, Savior.” and recalls how he had confided in a friend, “People are recognizing me, they’re stopping me on the street and asking me what I meant in ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’, and what’s the true meaning in my other songs. They’re driving me flaky. Gotta get out of here.” (Dylan 46) However, there was nowhere to go. It was as though wherever he went, people pursued him looking for answers that were not there. Suddenly, a hero emerged in the form of Dylan. A hero who spoke out things that had never been dared said before. It may be suggested the youth culture that was disillusioned with the wars, racism and oppression by those in power finally found hope in Dylan and his songs, songs that protested and finger pointed the “ruling”

class, the class in the form of politicians and leaders. The popular culture and attitude as well as propaganda of the protesters was one thing before Bob Dylan came upon it with his protest songs, and quite another thing afterwards.

Bob Dylan began to use his music to show the experiences of injustice within the American society. His protest songs, especially those with political issues often feature particular incidents that have happened in the society wherein Dylan finger-points and blames those in power who used their power to suppress the less privileged. To fully analyse Dylan's key role in the revolutionary change that occurred in popular culture and how his music altered the cultural values of America, certain theories about popular culture, society, class and power dynamics may be applied while scrutinizing the discourses of his lyrics.

For many cultural critics working within the cultural dynamics, mass culture is not just an imposed and impoverished or lower culture, it is in a clear identifiable sense an imported American culture: "If popular culture in its modern form was invented in any one place, it was in the great cities of the United States, and above all in New York." (Maltby 11) If the claim that popular culture is American culture were really true, it will have to do with the history it has within the theoretical mapping of popular culture. It operates under the term "Americanization" and its central theme is that British culture has declined under the homogenizing influence of American culture. To look into the dynamics of the United States and popular culture, we may consider what Andrew Ross has pointed out: "Popular culture has been socially and institutionally central in America for longer and in a more significant way than in Europe." (Ross 7) Particularly in the 1950s and 60s, one of the key periods of Americanization, for many young people in Britain and other parts



of the world, American popular culture represented a force of liberation, perhaps because in it, the youth, the rebels and the working class people had a voice. The texts, practices and way of living in this popular culture are seen as a form of “public fantasy” (Storey 9) It is a collective dream world and provides “escapism that is not an escape from or to anywhere, but an escape of our utopian selves.” (Maltby 14) It may also be stated that popular culture is the culture that originates from the people, a folk culture which is a culture of the people for the people and is “often equated with a highly romanticised concept of working-class culture construed as the major source of symbolic protest within contemporary capitalism.” (Bennet, 27) With these theories, Dylan’s impact on the liberation that the popular culture of America represented, where the working-class protested against the capitalistic ideals is clearly evident. In order to analyse Dylan’s protest songs and how it contributed to this “public fantasy” and how it provided “escapism”, the historical events that triggered the songs and the topics raised in his lyrics will have to be looked at.

His second album, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* released in 1963 is often regarded to represent the beginning of Dylan’s writing contemporary words to traditional melodies. Eleven out of the thirteen songs in it are Dylan’s original compositions and includes “Blowin’ in the Wind” which became an anthem of the 1960s Civil Rights movement and is regarded to capture the frustration and aspirations of those affected. The song poses a series of rhetorical questions about peace, war and freedom where Dylan questions;

“How many roads must a man walk down

Before you call him a man?

Yes, how many seas must a white dove sail

Before she sleeps in the sand?

Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon ball fly

Before they're forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,

The answer is blowin' in the wind." (Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985,7).

The song does not necessarily outline or point to the occurrences of the wars or what literally happened, nor does it provide a solid solution to whatever was happening to the society. In this song, Dylan seems to be avoiding specifics but nonetheless captures the impending question "by posing questions that so many Americans were asking: 'How many times? How many deaths? How many years?' " (Lynskey 55) Although it does not tell the exact situations and happenings, "Blowin' in the Wind" intrigued the listener with its subtle poetic vagueness and although it provides no clear-cut answer, it gave the disillusioned Americans a sense of an escape from the questions that they had suppressed for so long. It became a consensus for a particular group of people, a group of people that formed the popular culture of the time.

Another theory applicable to the study and analysis of popular culture is that of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Gramsci uses the term "hegemony" to refer to the way in which dominant groups in society, through a process of "intellectual and moral leadership" seek to win the consent of subordinate groups in society. For him, hegemony becomes a political concept developed to explain the absence of socialist revolutions in the Western capitalist democracies, given the exploitative and oppressive nature of capitalism. As such, it involves a specific kind of consensus, where a social group seeks to present its own particular interests as the general interests of the society as a whole. The existence of

hegemony however does not imply that all conflicts within a society, between classes have been removed. It basically suggests “a society in which conflict is contained and channeled into ideologically safe harbours.” (Storey 80) In this sense, hegemony is created by the coming together of a certain group of people with a set of shared ideals, thus forming a popular culture. Through the songs of Dylan, songs that talk about the injustices of wars, racism and the cruelties done to mankind, a social group who shares the same angst and hope come together to create a consensus that contributed greatly to the already existing popular culture whilst forming a new one. For instance, as politicians continued to send more troops to Vietnam, the people began to question the United States’ involvement in the war and expressed their concern openly. Bob Dylan’s song Masters of War came up and signified the ideas and stances of the angry students and youth who were protesting against the war. The song presents the brutality of the war and Dylan blames those in power, the politicians who were in command as evil men who make profit off of the war while young men go off and die, saying:

“ . . like Judas of old, you lie and deceive. . .

you fasten the triggers for the others to fire,

then you set back

and watch when the death count gets higher. . .”(Bob Dylan :

Lyrics. 1962-1985, 81).

This song shows how little concern the U.S government seems to have for the number of deaths caused by the war since its only interest was winning the war. Dylan is frustrated and angry in this song, exclaiming “you ain’t worth the blood that runs in your veins” and ends it with a threatening message, “till’ I’m sure you’re dead.” He turns the topic of the military-industrial complex into an ancient horror

story in which a wrongdoer is pursued by a vengeful spirit. In the liner notes to his album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, he explains himself saying, "I've never really written anything like that before. I don't sing songs which hope people will die, but I couldn't help it with this one. The song is a sort of striking out, a reaction to the last straw, a feeling of what can you do?" (Lynskey 57). His wish for death upon these "masters of war", emphasized the true hatred that the protestors had and their genuine desire for the war to end and to have peace within the society.

Hegemony no longer pertains to just the power imposed from above. According to Gramsci's concept of the term, in times of crisis within a society, when the moral and intellectual leadership is not enough, the processes of hegemony are replaced by the coercive power and in this case, it can be said that the people who embraced the popular culture through Dylan's protest music, rise together to protest against the failing leaders and exercise their own form of power. Using hegemony theory, "popular culture is what men and women make from their active consumption of the texts and practices of their culture industries." (Storey 81) This may be understood using certain subcultures and in this case, the popular culture or subculture of the youth, the youth culture who protested and formed a distinct culture within the existing culture and embracing the protest music of Bob Dylan to bring about their beliefs and desires. With this concept, popular culture brings about a balance in the society and creates classlessness, what Gramsci calls "a compromise equilibrium" (Storey 71).

Michel Foucault's ideas and concepts about power and knowledge within a society can also be an underlying factor in the study of culture and how these things operate within civilization, within the workings of class and social

hierarchies. Foucault is concerned with how knowledge is put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of others. He focused on the relationship between knowledge and power, and how power operated within what he called an institutional apparatus and technologies. This approach took as one of its key subjects of investigation the relations between knowledge and power in the modern society. It saw knowledge as always inextricably intertwined in relations of power because it has always been applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice. For him,

“Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’.

Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, not any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.” (Foucault 27)

This idea and approach about knowledge and power brought Foucault’s interest closer to those of the classical sociological theories, like Marxism with its concern to identify the class positions and class interests concealed within particular forms of knowledge. Looking into the American culture and society and the happenings of the given time period, power seems to be solely in the hands of the government and the elite officials or the “knowledgeable” politicians and yet the people were subjected to wars, racism and all kinds of injustices under the guidance and leadership of those who assumed the power. Though the American society may be one that is classless, the workings of power and how power is

maintained still relied on how an imaginary line was drawn between the rich and the working class. Marxist ideology has argued:

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e, the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has all means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.” (Marx 64)

The ruling ideas are thus those of the ruling class which governs a capitalist economy and in turn, power becomes subjected to those of the ruling class. Just like this, in the modern American society too, the people suffered the effects of the wars and the various rules imposed upon them by the “ruling class”.

Foucault argued against this classical Marxist theory with the claim that it tended to reduce all the relation between knowledge and power to a question of class power and class interests. He did not deny the existence of classes but strongly opposed to the powerful element of economic or class reductionism in the Marxist ideology. This led him to propose the idea of how power really works within a society, between classes and to whom power is really manifested. Foucault has stated how power is diffused and he challenges the idea that power is exercised by people or groups or the authority through sovereignty and traditional conventions, and instead, sees it as something dispersed. In “Power/Knowledge”, he has maintained:

“Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised

through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. . .In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.” (98)

If this theory is to be applied in our analysis and study of the songs of Bob Dylan within the paradigm of popular culture, we may look into how the protest songs of Bob Dylan, how a certain group of people who protested against the happenings of the American society and who embraced Dylan’s songs come together to form a consensus, thereby forming a radical change in the society and in turn, wielded power in their own right.

Bob Dylan, with his first album being released in 1962, emerged in the music scene at the time when many Americans were getting tired of the way the government was handling things. His music gave them a sense of hope and inspired them in the protests that were going on in the form of the civil rights movement and many other social activist movements. His songs spoke out and finger-pointed those who were in the position to make a change but chose not to and this was exactly the kind of voice that the people needed. The people’s frustration with issues like racism and an unjust government is also clearly captured by Bob Dylan in his song “The Death of Emmett Till”, a song about a black fourteen-year-old who had been beaten and shot to death in Mississippi in 1955 for “whistling at a white woman” and many regarded that with this song, “Bob Dylan the protest singer was born.” (Lynskey 54). In the song, Dylan vividly describes how the murder must have taken place and perhaps, to highlight how unreasonable and inexcusable the reason for the murder was, intentionally says, “They said they had a reason, but I

can't remember what." He also seems to be stressing upon the injustices done to black people, where they were ridiculed and suppressed just because of the colour of their skin and how it was as if the white men enjoyed torturing them for this and says:

"The reason that they killed him there, and I'm sure it ain't no lie

Was just for the fun of killin' him and to watch him slowly die." (Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985, 29)

Perhaps the biggest reason that this song caused such a stir and why it was loved by so many people who protested against the government was the way Dylan spoke out against the corrupt government, a government that would not lay its hand on white men even if they were guilty and confessed to their own crimes:

". . to stop the United States of yelling for a trial.

Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till.

But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this awful crime,

And so this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind."

Dylan mentions his own disgust at the way things were handled and paints a vivid imagery of the plight of the murderers and the murdered:

"I saw the morning papers but I could not bear to see,

The smiling brothers walkin' down the courthouse stairs

For the jury found them innocent and the brothers they went free,

While Emmett's body floats the foam of a Jim Crow southern sea."

The song greatly reflects Dylan's anger and frustration towards a law that was so unjust. He ends the song by reminding the people that such an injustice still exists



and asks that they join him in fighting against it:

“This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man,  
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed Ku Klux Klan.  
But if all of us folks that thinks alike, if we gave all we could give,  
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live.” (Bob Dylan  
: Lyrics. 1962-1985,17).

This kind of a revelation of the bitter truth wrapped up in a hopeful message and encouragement was exactly what the Americans needed. His fans saw in him the power to defy the “ruling class” and through Dylan and his songs, power was manifested in the hands of the working class people, a class embraced by the popular culture.

This flux of power within a society is the kind Foucault has stressed upon, wherein he challenged the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of “episodic” or “sovereign” acts of domination or coercion and instead sees it as dispersed and pervasive. According to him, “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere” and in this sense, it is neither an agency nor a structure. (Foucault 93 ) It is a kind of “metapower” or “regime of truth” that pervades society and is in a constant flux and negotiation. Similar to this, in the American society, the traditional power may have belonged to those in charge of making the decisions, the politicians and other elite officials who proposed rules such as the segregation in public places between white and black men. They may have had the power to recruit young men into fighting in the wars and they may be seen as the single source of power- the sovereign and the ruling class. However, “power does not function in the form of a chain” but it circulates and is never monopolized by one centre but is diffused and

exercised through a net-like organization. (Foucault 98). This suggests that to a degree, we are all caught up in its circulation- the oppressors and the oppressed and likewise, the people of the supposedly “lower class”, the youth, the rebels and the working class people of American culture too exercised their power by defying and challenging the laws through their protest whilst embracing and promoting the protest songs of Dylan that highlighted certain flaws and injustices of those traditionally assumed to be in power.

Bob Dylan joined the social movements and created a stir in the society and triggered the countercultural forces through his songs. Another well-known song “The Times They Are-A Changin’ ” is a proof that Dylan became a voice of a generation during the 1960s when the American youth was going through a cultural rebellion. According to him, this was “definitely a song with a purpose. I knew exactly what I wanted to say and for whom I wanted to say it to.” (Dylan 75) He calls out to the older generation, to mothers and fathers of the society;

“And don’t criticize what you can’t understand,

Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command. . .” (Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985,27).

The lyrics of the song as such describes the generation gap and why the youths were rebelling against the mainstream society. It represents the cry for freedom and Dylan pleads that this younger generation may be given freedom and the opportunity to express themselves and to be accepted for the individuals that they are.

“Protest songs are difficult to write without making them come off as preachy and one-dimensional,” Dylan wrote in Chronicles. “You have to show people a side

of themselves that they don't know is there." (Dylan 87 ) To do this, at that time in American history, "was to blow a hole in a dam and hope that you didn't drown in the torrent." (Lynskey 55) Thus, it was a given that writing and singing such songs would create a stir within the whole society, and that was exactly what the songs of Dylan did.

Despite Dylan's argument that he never really meant to protest through his songs, his lyrics nonetheless proved powerful in creating a distinct popular culture. The class he belonged to, through his music and through the people who embraced it, becomes hegemonic to the extent that it articulated different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized. His music signalled the expression of the message of his social and political convictions to an enormous audience, not only in America but worldwide. Undoubtedly, for many of his audience, his music had the effect of enlightenment, awareness and understanding and perhaps, even submission and conversion to, and coming together and bonding for those already convinced of the need to make a change by protesting and defying the injustices. Also, his music made and continues to make profits for the music industry, thereby contributing to a particular economy which is ultimately of financial benefit to the dominant culture. Most of all, his protest songs prove to be a force for change that paradoxically stabilizes to a degree, the very forces of power that it seeks to challenge and overthrow. Dylan laid the foundation for the activists, mostly college students and the youth who fought against the destruction of the system and it may be rightly said that no other artist was able to create the kind of revolution that he did, and he definitely had the greatest impact on that generation. His songs may not have been powerful enough to create a physical revolution nor do they end in one. However, they did start an awareness for the need of a change, a much needed

aspect in the creation of any revolution.

## **Chapter III**

### **Power and its Exercise**

This chapter will analyse how the working class of a society who embraced the popular culture through protest music defied the traditional elite class, thereby exercising power. It will study the situation of the time, the status and condition of the working class population and how protest music contributed to their protests against those in power, and how this in turn, made them participants in the power structure of the society. For this, Foucault's concept of power and knowledge and the dissemination of power based on certain Marxist class structures within the society will also be reflected upon.

When looking at the history of protest music and the emergence of its popularity as well as its role in society, wars and other issues that cause discontent among the masses, leading to the creation of certain antagonists who transformed their empathy, anger and emotions into song and music, may be considered as the main attribute. This is particularly true in the case of Bob Dylan and his protest songs.

Dylan and his music entered America at the time when the country was “convulsed by the battle for civil rights and the palpable threat of nuclear war”. It was the period when “young Americans, losing faith in the wisdom of their elders, hungered for someone who could voice their inchoate discontent” and “1963 America saw the birth of a myth that will never be quashed - that of Dylan the protest-singing prophet.” (Lynskey 52). Between the years 1962 and 1963, with the release of his first two albums, Dylan became one of the most prominent figures among the protest musicians and the protest scene. It was during this period that most of his famous political and protest songs or songs concerning the various protests and issues of the time and songs that fixed him in the popular imagination were written. In his

autobiography *Chronicles : Volume One*, Dylan recalls and shudders at the labels thrown at him; “Prophet, Messiah, Saviour. . .” (28) and admits to how he was troubled by people recognising him as somebody who could represent them and somebody who could be their voice. “People are recognising me, they’re stopping me on the street and asking me what I meant in *Blowin’ in the Wind*, and what’s the true meaning in my other songs. They’re drivin’ me flaky. Gotta get outta here.” (42). However, there was no getting out. People began to seek and look for answers in him and his songs. “Protest music was one thing before Bob Dylan came upon it, and quite another thing afterwards.” (Lynskey 54).

To study the situation of the period and the condition of the people, the difference in the power paradigm within the society - between the working class and those in power, Foucault’s theory of the power structure in the society may be examined. The 1960s, the period that saw tremendous growth in inventions, music, television and entertainment and art of all forms, was also convulsed by deaths due to racism and wars and assassination of political leaders, threats of more wars and nuclear attacks proposed by some of the leaders, who embody and exercise the ultimate power in the society. As a result of these actions, the masses who embody the lower group, those who were traditionally not expected to embody power and often labeled as the working class of the society were affected the most. This caused distinction between the two, leading the former to manipulate their control over the people and the latter to resist and oppose. In such an environment, power becomes an important factor and traditionally located within the state or the government and this study will attempt to reveal how this power fluctuates.

Power, its presence and manipulation of it is foremost embodied by the government. The control may be through the recruitment of soldiers to fight in the war and this recruitment is not always through one's consent. In such a scenario, it may be said that the control is extreme and may be examined and compared in relation to what Foucault had said in his book *Discipline and Punish*, "The carceral texture of society assures both the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation." (Foucault 1995: 29). Here in Foucault's book, we see an example of a city whose viability has been challenged by a natural disaster, a plague, and this situation which could potentially result in chaos and disorder, offers agency for the government to assume total power and control of its populous, while at the same time, acting or disguising itself as a protector. America, the government and its political leaders, who are to work for the betterment and protection of the citizens, fell short of what was expected of them since under their rule and leadership, the people felt unsafe, insecure and threatened. The external capture and control is carried out in the form of the recruitment of citizens to go into wars where their safety and well-being is not guaranteed, while the internal capture depends upon the observation of the citizens by the government wherein they are not free and are traumatized by fear and the effects of the wars.

Foucault has also introduced what he terms as "technologies of punishment" and within these technologies, there are two representations of punishment- Monarchical Punishment which refers to the public and torturous punishments that was present during the Eighteenth century, in which the "dysfunction of power was related to a central excess. . .which identified the right to punish with the personal power of the sovereign." (Foucault 1995: 80) The other is Disciplinary Punishment



which refers to the punishment or incarceration of offenders and is “isomorphic with obligation itself.” (180) To link these concepts with contemporary society, Foucault borrows an adaptation of Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the Panopticon to demonstrate the impact that surveillance and constant control and observation has not only on individuals in institutions like prison, but also on society as a whole. The Panopticon is an annular building with various cells, with a tower in its centre from which every cell where a prisoner is kept can be seen, but the prisoner cannot identify from where he is being monitored. The Panopticon denotes the idea that “Visibility is a trap.” (200) Each prisoner is seen but he cannot see or communicate with the warders or with the other prisoners, and hence “he is the object of information, never a subject in communication.” and this “invisibility is a guarantee of order” (200) which implies the functioning of power from a higher authority, ensuring that “. . . power should be visible and unverifiable.” (201) Very similar to this, the U.S government exercised their control upon the people in which the people are made aware that they are under its control, yet they are left powerless to the point that they do not have the voice to speak up for their own rights, wants and opinions against the societal injustices like wars and unfair treatments like racial discrimination and white supremacy. In such an environment, the power structure of the society comes into question.

The power structure within a society has also been examined by Foucault. If the Panopticon is taken as an example again, it can be suggested that Foucault has outlined the imperative modalities for the individuals to become imprisoned not just physically but also internally, and monitored by their own sense of imprisonment and control. He describes four practices which include the establishment of a power

heirarchy, segregation, training and military surveillance. These practices can be examined in relation to the contemporary U.S society by looking into the governmental workings of the country. Although the contemporary society has done away with sovereignty in terms of kingship and rulers, an invisible line is still drawn between the people - between the working class and the government officials, between the proletariats and the capitalists. This can be seen as a form of class heirarchy. The segregation that Foucault has talked about is also evident in this class structure. Thirdly, the practice of training is also an integral part of the state's governance in the form of the recruitment of citizens for soldiers to fight in the wars. Such a practice can be analysed under what Foucault has stated, “. . .the great confinement on the one hand, the correct training on the other.” (223) The fourth practice that Foucault has pointed out which is of the military surveillance is seen wherein the citizens are under the observation of the government or where there is unfair treatment, in which black people were unfairly treated and even killed, and where the killers were protected by the law. In such a situation, the black man is subjected to a constant fear and is void of equality and personal freedom, which can be related to Foucault's statement, “Each individual is fixed in his place. And if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment.” (195) Thus, there is loss of individuality and loss of freedom for expression due to the control by such a power structure. This results in the loss of any agency which leads to the loss of the ability or willingness to fight against those in power, just as Foucault has stated, “He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power. . .becomes the principle of his own subjection.” (207) This statement proves significant in the way the citizens assumed power to be in the hands of the government and thereby, are incapable of fighting against it. For a time,

before movements and protests sprung up, it can be said that the people's sense of self and power had been diminished to the extent that they had become complicit in their subjugation.

