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**ALBERT CAMUS'S *THE PLAGUE*: A CRITICAL STUDY IN  
 POST COVID-19 WORLD**

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**Abstract:**

*The Plague by Albert Camus, published in 1948 (in English), tells us a story about Bubonic Plague transmitted in the city of Oran in 1940, a French Algerian state. The novel has been considered as one of the greatest creation of all time not only because of its literary elements, but, of the significance and the portrayal of an epidemic outbreak, not fully fictitious but, the perennial reality in form of a horrific captivation of human lives. The beginning of 'blessed-2020' was seraphic while as other normal days people usually behave like without any hiccups. Just when everything was alright, we have been struck by a sudden thud, the death toll of human lives by the lethal Corona Virus. We are now accustomed with 'new normal' situation prevailing in 2020. The misery, obscurity, absolute devastation and most importantly the 'QUARANTINE SUBJUGATION' have been occurred by COVID-19 pandemic, the contagious virus which has made all of us choked in a forthcoming future of uncertainty. This research paper focuses on the plot, characterisation and the situational similarity and its analysis with the present surrounding we are belonging to. As the plot of the novel, 'The Plague' was conspicuously fictionalised by the author Albert Camus, the outrageous scenario of the Corona transmission has been analysed with minute observation. Each character in the novel somehow delineates the numerous people belonging in various social strata in any society exists in this world. Thus, this particular paper speaks a discourse on an adamant social commentary. The partial demonstration of human psychology, as the way it associates, alienates or combats any known or unknown phenomena, has also been a part of this research paper. The conclusive ideas propel us to the recovering and encouraging mentality to the new world instead of accepting and being subdued to the new normal. This research paper also takes a lead to have an observation of optimistic retreat.*

**Keywords:** Epidemic, Quarantine, New Normal, Sermon, Transmission, Existentialism etc.

**Insolence, Indifference and Ineptness :**

We, the human-beings, are the living species of this Mother Nature. Day by day as the time passes by, we have acclimatised the climate change, natural phenomena, diverse possibilities, scopes, fundamental requirements and so on and so forth. Therefore also we have mastered on the process of making each of us best fitting to the activities of nature as well. No matter what the condition it was, it is and what probably it would be, we know one thing in an affirmation that the technology and humanly demands being concocted with, will be going to make the best of its extent. So, as of now it seems we have made the justification to 'the survival of the fittest'.

Now, the questions remain. With all due respect to the every form of notions and theories, is that the only doing we need to execute in order to make us fit to the prevailing atmosphere? If we made us the best fit species of the world, do we not think that those are the fittest, have got their potentiality to make a coincided, co-existing ambience to live with? Or, if we truly fetch the reality extracted, do we even think about the others being juxtaposed in a same society? Or, we just want to have the projection of 'de facto' narratives while the reality is something else? There are the figments lie as Insolence, Indifference and

Ineptness of human psychology and get it done with a gruesome aftermath.

In 'The Plague', Albert Camus, the author, in the very beginning perfectly portrayed the situation incorporating the negations of the populace of Oran and the carefree attitude of the local body while they seemed quite reluctant to accept the situation dreadful. Being unaware of collecting and the cremation of thousands of dead rats, the transmission started and sooner the death toll arose at its high. Similarly we have witnessed the mentality and aloofness of 21<sup>st</sup> century 1<sup>st</sup> world countries. And, considering the present situation is at least ten times larger than any locality crisis, disaster threat. Though there are on record similar calamities happened in history like 'Black Death' which decimated half of the population of London and parts of Europe. That situation reappeared three times more and made human hopes sunken into a deep dungeon.

Moreover, one most crucial thing we need to notice, the contagion is always more harmful than anything which is deadly. When the situation arises like community transmission at its worst, all primal cautionary gets nullified. And, if we look at our psychological negations, we take too much time to accept, even if we accept, we fail to make other understand because we generally think of us as the prime of superiority. Seems likely what has been portrayed by Albert Camus in 'The Plague'. People took it seriously when the death tolls reached thirty per day. Same we have witnessed in this case of COVID-19 transmission. When it hits only China, we did not take any care of it, instead Spain, Italy, Germany, France especially caught fatally by conducting no necessary caution and combat against this lethal trauma. Though, even being a 3<sup>rd</sup> world country, India fought exceptionally well and still fighting. But, this does not only a stern concern about India or New Zealand but the whole world. Eventually as the result, we fit ourselves as the victim of enormous fiscal drainage, depleted by biological disaster.

#### **Vagueness, Horror and Alienation:**

So, following the way of the plot, the city of Oran has been sealed off eventually in trying out to abstain from the disaster. Right after the detection and the confirmation of the Bubonic Plague, sealing off the town was the foremost act of being implemented by the city authority. Along the side, all essentials and daily services have been strictly exhausted and prohibited by the body as well. The separation affects daily activity and depresses the spirit of the townspeople, who begin to feel isolated and introverted, and the plague begins to affect various characters.

