



The Postmodern Absurd in the context of Corona

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Abstract— A pandemic is an aporia to the human culture and existence which presents before us a lack of human engagement as well as in the coexistence of Culture and Nature. The outbreak of Corona virus/ Covid-19 was an unanticipated event that brought a rupture in the culture of human existence and while rupturing the cultural history of human race it is also documenting a new history as Albert Camus in *The Plagues* says human existence can never be immune. The mention of Corona will cease to remain complete if the most significant precautionary event, the world-wide Lockdown is not mentioned. Lockdown in the history will remain documented as an event that broke down the dichotomy of Life/Death as to prevent death of the masses due to the virus, employment and economy falls in a deep pit which gives rise to starvation, hunger and death. Jean Francois Lyotard in his *The Postmodern Condition* theories it and as P. K Nayar writes -

"Lyotard inaugurated the key theoretical note in postmodernism when he characterizes it as a resistance to the great narratives, and focused on the marginal, the liminal and the fragmented, arguing against totalising systems of thought."

In this study I would like to state an argument that killing of Culture can be Cleansing of Nature and how a pandemic can be a postmodern absurd where the human existence is the cause of human death representing how Camus' Absurd philosophy has already left an open-ended solution.

Keywords— Corona Virus, Covid-19, Culture, Philosophy.

I. INTRODUCTION

When a pandemic like the outbreak of the Corona virus/Covid-19 enters into the domain of human Culture or the Culture of human existence, the scenario is often compared to that of a War. The only point of differentiation being the army of human race, here, fights against an unanticipated and unseen Absurd. This Culture of ours encoded within the vicinity of language and representations, comes to a "pause" and simultaneously an area of "aporia" is formed between the Culture and Nature. Under the superficial dialogue that we shared with Nature resided the monologue since we have treated Nature only as a "resource" which makes the "lack" between Nature and Culture and also their coexistence questionable. The deconstruction of the Nature/Culture dichotomy in this

situation of the crisis has made us think that with the killing of Culture the Nature is cleansed.

II. NATURE/CULTURE DICHOTOMY

Questions have not only become a part of the Nature/Culture dichotomy but within the domain of Culture itself. The crisis due to the Corona virus reflects immense postmodernity. One of the most significant theories of the latter half of the 20th century was *Postmodernism* by Jean Francois Lyotard where he puts forward an idea that talks about the age of computers and MNCs and where knowledge emerges as a new mode over which the state or a greater ideology has little control. He points out that identity and the 'sense of Self' of a Culture is based on the knowledge generated and codified about this Culture. Lyotard talks about the "location" of a child

is determined by the "positioning" of a being within the body of knowledge which is nothing but an organization of Narratives. The classic work of Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* argues that no philosophy or political theory or narrative can be totalizing. The relevance of this argument is such in the present situation that to ensure the lives of the masses and to prevent death the world-wide Lockdown is implemented, making it the Grand Narrative of the situation. The problem arises when this grand narrative fails to totalize and instead death due to the fall of economy and employment comes in the forefront making it the cause of the death of the small, local and marginal meta-narratives i.e., the poverty-stricken class of the society. Thus, through Lyotard we can recognize that the "Truth" of lockdown has several other "truths" in between.

Therefore, the Corona virus crisis and the implementation of Lockdown refuses to accept any system of thought as universal, blurring the difference between high and low, making itself a typical postmodern one.

III. ANALYSIS AND INTERTEXTUALITY

To judge how this crisis is an Absurd one need to go through what *Albert Camus* has left behind in his *The Plague* where Camus talks about a fictionalized town Oran and its citizens who are barely alive. To write this Camus studies the history of plague, for example, The black death in 1869, the pandemic of 18th and 19th century in China etc. and then in the year 1942 Camus tells writer *Andre Malraux* that he wanted to understand the situation of the plague in the realm of humanity and says "But this seems so natural to me." this signifying an "ill-space" which to Camus was similar to the "not ill space". He believed in a philosophy that human beings were already living in the plague- A silent and invisible disease that may kill any of us any time.

So, to Camus, the plague and to us the corona virus pandemic should be seen as an event of perpetual rule that we are vulnerable to being randomly exterminated by a bacillus, a virus or maybe an accident by which he signifies the "Absurd" and we are always just at the edge of it. So, he wants us to see life through a tragi-comic perspective, with or without the pandemic.

Since there is no escape in the process of Death so being alive is always being on an emergency which making life a *Hospice* and not a *Hospital*.

To question his own philosophy of Absurd, Camus in the text introduces a religious figure who tries to make people believe that the plague is a divine punishment but the character of *Dr. Rieux* (who is partially Camus himself) denies the argument justifying with the death of young

new born children making sure these deaths are the outcome of Absurd and nothing else.

At the end of the story when the plague ends and the people of Oran are happy to have reached the end of their suffering, Camus has a different point of view, he says

"The plague never dies. "

Just as *Sisyphus* never stops and all that can be done is to imagine *Sisyphus* happy. *Sisyphus'* happiness and immunity in *The Plague* is what Camus tries to make us understand as the Absurd leaving an open end like this can make us believe, in this situation, that human Life is the cause of human Death.

Quoting Camus-

"Everyone has it inside himself, this plague, because no one in this world, no one, can ever be immune. "

IV. CONCLUSION

Covid-19 shows us the similarities between Lyotard's "Grand Narrative" and Camus' concept of "Immunity" and that nothing can be totalizing or bring a close ended solution as this crisis is one such Whole Truth where resides an amalgamation of various fragmented "meta-truths". This is how the Outbreak of the Corona Virus becomes a Postmodern Absurd.

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