Foucault has also given a form of discipline that was introduced and prevalent during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth century in Europe to show how a body can be "docile" in order to fulfill the controlling power's motive, order or regulation. According to this idea, "The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body- to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces." (136) For him, this method is different from slavery which was "based on a relation of appropriation of bodies", instead, here, there is a "scale of control. . .working it 'retail', individually, of exercising upon it a subtle coercion". There is also the "object of control: it was not or was no longer the signifying elements of behaviour or the language of the body, but the economy, the efficiency of movements, their internal organization." There is also the "modality" which is "an uninterrupted, constant coercion. . .exercised according to a codification." (137) In this docility-utility, the "disciplines became general formulas of domination." This discipline does not merely produce "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies" but also "dissociates power from the body" and becomes an " 'aptitude', a 'capacity'. " (137-138) This means that the energy produced by the body is disciplined, developed and controlled and reversed. It becomes a power of subjection and with Foucault's concept, the docile body is made to be more intelligible and useful. Similar to this, the government often educate or manipulate the people to reverse their view and positions. By recruiting them as soldiers to fight in wars without their consent, they

teach the citizens to recognise their bodies as the property of the nation, a one unison body that is no longer a liberated body but a restrained body. In this way, the control that the government or the authority has over the body of the citizens embodies Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and the docile body. The recruitment of young men in the army is significant because it is their young age and often, lack of experience and knowledge that makes them more docile. The government is manipulative because it lures these soldiers into the war with the promise of a good name and medals, employing a seemingly metaphor of a "hero", which is a subtle and manipulative form of control and coercion. This is clearly reflected in Bob Dylan's protest songs like "Masters of War" (1963) that reveal the government's corrupt practices and involvement in the wars. Their control over the soldiers, the "docile bodies" is evident and according to Dylan, they

"build the death planes. . .

lie and deceive

fasten the triggers for the others to fire. . .

then sat back and watch when the death count gets higher."

(Bob Dylan: Lyrics 1962- 1985, 81)

The government subtly manipulates and exercise a form of control and coercion to these "docile" bodies into entering the wars. This is also evident in Dylan's song "John Brown" (1962) where John Brown went off to war and his mother, another "docile body" is being controlled by the government into believing his son is a hero in his uniform and will be a hero when he returns with his medals. However, she could not even recognize him when he returns because of the physical and mental damage that the war has caused him. (69)

Marxism, a scientific theory of human societies propounded by Karl Marx and later on, till date, shaped by the Marxists, has a significant role in the transformation of human societies. Marxist Criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis that aims to understand ideologies like the ideas and values by which man experience the society, and Marxist Literature attempts to highlight this through the class structures and economic differences within a society. In the Marxist theory, the concept of class places greater burdens on its theoretical foundations and Marxists argue that class or the economic base was at the center of a general theory of history, which they often refer to as “historical materialism”. This was initially stated in *The German Ideology* by Marx and Engels themselves who claim, “The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life”. (Eagleton, 4). Hence, this materialism brings into light the concept of “class struggle” and the difference between the capitalists and the proletariats. This struggle that exists in a society, between men and how the capitalist class owns the means of production, buying the labour-power of the proletarian class for profit is highlighted and focused upon by the Marxist theory. Upon a Marxist study of certain societies, this notion of class struggle and differences can be seen pertaining to the workings of certain social structures.

This study situates the power structure between the working class of the population who embrace and signify popular culture and that of the class traditionally assumed to have power, the class in the form of the government, the politicians. In this case, if the working class people are the proletariats, the government is the capitalist. A defining and recurring factor in the American society is the American Dream which is a national ethos of attaining certain ideals like liberty, democracy,

rights, opportunity and success through hardwork. Often, this American Dream has become a pursuit of material prosperity and perhaps, has proved to be beyond the grasp of the working class. It can also be regarded as the pursuit of a simple, fulfilling life with less focus on material and financial acquisition. Either way, it suggests a better living. This American Dream has proved most significant and contentious in the area of class within a society. According to Lawrence Samuel in his book *The American Dream : A Cultural History*, “Part and parcel of the framework of class is the notion of upward mobility, the idea that one can, through hardwork. . .climb the ladder of success and reach a higher social and economic position. For many in both the working class and the middle class, upward mobility has served as the heart and soul of the American Dream.” (7) However this dream has often proved futile and this “upward mobility” has become “even a greater myth than the Dream itself.”, causing to create a wider gap between the classes. The manipulation of it can also be seen in which “the government has employed it as a tool of propaganda. . .a powerful ideological weapon of persuasion.” (7) In such a scenario, the dream ironically becomes a nightmare for the people. During the time of the Great Depression and the war years, this dream seemed to be the only hope for the people in despair, the hope to retain economic, social and individual being. At the same time, due to unfair workings of the society and the government, this dream was more than often diminished. This result is in opposition with what the dream has initially been regarded to be. Lawrence Samuel quotes James Truslow Adams, who in his 1931 book *The Epic of America*, defined his idea of the American Dream;

“The dream is a vision of a better, deeper, richer life for every individual, regardless of the position in society which he or she may occupy by the accident of birth. It has been

a dream of a chance to rise in the economic scale, but quite as much, or more than that, of a chance to develop our capabilities to the full, unhampered by unjust restrictions of caste or culture. With this has gone the hope of bettering the physical conditions of living, of lessening the toil and anxieties of daily life.” (13)

This idea is the true essence of the dream. However, Adams argued that this concept has lost its notion and purpose and “its guiding philosophy forgotten in the wild pursuit of money. . . ‘The dream of a richer, better, fuller human life for all citizens instead of for a small class had been turned by our leaders and ourselves.’ ” (13-14) This proves that the ideals and morals of the dream had been hampered, and instead of providing equal opportunities, had often resulted in the creation of a wider gap between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the non-privileged, the powerful and the powerless. This failure in the idea of the dream can be linked with Marxist idea of class struggle, wherein the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. America, from the 1020s to the Great Depression of 1929 till date, has experienced a great economical and social change, resulting in certain class struggles that shaped their lives. This can be analyzed under the light of Marxism as seen in The Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), which claims that, “In the social production of their life, men enter into a definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will. . .The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.” (Eagleton, 4). As such, the people are affected by their economy and the changes which in turn, affected their consciousness

and their social being, their position as well as their relationships with others within the society. This is evident in the American society during the 1960s, on which this study is particularly situated. Bob Dylan, with his ability to put into writing his surroundings, clearly captured the prevailing situation of the time in his songs. He highlights the conflicts of the time and questions when the people would finally have freedom in his song “Blowin’ in the Wind”, asking, “How many years can some people exist before they’re allowed to be free?” and questions how long the authority would neglect the plight of the people, “How many times must a man turn his head, pretending he just doesn’t see?” (Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985, 77) He also pinpoints the people responsible for the wars and deaths due to racial discrimination, calling them “masters of war”. (81-82)

The 1960s or the Swinging Sixties, particularly in America goes hand in hand with what is known as counterculture. World War II had ended, the country was relatively prospering, yet it saw the rise of protesters and movements against the prevailing politics and governance of the country. The decade witnessed the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Vietnam War was still going on and there were threats of a nuclear war and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. At the same time, there was huge growth in inventions, economy, technology and art of all forms including the first man landing on the moon. The United States, home to the Statue of Liberty, (Liberty Enlightening the World) that depicts its independence, is an icon for freedom and opportunities and a landmark for many immigrants. Significantly, it is home to many racial groups, ethnicities, cultures and religion, and for its citizens and the world, it represents freedom, opportunities and hope. “The U.S government was democratic and designed to protect the people’s right to life, liberty,



and the pursuit of happiness.” ( “Home Front Turmoil: The 1960s.”) However, the governance within the country often contradicts with this theory. For instance, the people lost their beliefs in this idea of freedom due to the ongoing Vietnam War and threats of nuclear war with the Soviets. The principles of equality and opportunity was also not entirely guaranteed since blacks were not entirely equally treated. Protesters of wars and riots over inequalities that black people faced broke out all over the country. The country’s principles of democracy and its commitment to equality, justice and freedom was highly in question due to these happenings and it appeared as though the U.S system had failed miserably. Dylan brought to light these problems in his protest songs. The failure of the establishment to protect its citizens and instead, its tendency to discriminate and manipulate is seen in songs like “The Death of Emmet Till” where white supremacy is highlighted through the murder of a young black boy and where the white murderers are found not guilty.

In this internal conflict, it is the powerless against the powerful, the working class against the upper class, the youth against the older generation and the concept of power struggle within a society is put into perspective. Michel Foucault has notably indicated that “Where there is power, there is resistance.” ( 1990: 95) For him, “These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. . .resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable. . .by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations.” (95-96) Therefore, power, in any form, affirms the existence of resistance and vice versa. The first form of power, in this context is power exercised by the government, in the form of its leaders and politicians, and to signify or exemplify Foucault’s statement, this power is resisted by the people.

The Americans, traumatized by war and social injustices, grew weary of the

country's governance. The world was growing in technology and for the first time, the Vietnam War was broadcasted on television, and the public was easily informed of the tragedies of the war. The U.S government, in order to increase its troop in the war, recruited all eighteen-year-old citizens who were not in school or college to enter the military. Hence, many had to enter the war with no consent on their part and this upset the public tremendously. At the same time, racism was a prevailing issue in the society. The people, the youth especially, started to demonstrate their anger and frustration towards the government through protests. Demands for peace and equal opportunities were their main propaganda. The happenings in America was contradictory to the country's ideals, and its devotion to democracy and justice was thus put into question since it was evident that racism and violence were still condoned. Hence, the prevailing power was resisted, challenged and attacked by the people. The "lower" class group of the society now becomes a participant in the power structure. This signifies the stance that "No longer is power considered a unitary, constant force that emanates a particular social class or institution; rather, it is seen as a complicated, more tenuous fabric of hegemonic forms." (Constable 12) The power, conventionally believed to exist autonomously in the hands of the government now becomes fractured by certain acts of resistance, making the two "coexist and constantly reassert themselves against each other." (13) In this context, the resistance that is being put up through protests and social upheavals gave way, and at the same time, is thoroughly supported and given an agency by the countercultural movement of the time. Usually understood as a culture created outside the mainstream culture, it is a product of what Theodore Roszak termed as the "technocracy's children", ". . .the creation either of youth who are profoundly, even fanatically, alienated from the

parental generation, or of those who address themselves to the young.” (Roszak 1)

The existing culture or domination is challenged by this counterculture, usually embraced by the youth, and Roszak also raises the question as to why it has to be them; “Why should it be the young who rise most noticeably in protest against the expansion of the technocracies?” (22) To This, he claims that there is no right answer but “the young stand forth so prominently because they act against a background of nearly pathological passivity on the part of the older generation.” (22) It is thus the youth who protest, who challenge the existing authority and move outside the mainstream culture to create a counterculture because of their dissent with what has been practiced and followed by their parents and the older generation. Dylan’s music and lyrics proved useful for the younger generation who wanted to move away from the older generation’s ideals and beliefs since they no longer proved efficient to the requirements of the time.

Counter-cultural movements have been evident in certain parts of the world. However, one of the earliest and the most prominent may be the 1960s counterculture movement of the United States, triggered by the Civil Rights movement, protests against the Vietnam War, threats of nuclear wars and the overall demand for human rights, equality and peace. Since the movement, as pointed out, is created by the younger generation, it often started in college campuses by students and even outside the campuses, was joined by young rebellious people. Since this counterculture is intricately linked with youth culture, the lifestyle, norms, habits and beliefs adopted by the youth play a significant role in its creation. One of the major elements adopted by the youth culture is music and it also became an important feature of the counterculture movement. Music and lyrics

became a weapon for protests and the musicians' role in it is thus extremely significant, and Bob Dylan's role is perhaps one of the most important in this context. According to Peter Doggett in his book *There's a Riot Going On* (2007), "No one signified the ambiguous relationship between music and revolution more accurately than Bob Dylan." and regarded him as "a beacon of radicalism by the counter-culture." (6) His songs signify what the youth wanted to say, challenges the government with the bitter truth, contributed to the counter-culture of the time, moving away from the existing mainstream culture and became an instrument in the medium to defy and challenge who and what was traditionally believed to be in power. The "docile bodies", by the creation of this counter-culture and embracing it and using it as a weapon to defend themselves now actively and consciously resist domination and are no longer completely docile. Even if they have not completely become equal players in the field of power, by resisting it and acting upon it, have become active participants and often, power is maintained by them in the power structure within the society.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Lyrics and Interpretation**

This chapter will analyse the literary quality of Dylan's protest songs and will attempt to dissect the ambiguity in his lyrics. In doing so, it will attempt to reveal Dylan's own narratives on the protest. Protest songs, by definition, would simply

suggest songs with texts that consist of protests against wars, racial discrimination and other injustices of society. The lyrics are often a cry for help, a plea to the concerned, an awareness for the public and a voice for the subjects. Bob Dylan's protest songs address a variety of such issues, making him a writer of a song considered to be an anthem of the Civil War, wherein, he emerged as one of the most important figures in pop – culture history.

Historically, the tradition of protest songs, particularly in the U.S, dates back to the Eighteenth century and the Colonial period, the American Revolutionary war and its aftermath. Protest songs, being part of popular music and popular culture, have become an important instrument in bringing a change within a particular culture. Protest songs, in a way have emerged as a genre that is capable of bringing a change within a particular country, and Bob Dylan's protest songs, with the issues raised in it, have captured the voice of a generation. Lyrical ballads, poetry or songs have been used to express the full spectrum of human emotions, thoughts, feelings and concerns. As much as a love song lyricist or a romantic poet expresses love and romance and beauty into a song or a poem, the protest song lyricist expresses discontent and anger and proclaims social needs in the protest songs.

Bob Dylan's protest songs are angry, vivid and are a cry for redemption. Some of the songs depict actual incidents and occurrences while some are ambiguous as to what the main content is. At the same time, they all address the need for a better, more peaceful living, hoping for a change while attempting to contribute a solution to the problems faced. To comprehend Dylan's lyrics and interpret them to show his own narratives, the discourses of popular music will have to be considered. There may be certain discourses that determine the way we interpret popular music

and they may contribute to how we assess what is good or bad, what is significant and what is trivial. As such, the essence of any song or a musical piece is not so much in themselves but in the discourses attributed to them. These discourses may be varied and subjected to the listener. However, according to David Machin in his book *Analysing Popular Music : Image, Sound and Text* (2010), authenticity is one of the underlying discourses. “The discourse of authenticity is at the heart of the way we think about music and can be seen signified in the different semiotic modes through which artists communicate, through their sound, looks, lyrics and what they say in interviews.” (Machin 14). He takes blues music as an example of an authentic genre because it “is viewed as an authentic expression of an oppressed race- music from the heart- in contrast to the formality of the classical tradition of concert music from Europe, it is considered to be the archetype of music that genuinely expresses true emotion and feeling.” (Machin 14) Taking this into consideration, folk music, the genre that Bob Dylan is known for, may be examined for its authenticity.

Folk music is “music that originates in traditional popular culture or that is written in such a style. Folk music is typically of unknown authorship and is transmitted orally from generation to generation.” (Merriam Webster) Having no distinct owners or particular composers, this traditional folk music suggests history of any particular group of people, whose story, feelings and emotions have been captured and put into song, passed down from generation to generation, either written down or by word of mouth. Hence, in this case, its authenticity lies in the fact that it tells the factual happenings, sentiments and stories of the people. Bob Dylan’s music on the other hand, belongs to the more recent form of folk music, folk music of the twentieth century, a new form of folk music that evolved from the traditional

folk music and “its definition came to be based on a new set of criteria revolving around the taint of the commercial, of politics, and of class.” (Gelbart 256)

It is significant that Bob Dylan protested in his lyrics under the genre of folk music and authenticates it since “authenticity is about conviction and expression of emotion.” (Machin 18) In his folk protest songs, Dylan writes with conviction and expresses his sincere feelings and emotions about the time, what he feels is wrong and what must be done. Dylan’s appearance on the scene is also very relevant because for a time, before him, folk music had seen a subtle decline in the United States as well as in other parts of the world. Along with a few other folk musicians, Dylan entered the scene at the time when the genre was revived, reaching its zenith in the 1960s.

To analyse the literary quality and authenticity of Dylan’s protest songs, another discourse about the meaning of music may be studied. This discourse is how music “relates to our body and mind and how we can use music to express ourselves.” (Machin 18) One way of understanding this is how an audience or a listener responds to a certain type of music. Classical music or operas may require full contemplation and silence while in rock concerts, the audience may be loud and aggressive. This suggests that there is no doubt certain ways in which the body relates and reacts to a certain type of music and that there is a difference between listening with the mind and listening with the body. This difference has “its origin in the Romantic dichotomy between nature and culture and their corresponding associations with feeling and reason. Feelings were therefore associated with the body as opposed to the intellect.” (Machin 19) Bob Dylan’s music, since it is part of popular music, embraced by popular culture, and specially with its honest content, has



the quality to challenge the authority. It is music of the body, it is angry, honest and passionate, with the literary quality that need not to be contemplated and analysed by its audience, but to be embraced, agreed upon and followed and it is this association with the body and the natural and not of the mind and culture that has allowed popular music to come to be seen as a way of casting off bourgeois inhibitions. (Frith 124) It acts as a way of challenging the traditionally superior and social conventions and Dylan's songs manage to convey the message of frustration, discontent of the masses because it is music of the body that needs no further explanation. "The distinction between the body, instinct and feeling as opposed to the mind, intellect and reason sets up the idea that music of the body is free from restriction of the intellect and of high culture. So artists, simply through using certain sounds and visual references that connote this discourse, can indicate that they are of the body, the low brow and not of the bourgeoisie repressed social condition." (Machin 19).

Another discourse suggested by Machn that may be looked at when studying music is its association with "subcultures". Subculture may be explained as the culture that deviates itself from a larger culture, with particular interests, opinions and beliefs. The people following and embracing a particular subculture may adopt a certain kind of style, habits, language and overall way of living. Each music genre is capable of creating its own subculture, depending upon the situation of its time. For instance, punk music creates its own subculture where its followers may donne brightly dyed hair with spikes and wear torn clothes to show their rebellion as explained by Dick Hebdige in his book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1970), "The unlikely alliance of diverse and superficially incompatible musical traditions,

mysteriously accomplished under punk, found ramifications in an equally eclectic clothing styles which reproduces the same kind of cacophony on a visual level.” (26) Such a subculture created by punk music combined such elements to communicate a particular way of life. With their loud music, loud clothing, how they spoke and their choice of behaviour, they showed their disillusionment and were able to challenge and speak against the mainstream culture. In the same way, country music may require cowboy hats and boots to highlight their roots and way of living. Bob Dylan’s music was at its peak during the 1960s, at the time when folk music was revived. This was the period when America was agitated by the civil war and the threat of a possible nuclear war. The young Americans, starting to lose faith in the government and their elders who were supposed to pave the way for their betterment, hungered for someone or something that could voice their concern and discontent. They wanted peace and brotherhood. They needed a medium through which they could channel their opinions and music was just the right tool for it. Bob Dylan’s protest songs did not just capture the wrongdoings of those in power but also beautifully express the feelings and desires of the people. This enabled them to peacefully express themselves and for once, their voice was heard. Thus, through Dylan’s music, his followers began to form a subculture that had a coherent view and criticism of the government and the society and they were able to show their discontent through the directness and honesty of Dylan’s lyrics.

Bob Dylan’s lyrics are either very straightforward or very ambiguous and their interpretations can be varied. In *Chronicles: Volume One* (2004), Dylan recalls how he was often stopped on the streets by people who wanted to know the true meaning of his songs. One of his most well known songs, a song Dylan sang at the March

on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous speech is “Blowin’ in the Wind” from the album *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* (1963). The song even came to be known as an anthem of the civil rights movement and is still celebrated worldwide. The song consists of rhetorical questions where Dylan does not provide a solid solution nor does he address it to anyone in particular. It does not talk about any war or injustices in detail but simply questions:

“How many roads must a man walk down

Before you call him a man?

Yes, ‘n’ how many seas must a white dove sail

Before she sleeps in the sand?

Yes, ‘n’ how many times must the cannon balls fly

Before they’re forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind,

The answer is blowin’ in the wind.” (Bob Dylan : Lyrics.

1962- 1985, 77)

This song is one of the most ambiguous among all Dylan’s songs because unlike his other songs where he directly refers to the government or where he mentions the names of the victims of injustice, it refers to nobody in particular but at the same time, can be seen as a song meant for all. He seems to be questioning how many battles and hardships, internally or externally a man has to go through in order for him to be deemed worthy, to be called a “man”, and also how many violence and wars will we encounter before we can finally have peace. Even though this song does not literally highlight actual happenings, Dylan manages to bring across the problems faced by the country at the time in this song. He continues to question:

“How many years can a mountain exist  
Before it’s washed to the sea?  
Yes, ‘n’ how many years can some people exist  
Before they’re allowed to be free?  
Yes, ‘n’ how many times can a man turn his head,  
Pretending he just doesn’t see?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind,  
The answer is blowin’ in the wind.” (77)

Dylan’s genuine concern about the country is evident in these lines where he questions how long it would take for the people to be truly free from the shackles that bind their freedom and wonders how long the authority would turn a blind eye to the people in despair. It expresses the hardships faced by the minorities, or particularly the blacks. The refrain of the song where he keeps on repeating that the answer to all these questions is blowing in the wind may suggest that Dylan himself is not sure whether a solution would arrive soon but at the same time, he also provides hope for the people in need, by reminding them that the answer to their problems is somewhere to be found and that it will be found. “Blowin’ in the Wind” indeed captured the essence of the time and served as a tool to protest by delivering a message to its audience. The song may not have been powerful enough to start a physical revolution but it had the “potential to comment on society, politics and prejudice, . . . ‘protest’ and perhaps play some part in the struggle to bring about a better world” (Negus 99). It remains as one of the most covered songs of Bob Dylan and the ambiguity of this song proves significant because more than fifty years after

its release, it is still relevant to the happenings of the country, where equality or human rights is still often sought for, and the answer to whether such basic social equalities will be found or not is blowing in the wind.