Before discussing the existing traits of human psychology and what is generally examined in the cases of characterisation being portrayed by Albert Camus, we better be conscious about the 'Kafkaesque' character representation amalgamated with plot. Don't we see ourselves on the same ground where the plot may have subtle difference? But, the dilemma has always been the same and inevitable. We know pretty well about most famous novels of Franz Kafka, 'The Trial' and 'Metamorphosis'. Joseph K and Gregor Samsa, the main protagonists accordingly, found out themselves in a grotesque and horrific confrontation of life while they don't even know the reason why it was happening. Joseph K, without knowing the reason, being arrested by the cops and the trial begins, and Gregor Samsa in one fine morning found himself being a huge insect. So, the thing is not here being focused on the particular characters. Even, without further ado about the plot if we literally without heed concentration look on the facts and abruptness of the situation, the state of being horrified, alienated and followed by the vagueness come along with that trauma which does not have any clue to get rid of it. The tension and freakiness has generally been incorporated by one's own self who ends up with vague.

Dr. Reix is a ubiquitous character we find in every society anonymously. Being a doctor, he is always committed to his duty and moreover on the implementation of his responsibilities to the patients. Dr. Reix with his conspicuous effort, he is adamant to treat his patients while also being petrified with the time being and the surrounding which compels him to be alienated from the situation. The fatal occurrence ceases him to be with his loved one staying outside the city. Jean Tarrou and Joseph Grand with their

relentless assistance to Dr. Reix are beyond of any scarification and sacred requirements of humanly desire. In recent times we have witnessed the doctors and the medical officials for doing so exhaustively wearing PP's while they don't even know the consequences impending on earth and so as the Police official as well. No matter what the shade canopied the sky, they have been ruthless in this deadly situation even being threatened by the pandemic hit. At the end of the day, every official are human being. But, the way they define themselves to the welfare of the society at this situation, thing seems like they are the stone-heart personification of fancied heroic embodiment.

Being disconnected and alienated with family members and moreover being stray in a complete unknown surrounding is even fatal than anything on earth. The human desperation, moreover if its gets conglomerated in desire and search of someone's enamoured loved one, usually being burst out fearlessly. It seems likely for Raymond Rambert, devises a plan to escape the city to join his wife in Paris after city officials refused his request to leave. He befriends some underground criminals so that they may smuggle him out of the city.

The figments of bizarre human traits we have witnessed for years during any calamities and unnatural phenomena where we are usually not accustomed with. Especially in some situations which got threatened by 'Black Death', 'Bubonic Plague', Virus Epidemic, Contagious and so on and so forth. Vague religious propagations, preaching and sermons played the heinous role out of its propelling nature. Not particularly any one out of these ambiguities but, more or less each and every acted accordingly to make the proliferations on the scapegoats. The bare, naked and darkening nature of doctrines has shown their part within. In 'The Plague', another character Father Paneloux uses the plague as an opportunity to advance his stature in the town by suggesting that the plague was an act of God punishing the citizens' sinful nature. The dominant nature of religion and its propagation have been coming out when the situation somehow compelled it in search of enlightenment. Religious preaching during this situation was more expected to be enacted like the true philosophical notions while it made the distinctions among the blasphemous educated. Profanity propagates and propels the expansion of devastation while the true sense of any religion teaches us to believe in co-existence.

In India, a load of distressful scenes we have witnessed through media and sometimes by own eyes for those we have been literally introduced with the term 'Migrant Labour'. Our own people have got an address which truly considers them somebody who are outsider and must be kept away or we must have a safe distance. If we closely look at the headline of this part of discussion, it states the newly invented truth as suddenness, despair which compels us to be horrified, which force us to live in alienation as a unified whole and thus leading towards out of vagueness. For a change, if we just forget about the Covid-19, Plague, pandemic, lockdown, caution and this some sort of situation, we are still escaping, being escaped, fugitive, trying to be a cunning elusive one. So, what we are trying to look over? Even, from where we are trying to escape? What do we try to leave behind or where do we want to live in? Question remains.