“Masters of War” from the same album is a more vivid song where the masses’ anger and concern over the Vietnam war is portrayed. “The U.S Army’s role in Vietnam was to establish a safe environment within which the people of South Vietnam could establish a government that was independent, stable and freely elected. . .” (Rottman 6). The U.S government’s explanation and stance seemed beneficial for all parties, yet as the war continued, more lives were lost and the people felt unsafe and betrayed. As more troops were sent to Vietnam, more blood was shed and the people began to question the U.S’s motives and involvement and started to express their concern openly. Protests were held by young college students and when the song was released, it served as an important instrument for these protests since the lyrics captured the stance of the angry protesters. In the song, Bob Dylan openly blames and attacks the men in power, the politicians and calls them evil for making profit off of the war while they send the young men of the country off to the war only to die. He bravely calls them out, claiming that he can see through the mask that they put up and blaming them as the creators of the war:

“Come you masters of war  
You that build all the guns  
You that build the death planes  
You that build the big bombs  
You that hide behind walls  
You that hide behind desks

I just want you to know

I can see through your masks.” (Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962- 1985, 81)

Bob Dylan

condemns the “masters of war” and claims that they “build to destroy”, highlighting their cowardice when trouble lurks:

“You put a gun in my hand  
And you hide from my eyes  
And you turn and run farther  
When the fast bullets fly. . .  
When the death count gets higher  
You hide in your mansion. . .” (81)

The extremities of the damage caused by these “masters of war” is clearly depicted by Dylan who shows that their wrongdoings are so deeply rooted to the extent that he even fears for the future generation:

“You’ve thrown the worst fear. . .  
Fear to bring children  
Into the world. . .” (82)

The song resonated with the young protesters of the time because Dylan places himself as the youngling subjugated by the elder. He is aware of his youth but is adamant to not let them take his naivety for granted and bravely proclaims:

“ You might say that I’m young  
You might say I’m unlearned  
But there’s one thing I know

Though I'm younger than you

Even Jesus would never

Forgive what you do." (82)

This bold, aggressive voice was exactly what the young, rebellious protesters needed. Dylan's choice of language in this song is loud, angry and straightforward. It bravely cursed the wrongdoers and rightly captured the angst of the youth and in it, they found an outlet for their disillusionments and frustrations:

"And I hope that you die

And your death'll come soon

I will follow your casket

In the pale afternoon

And I'll watch while you're lowered

Down to your deathbed

And I'll stand o'er your grave

Til I'm sure that you're dead." (82- 83)

It has often been said that Dylan wrote his song "A Hard Rains A-Gonna Fall" (1962) in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the introductory note to Dylan's 1963 album, writer Nat Hentoff quotes Dylan as saying that this song "is a desperate kind of song. . .it was written during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 when those who allowed themselves to think of the impossible results of the Kennedy-Khrushchev confrontation were chilled by the imminence of oblivion. . .Every line in it is actually the start of a whole song. But when I wrote it, I thought I wouldn't have enough time alive to write all these songs so I put all I could into

this one.” (Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985, 62). The “hard rain” in this song has often been interpreted literally as the “atomic rain” perpetuated by the missiles but it can be seen that it is not just about the nuclear war but how the people have been manipulated and deceived, and Dylan also explains that this “hard rain” that he says is going to fall in his song is actually “the lies that are told on the radio and in the newspapers, trying to take people’s brains away, all the lies I consider poison.” (Dylan 65) .

The song, although it has themes related to war and destruction, is nonetheless beautiful and poetic in terms of Dylan’s choice of language and diction. Like many of his other songs, he starts each line with a question, addressing his “blue-eyed son”, his “darling young one” and this can be regarded as his attempt to speak to every American. He asks:

“Oh where have you been, my blue-eyed son?. . .

Oh, what did you see?. . .

And what did you hear?. . .

Who did you meet?. . .

Oh, what’ll you do now, my darling young one?” (Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962- 1985, 86-87)

Bob Dylan is aware of the impending doom and the song encompasses a wider message of injustices done to the people by the government by keeping them in the dark and feeding them false information through the media that they control, and concludes that he knows a “hard rain” is going to fall like “the pellets of poison that are flooding their waters.” (87) The song was released at the time when



the Americans knew that there was something wrong and the song proved as a medium to voice their concern. Many spoke up about the relevance of the song and highly praised it for its honesty and its ability to say what was needed to be said. In the documentary based on Bob Dylan, *No Direction Home* (2005) directed by Martin Scorsese, the poet Allen Ginsberg talks about his reaction upon hearing the song, saying, “. . . And I heard “Hard Rain”, I think. And wept. ‘Cause it seemed that the torch had been passed to another generation. From earlier bohemian, or Beat illumination. And self-empowerment.” (Ginsberg. *No Direction Home*.)

In 1964, Bob Dylan released his album *The Times They Are A-Changin’* and although Dylan continues to claim that he never really meant to protest through his songs, his concern with the happenings in the society, humanity as well as with politics started to reveal itself. This album includes more songs directed towards the government, underlining its evils. Some of the songs are now even from straightforward, depicting incidents in their actuality. It includes songs like “Only a Pawn in Their Game”, a song about the murder of Medgar Evers, a Civil Rights activist. Dylan first sang this song in Greenwich, Mississippi at a Civil Rights battle. The “pawn” in this song is actually the white murderer and by positioning him as one of the victims, as the “pawn” in this murder, Dylan manages to show just how immoral and corrupted the system is. He describes the murder but claims that the murderer cannot be blamed for “He’s only a pawn in their game”, and is convinced that it is the politicians who manipulate the majority of the white men in thinking that they are better than the blacks. These politicians preach:

“You got more than the blacks, don’t complain.

You’re better than them, you been born with white skin,. . . .” (Bob

Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985, 138).

Dylan also claims that the white man becomes a tool of those in power, like the deputy sheriffs, the marshals and the cops who are paid by the government. He shows how manipulative the government has been and how it has embedded in the minds of the people the white supremacy, teaching that the white man can do no wrong because it has the government to protect him:

“He’s taught in his school  
From the start by the rule  
That the laws are with him  
To protect his white skin  
So he never thinks straight  
‘Bout the shape that he’s in  
But it ain’t him to blame  
He’s only a pawn in their game.” (139)

“With God on Our Side” is another precise, straightforward song that describes the implementation and consequences of wars. It addresses the inclination or tendency of any land or country, its citizens, any tribe, society or nation to be of the notion that God is on their side, regardless of their actions and motives, as opposed to anyone that they are in conflict with. Dylan opens the song with how he has been conditioned by the laws to believe that the land he was born in has God on its side, and he mentions several disastrous historical events. He seems to be conveying the message that even though evil acts are done upon people, the perpetrators always have the tendency to justify their acts with the belief that God is on their side, and

that things are done in the name of God, things not condoned by God. He describes the massacre of the Native Americans in the Nineteenth century, the Spanish-American War, the Civil War and depicts the deaths. These wars were bloody and many lives were lost. It resulted in nothing good, yet the actions and consequences were rationalised with the belief that God was there. (Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985, 132).

Dylan also clearly highlights the first and second World Wars in this song, describing his inability to comprehend the purpose of these wars and mentions how the effects did not really matter because they had God on their side:

“The reason for fighting  
I never got straight  
But I learned to accept it  
Accept it with pride  
For you don’t count the dead  
When God’s on your side” (132)

Dylan does not only situate God on their side but also shows the tendency of every nation to believe that they have God on their side, and how once there is peace, the destruction is neglected by both parties:

“When the Second World War came to an end  
We forgave the Germans and we were friends  
Though they murdered six million  
In the ovens they fried  
The Germans now too

Have God on their side.” (133)

After a detailed description of the many wars that America had encountered, Dylan looks for a conclusion and makes a biblical reference where he talks about how Jesus Christ was betrayed by Judas Iscariot. In Luke 22:48, Jesus is betrayed by Judas with a kiss. Judas is the enemy, the traitor and Dylan seems to be showing the complex nature of everyone’s belief that they have God siding with them by questioning whether Judas too had God on his side:

“. . .Jesus Christ was betrayed by a kiss

But I can’t think for you

You’ll have to decide

Whether Judas Iscariot had God on his side.” (133)

God’s involvement and predestination becomes an issue and a complication for Dylan in this song. He ends the song admitting that he is confused and “weary as Hell”, and ironically leaves it to God to decide:

“If God’s on our side

He’ll stop the next war.” (133)

As Dylan released more songs, it became clear that whether intentionally or unintentionally, he became a much needed voice in the ongoing protests. His songs did not only condemn the government and its workings but many also speak up for what needs to be done. “The Times They Are-A Changin’ ”(1964) is one such example, and according to Dylan, a song that “. . .seems to be what people want to hear.” (Heylin 126). The song has been influential for people’s views on the

government, the society and their time, creating an awareness that change has to be made and that change is coming. In the song, Dylan calls how to the people to be aware of what is happening around them and to accept the reality that time and things have changed, and to do something about it:

“Come gather ‘round people. . .

If your time to you is worth savin’

Then you better start swimmin’

Or you’ll sink like a stone

For the times they are a-changin’ ” (Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962-1985, 127).

Dylan speaks directly not only to the people but also confronts writers and critics, senators, congressmen and the older generation of the country. He motivates these writers and critics who have the power to voice their opinions and asks the politicians to pay attention to this calling:

“Come writers and critics

Who prophesize with your pen

And keep your eyes wide open

The chance won’t come again. . .

Come senators, congressmen

Please heed the call

There’s a battle outside and it is ragin’

It’ll soon shake your windows

And rattle your walls

For the times they are a-changin’ ”. (127-128)

This song also addresses the older generation of the country who are perhaps in oppose of the youth culture of the moment, who expressed their opinions and wants of a better, more peaceful world by embracing the “hippie” culture:

“Come mothers and fathers  
Throughout the land  
And don’t criticize what you can’t understand  
Your sons and your daughters  
Are beyond your command  
Your old road is rapidly agin’.  
Please get out of the new one  
If you can’t lend your hand  
For the times they are a-changin’ ”. (128)

This song indeed drew attention and some of the lines remain a frequently quoted line till date. Michael Gray, in *The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia* (2006) called it “the archetypal protest song” where the writer’s “aim was to ride upon the unvoiced sentiment of a mass public- to give that inchoate sentiment an anthem and give its clamour an outlet.” (662). The song very much became what Dylan had intended upon, an anthem for a change, and it may be said that he did not necessarily convince people of something new in this song as well as his other songs, but reinforced views and facts that were already there, but where action was not taken. How and why something is said is often as important as what is actually being said. With Dylan, this medium of songwriting or putting down what needed to be said in songs, becomes his message. “I don’t think when I write. I just react and put it down on paper. . .what comes out. . . is a call to action.” (Dylan 187), and

significantly, what comes out of Dylan's songs influenced the movement of the time as much as the movement influenced him and the songs.

The singles "John Brown" and "The Death of Emmet Till", both released in 1962 are songs where Dylan recounts the stories of the two protagonists, John Brown and Emmet Till. John Brown is a character painted by Dylan, where through his experiences in the war, the true nature of wars is shown and may be considered as an anti-war song. Emmet Till on the other hand, is an actual black fourteen-year-old boy who had been beaten and shot to death in Mississippi in 1955 for "whistling at a white woman" and it is considered by many that with this song, "Bob Dylan the protest singer was born." (Lynskey 54)

John Brown, in Dylan's song is a young boy who is about to go off to war, and through his experiences, the deception of war and the effects that it has on a person is shown. The song recounts how proud his mother is of John as he is about to leave for war and brags about his son in his uniform and gun. His son leaves and during his time in the war, would often write to his mother and the mother would show and brag about him to the neighbours. However, when her son returns, she could hardly recognise him because of the destruction the war had caused :

"Oh his face was all shot up and his hand was all blown off

And he wore a metal brace around his waist." (Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985, 69)

Through this imagery, Dylan succeeds in showing the real effects of war and how destructive it is to man. John Brown's physical appearance had changed

so much that it was difficult for his mother to recognise him, and even when she did, was unbearable for her to see. By making the protagonist describe his encounter with the war, Dylan is able to bring across the reality of it all and how deceptive it all is:

“Don’t you remember Ma, when I went off to war  
You thought it was the best thing I could do?  
I was on the battleground, you were home. . .acting proud.  
You weren’t there standing in my shoes.  
Oh, and I thought when I was there, God, what am I doing here?  
I’m tryin’ to kill somebody or die tryin’.  
But the thing that scared me most was when my enemy came close  
And I saw that his face looked just like mine.  
Oh Lord, just like mine!” (70)

John Brown, in the battlefield, when confronted with the enemy, came to the realisation that fear, destruction of his courage, emotions and keeping his life at stake were the price he had to pay for a good name, for glory. He also came to the conclusion that he is doing all these not because he is brave and willing, but because he has been deceived and manipulated and forced by those in power, and that he “was just a puppet in a play” controlled by those who can. (70)

Bob Dylan’s then- girlfriend Suze Rotolo was undeniably very influential for Dylan’s involvement in the issues of the time and for his identity as a protest singer. Suze was involved in the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E), an organization



involved in the Civil Rights movement. She requested Dylan to write some songs for the organization and the first song that he wrote was “The Death of Emmet Till”. In the song, Dylan vividly describes the murder of the fourteen-year-old black boy and highlights how unreasonable and inexcusable the reason for the murder was and intentionally says:

“They said they had a reason, but I can’t remember what.

They tortured him and did some things too evil to repeat.” ( (Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985, 29)

Dylan, by highlighting this murder in this song, stresses upon the injustices done to black people, white supremacy and how the system suppresses them based on the colour of their skin. He believes that this murder was a mere enjoyment for the white people:

“The reason that they killed him there, and I’m sure it ain’t no lie,

Was just for the fun of killing him and watch him slowly die.” (29)

This song created a huge stir and was loved by the protesting people because Dylan spoke up against the corrupt government, a government that was so biased and corrupted that it would not take action against the guilty who even confessed to their own crimes, because it was a system that protects the white people. The murderers of Emmet Till, even though they confessed and pleaded guilty, were found innocent by the jury and were set free. Dylan was disgusted at this unfair trial and how the government refuses to punish the guilty. The song greatly reflects Dylan’s anger and frustration and addresses not only the authority but the people as a whole, condemning them for keeping quiet when so much was needed to be said:

“If you can’t speak out against this kind of thing,  
a crime that’s so unjust,  
Your eyes are filled with dead men’s dirt,  
your mind is filled with dust.  
Your arms and legs they must be in shackles and chains,  
and your blood it must refuse to flow,  
For you let this human race fall down so God-awful low!” (30)

The song ends with Dylan pointing out and reminding people the existence of such an injustice and requests them to join him in fighting against it:

“This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man  
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed  
Ku Klux Klan.  
But if all of us folks that thinks alike,  
if we gave all we could give,  
We could make this great land of ours a greater pace to live.” (30)

The song proved to be a revelation of the bitter truth of the society and the hopeful message and encouragement that Dylan included was exactly what was needed by the people. It triggered the ongoing protests and his fans saw in him and his songs the power to defy the government, the authority or the “ruling class, and his songs proved as a medium of power, where power was manifested in the hands of the working-class people, a class embraced by the popular culture.

Power has always traditionally been in the hands of the ruling class, either in

the form of the government, the coloniser, or based on the colour of one's skin. Hence, the subjugation of the working class, the colonised, the inferior race or the lower class is parallel to colonial stereotyping and subjugation. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha discusses and highlights several instances of racial stereotypes, cultural difference, identity, hybridity and agency and talks about the need to understand and locate the questions of culture in the transitional phase of the contemporary world. Culture and identity no longer pertain to the beginning and ending, and in this contemporary realm, "we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion." (2) He asserts that we must move away from this monolithic categorization of class and move to the "beyond" which is a coming together and mixing of different cultures to form a new classless identity, and this will define the act of society itself.

Stereotyping any particular group of people, whether by race, nationality or by class becomes a form of subjugation. Similarly, many of Dylan's songs highlight this subjugation wherein the blacks, the youth and the working class people are stereotyped as inferior and the whites, the older generation, the government or the ruling class are superior. For Bhabha, this act of stereotyping is dangerous not just because it mischaracterizes the other but also assumes a totalized fixity of the image, and the said inferior groups of society assume a fixed stereotype image and being. However, by moving to what he calls the "beyond", there will be a free flow of cultural differences and such groups will no longer be isolated. This free flow of groups without any fixity can be seen as what Dylan proposes in his protest songs. As long as a certain group assumes superiority, the other will be sidelined. The

American society too has been conditioned to believe that the government has all the power and the politicians are the manifestors of this power. In such an environment, they control the people under them, manipulating and deceiving them by sending them off to wars. In the same way, the black-skinned people are assumed to belong to the inferior group, controlled and subjugated by the whites, where they are suppressed to the point that they are killed by the whites for the slightest reasons and where their killers are not guilty in the eyes of the law, which are all reflected in the protest songs of Bob Dylan.

Homi Bhabha also uses the work of Franz Fanon to analyse the concept of identity. Fanon was concerned with the psychoanalytic explanation of how people can be enslaved not only physically, but in their mindsets as well. According to Bhabha, this differentiation and identification of people must be reanalysed in the contemporary world. For Bhabha, “the question of identity is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity” (64) but rather, something that has been created in the mind of people who are being colonised, dominated or subjugated. This created image shows them inferior. In such a situation, man belonging to the subjugated group is influenced by many things around him which blurs his identity. It is these external influences that make people to assume their given role in a society. For instance, the black man has been colonised for so long that even after he is free from slavery, he is still influenced by the events and beliefs around him, making him believe that he was, is and will always be inferior.

Even though slavery had been abolished a century ago, America in the 1960s still had the Civil Rights movement, wherein equality of the races and human rights were demanded, and an important issue in the songs of Bob Dylan. The idea that the

blacks were inferior and that they were the “Other”, the colonised is what complicates the black man’s being, making him not being able to stand up for himself and continuing to be oppressed by the white man. This subjugation is now challenged by the people who protested against it, and by Dylan through his protest songs, making him the voice of the time.

Homi Bhabha is aware of the existence of cultural differences and notes that it “. . .is a process of signification through which statements of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity.” and for him, “Culture only emerges as a problem, or a problematic, at the point at which there is a loss of meaning. . .between classes, genders, races, nations.” (50) He also claims that this “cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation.” (50-51) As such, this cultural “difference” forms itself once there is the belief that one group is better than the other, or one race is superior than the other. It creates a problem the moment this idea of a “difference” is conjured. Significantly, as seen in the protest songs of Bob Dylan, the society or culture faces a problem due to this difference, and the people are subjected to inequality and injustices.

Homi Bhabha is of the opinion that postcolonial perspectives do not agree with the term “underdevelopment” and attempts to study and revise the point of view in which there is a binary opposition between the First World and Third World. According to Babha, “The postcolonial perspective departs from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or “dependency”. . .set up the relation of Third World

and First World in a binary structure of opposition. . .forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres.” (248) This postcolonial binary opposition is analogous to the two classes of the contemporary world, a class created by the “cultural difference”. It is the clash between these two opposing factors that led to a cultural difference, creating a social crisis. The desire and recognition of the need to terminate this difference led to the various movements and protests of the time, leading to create a popular culture, a culture embraced by the masses in want of a social change.

Culture is ever - changing, fluid and transitional. It can be displaced and moved and thus, it is significant to decode certain cultural signs. The movements and the protests may not have produced or resulted in a drastic cultural change but it did create a consensus, whereby the people of a particular group, and in this case, the previously subjugated, seek to present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole. Through the protest songs that speak about racial discrimination, injustices and the corrupted government, an important tool in the ongoing protests and movements, a social group that shares the same opinion, angst, beliefs and hope come together to create a consensus that contributed heavily to the existing popular culture whilst forming a new one.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter will attempt to analyse and sum up the preceding chapters

and focus on the dynamics of music culture and how cultural changes are made possible in relation to its philosophical and theoretical study. In doing so, it will reflect upon how protest music is constituted as a tool in creating a consensus within popular culture, thereby creating a sub-culture.

It is historically evident that cultural change is made through varied occurrences and situations as well as certain ideologies, and culture is not static. Man's involvement in it is highly influential, and at the same time, a particular culture and the changes within it is also crucial in the formation, development and participation of man. Culture, "a particular way of life, of a people, a period or a group." (Williams 88) encompasses all habits, beliefs, practices and way of life itself. Music has always been an integral part of any given culture and acts as an important feature to signify a particular culture's identity. It tells the history and tradition of a people and reflects their ancestry, identity and religion, and through it, cultural values are passed on from generation to generation. The term "ethnomusicology" is significant in the study of the relationship between music and culture and how music is culturally created or how music influences and changes culture. The term is regarded to have been first coined by Jaap Kunst from the Greek words "ethnos" which means "nation", and "mousike" which is translated as "music". (Behague 260) It may be understood as the study of music from the perspective of culture and society, or the cultural and social aspects that led to its creation. In the seminal book, *The Anthropology of Music* (1964), Alan P. Merriam extensively talks about this term, its usage and significance and calls it "the study of music in culture." (6) and claims that one of the main purposes of



ethnomusicology is considering “music as a means of communication.” In support of this view, he borrows Mantle Hood’s opinion;

“In the latter half of the Twentieth Century it may well be said that the very existence of man depends on the accuracy of his communications. . .speaking and listening, informing and being informed, constructively evaluating and welcoming constructive criticism. Communication is accurate to the extent that it is founded on a sure knowledge of the man with whom we would hold intercourse.” (10)

If music is thus a means of communication, it undoubtedly contributes to cross-cultural communication to bring about understanding and validation, becomes a carrier of identity and values and create unity. It is in this aspect that a folk-singer like Bob Dylan, with his protest lyrics that carry messages that needed to be said and delivered, that demonstrates the cultural value of its time and bring together a group of people with the same ideals and beliefs to unite to form a cultural change, becomes an indispensable participant in the cultural dynamic.

“The ultimate interest of man is man himself, and music is part of what he does and part of what he studies about himself. . .music is also human behaviour” (16) and through Dylan’s music and songs, the internal conflicts, emotions of man disturbed by the culture and society of the time can be dissected.

Within the field of ethnomusicology, popular music and the effects it

has on people can also be examined. Since Bob Dylan and his protest music belong to popular culture and popular music as discussed in the previous chapters, this particular aspect may be substantial to look into. According to Theodor Adorno, popular music is contrasted with serious music. If this is the case, popular music would function less deliberately and would in turn, have greater impression on the majority of the people. This stance is significant because since the music that Bob Dylan introduced and the lyrics of his songs resonated with the mass culture, it was able to have more impact on the people. It contrasts itself from the formality of “serious music” and can be seen as the kind of music “that genuinely expresses true emotion and feeling.” (Machin 14) According to ethnomusicology, popular music is also often linked with mass media. The 1960s, the decade when Dylan and his music gained popularity, was also a period that relatively grew in technology and inventions. The world became smaller due to the development in mass media and television and since a dependant relationship was built between the two, musicians could gain a wider platform and audience. They were able to acquire a superstar persona and economic success and in turn, their fans and followers were more avid and devoted which contributed largely in the creation of a subculture. Bob Dylan’s time of emergence as a singer and a public figure was relevant not only for his own success and popularity but also for the impact he had and for the success of the circulation of his songs’ message and content. The successful reception of his songs indeed had to do with the condition of the time and it appealed to the masses, especially the youths who were already protesting and in dire need of somebody who could voice their propaganda.

In the creation of a subculture through popular protest music, an identity has also been created within the societal paradigm and power structure and social infrastructure. This relationship between music and identity has been a much debated subject for ethnomusicologists. Thomas Turino, in the book *Music as Social Life : The Politics of Participation* (2008) notes that it is with the “conception of the self and individual identity” that “culture and musical meaning ultimately reside.” He is of the opinion that “identity involves the partial selection of habits” and connects this “habit” with self, identity and culture, whereby, our musical habits, our reception of it and our attitude towards it can lead to the formation of cultural changes and the creation of identity and identity groups. (95) Bob Dylan’s protest music, with its rebellious nature and attitude to challenge the authority created within itself and its followers a sense of identity and the people came together, breaking barriers and formed an identity group that acted as a collective power. The role that music plays within any given culture and its impact on cultural change leads to the question of who and what constitute a culture. Culture is no longer subjected only to the “intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic factors” (Storey 2) but encompasses all “forms of life and social expression.” (Rivkin and Ryan 1233) With certain ideologies, especially that of Marxism, culture also now has a broader meaning and has been examined through a more political perspective. It has now also been understood as “both a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination.” (1233) In this aspect, culture has become political wherein it has become parallel to power, the power of the ruling class and where the ruling class governs. In contemporary society, the government is the power who

speaks and acts for the rest of the society and assumes total control. This can be seen as a form of authoritarianism whereby it silences the voice of the lower class people and the culture and tradition of those who lack power is diminished.

The politics in culture, the difference between the classes as well as the functioning of power between them becomes important in the formation and change in the existing culture. The term “hegemony”, simply understood as control, leadership or dominance of one group over the other, or power exercised by a ruling class over a lower class, according to Antonio Gramsci now also means “political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class.” (Bates 352) This can suggest the reduction of conflicts between the dominator and the dominated, and more political inclusion of the previously marginalized in order to attain a smoother governance, a political and cultural change and in this consent, hybridity can exist. As frequently highlighted, the difference between the classes has to do with how power and ideas have been manifested in the hands of the traditionally superior which caused tension and conflicts between the two. However, the hegemon has now been challenged by the previously dominated class or group of people and as mentioned, through the protest songs of Bob Dylan, have found an outlet to voice their opinions and ideas that were previously silenced, leading the notion of power to be diffused and in turn, creating a hybrid moment which is an initial stage of a cultural change.

Homi Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994) has attempted to display “the importance of the hybrid moment of political change” and notes that “the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation of elements. . .a negotiation between gender and class, where each formation encounters the displaced, differentiated boundaries of its group representation. . .in which the limits and limitations of social power are encountered in an agonistic relation” and claims that this type of hybridity is a “historical necessity”. (41) This negotiation for a political change is only possible by the creation of what Stuart Hall calls a “power bloc”, a “new social bloc” which would produce “a form of symbolic identification that would result in a collective will.” (41- 42) This bloc may be constructed through certain political groups or any particular group with common interest to challenge and question the existing power. It is in this aspect that the formation of a culture that deviates itself from the traditional culture, a popular culture from the high culture, or a sub-culture from the prevailing popular culture can occur. The sub-culture created within the popular culture under the wing of the youth protesters, precipitated by protest music posits itself as the power bloc. The coming together of the previously silenced, the lower and working class people, the black-skinned people forms a group that would challenge to negotiate and create a cultural consensus and “a structure of heterogeneity to construct a theoretical and political alternative.” (41)

For the “newly” constructed cultural group or sub-culture, protest songs become the guiding force in their attempt to voice their opinions and

frustrations and hence, the cultural impact that music has is evident. The uses and functions of music and how it is employed in human society has thus been an important topic for ethnomusicologists. Alan Merriam has discussed certain major and overall functions of music, among which is “the function of emotional expression”. This function is primarily apparent in the operation of protest songs. He borrows Linton Clarke Freeman’s idea that “a particular type of folk expression should be associated with a particular kind of social organization” and that “social protest verses emerge when the members of a society are deprived of other mechanisms of protest. Such songs will persist as long as these individuals are deprived of other more direct techniques of action. These verses represent an attempt of the members of the society to cope with unacceptable social conditions.” (220) This is particularly true in the development of the protest songs of Bob Dylan as well as in its employment by the protesters of the time. There were things that needed to be said in the society but for the people that had always been conventionally sidelined, resources were scarce and protest music became their main weapon.

The protest songs of Bob Dylan were not created to start a protest nor did they end in protest. Instead, they functioned as a much needed medium for the protests that occurred because of certain cultural conflicts, and answered the requirement of the cultural demands, while stabilizing and validating the social system since songs or music has the ability to function “as a mechanism of emotional release for a large group of people acting together.” (222) The angry, “lower” class people in want of a change saw in Bob Dylan a revolutionary voice, and he in turn became the symbolic representation of a

revolution. His protest songs contributed to the integration of society and created a cultural unity since “music provides a rallying point around which the members of society gather to engage in activities which require the cooperation and coordination of the group.” (227)) The protest music of Bob Dylan, through its cry for redemption, its portrayal of the unfair treatment of the black people, the government’s corrupted system and strong message of hope and change brought the people to come together as a unit, a power bloc to challenge the traditional power and contributed to the change in society and culture.

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**APPENDICES**

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**DEGREE** : **M.Phil.**

**DEPARTMENT** : **English**

**TITLE OF DISSERTATION** : **Remapping Song: A Study  
of Select Protest Songs by Bob  
Dylan**

**DATE OF PAYMENT OF ADMISSION** : **26.7.2016**  
(Commencement of First Semester)

**COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEMESTER** : **1.1.2017**

**SEMESTER/DISSERTATION**

**APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL-**

**BOS** : 26.4.2017

**SCHOOL BOARD** : 26.5.2017

**REGISTRATION NO. & DATE** : **MZU/M.PHIL./367** of dt.26.5.2017

**EXTENSION IF ANY** : **January 2018- July 2018**

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XII	MBSE	2007	II	57.2%
B.A	Mizoram University	2011	II	59.4%
M.A	Mizoram University	2016	I	67.5%
M.Phil.	Mizoram University	Course work completed in 2016	I 'A' Grade awarded. 10 pt. scale grading system, 'A' corresponds to 60 – 69.9 pts.	Corresponds to 65% in terms of percentage conversion.

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**Other relevant information :**

- i) Currently working on M.Phil. dissertation entitled “Remapping Song: A Study of Select Protest Songs by Bob Dylan” under the supervision of Prof. Margaret L. Pachuau, Department of English, Mizoram University.
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- iii) Attended a national seminar entitled “Child Lore and Identity”, organized by the Department of English, Mizoram University, on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2016.
- iv) Attended and presented a paper “Decoding the Contradictions: A Study of Select Mihrinna Hla by R.L Kamlala” in a state level seminar entitled “R.L Kamlala’s Confessional Poetry : Reconnecting with his Mihrinna Hla”, organized by the Department of Mizo, Pachhunga University College in collaboration with the Department of Mizo, Govt. Kolasib College, on 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2017.
- v) Visited NEHU Central Library and The State Central Library, Meghalaya for the purpose of research.
- vi) Awarded the UGC-MZU Fellowship for a tenure of eighteen months from the date of admission on 26.7.2016.

This chapter will situate Bob Dylan in terms of his life and work within music and the American song tradition. In doing so, it will analyse his projection of certain identities, including his identity as a folksinger and a protest musician.

The history of American music and song dates back to the time of the Native Americans, the first people to live in North America, whose music was varied in form, and was most religious in purpose. Colonisation brought about changes within the music of America and has resulted in the creation of certain new genres and styles. Folk music in particular, remains as one of the most traditional styles of American music. It encompasses both traditional music that has been brought to America by previous immigrants as well as the genre that evolved from it during the twentieth century folk revival. These traditional folk songs have often been transmitted orally and according to Bob Dylan, are “handed down songs”. (Dylan 8)

American folk music is a combination of numerous music genres, and often known as traditional music, traditional folk music, contemporary folk music or roots music. Many traditional songs have been sung within the same family or folk group for generations, and sometimes go back to such origins as Great Britain, Europe or Africa. The genre’s popularity and its place in popular music and culture may be credited to the American folk music revival, a phenomenon in the United States that began in the 1940s, reaching its peak of popularity in the mid 1960s. The revival brought about the emergence of various styles of American folk music and also led to the development of other genres including country and rock and roll music.

The folk revival that began in New York city gave birth to what may be called contemporary folk music, with artists like Bob Dylan being one of its most prominent artists. This revival of folk music can also be explained as a period of renewed interest in traditional folk music, transforming folk music, and the songs produced within it often include a social activism component, social awareness about the events taking place then within the paradigm of America, as well as globally.

To situate Bob Dylan within the context of the American song tradition, particularly within folk music, and to draw out his role in it, his life and his beginnings as a musician may be looked at. The 1960s in America was undeniably a decade of liberation for music, way of living, public opinion, art of all forms, invention and certain political and social issues. This generation thus produced the greatest musical artists of all time including Bob Dylan, who may be considered as one of the greatest influences on popular culture of all time. With a closer study of his childhood and the environment that he grew up in, it may be suggested that his legacy is a result of his surroundings. He initially emerged into the art scene, particularly music, as a folk singer and when asked what folk song really is, his reply was that it means “handed down songs”. (Dylan 8). However, perhaps due to being affected by various historical events such as the after-shocks of the world wars, improvement of certain technological inventions in the society, Kennedy’s assassination, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Civil Rights Movement, many of his songs may be categorized as protest or rebel songs, but always with a folk undertone, which evoked changes within the society itself.

Robert Allen Zimmerman, later known as Bob Dylan was born on May 24, 1941 to Abraham Zimmerman and Beatty Stone Zimmerman. This was a period when the Second World War was already raging in Europe. Bob Dylan recalls this period in history, saying, “If you were born around this time or were living and alive, you could feel the old world go and the new one beginning.” (Dylan 28) and also talks about his experiences as a schoolboy where they were trained to hide and take cover under desks when the air-raid sirens blew since this means the Russians were attacking with bombs. Such experiences are also reflected in many of his songs where he writes about peace, life and humanity as a whole. In fact, before he decided that he wanted to be a singer, he had also even thought about joining the army and says, “I’d always pictured myself dying in some heroic battle rather than in bed.” (Dylan 41). Such an influence and attitude indeed shaped Dylan as a person, his views as well as his contribution to music and literature. His close association with his roots and folk music thus comes as no surprise and he himself admits, “The madly complicated modern world was something I took little interest in. It had no relevancy, no weight. I wasn’t seduced by it.” (20).

Bob Dylan was born in Duluth, Minnesota and his family moved to Hibbing, Minnesota when he was seven years old. Growing up in a small town like Hibbing must have been a difficult task for Dylan and he recalls how the small-town life never quite provided him with the opportunities he needed. Nonetheless, at an early age, he had already showed signs of natural talent. The stark contrast between his upbringing and what he was destined to be is seen from Dylan’s recollection of his father and the

differences between them, as well as his detachment to the life in Hibbing;

“Growing up, the cultural and the generational differences had been insurmountable- nothing but the sound of voices, colorless unnatural speech. My father, who was plain speaking and straight talking had said, “Isn’t an artist a fellow who paints?” when told by one of my teachers that his son had the nature of an artist. It seemed I’d always been chasing after something, anything that moved- a car, a bird, a blowing leaf- anything that might lead me into some more lit place, some unknown land downriver. I had not even the vaguest notion of the broken world I was living in, what society could do with you.” (Dylan 108)

Finally in 1959, Dylan left home to attend the University of Minnesota. Here, he tried out for a gig at the Ten O’ Clock Scholar Coffee House where they were auditioning for folk singers. When asked for his name, he simply replied “Bob Dylan”. There are a number of theories regarding Dylan’s reasons for choosing this name and he himself has no solid explanation for it. However, he has mentioned his decision to shorten his name to Robert Allen as soon as he left home. After coming across a story about a West Coast saxophone player named David Allyn and some poems by Dylan Thomas, he was conflicted between the names Robert Dylan and Robert Allyn, and since people had already often called him Bobby, perhaps came up with a cross between the three- Bob Dylan.

Dylan’s versatility is evident from the thirty seven studio albums, eleven live albums, compilation albums and numerous singles he had released between the years 1962 and 2016. These albums comprise of folk music, blues, rock n’ roll, electric,

country music and gospel music. It has often been said that Dylan's goal was to become a famous rock n' roll star and many believe rock n' roll to be his first inspiration. However, it was actually country music that he first loved and his "first idol" was country singer Hank Williams. According to Mckeen in his book *Bob Dylan : A Bio-Bibliography*, "Hank Williams sang about the world of railroads, the pain of loss, and the need to move. His restlessness echoed Bob's own." ( 5). However, being inspired by the music of Little Richard, Buddy Holly and Elvis Presley, Dylan decided that he would also become a rock n' roll star. The lyrics of these artists "crystallized all his feelings of ambition, rebellion and individual identity. . ." (Heylin 8). However, despite his ambition to become like them, he initially became well-known as a folk singer. Folk music definitely provided him with the platform he needed. After his arrival in New York, he started playing at the Café Wha?', where the kind of music he was playing and the kind of songs he was singing "either drove people away or come in closer. . ." (Dylan 18). He admits there were better singers and better musicians playing at the café but also acknowledges that there was not anybody close to what he was doing. So, he stuck to folk music and claims, "Folk songs were the way I explored the universe, they were pictures and the pictures were worth more than anything I could say." (Dylan 18). By this time, folk music had indeed become Dylan's speciality and preference. He was aware of the changes taking place within the country and how these changes affected the music scene but was adamant to stick with what he knew best and admits, " '50s culture was like a judge in his last days on the bench. It was about to go. Within ten years' time, it would struggle to rise and then come crashing to the floor. With folk songs



embedded in my mind like a religion, it wouldn't matter. Folk songs transcended the immediate culture." (Dylan 27).

Most of Dylan's influences were from country, folk, rhythm and blues and his biggest role model was folk musician Woody Guthrie. One tradition of folk music is borrowing from other artists and Dylan too, borrowed from just about every blues or folk performer he liked. He also admits to copying and borrowing from Guthrie and one of the first songs he wrote, which was of a substantial importance according to him, was written for Woody Guthrie. This song, "Song to Woody", was actually the song that initially associated him with Leeds Music, the label that started his own career. According to him, the song is "an homage to the man who'd pointed out the starting place for my identity and destiny. . ." and stressed, "My life had never been the same since I'd first heard Woody on a record player in Minneapolis. When I first heard him it was like a million megaton had dropped." (Dylan 229). Woody Guthrie indeed gave Dylan a perspective on music and guided him to become what he became. Dylan recalls his first experience of listening to Guthrie as an "epiphany. . ." where he "discovered some essence of self-command. . ." and even exalts him as somebody who "divides the world between those who work and those who don't and is interested in the liberation of the human race and wants to create a world worth living in." (Dylan 245).

Perhaps due to being part of the teenage rebellion era of America, many consider that he mimicked the looks and attitude of James Dean "the rebel". However, he pleads that it was only Woody Guthrie who had the deepest impact on him and that he

influenced his every move, what he ate, how he dressed and who he wanted to know and not know. He argues that this teenage rebellion of the late 1950s and early 1960s did not really appeal to him and believes that “It had no organized shape. The rebel-without-a-cause thing wasn’t hands on enough even a lost cause. . .” (Dylan 247). However, many of his songs are often still labeled as rebel songs and if this is taken into account, his transition from folk songs to rebel as well as protest songs may be something substantial to look at.

Dylan’s dreams were becoming a reality by 1961 when Columbia Records offered him a contract, and in March 1962, he released his first album *Bob Dylan* which was produced by John H. Hammond who signed him to the label. The songs in this album were pure folk and included two original compositions, “Talkin’ New York” and the one he wrote for Woody Guthrie. His second album, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* was released the next year in May and this album is regarded to represent the initial stages of Dylan’s writing contemporary words to traditional melodies. Eleven out of the thirteen songs in it are Dylan’s original compositions and includes “Blowin’ in the Wind” which became an anthem of the 1960s, as well as other well-known songs like “Girl from the North Country”, “Masters of War”, “A Hard Rain’s a-Gonna Fall” and “Don’t Think Twice, It’s All Right” which all became classics of the 1960s folk scene. Although these songs may be characterized as folk, the lyrics embody what may be defined as “protest songs” and Dylan’s inclination to write about the occurrences of the world, about humanity and life itself is evident. Dylan himself had said that “Folk songs are evasive-the truth about life. . .” (Dylan 71) and thus, have a close relation with what is called

“topical songs”, songs that Dylan sung a lot. These topical songs may be defined as songs about real events where the point of view of the songwriter is embedded. As such, the songs in *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* are basically a merge of folk and topical songs. Some are of the opinion that this album was the start of Dylan’s protest songs, songs that are also called “finger-pointing” songs- sincere expressions of frustration towards leaders who opposed change.( Heylin 87) For instance, the song “Blowin’ in the Wind” which has been described as an anthem of the 1960s Civil Rights movement is regarded to capture the frustration and aspirations of those affected by various injustices like racism and wars. The song poses a series of rhetorical questions about peace, war and freedom where Dylan questions;

“. . .how many times must a man look up,

Before he can see the sky?

Yes, and how many ears must one man have,

Before he can hear people cry?

Yes, and how many deaths will it take ‘til he knows,

That too many people have died. . .?” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985, 7*)

Dylan’s reply to these rhetorical questions and the refrain of the song, “The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind” is quite ambiguous wherein there is no clear-cut solution and yet it suggests that there is one. However, according to Dylan, “Topical songs weren’t protest songs. . .I tried to explain later that I didn’t think I was a protest singer, that there’d been a screwup. . .” and it appears as though for him, there was a clear cut difference between protest songs and rebel songs and that he was more inclined

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towards the latter, the kind of songs that “really moved. . .” him. (Dylan 83). Locating Dylan as a protest singer and his songs as protest songs, when he himself is in denial is a substantial factor to look at.

“One of the trickier difficulties in appreciating Dylan’s art involves distinguishing it, as far as is possible, from his carefully crafted, continually changing public image.” (Wilentz, 11) and this statement may imply the problematic situation that arises when looking at Bob Dylan with the motive of examining his role and identity in the American song tradition, especially within the protest music paradigm. Dylan’s music indeed has connections to the 1930s and 1940s, through the influences of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and other folk musicians. However, there are other connections, to a broader world of experimentation with American music as well as with cultural and political events which eventually add up to the creation of his identity as a musician.

If there is a clear cut distinction between a folksinger and a protest musician or singer, Dylan’s growth, or rather metamorphosis within the realms of the two may be examined in order to highlight his identity and role within American music as a whole. Whether Dylan did mean or never meant to protest through his songs, he nonetheless became a voice and his songs became the most influential protest songs of a generation, particularly for the era of the Civil Rights movement. Historically, there were several events that led up to the movement. The integration of major league baseball that took place in 1947 and Truman’s initiation to integrate the armed forces were both catalysts in starting the movement. The integration of schools in 1954 was also a major event in the history of America where the Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” in

schools was no longer tolerable. An event took place the next year also tremendously changed the course of the movement. On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, a Civil Rights activist named Rosa Louise McCauley Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat for a white man which was a violation of the bus segregation rule. This caused a great effect that finally led to the creation of the Montgomery Improvement Association, whose president, Martin Luther King Jr., as well as many activists and advocates started boycotts, protests and marches that eventually led to many positive changes within the society. All of these caused Dylan to write some of his most influential songs that are regarded to be protest songs.

If Dylan were really to be regarded as a protest song writer, his then-girlfriend, Suze Rotolo was undeniably very influential for him. Suze was involved in the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E), an organization involved in the Civil Rights movement. She asked him to write some songs for the organization and the first was "The Death of Emmett Till", a song about the murder of a black boy in 1955. Fifteen year-old Emmett Till was killed because he had whistled at a white girl, and the song created a huge controversy. He also wrote "Oxford Town", which detailed about major events that occurred in the movement. By this time, Dylan became not only known for his protest songs but his career as a writer also began. He began writing for *Broadside*, the first magazine to publish his work and he became one of the most regular contributors.

Dylan's third album *The Times They Are-a Changin'* released in 1964 includes what is often regarded as Dylan's one of Dylan's most offensive songs, "Only a Pawn in Their Game", which he sang for the first time in Greenwich, Mississippi at a Civil Rights gathering. The song is about the murder of Medgar Evers, a Civil Rights activist. Coming home one evening, Evers was shot and killed on his front porch and in the song, Dylan described the murder as "just a poor dumb white bigot manipulated by powerful racist forces" and also said that "the assassin was also a victim, harmed by a system that teaches hate." (Dylan 256) Some of the other songs in the album like "The Times They Are-a Changin'" also seemed to show more refinery and sophistication than his traditional work. In reference to his traditional songs, Dylan had said, "The folk songs showed me that songs can say something human." (Dylan 236) It may be suggested that folk singers did not necessarily show or convince people of something new, but rather, strengthened and reinforced traditional and political views that were already in existence. The way something is transferred and delivered is often as important as what is actually being conveyed, and with Dylan, his approach and his medium also becomes his message and he himself had said, "I don't think when I write. I just react and put it down on paper. . .what comes out in my music is a call to action." (Dylan 187) And it may be a fact to state that his songs indeed influenced the movement, as much as the movement influenced him.