### **Similarities, Survival and Existentialism:**

Time was passing by; the situation worsened as the death toll increased and no such sympathy was shown to the corpses neither to the families during cremations and hastily it was getting done. Literally the city of Oran was at the mercy of plague. In the middle of August the people of the town were ruffled by the fear and subjugations, therefore, several times they tried to escape the city and got shot by sentries. Out of despair and frustrations, looting, massacre started in few areas. From mid September to till the end of October, the scenario was gruesome where nothing is quite certain even after application of first anti-plague serum. It was an immense despondency for Othon whose son didn't make it. Dr. Reix was devastated after knowing his wife's condition was diluting at the sanatorium. Father Paneloux joined the volunteer group those were combating the situation commendably, retreating himself from preaching his catholic sermons stating as the plague is the innocent child's suffering to him what compelled him to

believe either in Christian theology or to deny the whole. With making some underworld connections and negotiations with the guards, Rambert finally got a chance to escape the town but decided to stay with the group of volunteers assisting them in combating the situation.

So, that entire scenario has got its similarities as miniature of human desperation and wish of survival nature. After the first hit of Covid-19, with careless and sloth movement through insolence when people finally accepted that there is something which is quite breathtaking and unpleasant, the freakiness started cast within mind. In a subsequent manner, the augmented state of struggle for existence. Getting habituated with a specified scenario is a common trait of human characteristic and the psychology. But, being bitten by the cynic torments and forcibly accepting that matter as usual circumstance is the real struggle for the juxtaposition of an acceptance and grave denial.

So, the meaning of life lies upon its essence of finding meaning out of every possible situation known or unknown. The struggle for survival in the grovelling situation actually states this positive outcome as a unification of human desire. So much of ambiguity, hegemony of dominant circles, groups and communities are there. But, the foremost intension of all is to survive anyhow and habituate the situation for fighting the issues in one's individual psychic and capability. Dr. Reieux, Rambert, Father Paneloux, Tarrou, Joseph Grand and the other characters, with all these characterisation. The author, Albert Camus has represented the society at its system incorporated and if anyhow it gets devastated, the possible aftermath it would confront. Learning and extracting from the history of Epidemic outburst, we have also measured and it would be appropriate to consider all of us still learning how to get habituated with an unnatural happening. Time will go by its natural habits, living species will be diminished and reproduction will make its own mark, the fear and horror will overpower human lives and in return they will overdo that darken aspect with clarity. But, the wilful existence was always there; it exists and will prevail in a subsequent manner.

### **Epidemic as a symbol of disjunction of human lives:**

Come the 21<sup>st</sup> century, come with the ramifications. With the gush of technologies and science, not in a pejorative tone, we prepared ourselves how to get fit within situations. So easily and superciliously we just make the distinctions between primordial and post-modern considering primordial as an anachronistic vision while the 'neomodernism' is visionary. Obviously there are facets of discussion and nothing is limited in terms of having and putting a conclusive idea on a particular. But, do we really care for those facets on which we can at least take a step towards the enlightenment? How do we get rid of the pandemic lies within us? Everyone is just scampering towards something without knowing exactly where to run and what the actual reason for running. And when we just notice that something grovelling and howling is coming to engulf us which would probably prevent us from accessing the daily stuffs, we start of being fearful and freaky. Do we really take care of each other are staying as a family? We just see and the most gruesome part, we don't even notice how long we stopped caring, feeling for the others. As if, the state of being togetherness is just has got its definition according to us as just getting mingled through gadgets and daily amenities. Thus, it shows us the deformity of our limitations while we just excel within self and therefore end up within self as well. We live in 'SELF-SUBJUGATION' for years unnoticed. Our forgetfulness or the states of oblivion and wilful ignorance constantly have taken us aback when it seems to be exposed in daylight. These are not the distinction; it's the gradual maturity or development of the timeline. Instead of considering the present situation as 'Social Distancing', we may consider it as 'Social Solidarity' by maintaining 'Physical Distancing'. But, what about the 'Mental Distancing' which always reoccurs within our mind with its diversion? The situation has its broader proliferation as a gush when it is quite suffice to say that we have crossed the limits of our vagueness and double-meaning-laden state of mind. This disjunctive mode of our self has been noticed when we are getting restricted by our own deformity and disfunctionality. It is not intended in this research paper to make a herald of Epidemic, but



the situation is too gruesome and fearful so that it intrigues us to have the consciousness of our own lack of humanly connection.

At the end of the novel 'The Plague', the city of Oran retreats its flow to the normal life while the plague was diminished and finally announced by the authorities. People started celebrating when finally the city gates were opened. Some got there desired ones and some were devastated. But, the mark was inscribed as realisation that is the most significant part of any search.

### **Conclusion:**

So the question always remains. What about the proletariat? What about those whose existence is being extinguished and even those who doesn't even exist? An aftermath always tells a story about a happening and its intensity on which it was happened. Men are too obstinate to handle his own-self while they have grabbed all the knowledge but they don't really learn from it. Thus, this disfunctionality causes the lethal after effects. We need to remember one last but not least, if it is possible to do something distinctive, it only can be possible through attachment and enlightenment. Scaring off or being scared off from the reality doesn't make any salubrious effect on self as well as on the society.

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