Dylan's concern with the society, humanity as well as politics started to reveal itself through many of his songs. He insisted that politics were an integral element of

his songs' lyrics and that "social issues are more important than music. . ." (Dylan 242). However, Dylan tends to often contradict himself and his beliefs. For instance, certain political events would often evoke a musical response from him which made his concern for politics quite obvious. One such example was the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1963, America was threatened with the fear of nuclear warfare by the U.S.S.R and in response to this, Dylan wrote "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall". The song describes the then - current situation that the public was facing like fear, anticipation, worry, bitterness and dread and he himself said, ". . .it was a song of terror. Line after line, trying to capture the feeling of nothingness." (Heylin 26) In this song, he parallels between what was happening in the U.S and the imagery used by the Biblical prophets describing destruction and desolation. Such a song as this reflects Dylan's interest in politics and what it was doing to the world. Yet, later, he describes his song "Political World", a song with a strong political tone as simply something that might have been "triggered by current events" or a song about "an underworld, not the world where men live, toil and die like men." (Dylan 166) His self-contradiction is also seen in his views regarding the age of rebellion and rebel music. He had always stated that the rebellious act had never appealed to him and yet, later celebrates rebel music and songs. His celebration and appreciation of it may be what led people to recognize his music as rebel music. If this was so, then, protest songs and rebel songs indeed would have a very close relation and resemblance but Dylan however, stressed upon how different the two were; "The rebellion songs were a really serious thing. The language was flashy and provocative- a lot of action in the words, all sung with great gusto. . .I loved these songs. . .They

weren't protest songs, though, they were rebel ballads. . . even in a simple, melodic wooing ballad there'd be rebellion waiting around the corner. You couldn't escape it. . . Rebellion spoke to me louder. The rebel was alive and well, romantic and honorable.”  
(Dylan 83)

Another feature of Dylan's music are the anti-war songs. However, to categorize them as a completely different feature would not be valid because these songs too still protested, still rebelled against the injustices done to people by the wars and by those in power. Although he was never a big part of the Vietnam protest, a number of his anti-war songs were written in response to the Vietnam war. Two of the most popular were “Masters of War” and “John Brown”. What is significant to note here is that the song “Masters of War” was actually a part of his second album. This shows that Dylan, whether he regards himself as somebody who writes protest and rebel songs or not, had actually protested against certain injustices from the very beginning of his career. In this song, he finger-points the evil men who make profit off of the war while young men go off and die, and says,

“. . . like Judas of old, you lie and deceive. . .

you fasten the triggers for the others to fire,

then you set back and watch when the death count gets higher. . .” (Bob

*Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985, 81).*

“John Brown”, on the other hand, tells the true nature and deception of the war, and the negative effects it has on a person. John Brown, the protagonist in the song



is sent off to war with honour, and his mother “brags about her son with his uniform and gun. . .” However, when her son returns, she can hardly recognize his face because of the destruction the war had caused. John Brown says that in the middle of battleground, he realized that he was just a “puppet in a play.” Another popular anti-war song is “With God on Our Side” and it reflects upon several wars that the U.S had gone through, including the Spanish-American war and both World War I and World War II, and is basically about how wrong and arrogant it is for people to ask God to be on their side, when it is actually the people themselves who cause the harm. Other anti-war songs of such stature are “Legionnaire’s Disease”, “Let Me Die In My Footsteps” and “Talkin’ World War III Blues”.

A major event in the U.S history and in Dylan’s career was the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963. After this tragedy, Dylan started to distance himself from politics. Some believe that he was afraid of being assassinated himself, and many had the same fear that he might be, because so many of the nation’s public figures and “heroes” had been assassinated and they feared that Dylan would be next. Although Dylan never actually confirmed his decision to remove himself from it, it can be seen that he restrained himself from being too involved in any kind of political movement going on at that time. Nonetheless, he paved the way and laid the foundation for the activists, mostly college students and the youth who fought against the destruction of the establishment and it may be rightly said that no other artist was able to create the kind of revolution that he did, and he definitely had the greatest impact on

that generation;

“The nation was divided in the fall of 1968, by its split over the Vietnam war and social issues such as the continuing battle of integration. As anti-war demonstrations and police clashed on the streets of Chicago, the young protestors chanted Dylan’s words, “The whole world is watching.”. . .” (McKeen 36)

Dylan, through his music was definitely a factor in the revolution of hundreds and thousands of people. He may not have been responsible for the ideologies behind the movements, but he indeed provided the emotional drive behind the people. Not only was he an influence on the American public, but also on other rising musicians of that era, such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Joan Baez, Eric Clapton, Van Morrison, Jimi Hendrix and others. Yet, Dylan remains the nonchalant, humble person that he is and maintains, “All I’d ever done was sing songs that were dead straight and expressed powerful new realities. I had very little in common with and knew even less about a generation that I was supposed to be the voice of.” (Dylan 115)

For more than five decades, Dylan has made his mark in the world as one of the most iconic and celebrated musicians of all time. He started out as a folk singer but his talent indeed widened as he explored certain kinds of music. The public’s surprise or rather, disapproval at his later transition into rock and even electric can be justified when taking into account Dylan’s previous loyalty and commitment to folk music. He himself had said, “Folk music was all I needed to exist. . .I had no other cares or

interests besides folk music. I scheduled my life around it. I had little in common with anyone not like-minded.” (Dylan 236) However, with a talent like his’, it is only appropriate that he emerge as a versatile icon, representing all kinds of artistic aptitudes.

The number of awards, medals and honours he had received tells the artist that he is. Among these are twelve Grammy awards, one Academy and one Golden Globe awards for his song “Things Have Changed” from the movie “Wonder Boys”. Eight of his songs have been included in the Grammy Hall of Fame and five in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He has also been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The award he received that probably caused the greatest stir was the Nobel Peace Prize he received in 2016 “for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition.” With this award, he became the first songwriter and American, since 1993 to win the award in literature. The news of Dylan receiving this award divided social media between those who felt he was not worthy of it, believing him not to be fit to be awarded something for literature, and those who felt he was the most appropriate awardee for it. In defense of the talks circling around, the Swedish Academy’s permanent secretary Sara Danius told the *Guardian* that the news may be surprising but Dylan deserved it because he is “a great poet- a great poet in the English speaking tradition. For fifty four years, he’s been at it, reinventing himself constantly, creating a new identity.” In spite of whether people felt he was worthy of it or not, the Nobel Committee indeed acknowledged Dylan as a true recipient of the literary Nobel Prize. Their stance as well as Dylan’s capabilities as a literary figure is truly captured

by the presentation speech delivered by Professor Horace Engdahl , Member of the Swedish Academy and the Nobel Committee for Literature, on December 10, 2016;

“ . . . it ought not to be a sensation that a singer/songwriter now stands recipient of the literary Nobel Prize. In a distant past, all poetry was sung or tunefully recited, poets were rhapsodes, bards, troubadours. . . . But what Bob Dylan did was not to return to the Greeks or the Provencals. Instead he dedicated himself body and soul to 20<sup>th</sup> century American popular music ,. . . for ordinary people, white and black: protest songs, country, blues, early rock, gospel, mainstream music. He listened day and night, testing the stuff on his instruments, trying to learn. But when he started to write similar songs, they came out differently. In his hands, the material changed. . . . he panned poetry gold, whether on purpose or by accident is irrelevant; all creativity begins in imitation. . . . Soon people stopped comparing him to Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams and turned instead to Blake, Rimbaud, Whitman, Shakespeare. . . . Recognising that revolution by awarding Bob Dylan the Nobel Prize was a decision that seemed daring only beforehand and already seems obvious. . . . Chamfort made the observation that when a master appears, the hierarchy of genres. . . is nullified. “What matter the rank of a work when its beauty is of the highest rank?” he wrote. That is the straight answer to the question of how Bob Dylan belongs in literature: as the beauty of his songs is of the highest rank. . . .” (Engdahl 1).

Bob Dylan’s place in the American song tradition as well as his position as one of the greatest and most prominent figures in music has indeed been elevated further by the Nobel prize. The Nobel’s stance for Dylan being awarded the prize “for having

created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition” permanently marks Dylan as not just a popular musician or a great artistic figure in popular culture, but as a literary figure, surpassing the line between high and low literature as well as culture and this is clearly captured by Sara Danius who calls him “a very interesting traditionalist, in a highly original way. Not just the written tradition, but also the oral one; not just high literature, but also low literature.”

Bob Dylan’s own response to his win is seen in his audio lecture published by the Nobelprize.org. where he himself admits to having wondered how his songs are related to literature. He reflects on the very beginning and how he was influenced by musicians like Buddy Holly and claims that he had picked up the vernacular and had internalized it. However, perhaps his distinctiveness when compared to other folk musicians lies in how he internalized the vernacular, the devices, the rhetoric and the techniques, incorporating his “principles and sensibilities and an informed view of the world”. His background of literature and what he had learnt in grammar school serve as important instruments in his “way of looking at life”, giving him “an understanding of human nature, and a standard to measure things by”. Dylan claims to have taken all these with him when he started composing lyrics and the themes from many books he had read worked their way into many of his songs and announced, “I wanted to write songs unlike anything anybody ever had, and these themes were fundamental”. (Dylan 2017)

His protest songs and the impact it had on the American society as well as culture indeed proved that Dylan’s songs were different and on a different league. The

contents were authentic because he did not restrain himself from describing the controversial events like murders in their actuality. He used his songs as a medium to make the masses aware of how corrupt and deceptive the establishment really is in its governance and in its way of handling wars and the manipulation of power. Through such songs, Dylan managed to assert himself as the much needed voice in the prevailing protests as well as within the whole of the American Song tradition.

This chapter will analyse how the popular protest songs of Bob Dylan, namely “Blowin’ in the wind”, “Masters of War”, “A Hard Rains’ A-Gonna Fall”, all from the album *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* (1963), “With God on Our Side”, “The Times They Are A- Changin’ ”, “Only a Pawn in their Game”, from the album *The Times They Are A-Changin’* (1964) and the singles “John Brown” and “The Death of Emmet Till” (1962) resonate with the culture of its time by looking at the subjects dealt and the concerns raised by Dylan. In doing so, it will focus on the various events that led to the issues dealt with in his songs and how it affected the scenario of the time.

“Culture”, a term broadly used and defined, according to Raymond Williams, is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” (Williams 87) and he suggests three broad definitions for the term. Firstly, as a term to refer to “a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development”, secondly, as “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group”, and thirdly, as “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.” (Williams 88) Within this, and due to certain ideologies, popular culture comes into existence. In order to define and analyse popular culture, the ideologies behind it may be looked at. One such example is Marx’s famous formulation:

“In the social production of their existence men enter into definite, necessary relations, which are independent of their will, namely, relations of production corresponding to a determinate stage of development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political

superstructure and to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general.”(Eagleton 4)

Here, Marx is suggesting that “the way a society organizes the means of its economic production will have a determining effect on the type of culture that society produces.”

(Storey 3) This stance may also be further explained as the way in which the various implications of a particular culture, like what is being produced at a particular period may contribute to what is “popular” and thereby, creating a popular culture for that particular group or period. The term “popular” according to Williams, suggests “well liked by many people”, “inferior kinds of work”, “work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people” and “culture actually made by the people for themselves.”

(Williams 237) Hence, it may be valid to state that popular culture is a culture that is widely accepted and liked by many people. And within this popular culture exists certain aspects like the fashion, sports, food, music, language, movies and festivals embraced by the masses.

Popular culture may also be explained as the culture that is left over after we have decided what is high culture. (Storey 6) According to this idea, popular culture becomes a residual category, as inferior to high culture. For instance, popular literature is often seen as inferior when compared with canonical or classic literature- of high and low art. This assumption may be because what is regarded to be “high” has to be something that is complex and difficult to understand by the majority of the people, while what is deemed to be “low” or popular is comprehensible to everyone. The French



sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that cultural distinctions of this kind are often used to support class distinctions and to fulfill a social function of legitimating social differences. Hence, the ideologies of Marxism and how social classes are created may be substantial in the analysis of popular culture and the role it plays within a society. Popular culture is also often explained as “mass culture”, hence, a commercial culture and therefore, consumerism becomes a key factor, wherein what is popular at a given time period- from movies to books, music and fashion depends upon the consumers. It thus becomes something highly embraced by the working class culture. Under this light, the sub-cultures within popular culture, like popular music or popular literature becomes an important voice for the masses. It gives people the chance to voice their opinions through songs, books and poetry. And since, unlike high culture or art, it is comprehensible by everyone, it becomes a significant aspect in creating a revolution or change within a society.

Popular culture is perhaps most widely embraced in America. Following the Second World War, America experienced the temporary success of a cultural and political consensus- supposedly based on liberalism, pluralism and classlessness. And especially by the late 1950s and early 1960s, the country saw a liberation for music, art, inventions, public opinions and way of living itself. This popular culture embraced the rise of popular art of all forms. Certain aspects like the youth rebellion and the hippie culture signified the youth protesting for peace and liberation in the decade of turmoil, and thus, the period saw the emergence of music, songs and artists who voiced their opinions and protested against certain injustices done to the masses. The civil rights

movement and the Vietnam War were among the main causes of great concern to young people. Activities related to the civil rights movement were among the main topics raised and circulated and many optimistic young people of all races strongly believed that all human beings are equal and hence, deserved equal rights and opportunities. The Vietnam War created a huge stir and was a great concern to most young people because young men were required to register for the war once they turn eighteen. Many anti-war protests took place on college campuses and to an extent, such protests became a part of the popular culture, often carried out through popular music and other forms of art. Since folk music was often topical and political and generally about protests against racism and war, it was the music choice on many college campuses. Hence, even though often considered as “low”, popular culture indeed acted as a tool to bring about a stir and change in the society and in a way, heroes emerged not in the form of elite officials but in the form of the working class musicians, artists and writers.

“They tell me that every period, every time, has its heroes. Every need has a solution and an answer. Some people- the press, magazines- sometimes think that the heroes that young people choose lead the way. I tend to think that they happen because they grow out of a need. This is a young man who grew out of a need. He came here, he came to be as he is, because things needed saying and the young people were the ones who wanted to say them, and they wanted to say them in their own way. He somehow had an ear on his generation. . . I don’t have to tell you- you know him, he’s yours: Bob Dylan!” With these lines, “Ronnie Gilbert of the Weavers introduced twenty-

two year old Bob Dylan to forty thousand folk fans in Freebody Park, Newport, Rhode Island, on July 26,1963.” (Lynskey 51)

In order to look into how popular culture, particularly the popular music of Bob Dylan shaped and contributed to a revolutionary change in the American society, thereby becoming what Gilbert called a “hero”, the discourses of popular music may be taken into account. It may be suggested that the meaning of any piece of music is not entirely based on the discourses we have for comprehending them, but more with how we analyse and put the meanings there. According to Simon Frith , “to understand cultural value judgements we must look at the social contexts in which they are made, at the social reasons why some aspects of a sound or spectacle are valued over others.” (22) Hence, a study on how artists, particularly Dylan in this case, communicate cultural value judgements, referred to here as “discourse”, through attitude, style, voice, lyrics and language can be made.

The social contexts on which the discourses of the songs of Bob Dylan are based have to do with certain historical events such as the after-shocks of the world wars, improvement of certain technological inventions in the society, Kennedy’s assassination, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War and most of his songs too, contain themes of these events and highlight their effects on society and the individual. To fully examine the relation between song and culture and how the songs of Bob Dylan resonated with the culture of its time, a closer study of what is known as the then counterculture and his role in it may be made.

A counterculture may be defined as a subculture whose values and norms of behavior differ substantially from those of mainstream society, often in opposition to mainstream cultural mores. (*Merriam-Webster's*, 2008) A countercultural movement expresses the ethos and aspirations, beliefs and ideals of a certain group of people or population during a certain period and when such oppositional forces reach a critical mass, countercultures often result in the creation of certain cultural changes. Within this context, the counterculture of the 1960s, specifically between the years 1964 and 1974 may be examined. The term “counterculture” is said to have been originated by John Milton Yinger who first used it in his 1960 article *Counterculture and Subculture*, where he suggested the use of the term “wherever the normative system of a group contains, as a primary element, a theme of conflict with the values of the total society, where personality variables are directly involved in the development and maintenance of the group’s values, and wherever its norms can be understood only by reference to the relationships of the group to a surrounding dominant culture”. (Yinger 625). To identify Dylan’s role and contribution in this counterculture, his first emergence into music and popular culture may be taken into account, and for this, his beginnings as a folksinger is significant. Bob Dylan’s influences came from varied genres of music but when he first arrived in New York, beginning his career as a singer in a café, amidst singers who were playing different kinds of music, he stuck to folk music which “either drove people away or come in closer. . .”, claiming “Folk songs were the way I explored the universe, they were pictures and pictures were worth more than anything I could say.” (Dylan 18) He was aware of the changes taking place within the country and how these

changes affected the music scene but was adamant to stick with what he knew best and admits, “ ‘50s culture was like a judge in his last days on the bench. It was about to go. Within ten years’ time, it would struggle to rise and then come crashing to the floor. With folk songs embedded in my mind like a religion, it wouldn’t matter. Folk songs transcended the immediate culture.” (Dylan 27) Perhaps Dylan’s choice of sticking to folk music proved to be a wise decision. America, at that time, was “convulsed by the bloody battle for civil rights and the palpable threat of nuclear war, and young Americans, losing faith in the wisdom of their elders, hungered for someone who could voice their inchoate discontent.” (Lynskey 52) and since folk music was often generally political, taking positions against racism and war, and Dylan being the main folk music figure of the time, he emerged as the voice and hero for the youth culture.

Many of Bob Dylan’s songs defined social issues such as the Vietnam war and the Civil Rights Movement. The 1960s, the time when Dylan started to rise to fame through his music was the time rebellion against mainstream society was rising among the youth. These rebels adopted a certain lifestyle as opposed to the traditional lifestyle of the mainstream culture as a way of asserting their beliefs, ideals and individuality to an extent and to achieve self transformation. According to James Dunlap, folk music was generally viewed “as a way to understand or promote the common beliefs and aspirations of entire social groups” which provided a way for young people to express their discontent with the mass culture and their parents’ values. (Dunlap 549) As such, Bob Dylan, through his lyrics challenged the accepted beliefs and norms of traditional

American society and focuses on individual feelings rather than entire social groups, making his songs a forerunner for the creation of a counterculture.

By 1963 and with the release of his first two albums, *Bob Dylan* (1962) and *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963), a myth that may never be quashed- that of Dylan, the protest singing prophet was born. All of his most famous political songs were written in a relatively short period, but these became the songs which fixed him in the popular culture imagination. In his autobiography *Chronicles: Volume II*, Dylan shudders as he remembers the labels slapped upon him- "Prophet, Messiah, Savior." and recalls how he had confided in a friend, "People are recognizing me, they're stopping me on the street and asking me what I meant in 'Blowin' in the Wind', and what's the true meaning in my other songs. They're driving me flaky. Gotta get out of here." (Dylan 46) However, there was nowhere to go. It was as though wherever he went, people pursued him looking for answers that were not there. Suddenly, a hero emerged in the form of Dylan. A hero who spoke out things that had never been dared said before. It may be suggested the youth culture that was disillusioned with the wars, racism and oppression by those in power finally found hope in Dylan and his songs, songs that protested and finger pointed the "ruling" class, the class in the form of politicians and leaders. The popular culture and attitude as well as propaganda of the protesters was one thing before Bob Dylan came upon it with his protest songs, and quite another thing afterwards.

Bob Dylan began to use his music to show the experiences of injustice within the American society. His protest songs, especially those with political issues often

feature particular incidents that have happened in the society wherein Dylan finger-points and blames those in power who used their power to suppress the less privileged. To fully analyse Dylan's key role in the revolutionary change that occurred in popular culture and how his music altered the cultural values of America, certain theories about popular culture, society, class and power dynamics may be applied while scrutinizing the discourses of his lyrics.

For many cultural critics working within the cultural dynamics, mass culture is not just an imposed and impoverished or lower culture, it is in a clear identifiable sense an imported American culture: "If popular culture in its modern form was invented in any one place, it was in the great cities of the United States, and above all in New York." (Maltby 11) If the claim that popular culture is American culture were really true, it will have to do with the history it has within the theoretical mapping of popular culture. It operates under the term "Americanization" and its central theme is that British culture has declined under the homogenizing influence of American culture. To look into the dynamics of the United States and popular culture, we may consider what Andrew Ross has pointed out: "Popular culture has been socially and institutionally central in America for longer and in a more significant way than in Europe." (Ross 7) Particularly in the 1950s and 60s, one of the key periods of Americanization, for many young people in Britain and other parts of the world, American popular culture represented a force of liberation, perhaps because in it, the youth, the rebels and the working class people had a voice. The texts, practices and way of living in this popular culture are seen as a form of "public fantasy" (Storey 9) It is a collective dream world and

provides “escapism that is not an escape from or to anywhere, but an escape of our utopian selves.” (Maltby 14) It may also be stated that popular culture is the culture that originates from the people, a folk culture which is a culture of the people for the people and is “often equated with a highly romanticised concept of working-class culture construed as the major source of symbolic protest within contemporary capitalism.” (Bennet, 27) With these theories, Dylan’s impact on the liberation that the popular culture of America represented, where the working-class protested against the capitalistic ideals is clearly evident. In order to analyse Dylan’s protest songs and how it contributed to this “public fantasy” and how it provided “escapism”, the historical events that triggered the songs and the topics raised in his lyrics will have to be looked at.

His second album, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* released in 1963 is often regarded to represent the beginning of Dylan’s writing contemporary words to traditional melodies. Eleven out of the thirteen songs in it are Dylan’s original compositions and includes “Blowin’ in the Wind” which became an anthem of the 1960s Civil Rights movement and is regarded to capture the frustration and aspirations of those affected. The song poses a series of rhetorical questions about peace, war and freedom where Dylan questions;

“How many roads must a man walk down  
Before you call him a man?  
Yes, how many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand?  
Yes, ‘n’ how many times must the cannon ball fly



Before they're forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,

The answer is blowin' in the wind." (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985,7*).

The song does not necessarily outline or point to the occurrences of the wars or what literally happened, nor does it provide a solid solution to whatever was happening to the society. In this song, Dylan seems to be avoiding specifics but nonetheless captures the impending question "by posing questions that so many Americans were asking: 'How many times? How many deaths? How many years?' " (Lynskey 55) Although it does not tell the exact situations and happenings, "Blowin' in the Wind" intrigued the listener with its subtle poetic vagueness and although it provides no clear-cut answer, it gave the disillusioned Americans a sense of an escape from the questions that they had suppressed for so long. It became a consensus for a particular group of people, a group of people that formed the popular culture of the time.

Another theory applicable to the study and analysis of popular culture is that of the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Gramsci uses the term "hegemony" to refer to the way in which dominant groups in society, through a process of "intellectual and moral leadership" seek to win the consent of subordinate groups in society. For him, hegemony becomes a political concept developed to explain the absence of socialist revolutions in the Western capitalist democracies, given the exploitative and oppressive nature of capitalism. As such, it involves a specific kind of consensus, where a social group seeks to present its own particular interests as the general interests of the

society as a whole. The existence of hegemony however does not imply that all conflicts within a society, between classes have been removed. It basically suggests “a society in which conflict is contained and channeled into ideologically safe harbours.” (Storey 80) In this sense, hegemony is created by the coming together of a certain group of people with a set of shared ideals, thus forming a popular culture. Through the songs of Dylan, songs that talk about the injustices of wars, racism and the cruelties done to mankind, a social group who shares the same angst and hope come together to create a consensus that contributed greatly to the already existing popular culture whilst forming a new one. For instance, as politicians continued to send more troops to Vietnam, the people began to question the United States’ involvement in the war and expressed their concern openly. Bob Dylan’s song *Masters of War* came up and signified the ideas and stances of the angry students and youth who were protesting against the war. The song presents the brutality of the war and Dylan blames those in power, the politicians who were in command as evil men who make profit off of the war while young men go off and die, saying:

“ . . like Judas of old, you lie and deceive. . .

you fasten the triggers for the others to fire,

then you set back

and watch when the death count gets higher. . .”(Bob Dylan : *Lyrics.*

*1962-1985*, 81).

This song shows how little concern the U.S government seems to have for the number of deaths caused by the war since its only interest was winning the war. Dylan is

frustrated and angry in this song, exclaiming “you ain’t worth the blood that runs in your veins” and ends it with a threatening message, “till’ I’m sure you’re dead.” He turns the topic of the military-industrial complex into an ancient horror story in which a wrongdoer is pursued by a vengeful spirit. In the liner notes to his album *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, he explains himself saying, “I’ve never really written anything like that before. I don’t sing songs which hope people will die, but I couldn’t help it with this one. The song is a sort of striking out, a reaction to the last straw, a feeling of what can you do?” (Lynskey 57). His wish for death upon these “masters of war”, emphasized the true hatred that the protestors had and their genuine desire for the war to end and to have peace within the society.

Hegemony no longer pertains to just the power imposed from above. According to Gramsci’s concept of the term, in times of crisis within a society, when the moral and intellectual leadership is not enough, the processes of hegemony are replaced by the coercive power and in this case, it can be said that the people who embraced the popular culture through Dylan’s protest music, rise together to protest against the failing leaders and exercise their own form of power. Using hegemony theory, “popular culture is what men and women make from their active consumption of the texts and practices of their culture industries.” (Storey 81) This may be understood using certain subcultures and in this case, the popular culture or subculture of the youth, the youth culture who protested and formed a distinct culture within the existing culture and embracing the protest music of Bob Dylan to bring about their beliefs and desires. With

this concept, popular culture brings about a balance in the society and creates classlessness, what Gramsci calls “a compromise equilibrium” (Storey 71).

Michel Foucault’s ideas and concepts about power and knowledge within a society can also be an underlying factor in the study of culture and how these things operate within civilization, within the workings of class and social hierarchies. Foucault is concerned with how knowledge is put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of others. He focused on the relationship between knowledge and power, and how power operated within what he called an institutional apparatus and technologies. This approach took as one of its key subjects of investigation the relations between knowledge and power in the modern society. It saw knowledge as always inextricably intertwined in relations of power because it has always been applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice. For him,

“Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true’.

Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, not any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.” (Foucault 27)

This idea and approach about knowledge and power brought Foucault’s interest closer

to those of the classical sociological theories, like Marxism with its concern to identify the class positions and class interests concealed within particular forms of knowledge. Looking into the American culture and society and the happenings of the given time period, power seems to be solely in the hands of the government and the elite officials or the “knowledgeable” politicians and yet the people were subjected to wars, racism and all kinds of injustices under the guidance and leadership of those who assumed the power. Though the American society may be one that is classless, the workings of power and how power is maintained still relied on how an imaginary line was drawn between the rich and the working class. Marxist ideology has argued:

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e, the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has all means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.” (Marx 64)

The ruling ideas are thus those of the ruling class which governs a capitalist economy and in turn, power becomes subjected to those of the ruling class. Just like this, in the modern American society too, the people suffered the effects of the wars and the various rules imposed upon them by the “ruling class”.

Foucault argued against this classical Marxist theory with the claim that it tended to reduce all the relation between knowledge and power to a question of class power and class interests. He did not deny the existence of classes but strongly opposed

to the powerful element of economic or class reductionism in the Marxist ideology. This led him to propose the idea of how power really works within a society, between classes and to whom power is really manifested. Foucault has stated how power is diffused and he challenges the idea that power is exercised by people or groups or the authority through sovereignty and traditional conventions, and instead, sees it as something dispersed. In “Power/Knowledge”, he has maintained:

“Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. . .In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application.” (98)

If this theory is to be applied in our analysis and study of the songs of Bob Dylan within the paradigm of popular culture, we may look into how the protest songs of Bob Dylan, how a certain group of people who protested against the happenings of the American society and who embraced Dylan’s songs come together to form a consensus, thereby forming a radical change in the society and in turn, wielded power in their own right.

Bob Dylan, with his first album being released in 1962, emerged in the music scene at the time when many Americans were getting tired of the way the government was handling things. His music gave them a sense of hope and inspired them in the protests that were going on in the form of the civil rights movement and many other social activist movements. His songs spoke out and finger-pointed those who were in the position to make a change but chose not to and this was exactly the kind of voice that the people needed. The people's frustration with issues like racism and an unjust government is also clearly captured by Bob Dylan in his song "The Death of Emmett Till", a song about a black fourteen-year-old who had been beaten and shot to death in Mississippi in 1955 for "whistling at a white woman" and many regarded that with this song, "Bob Dylan the protest singer was born." (Lynskey 54). In the song, Dylan vividly describes how the murder must have taken place and perhaps, to highlight how unreasonable and inexcusable the reason for the murder was, intentionally says, "They said they had a reason, but I can't remember what." He also seems to be stressing upon the injustices done to black people, where they were ridiculed and suppressed just because of the colour of their skin and how it was as if the white men enjoyed torturing them for this and says:

"The reason that they killed him there, and I'm sure it ain't no lie

Was just for the fun of killin' him and to watch him slowly die." (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 29)

Perhaps the biggest reason that this song caused such a stir and why it was loved by so many people who protested against the government was the way Dylan

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spoke out against the corrupt government, a government that would not lay its hand on white men even if they were guilty and confessed to their own crimes:

“. . . to stop the United States of yelling for a trial.

Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till.

But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this awful crime,

And so this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind.”

Dylan mentions his own disgust at the way things were handled and paints a vivid imagery of the plight of the murderers and the murdered:

“I saw the morning papers but I could not bear to see,

The smiling brothers walkin’ down the courthouse stairs

For the jury found them innocent and the brothers they went free,

While Emmett’s body floats the foam of a Jim Crow southern sea.”

The song greatly reflects Dylan’s anger and frustration towards a law that was so unjust. He ends the song by reminding the people that such an injustice still exists and asks that they join him in fighting against it:

“This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man,

That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed Ku Klux Klan.

But if all of us folks that thinks alike, if we gave all we could give,

We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live.” (*Bob Dylan :*

*Lyrics. 1962-1985,17).*



This kind of a revelation of the bitter truth wrapped up in a hopeful message and encouragement was exactly what the Americans needed. His fans saw in him the power to defy the “ruling class” and through Dylan and his songs, power was manifested in the hands of the working class people, a class embraced by the popular culture.

This flux of power within a society is the kind Foucault has stressed upon, wherein he challenged the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of “episodic” or “sovereign” acts of domination or coercion and instead sees it as dispersed and pervasive. According to him, “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere” and in this sense, it is neither an agency nor a structure. (Foucault 93 ) It is a kind of “metapower” or “regime of truth” that pervades society and is in a constant flux and negotiation. Similar to this, in the American society, the traditional power may have belonged to those in charge of making the decisions, the politicians and other elite officials who proposed rules such as the segregation in public places between white and black men. They may have had the power to recruit young men into fighting in the wars and they may be seen as the single source of power- the sovereign and the ruling class. However, “power does not function in the form of a chain” but it circulates and is never monopolized by one centre but is diffused and exercised through a net-like organization. (Foucault 98). This suggests that to a degree, we are all caught up in its circulation- the oppressors and the oppressed and likewise, the people of the supposedly “lower class”, the youth, the rebels and the working class people of American culture too exercised their power by defying and challenging the laws through their protests

whilst embracing and promoting the protest songs of Dylan that highlighted certain flaws and injustices of those traditionally assumed to be in power.

Bob Dylan joined the social movements and created a stir in the society and triggered the countercultural forces through his songs. Another well-known song “The Times They Are-A Changin’ ” is a proof that Dylan became a voice of a generation during the 1960s when the American youth was going through a cultural rebellion. According to him, this was “definitely a song with a purpose. I knew exactly what I wanted to say and for whom I wanted to say it to.” (Dylan 75) He calls out to the older generation, to mothers and fathers of the society;

“And don’t criticize what you can’t understand,  
Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command. . .” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962-1985,27*).

The lyrics of the song as such describes the generation gap and why the youths were rebelling against the mainstream society. It represents the cry for freedom and Dylan pleads that this younger generation may be given freedom and the opportunity to express themselves and to be accepted for the individuals that they are.

“Protest songs are difficult to write without making them come off as preachy and one-dimensional,” Dylan wrote in *Chronicles*. “You have to show people a side of themselves that they don’t know is there.” (Dylan 87 ) To do this, at that time in American history, “was to blow a hole in a dam and hope that you didn’t drown in the

torrent.” (Lynskey 55) Thus, it was a given that writing and singing such songs would create a stir within the whole society, and that was exactly what the songs of Dylan did.

Despite Dylan’s argument that he never really meant to protest through his songs, his lyrics nonetheless proved powerful in creating a distinct popular culture. The class he belonged to, through his music and through the people who embraced it, becomes hegemonic to the extent that it articulated different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized. His music signalled the expression of the message of his social and political convictions to an enormous audience, not only in America but worldwide. Undoubtedly, for many of his audience, his music had the effect of enlightenment, awareness and understanding and perhaps, even submission and conversion to, and coming together and bonding for those already convinced of the need to make a change by protesting and defying the injustices. Also, his music made and continues to make profits for the music industry, thereby contributing to a particular economy which is ultimately of financial benefit to the dominant culture. Most of all, his protest songs prove to be a force for change that paradoxically stabilizes to a degree, the very forces of power that it seeks to challenge and overthrow. Dylan laid the foundation for the activists, mostly college students and the youth who fought against the destruction of the system and it may be rightly said that no other artist was able to create the kind of revolution that he did, and he definitely had the greatest impact on that generation. His songs may not have been powerful enough to create a physical revolution nor do they end in one. However, they did start an awareness for the need of a change, a much needed aspect in the creation of any revolution.

This chapter will analyse how the working class of a society who embraced the popular culture through protest music defied the traditional elite class, thereby exercising power. It will study the situation of the time, the status and condition of the working class population and how protest music contributed to their protests against those in power, and how this in turn, made them participants in the power structure of the society. For this, Foucault's concept of power and knowledge and the dissemination of power based on certain Marxist class structures within the society will also be reflected upon.

When looking at the history of protest music and the emergence of its popularity as well as its role in society, wars and other issues that cause discontent among the masses, leading to the creation of certain antagonists who transformed their empathy, anger and emotions into song and music, may be considered as the main attribute. This is particularly true in the case of Bob Dylan and his protest songs.

Dylan and his music entered America at the time when the country was "convulsed by the battle for civil rights and the palpable threat of nuclear war". It was the period when "young Americans, losing faith in the wisdom of their elders, hungered for someone who could voice their inchoate discontent" and "1963 America saw the birth of a myth that will never be quashed - that of Dylan the protest-singing prophet." (Lynskey 52). Between the years 1962 and 1963, with the release of his first two albums, Dylan became one of the most prominent figures among the protest musicians

and the protest scene. It was during this period that most of his famous political and protest songs or songs concerning the various protests and issues of the time and songs that fixed him in the popular imagination were written. In his autobiography *Chronicles : Volume One*, Dylan recalls and shudders at the labels thrown at him; “Prophet, Messiah, Saviour. . .” (28) and admits to how he was troubled by people recognising him as somebody who could represent them and somebody who could be their voice. “People are recognising me, they’re stopping me on the street and asking me what I meant in *Blowin’ in the Wind*, and what’s the true meaning in my other songs. They’re drivin’ me flaky. Gotta get outta here.” (42). However, there was no getting out. People began to seek and look for answers in him and his songs. “Protest music was one thing before Bob Dylan came upon it, and quite another thing afterwards.” (Lynskey 54).

To study the situation of the period and the condition of the people, the difference in the power paradigm within the society - between the working class and those in power, Foucault’s theory of the power structure in the society may be examined. The 1960s, the period that saw tremendous growth in inventions, music, television and entertainment and art of all forms, was also convulsed by deaths due to racism and wars and assassination of political leaders, threats of more wars and nuclear attacks proposed by some of the leaders, who embody and exercise the ultimate power in the society. As a result of these actions, the masses who embody the lower group, those who were traditionally not expected to embody power and often labeled as the working class of the society were affected the most. This caused distinction between the two, leading the

former to manipulate their control over the people and the latter to resist and oppose. In such an environment, power becomes an important factor and traditionally located within the state or the government and this study will attempt to reveal how this power fluctuates.

Power, its presence and manipulation of it is foremost embodied by the government. The control may be through the recruitment of soldiers to fight in the war and this recruitment is not always through one's consent. In such a scenario, it may be said that the control is extreme and may be examined and compared in relation to what Foucault had said in his book *Discipline and Punish*, "The carceral texture of society assures both the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation." (Foucault 1995: 29). Here in Foucault's book, we see an example of a city whose viability has been challenged by a natural disaster, a plague, and this situation which could potentially result in chaos and disorder, offers agency for the government to assume total power and control of its populous, while at the same time, acting or disguising itself as a protector. America, the government and its political leaders, who are to work for the betterment and protection of the citizens, fell short of what was expected of them since under their rule and leadership, the people felt unsafe, insecure and threatened. The external capture and control is carried out in the form of the recruitment of citizens to go into wars where their safety and well-being is not guaranteed, while the internal capture depends upon the observation of the citizens by the government wherein they are not free and are traumatized by fear and the effects of the wars.

Foucault has also introduced what he terms as “technologies of punishment” and within these technologies, there are two representations of punishment- Monarchical Punishment which refers to the public and torturous punishments that was present during the Eighteenth century, in which the “dysfunction of power was related to a central excess. . .which identified the right to punish with the personal power of the sovereign.” (Foucault 1995: 80) The other is Disciplinary Punishment which refers to the punishment or incarceration of offenders and is “isomorphic with obligation itself.” (180) To link these concepts with contemporary society, Foucault borrows an adaptation of Jeremy Bentham’s concept of the Panopticon to demonstrate the impact that surveillance and constant control and observation has not only on individuals in institutions like prison, but also on society as a whole. The Panopticon is an annular building with various cells, with a tower in its centre from which every cell where a prisoner is kept can be seen, but the prisoner cannot identify from where he is being monitored. The Panopticon denotes the idea that “Visibility is a trap.” (200) Each prisoner is seen but he cannot see or communicate with the warders or with the other prisoners, and hence “he is the object of information, never a subject in communication.” and this “invisibility is a guarantee of order” (200) which implies the functioning of power from a higher authority, ensuring that “. . .power should be visible and unverifiable.” (201) Very similar to this, the U.S government exercised their control upon the people in which the people are made aware that they are under its control, yet they are left powerless to the point that they do not have the voice to speak up for their own rights, wants and opinions against the societal injustices like wars and unfair treatments like racial

discrimination and white supremacy. In such an environment, the power structure of the society comes into question.

The power structure within a society has also been examined by Foucault. If the Panopticon is taken as an example again, it can be suggested that Foucault has outlined the imperative modalities for the individuals to become imprisoned not just physically but also internally, and monitored by their own sense of imprisonment and control. He describes four practices which include the establishment of a power hierarchy, segregation, training and military surveillance. These practices can be examined in relation to the contemporary U.S society by looking into the governmental workings of the country. Although the contemporary society has done away with sovereignty in terms of kingship and rulers, an invisible line is still drawn between the people - between the working class and the government officials, between the proletariat and the capitalists. This can be seen as a form of class hierarchy. The segregation that Foucault has talked about is also evident in this class structure. Thirdly, the practice of training is also an integral part of the state's governance in the form of the recruitment of citizens for soldiers to fight in the wars. Such a practice can be analysed under what Foucault has stated, ". . .the great confinement on the one hand, the correct training on the other." (223)

The fourth practice that Foucault has pointed out which is of the military surveillance is seen wherein the citizens are under the observation of the government or where there is unfair treatment, in which black people were unfairly treated and even killed, and where the killers were protected by the law. In such a situation, the black man is subjected to



a constant fear and is void of equality and personal freedom, which can be related to Foucault's statement, "Each individual is fixed in his place. And if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment." (195) Thus, there is loss of individuality and loss of freedom for expression due to the control by such a power structure. This results in the loss of any agency which leads to the loss of the ability or willingness to fight against those in power, just as Foucault has stated, "He who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power. . . becomes the principle of his own subjection." (207) This statement proves significant in the way the citizens assumed power to be in the hands of the government and thereby, are incapable of fighting against it. For a time, before movements and protests sprung up, it can be said that the people's sense of self and power had been diminished to the extent that they had become complicit in their subjugation.

Foucault has also given a form of discipline that was introduced and prevalent during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth century in Europe to show how a body can be "docile" in order to fulfill the controlling power's motive, order or regulation. According to this idea, "The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is easy enough to find signs of the attention then paid to the body- to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces." (136) For him, this method is different from slavery which was "based on a relation of appropriation of bodies", instead, here, there is a "scale of control. . .working

it 'retail', individually, of exercising upon it a subtle coercion". There is also the "object of control: it was not or was no longer the signifying elements of behaviour or the language of the body, but the economy, the efficiency of movements, their internal organization." There is also the "modality" which is "an uninterrupted, constant coercion. . .exercised according to a codification." (137) In this docility-utility, the "disciples became general formulas of domination." This disciple does not merely produce "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies" but also "dissociates power from the body" and becomes an " 'aptitude' , a 'capacity'. " (137-138) This means that the energy produced by the body is disciplined, developed and controlled and reversed. It becomes a power of subjection and with Foucault's concept, the docile body is made to be more intelligible and useful. Similar to this, the government often educate or manipulate the people to reverse their view and positions. By recruiting them as soldiers to fight in wars without their consent, they teach the citizens to recognise their bodies as the property of the nation, a one unison body that is no longer a liberated body but a restrained body. In this way, the control that the government or the authority has over the body of the citizens embodies Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and the docile body. The recruitment of young men in the army is significant because it is their young age and often, lack of experience and knowledge that makes them more docile. The government is manipulative because it lures these soldiers into the war with the promise of a good name and medals, employing a seemingly metaphor of a "hero", which is a subtle and manipulative form of control and coercion. This is clearly reflected in Bob Dylan's protest songs like "Masters of War" (1963) that reveal the government's corrupt

practices and involvement in the wars. Their control over the soldiers, the “docile bodies” is evident and according to Dylan, they

“build the death planes. . .

lie and deceive

fasten the triggers for the others to fire. . .

then sat back and watch when the death count gets higher.” (*Bob Dylan:*

*Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 81)

The government subtly manipulates and exercise a form of control and coercion to these “docile” bodies into entering the wars. This is also evident in Dylan’s song “John Brown” (1962) where John Brown went off to war and his mother, another “docile body” is being controlled by the government into believing his son is a hero in his uniform and will be a hero when he returns with his medals. However, she could not even recognize him when he returns because of the physical and mental damage that the war has caused him. (69)

Marxism, a scientific theory of human societies propounded by Karl Marx and later on, till date, shaped by the Marxists, has a significant role in the transformation of human societies. Marxist Criticism is part of a larger body of theoretical analysis that aims to understand ideologies like the ideas and values by which man experience the society, and Marxist Literature attempts to highlight this through the class structures and economic differences within a society. In the Marxist theory, the concept of class places greater burdens on its theoretical foundations and Marxists argue that class or the

economic base was at the center of a general theory of history, which they often refer to as “historical materialism”. This was initially stated in *The German Ideology* by Marx and Engels themselves who claim, “The production of ideas, concepts and consciousness is first of all directly interwoven with the material intercourse of man, the language of real life”. (Eagleton, 4). Hence, this materialism brings into light the concept of “class struggle” and the difference between the capitalists and the proletariats. This struggle that exists in a society, between men and how the capitalist class owns the means of production, buying the labour-power of the proletarian class for profit is highlighted and focused upon by the Marxist theory. Upon a Marxist study of certain societies, this notion of class struggle and differences can be seen pertaining to the workings of certain social structures.

This study situates the power structure between the working class of the population who embrace and signify popular culture and that of the class traditionally assumed to have power, the class in the form of the government, the politicians. In this case, if the working class people are the proletariats, the government is the capitalist. A defining and recurring factor in the American society is the American Dream which is a national ethos of attaining certain ideals like liberty, democracy, rights, opportunity and success through hardwork. Often, this American Dream has become a pursuit of material prosperity and perhaps, has proved to be beyond the grasp of the working class. It can also be regarded as the pursuit of a simple, fulfilling life with less focus on material and financial acquisition. Either way, it suggests a better living. This American Dream

has proved most significant and contentious in the area of class within a society. According to Lawrence Samuel in his book *The American Dream : A Cultural History*, “Part and parcel of the framework of class is the notion of upward mobility, the idea that one can, through hardwork. . .climb the ladder of success and reach a higher social and economic position. For many in both the working class and the middle class, upward mobility has served as the heart and soul of the American Dream.” (7) However this dream has often proved futile and this “upward mobility” has become “even a greater myth than the Dream itself.”, causing to create a wider gap between the classes. The manipulation of it can also be seen in which “the government has employed it as a tool of propaganda. . .a powerful ideological weapon of persuasion.” (7) In such a scenario, the dream ironically becomes a nightmare for the people. During the time of the Great Depression and the war years, this dream seemed to be the only hope for the people in despair, the hope to retain economic, social and individual being. At the same time, due to unfair workings of the society and the government, this dream was more than often diminished. This result is in opposition with what the dream has initially been regarded to be. Lawrence Samuel quotes James Truslow Adams, who in his 1931 book *The Epic of America*, defined his idea of the American Dream;

“The dream is a vision of a better, deeper, richer life for every individual, regardless of the position in society which he or she may occupy by the accident of birth. It has been a dream of a chance to rise in the economic scale, but quite as much, or more than that, of a chance to develop our

capabilities to the full, unhampered by unjust restrictions of caste or culture. With this has gone the hope of bettering the physical conditions of living, of lessening the toil and anxieties of daily life.” (13)

This idea is the true essence of the dream. However, Adams argued that this concept has lost its notion and purpose and “its guiding philosophy forgotten in the wild pursuit of money. . . ‘The dream of a richer, better, fuller human life for all citizens instead of for a small class had been turned by our leaders and ourselves.’ ” (13-14) This proves that the ideals and morals of the dream had been hampered, and instead of providing equal opportunities, had often resulted in the creation of a wider gap between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the non-privileged, the powerful and the powerless. This failure in the idea of the dream can be linked with Marxist idea of class struggle, wherein the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. America, from the 1020s to the Great Depression of 1929 till date, has experienced a great economical and social change, resulting in certain class struggles that shaped their lives. This can be analyzed under the light of Marxism as seen in *The Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), which claims that, “In the social production of their life, men enter into a definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will. . .The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.” (Eagleton, 4). As such, the people are affected by their economy and the changes which in turn, affected

their consciousness and their social being, their position as well as their relationships with others within the society. This is evident in the American society during the 1960s, on which this study is particularly situated. Bob Dylan, with his ability to put into writing his surroundings, clearly captured the prevailing situation of the time in his songs. He highlights the conflicts of the time and questions when the people would finally have freedom in his song “Blowin’ in the Wind”, asking, “How many years can some people exist before they’re allowed to be free?” and questions how long the authority would neglect the plight of the people, “How many times must a man turn his head, pretending he just doesn’t see?” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 77) He also pinpoints the people responsible for the wars and deaths due to racial discrimination, calling them “masters of war”. (81-82)

The 1960s or the Swinging Sixties, particularly in America goes hand in hand with what is known as counterculture. World War II had ended, the country was relatively prospering, yet it saw the rise of protesters and movements against the prevailing politics and governance of the country. The decade witnessed the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Vietnam War was still going on and there were threats of a nuclear war and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. At the same time, there was huge growth in inventions, economy, technology and art of all forms including the first man landing on the moon. The United States, home to the Statue of Liberty, (Liberty Enlightening the World) that depicts its independence, is an icon for freedom and opportunities and a landmark for many immigrants. Significantly, it is home to many

racial groups, ethnicities, cultures and religion, and for its citizens and the world, it represents freedom, opportunities and hope. “The U.S government was democratic and designed to protect the people’s right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” ( “Home Front Turmoil: The 1960s.”) However, the governance within the country often contradicts with this theory. For instance, the people lost their beliefs in this idea of freedom due to the ongoing Vietnam War and threats of nuclear war with the Soviets. The principles of equality and opportunity was also not entirely guaranteed since blacks were not entirely equally treated. Protesters of wars and riots over inequalities that black people faced broke out all over the country. The country’s principles of democracy and its commitment to equality, justice and freedom was highly in question due to these happenings and it appeared as though the U.S system had failed miserably. Dylan brought to light these problems in his protest songs. The failure of the establishment to protect its citizens and instead, its tendency to discriminate and manipulate is seen in songs like “The Death of Emmet Till” where white supremacy is highlighted through the murder of a young black boy and where the white murderers are found not guilty.

In this internal conflict, it is the powerless against the powerful, the working class against the upper class, the youth against the older generation and the concept of power struggle within a society is put into perspective. Michel Foucault has notably indicated that “Where there is power, there is resistance.” ( 1990: 95) For him, “These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. . .resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable. . .by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations.” (95-96) Therefore, power, in any form, affirms the existence



of resistance and vice versa. The first form of power, in this context is power exercised by the government, in the form of its leaders and politicians, and to signify or exemplify Foucault's statement, this power is resisted by the people.

The Americans, traumatized by war and social injustices, grew weary of the country's governance. The world was growing in technology and for the first time, the Vietnam War was broadcasted on television, and the public was easily informed of the tragedies of the war. The U.S government, in order to increase its troop in the war, recruited all eighteen-year-old citizens who were not in school or college to enter the military. Hence, many had to enter the war with no consent on their part and this upset the public tremendously. At the same time, racism was a prevailing issue in the society. The people, the youth especially, started to demonstrate their anger and frustration towards the government through protests. Demands for peace and equal opportunities were their main propaganda. The happenings in America was contradictory to the country's ideals, and its devotion to democracy and justice was thus put into question since it was evident that racism and violence were still condoned. Hence, the prevailing power was resisted, challenged and attacked by the people. The "lower" class group of the society now becomes a participant in the power structure. This signifies the stance that "No longer is power considered a unitary, constant force that emanates a particular social class or institution; rather, it is seen as a complicated, more tenuous fabric of hegemonic forms." (Constable 12) The power, conventionally believed to exist autonomously in the hands of the government

now becomes fractured by certain acts of resistance, making the two “coexist and constantly reassert themselves against each other.” (13) In this context, the resistance that is being put up through protests and social upheavals gave way, and at the same time, is thoroughly supported and given an agency by the countercultural movement of the time. Usually understood as a culture created outside the mainstream culture, it is a product of what Theodore Roszak termed as the “technocracy’s children”, “. . .the creation either of youth who are profoundly, even fanatically, alienated from the parental generation, or of those who address themselves to the young.” ( Roszak 1)

The existing culture or domination is challenged by this counterculture, usually embraced by the youth, and Roszak also raises the question as to why it has to be them; “Why should it be the young who rise most noticeably in protest against the expansion of the technocracies?” (22) To This, he claims that there is no right answer but “the young stand forth so prominently because they act against a background of nearly pathological passivity on the part of the older generation.” (22) It is thus the youth who protest, who challenge the existing authority and move outside the mainstream culture to create a counterculture because of their dissent with what has been practiced and followed by their parents and the older generation. Dylan’s music and lyrics proved useful for the younger generation who wanted to move away from the older generation’s ideals and beliefs since they no longer proved efficient to the requirements of the time.

Counter-cultural movements have been evident in certain parts of the world. However, one of the earliest and the most prominent may be the 1960s counterculture movement of the United States, triggered by the Civil Rights movement, protests against the Vietnam War, threats of nuclear wars and the overall demand for human rights, equality and peace. Since the movement, as pointed out, is created by the younger generation, it often started in college campuses by students and even outside the campuses, was joined by young rebellious people. Since this counterculture is intricately linked with youth culture, the lifestyle, norms, habits and beliefs adopted by the youth play a significant role in its creation. One of the major elements adopted by the youth culture is music and it also became an important feature of the counterculture movement. Music and lyrics became a weapon for protests and the musicians' role in it is thus extremely significant, and Bob Dylan's role is perhaps one of the most important in this context. According to Peter Doggett in his book *There's a Riot Going On* (2007), "No one signified the ambiguous relationship between music and revolution more accurately than Bob Dylan." and regarded him as "a beacon of radicalism by the counter-culture." (6) His songs signify what the youth wanted to say, challenges the government with the bitter truth, contributed to the counter-culture of the time, moving away from the existing mainstream culture and became an instrument in the medium to defy and challenge who and what was traditionally believed to be in power. The "docile bodies", by the creation of this counter-culture and embracing it and using it as a weapon to defend themselves now actively and consciously resist domination and are no longer completely docile. Even

if they have not completely become equal players in the field of power, by resisting it and acting upon it, have become active participants and often, power is maintained by them in the power structure within the society.

This chapter will analyse the literary quality of Dylan's protest songs and will attempt to dissect the ambiguity in his lyrics. In doing so, it will attempt to reveal Dylan's own narratives on the protest. Protest songs, by definition, would simply suggest songs with texts that consist of protests against wars, racial discrimination and other injustices of society. The lyrics are often a cry for help, a plea to the concerned, an awareness for the public and a voice for the subjects. Bob Dylan's protest songs address a variety of such issues, making him a writer of a song considered to be an anthem of the Civil War, wherein, he emerged as one of the most important figures in pop – culture history.

Historically, the tradition of protest songs, particularly in the U.S, dates back to the Eighteenth century and the Colonial period, the American Revolutionary war and its aftermath. Protest songs, being part of popular music and popular culture, have become an important instrument in bringing a change within a particular culture. Protest songs, in a way have emerged as a genre that is capable of bringing a change within a particular country, and Bob Dylan's protest songs, with the issues raised in it, have captured the voice of a generation. Lyrical ballads, poetry or songs have been used to express the full spectrum of human emotions, thoughts, feelings and concerns. As much as a love song lyricist or a romantic poet expresses love and romance and beauty into a song or a poem, the protest song lyricist expresses discontent and anger and proclaims social needs in the protest songs.

Bob Dylan's protest songs are angry, vivid and are a cry for redemption. Some of the songs depict actual incidents and occurrences while some are ambiguous as to

what the main content is. At the same time, they all address the need for a better, more peaceful living, hoping for a change while attempting to contribute a solution to the problems faced. To comprehend Dylan's lyrics and interpret them to show his own narratives, the discourses of popular music will have to be considered. There may be certain discourses that determine the way we interpret popular music and they may contribute to how we assess what is good or bad, what is significant and what is trivial. As such, the essence of any song or a musical piece is not so much in themselves but in the discourses attributed to them. These discourses may be varied and subjected to the listener. However, according to David Machin in his book *Analyzing Popular Music : Image, Sound and Text* (2010), authenticity is one of the underlying discourses. "The discourse of authenticity is at the heart of the way we think about music and can be seen signified in the different semiotic modes through which artists communicate, through their sound, looks, lyrics and what they say in interviews." (Machin 14). He takes blues music as an example of an authentic genre because it "is viewed as an authentic expression of an oppressed race- music from the heart- in contrast to the formality of the classical tradition of concert music from Europe, it is considered to be the archetype of music that genuinely expresses true emotion and feeling." (Machin 14) Taking this into consideration, folk music, the genre that Bob Dylan is known for, may be examined for its authenticity.

Folk music is "music that originates in traditional popular culture or that is written in such a style. Folk music is typically of unknown authorship and is transmitted

orally from generation to generation.” (Merriam Webster) Having no distinct owners or particular composers, this traditional folk music suggests history of any particular group of people, whose story, feelings and emotions have been captured and put into song, passed down from generation to generation, either written down or by word of mouth. Hence, in this case, its authenticity lies in the fact that it tells the factual happenings, sentiments and stories of the people. Bob Dylan’s music on the other hand, belongs to the more recent form of folk music, folk music of the twentieth century, a new form of folk music that evolved from the traditional folk music and “its definition came to be based on a new set of criteria revolving around the taint of the commercial, of politics, and of class.” (Gelbart 256)

It is significant that Bob Dylan protested in his lyrics under the genre of folk music and authenticates it since “authenticity is about conviction and expression of emotion.” (Machin 18) In his folk protest songs, Dylan writes with conviction and expresses his sincere feelings and emotions about the time, what he feels is wrong and what must be done. Dylan’s appearance on the scene is also very relevant because for a time, before him, folk music had seen a subtle decline in the United States as well as in other parts of the world. Along with a few other folk musicians, Dylan entered the scene at the time when the genre was revived, reaching its zenith in the 1960s.

To analyse the literary quality and authenticity of Dylan’s protest songs, another

discourse about the meaning of music may be studied. This discourse is how music “relates to our body and mind and how we can use music to express ourselves.” (Machin 18) One way of understanding this is how an audience or a listener responds to a certain type of music. Classical music or operas may require full contemplation and silence while in rock concerts, the audience may be loud and aggressive. This suggests that there is no doubt certain ways in which the body relates and reacts to a certain type of music and that there is a difference between listening with the mind and listening with the body. This difference has “its origin in the Romantic dichotomy between nature and culture and their corresponding associations with feeling and reason. Feelings were therefore associated with the body as opposed to the intellect.” (Machin 19) Bob Dylan’s music, since it is part of popular music, embraced by popular culture, and specially with its honest content, has the quality to challenge the authority. It is music of the body, it is angry, honest and passionate, with the literary quality that need not to be contemplated and analysed by its audience, but to be embraced, agreed upon and followed and it is this association with the body and the natural and not of the mind and culture that has allowed popular music to come to be seen as a way of casting off bourgeois inhibitions. (Frith 124) It acts as a way of challenging the traditionally superior and social conventions and Dylan’s songs manage to convey the message of frustration, discontent of the masses because it is music of the body that needs no further explanation. “The distinction between the body, instinct and feeling as opposed to the mind, intellect and reason sets up the idea that music of the body is free from restriction of the intellect and of high culture. So artists, simply through using



certain sounds and visual references that connote this discourse, can indicate that they are of the body, the low brow and not of the bourgeoisie repressed social condition.” (Machin 19).

Another discourse suggested by Machin that may be looked at when studying music is its association with “subcultures”. Subculture may be explained as the culture that deviates itself from a larger culture, with particular interests, opinions and beliefs. The people following and embracing a particular subculture may adopt a certain kind of style, habits, language and overall way of living. Each music genre is capable of creating its own subculture, depending upon the situation of its time. For instance, punk music creates its own subculture where its followers may have brightly dyed hair with spikes and wear torn clothes to show their rebellion as explained by Dick Hebdige in his book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1970), “The unlikely alliance of diverse and superficially incompatible musical traditions, mysteriously accomplished under punk, found ramifications in an equally eclectic clothing styles which reproduces the same kind of cacophony on a visual level.” (26) Such a subculture created by punk music combined such elements to communicate a particular way of life. With their loud music, loud clothing, how they spoke and their choice of behaviour, they showed their disillusionment and were able to challenge and speak against the mainstream culture. In the same way, country music may require cowboy hats and boots to highlight their roots and way of living. Bob Dylan’s music was at its peak during the 1960s, at the time when folk music was revived. This was the period when America was agitated by the civil war

and the threat of a possible nuclear war. The young Americans, starting to lose faith in the government and their elders who were supposed to pave the way for their betterment, hungered for someone or something that could voice their concern and discontent. They wanted peace and brotherhood. They needed a medium through which they could channel their opinions and music was just the right tool for it. Bob Dylan's protest songs did not just capture the wrongdoings of those in power but also beautifully express the feelings and desires of the people. This enabled them to peacefully express themselves and for once, their voice was heard. Thus, through Dylan's music, his followers began to form a subculture that had a coherent view and criticism of the government and the society and they were able to show their discontent through the directness and honesty of Dylan's lyrics.

Bob Dylan's lyrics are either very straightforward or very ambiguous and their interpretations can be varied. In *Chronicles: Volume One* (2004), Dylan recalls how he was often stopped on the streets by people who wanted to know the true meaning of his songs. One of his most well known songs, a song Dylan sang at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous speech is "Blowin' in the Wind" from the album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963). The song even came to be known as an anthem of the civil rights movement and is still celebrated worldwide. The song consists of rhetorical questions where Dylan does not provide a solid solution nor does he address it to anyone in particular. It does not talk about any war or injustices in detail but simply questions:

“How many roads must a man walk down

Before you call him a man?

Yes, ‘n’ how many seas must a white dove sail

cBefore she sleeps in the sand?

Yes, ‘n’ how many times must the cannon balls fly

Before they’re forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind,

The answer is blowin’ in the wind.” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962- 1985, 77*)

This song is one of the most ambiguous among all Dylan’s songs because unlike his other songs where he directly refers to the government or where he mentions the names of the victims of injustice, it refers to nobody in particular but at the same time, can be seen as a song meant for all. He seems to be questioning how many battles and hardships, internally or externally a man has to go through in order for him to be deemed worthy, to be called a “man”, and also how many violence and wars will we encounter before we can finally have peace. Even though this song does not literally highlight actual happenings, Dylan manages to bring across the problems faced by the country at the time in this song. He continues to question:

“How many years can a mountain exist

Before it’s washed to the sea?

Yes, ‘n’ how many years can some people exist

Before they're allowed to be free?  
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head,  
Pretending he just doesn't see?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,  
The answer is blowin' in the wind." (77)

Dylan's genuine concern about the country is evident in these lines where he questions how long it would take for the people to be truly free from the shackles that bind their freedom and wonders how long the authority would turn a blind eye to the people in despair. It expresses the hardships faced by the minorities, or particularly the blacks. The refrain of the song where he keeps on repeating that the answer to all these questions is blowing in the wind may suggest that Dylan himself is not sure whether a solution would arrive soon but at the same time, he also provides hope for the people in need, by reminding them that the answer to their problems is somewhere to be found and that it will be found. "Blowin' in the Wind" indeed captured the essence of the time and served as a tool to protest by delivering a message to its audience. The song may not have been powerful enough to start a physical revolution but it had the "potential to comment on society, politics and prejudice, . . . 'protest' and perhaps play some part in the struggle to bring about a better world" (Negus 99). It remains as one of the most covered songs of Bob Dylan and the ambiguity of this song proves significant because more than fifty years after its release, it is still relevant to the happenings of the country, where equality or human rights is still often sought for, and the answer to

whether such basic social equalities will be found or not is blowing in the wind.

“Masters of War” from the same album is a more vivid song where the masses’ anger and concern over the Vietnam war is portrayed. “The U.S Army’s role in Vietnam was to establish a safe environment within which the people of South Vietnam could establish a government that was independent, stable and freely elected. . .” (Rottman 6). The U.S government’s explanation and stance seemed beneficial for all parties, yet as the war continued, more lives were lost and the people felt unsafe and betrayed. As more troops were sent to Vietnam, more blood was shed and the people began to question the U.S’s motives and involvement and started to express their concern openly. Protests were held by young college students and when the song was released, it served as an important instrument for these protests since the lyrics captured the stance of the angry protesters. In the song, Bob Dylan openly blames and attacks the men in power, the politicians and calls them evil for making profit off of the war while they send the young men of the country off to the war only to die. He bravely calls them out, claiming that he can see through the mask that they put up and blaming them as the creators of the war:

“Come you masters of war  
You that build all the guns  
You that build the death planes  
You that build the big bombs  
You that hide behind walls

You that hide behind desks

I just want you to know

I can see through your masks.” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962- 1985,*

81)

Bob Dylan condemns the “masters of war” and claims that they “build to destroy”, highlighting their cowardice when trouble lurks:

“You put a gun in my hand

And you hide from my eyes

And you turn and run farther

When the fast bullets fly. . .

When the death count gets higher

You hide in your mansion. . .” (81)

The extremities of the damage caused by these “masters of war” is clearly depicted by Dylan who shows that their wrongdoings are so deeply rooted to the extent that he even fears for the future generation:

“You’ve thrown the worst fear. . .

Fear to bring children

Into the world. . .” (82)

The song resonated with the young protesters of the time because Dylan places himself as the youngling subjugated by the elder. He is aware of his youth but is adamant to

not let them take his naivety for granted and bravely proclaims:

“You might say that I’m young  
You might say I’m unlearned  
But there’s one thing I know  
Though I’m younger than you  
Even Jesus would never  
Forgive what you do.” (82)

This bold, aggressive voice was exactly what the young, rebellious protesters needed. Dylan’s choice of language in this song is loud, angry and straightforward. It bravely cursed the wrongdoers and rightly captured the angst of the youth and in it, they found an outlet for their disillusionments and frustrations:

“And I hope that you die  
And your death’ll come soon  
I will follow your casket  
In the pale afternoon  
And I’ll watch while you’re lowered  
Down to your deathbed  
And I’ll stand o’er your grave  
Til I’m sure that you’re dead.” (82- 83)

It has often been said that Dylan wrote his song “A Hard Rains A-Gonna Fall”

(1962) in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the introductory note to Dylan's 1963 album, writer Nat Hentoff quotes Dylan as saying that this song "is a desperate kind of song. . .it was written during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 when those who allowed themselves to think of the impossible results of the Kennedy-Khrushchev confrontation were chilled by the imminence of oblivion. . .Every line in it is actually the start of a whole song. But when I wrote it, I thought I wouldn't have enough time alive to write all these songs so I put all I could into this one." (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 62). The "hard rain" in this song has often been interpreted literally as the "atomic rain" perpetuated by the missiles but it can be seen that it is not just about the nuclear war but how the people have been manipulated and deceived, and Dylan also explains that this "hard rain" that he says is going to fall in his song is actually "the lies that are told on the radio and in the newspapers, trying to take people's brains away, all the lies I consider poison." (Dylan 65) .

The song, although it has themes related to war and destruction, is nonetheless beautiful and poetic in terms of Dylan's choice of language and diction. Like many of his other songs, he starts each line with a question, addressing his "blue-eyed son", his "darling young one" and this can be regarded as his attempt to speak to every American.

He asks:

“Oh where have you been, my blue-eyed son?. . .

Oh, what did you see?. . .

And what did you hear?. . .



Who did you meet?. . .

Oh, what'll you do now, my darling young one?" (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics. 1962- 1985, 86-87*)

Bob Dylan is aware of the impending doom and the song encompasses a wider message of injustices done to the people by the government by keeping them in the dark and feeding them false information through the media that they control, and concludes that he knows a "hard rain" is going to fall like "the pellets of poison that are flooding their waters." (87) The song was released at the time when the Americans knew that there was something wrong and the song proved as a medium to voice their concern. Many spoke up about the relevance of the song and highly praised it for its honesty and its ability to say what was needed to be said. In the documentary based on Bob Dylan, *No Direction Home* (2005) directed by Martin Scorsese, the poet Allen Ginsberg talks about his reaction upon hearing the song, saying, ". . .And I heard "Hard Rain", I think. And wept. 'Cause it seemed that the torch had been passed to another generation. From earlier bohemian, or Beat illumination. And self-empowerment." (Ginsberg. *No Direction Home*.)

In 1964, Bob Dylan released his album *The Times They Are A-Changin'* and although Dylan continues to claim that he never really meant to protest through his songs, his concern with the happenings in the society, humanity as well as with politics started to reveal itself. This album includes more songs directed towards the government,

underlining its evils. Some of the songs are now even from straightforward, depicting incidents in their actuality. It includes songs like “Only a Pawn in Their Game”, a song about the murder of Medgar Evers, a Civil Rights activist. Dylan first sang this song in Greenwich, Mississippi at a Civil Rights battle. The “pawn” in this song is actually the white murderer and by positioning him as one of the victims, as the “pawn” in this murder, Dylan manages to show just how immoral and corrupted the system is. He describes the murder but claims that the murderer cannot be blamed for “He’s only a pawn in their game”, and is convinced that it is the politicians who manipulate the majority of the white men in thinking that they are better than the blacks. These politicians preach:

“You got more than the blacks, don’t complain.

You’re better than them, you been born with white skin,. . .” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 138).

Dylan also claims that the white man becomes a tool of those in power, like the deputy sheriffs, the marshals and the cops who are paid by the government. He shows how manipulative the government has been and how it has embedded in the minds of the people the white supremacy, teaching that the white man can do no wrong because it has the government to protect him:

“He’s taught in his school

From the start by the rule

That the laws are with him

To protect his white skin  
So he never thinks straight  
'Bout the shape that he's in  
But it ain't him to blame  
He's only a pawn in their game." (139)

“With God on Our Side” is another precise, straightforward song that describes the implementation and consequences of wars. It addresses the inclination or tendency of any land or country, its citizens, any tribe, society or nation to be of the notion that God is on their side, regardless of their actions and motives, as opposed to anyone that they are in conflict with. Dylan opens the song with how he has been conditioned by the laws to believe that the land he was born in has God on its side, and he mentions several disastrous historical events. He seems to be conveying the message that even though evil acts are done upon people, the perpetrators always have the tendency to justify their acts with the belief that God is on their side, and that things are done in the name of God, things not condoned by God. He describes the massacre of the Native Americans in the Nineteenth century, the Spanish-American War, the Civil War and depicts the deaths. These wars were bloody and many lives were lost. It resulted in nothing good, yet the actions and consequences were rationalised with the belief that God was there. (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 132).

Dylan also clearly highlights the first and second World Wars in this song, describing his inability to comprehend the purpose of these wars and mentions how the effects did not really matter because they had God on their side:

“The reason for fighting  
I never got straight  
But I learned to accept it  
Accept it with pride  
For you don’t count the dead  
When God’s on your side” (132)

Dylan does not only situate God on their side but also shows the tendency of every nation to believe that they have God on their side, and how once there is peace, the destruction is neglected by both parties:

“When the Second World War came to an end  
We forgave the Germans and we were friends  
Though they murdered six million  
In the ovens they fried  
The Germans now too  
Have God on their side.” (133)

After a detailed description of the many wars that America had encountered, Dylan looks for a conclusion and makes a biblical reference where he talks about how

Jesus Christ was betrayed by Judas Iscariot. In Luke 22:48, Jesus is betrayed by Judas with a kiss. Judas is the enemy, the traitor and Dylan seems to be showing the complex nature of everyone's belief that they have God siding with them by questioning whether Judas too had God on his side:

“. . .Jesus Christ was betrayed by a kiss  
But I can't think for you  
You'll have to decide  
Whether Judas Iscariot had God on his side.” (133)

God's involvement and predestination becomes an issue and a complication for Dylan in this song. He ends the song admitting that he is confused and “weary as Hell”, and ironically leaves it to God to decide:

“If God's on our side  
He'll stop the next war.” (133)

As Dylan released more songs, it became clear that whether intentionally or unintentionally, he became a much needed voice in the ongoing protests. His songs did not only condemn the government and its workings but many also speak up for what needs to be done. “The Times They Are-A Changin' ”(1964) is one such example, and according to Dylan, a song that “. . .seems to be what people want to hear.” (Heylin 126). The song has been influential for people's views on the government, the society and their time, creating an awareness that change has to be made and that change is

coming. In the song, Dylan calls how to the people to be aware of what is happening around them and to accept the reality that time and things have changed, and to do something about it:

“Come gather ‘round people. . .

If your time to you is worth savin’

Then you better start swimmin’

Or you’ll sink like a stone

For the times they are a-changin’ ” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 127).

Dylan speaks directly not only to the people but also confronts writers and critics, senators, congressmen and the older generation of the country. He motivates these writers and critics who have the power to voice their opinions and asks the politicians to pay attention to this calling:

“Come writers and critics

Who prophesize with your pen

And keep your eyes wide open

The chance won’t come again. . .

Come senators, congressmen

Please heed the call

There’s a battle outside and it is ragin’

It’ll soon shake your windows

And rattle your walls

For the times they are a-changin' ". (127-128)

This song also addresses the older generation of the country who are perhaps in oppose of the youth culture of the moment, who expressed their opinions and wants of a better, more peaceful world by embracing the "hippie" culture:

"Come mothers and fathers  
Throughout the land  
And don't criticize what you can't understand  
Your sons and your daughters  
Are beyond your command  
Your old road is rapidly agin'.  
Please get out of the new one  
If you can't lend your hand  
For the times they are a-changin' ". (128)

This song indeed drew attention and some of the lines remain a frequently quoted line till date. Michael Gray, in *The Bob Dylan Encyclopedia* (2006) called it "the archetypal protest song" where the writer's "aim was to ride upon the unvoiced sentiment of a mass public- to give that inchoate sentiment an anthem and give its clamour an outlet." (662). The song very much became what Dylan had intended upon, an anthem for a change, and it may be said that he did not necessarily convince people of something new in this song as well as his other songs, but reinforced views and facts

that were already there, but where action was not taken. How and why something is said is often as important as what is actually being said. With Dylan, this medium of songwriting or putting down what needed to be said in songs, becomes his message. “I don’t think when I write. I just react and put it down on paper. . .what comes out. . . is a call to action.” (Dylan 187), and significantly, what comes out of Dylan’s songs influenced the movement of the time as much as the movement influenced him and the songs.

The singles “John Brown” and “The Death of Emmet Till”, both released in 1962 are songs where Dylan recounts the stories of the two protagonists, John Brown and Emmet Till. John Brown is a character painted by Dylan, where through his experiences in the war, the true nature of wars is shown and may be considered as an anti-war song. Emmet Till on the other hand, is an actual black fourteen-year-old boy who had been beaten and shot to death in Mississippi in 1955 for “whistling at a white woman” and it is considered by many that with this song, “Bob Dylan the protest singer was born.” (Lynskey 54)

John Brown, in Dylan’s song is a young boy who is about to go off to war, and through his experiences, the deception of war and the effects that it has on a person is shown. The song recounts how proud his mother is of John as he is about to leave for war and brags about his son in his uniform and gun. His son leaves and during his time in the war, would often write to his mother and the mother would show and brag



about him to the neighbours. However, when her son returns, she could hardly recognise him because of the destruction the war had caused :

“Oh his face was all shot up and his hand was all blown off

And he wore a metal brace around his waist.” (*Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962-1985*, 69)

Through this imagery, Dylan succeeds in showing the real effects of war and how destructive it is to man. John Brown’s physical appearance had changed so much that it was difficult for his mother to recognise him, and even when she did, was unbearable for her to see. By making the protagonist describe his encounter with the war, Dylan is able to bring across the reality of it all and how deceptive it all is:

“Don’t you remember Ma, when I went off to war

You thought it was the best thing I could do?

I was on the battleground, you were home. . .acting proud.

You weren’t there standing in my shoes.

Oh, and I thought when I was there, God, what am I doing here?

I’m tryin’ to kill somebody or die tryin’.

But the thing that scared me most was when my enemy came close

And I saw that his face looked just like mine.

Oh Lord, just like mine!” (70)

John Brown, in the battlefield, when confronted with the enemy, came to the realisation that fear, destruction of his courage, emotions and keeping his life at stake were the price he had to pay for a good name, for glory. He also came to the conclusion that he is doing all these not because he is brave and willing, but because he has been deceived and manipulated and forced by those in power, and that he “was just a puppet in a play” controlled by those who can. (70)

Bob Dylan’s then- girlfriend Suze Rotolo was undeniably very influential for Dylan’s involvement in the issues of the time and for his identity as a protest singer. Suze was involved in the Congress of Racial Equality (C.O.R.E), an organization involved in the Civil Rights movement. She requested Dylan to write some songs for the organization and the first song that he wrote was “The Death of Emmet Till”. In the song, Dylan vividly describes the murder of the fourteen-year-old black boy and highlights how unreasonable and inexcusable the reason for the murder was and intentionally says:

“They said they had a reason, but I can’t remember what.

They tortured him and did some things too evil to repeat.” ( *Bob Dylan : Lyrics 1962- 1985*, 29)

Dylan, by highlighting this murder in this song, stresses upon the injustices done to black people, white supremacy and how the system suppresses them based on the colour of their skin. He believes that this murder was a mere enjoyment for the white people:

“The reason that they killed him there, and I’m sure it ain’t no lie,  
Was just for the fun of killing him and watch him slowly die.” (29)

This song created a huge stir and was loved by the protesting people because Dylan spoke up against the corrupt government, a government that was so biased and corrupted that it would not take action against the guilty who even confessed to their own crimes, because it was a system that protects the white people. The murderers of Emmet Till, even though they confessed and pleaded guilty, were found innocent by the jury and were set free. Dylan was disgusted at this unfair trial and how the government refuses to punish the guilty. The song greatly reflects Dylan’s anger and frustration and addresses not only the authority but the people as a whole, condemning them for keeping quiet when so much was needed to be said:

“If you can’t speak out against this kind of thing,  
a crime that’s so unjust,  
Your eyes are filled with dead men’s dirt,  
your mind is filled with dust.  
Your arms and legs they must be in shackles and chains,  
and your blood it must refuse to flow,  
For you let this human race fall down so God-awful low!” (30)

The song ends with Dylan pointing out and reminding people the existence of such an injustice and requests them to join him in fighting against it:

“This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man  
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed  
Ku Klux Klan.  
But if all of us folks that thinks alike,  
if we gave all we could give,  
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live.” (30)

The song proved to be a revelation of the bitter truth of the society and the hopeful message and encouragement that Dylan included was exactly what was needed by the people. It triggered the ongoing protests and his fans saw in him and his songs the power to defy the government, the authority or the “ruling class, and his songs proved as a medium of power, where power was manifested in the hands of the working-class people, a class embraced by the popular culture.

Power has always traditionally been in the hands of the ruling class, either in the form of the government, the coloniser, or based on the colour of one’s skin. Hence, the subjugation of the working class, the colonised, the inferior race or the lower class is parallel to colonial stereotyping and subjugation. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Homi Bhabha discusses and highlights several instances of racial stereotypes, cultural difference, identity, hybridity and agency and talks about the need to understand and

locate the questions of culture in the transitional phase of the contemporary world. Culture and identity no longer pertain to the beginning and ending, and in this contemporary realm, “we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.” (2) He asserts that we must move away from this monolithic categorization of class and move to the “beyond” which is a coming together and mixing of different cultures to form a new classless identity, and this will define the act of society itself.

Stereotyping any particular group of people, whether by race, nationality or by class becomes a form of subjugation. Similarly, many of Dylan’s songs highlight this subjugation wherein the blacks, the youth and the working class people are stereotyped as inferior and the whites, the older generation, the government or the ruling class are superior. For Bhabha, this act of stereotyping is dangerous not just because it mischaracterizes the other but also assumes a totalized fixity of the image, and the said inferior groups of society assume a fixed stereotype image and being. However, by moving to what he calls the “beyond”, there will be a free flow of cultural differences and such groups will no longer be isolated. This free flow of groups without any fixity can be seen as what Dylan proposes in his protest songs. As long as a certain group assumes superiority, the other will be sidelined. The American society too has been conditioned to believe that the government has all the power and the politicians are the manifestors of this power. In such an environment, they control the people under them,

manipulating and deceiving them by sending them off to wars. In the same way, the black-skinned people are assumed to belong to the inferior group, controlled and subjugated by the whites, where they are suppressed to the point that they are killed by the whites for the slightest reasons and where their killers are not guilty in the eyes of the law, which are all reflected in the protest songs of Bob Dylan.

Homi Bhabha also uses the work of Franz Fanon to analyse the concept of identity. Fanon was concerned with the psychoanalytic explanation of how people can be enslaved not only physically, but in their mindsets as well. According to Bhabha, this differentiation and identification of people must be reanalysed in the contemporary world. For Bhabha, “the question of identity is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity” (64) but rather, something that has been created in the mind of people who are being colonised, dominated or subjugated. This created image shows them inferior. In such a situation, man belonging to the subjugated group is influenced by many things around him which blurs his identity. It is these external influences that make people to assume their given role in a society. For instance, the black man has been colonised for so long that even after he is free from slavery, he is still influenced by the events and beliefs around him, making him believe that he was, is and will always be inferior.

Even though slavery had been abolished a century ago, America in the 1960s still had the Civil Rights movement, wherein equality of the races and human rights were demanded, and an important issue in the songs of Bob Dylan. The idea that the blacks

were inferior and that they were the “Other”, the colonised is what complicates the black man’s being, making him not being able to stand up for himself and continuing to be oppressed by the white man. This subjugation is now challenged by the people who protested against it, and by Dylan through his protest songs, making him the voice of the time.

Homi Bhabha is aware of the existence of cultural differences and notes that it “. . . is a process of signification through which statements of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability and capacity.” and for him, “Culture only emerges as a problem, or a problematic, at the point at which there is a loss of meaning. . . between classes, genders, races, nations.” (50) He also claims that this “cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation.” (50-51) As such, this cultural “difference” forms itself once there is the belief that one group is better than the other, or one race is superior than the other. It creates a problem the moment this idea of a “difference” is conjured. Significantly, as seen in the protest songs of Bob Dylan, the society or culture faces a problem due to this difference, and the people are subjected to inequality and injustices.

Homi Bhabha is of the opinion that postcolonial perspectives do not agree with the term “underdevelopment” and attempts to study and revise the point of view in which

there is a binary opposition between the First World and Third World. According to Babha, “The postcolonial perspective departs from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or “dependency”...set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition. . .forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres.” (248) This postcolonial binary opposition is analogous to the two classes of the contemporary world, a class created by the “cultural difference”. It is the clash between these two opposing factors that led to a cultural difference, creating a social crisis. The desire and recognition of the need to terminate this difference led to the various movements and protests of the time, leading to create a popular culture, a culture embraced by the masses in want of a social change.

Culture is ever - changing, fluid and transitional. It can be displaced and moved and thus, it is significant to decode certain cultural signs. The movements and the protests may not have produced or resulted in a drastic cultural change but it did create a consensus, whereby the people of a particular group, and in this case, the previously subjugated, seek to present their interests as the general interests of the society as a whole. Through the protest songs that speak about racial discrimination, injustices and the corrupted government, an important tool in the ongoing protests and movements, a social group that shares the same opinion, angst, beliefs and hope come together to create a consensus that contributed heavily to the existing popular culture whilst forming a new one.



This chapter will attempt to analyse and sum up the preceding chapters and focus on the dynamics of music culture and how cultural changes are made possible in relation to its philosophical and theoretical study. In doing so, it will reflect upon how protest music is constituted as a tool in creating a consensus within popular culture, thereby creating a sub-culture.

It is historically evident that cultural change is made through varied occurrences and situations as well as certain ideologies, and culture is not static. Man's involvement in it is highly influential, and at the same time, a particular culture and the changes within it is also crucial in the formation, development and participation of man. Culture, "a particular way of life, of a people, a period or a group." (Williams 88) encompasses all habits, beliefs, practices and way of life itself. Music has always been an integral part of any given culture and acts as an important feature to signify a particular culture's identity. It tells the history and tradition of a people and reflects their ancestry, identity and religion, and through it, cultural values are passed on from generation to generation. The term "ethnomusicology" is significant in the study of the relationship between music and culture and how music is culturally created or how music influences and changes culture. The term is regarded to have been first coined by Jaap Kunst from the Greek words "ethnos" which means "nation", and "mousike" which is translated as "music". (Behague 260) It may be understood as the study of music from the perspective of culture and society, or the cultural and social aspects that

led to its creation. In the seminal book, *The Anthropology of Music* (1964), Alan P. Merriam extensively talks about this term, its usage and significance and calls it “the study of music in culture.” (6) and claims that one of the main purposes of ethnomusicology is considering “music as a means of communication.” In support of this view, he borrows Mantle Hood’s opinion;

“In the latter half of the Twentieth Century it may well be said that the very existence of man depends on the accuracy of his communications. . .speaking and listening, informing and being informed, constructively evaluating and welcoming constructive criticism. Communication is accurate to the extent that it is founded on a sure knowledge of the man with whom we would hold intercourse.” (10)

If music is thus a means of communication, it undoubtedly contributes to cross-cultural communication to bring about understanding and validation, becomes a carrier of identity and values and create unity. It is in this aspect that a folk-singer like Bob Dylan, with his protest lyrics that carry messages that needed to be said and delivered, that demonstrates the cultural value of its time and bring together a group of people with the same ideals and beliefs to unite to form a cultural change, becomes an indispensable participant in the cultural dynamic.

“The ultimate interest of man is man himself, and music is part of what he does and part of what he studies about himself. . .music is also human behaviour” (16) and through Dylan’s music and songs, the internal conflicts, emotions of man disturbed by the culture and society of the time can be dissected.

Within the field of ethnomusicology, popular music and the effects it has on people can also be examined. Since Bob Dylan and his protest music belong to popular culture and popular music as discussed in the previous chapters, this particular aspect may be substantial to look into. According to Theodor Adorno, popular music is contrasted with serious music. If this is the case, popular music would function less deliberately and would in turn, have greater impression on the majority of the people. This stance is significant because since the music that Bob Dylan introduced and the lyrics of his songs resonated with the mass culture, it was able to have more impact on the people. It contrasts itself from the formality of “serious music” and can be seen as the kind of music “that genuinely expresses true emotion and feeling.” (Machin 14) According to ethnomusicology, popular music is also often linked with mass media. The 1960s, the decade when Dylan and his music gained popularity, was also a period that relatively grew in technology and inventions. The world became smaller due to the development in mass media and television and since a dependant relationship was built between the two, musicians could gain a wider platform and audience. They were able to acquire a superstar persona and economic success and in turn, their fans and followers were more avid and devoted which contributed largely in the creation of

a subculture. Bob Dylan's time of emergence as a singer and a public figure was relevant not only for his own success and popularity but also for the impact he had and for the success of the circulation of his songs' message and content. The successful reception of his songs indeed had to do with the condition of the time and it appealed to the masses, especially the youths who were already protesting and in dire need of somebody who could voice their propaganda.

In the creation of a subculture through popular protest music, an identity has also been created within the societal paradigm and power structure and social infrastructure. This relationship between music and identity has been a much debated subject for ethnomusicologists. Thomas Turino, in the book *Music as Social Life : The Politics of Participation* (2008) notes that it is with the "conception of the self and individual identity" that "culture and musical meaning ultimately reside." He is of the opinion that "identity involves the partial selection of habits" and connects this "habit" with self, identity and culture, whereby, our musical habits, our reception of it and our attitude towards it can lead to the formation of cultural changes and the creation of identity and identity groups. (95) Bob Dylan's protest music, with its rebellious nature and attitude to challenge the authority created within itself and its followers a sense of identity and the people came together, breaking barriers and formed an identity group that acted as a collective power. The role that music plays within any given culture and its impact on cultural change leads to the question of who and what constitute a

culture. Culture is no longer subjected only to the “intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic factors” (Storey 2) but encompasses all “forms of life and social expression.” (Rivkin and Ryan 1233) With certain ideologies, especially that of Marxism, culture also now has a broader meaning and has been examined through a more political perspective. It has now also been understood as “both a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class or group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination.” (1233) In this aspect, culture has become political wherein it has become parallel to power, the power of the ruling class and where the ruling class governs. In contemporary society, the government is the power who speaks and acts for the rest of the society and assumes total control. This can be seen as a form of authoritarianism whereby it silences the voice of the lower class people and the culture and tradition of those who lack power is diminished.

The politics in culture, the difference between the classes as well as the functioning of power between them becomes important in the formation and change in the existing culture. The term “hegemony”, simply understood as control, leadership or dominance of one group over the other, or power exercised by a ruling class over a lower class, according to Antonio Gramsci now also means “political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class.” (Bates 352) This can suggest the reduction of conflicts between the dominator and the

dominated, and more political inclusion of the previously marginalized in order to attain a smoother governance, a political and cultural change and in this consent, hybridity can exist. As frequently highlighted, the difference between the classes has to do with how power and ideas have been manifested in the hands of the traditionally superior which caused tension and conflicts between the two. However, the hegemon has now been challenged by the previously dominated class or group of people and as mentioned, through the protest songs of Bob Dylan, have found an outlet to voice their opinions and ideas that were previously silenced, leading the notion of power to be diffused and in turn, creating a hybrid moment which is an initial stage of a cultural change.

Homi Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994) has attempted to display “the importance of the hybrid moment of political change” and notes that “the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation of elements. . .a negotiation between gender and class, where each formation encounters the displaced, differentiated boundaries of its group representation. . .in which the limits and limitations of social power are encountered in an agonistic relation” and claims that this type of hybridity is a “historical necessity”. (41) This negotiation for a political change is only possible by the creation of what Stuart Hall calls a “power bloc”, a “new social bloc” which would produce “a form of symbolic identification that would result in a collective will.” (41- 42) This bloc may be constructed through certain political groups or any particular

group with common interest to challenge and question the existing power. It is in this aspect that the formation of a culture that deviates itself from the traditional culture, a popular culture from the high culture, or a sub-culture from the prevailing popular culture can occur. The sub-culture created within the popular culture under the wing of the youth protesters, precipitated by protest music posits itself as the power bloc. The coming together of the previously silenced, the lower and working class people, the black-skinned people forms a group that would challenge to negotiate and create a cultural consensus and “a structure of heterogeneity to construct a theoretical and political alternative.” (41)

For the “newly” constructed cultural group or sub-culture, protest songs become the guiding force in their attempt to voice their opinions and frustrations and hence, the cultural impact that music has is evident. The uses and functions of music and how it is employed in human society has thus been an important topic for ethnomusicologists. Alan Merriam has discussed certain major and overall functions of music, among which is “the function of emotional expression”. This function is primarily apparent in the operation of protest songs. He borrows Linton Clarke Freeman’s idea that “a particular type of folk expression should be associated with a particular kind of social organization” and that “social protest verses emerge when the members of a society are deprived of other mechanisms of protest. Such songs will persist as long as these individuals are deprived of other more direct techniques of action. These verses represent an attempt of the

members of the society to cope with unacceptable social conditions.” (220) This is particularly true in the development of the protest songs of Bob Dylan as well as in its employment by the protesters of the time. There were things that needed to be said in the society but for the people that had always been conventionally sidelined, resources were scarce and protest music became their main weapon.

The protest songs of Bob Dylan were not created to start a protest nor did they end in protest. Instead, they functioned as a much needed medium for the protests that occurred because of certain cultural conflicts, and answered the requirement of the cultural demands, while stabilizing and validating the social system since songs or music has the ability to function “as a mechanism of emotional release for a large group of people acting together.” (222) The angry, “lower” class people in want of a change saw in Bob Dylan a revolutionary voice, and he in turn became the symbolic representation of a revolution. His protest songs contributed to the integration of society and created a cultural unity since “music provides a rallying point around which the members of society gather to engage in activities which require the cooperation and coordination of the group.” (227)) The protest music of Bob Dylan, through its cry for redemption, its portrayal of the unfair treatment of the black people, the government’s corrupted system and strong message of hope and change brought the people to come together as a unit, a power bloc to challenge the traditional power and contributed to the change in society and culture.



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