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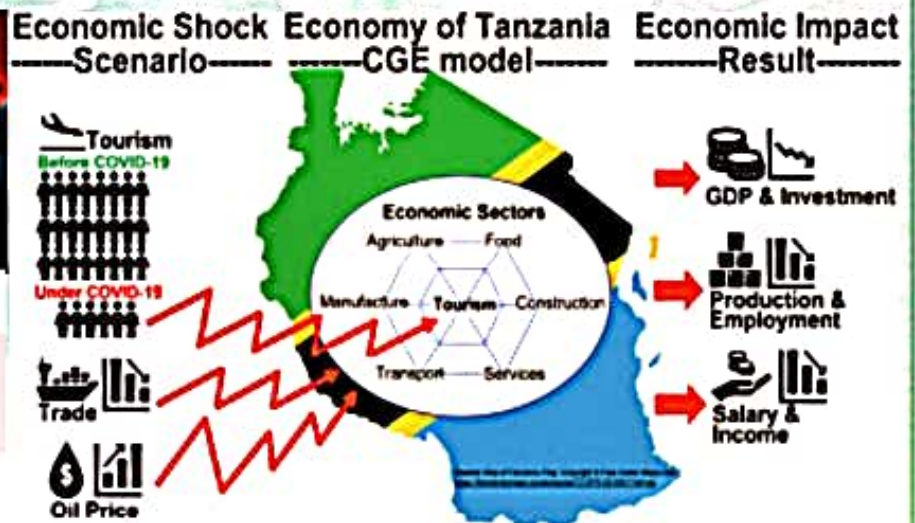
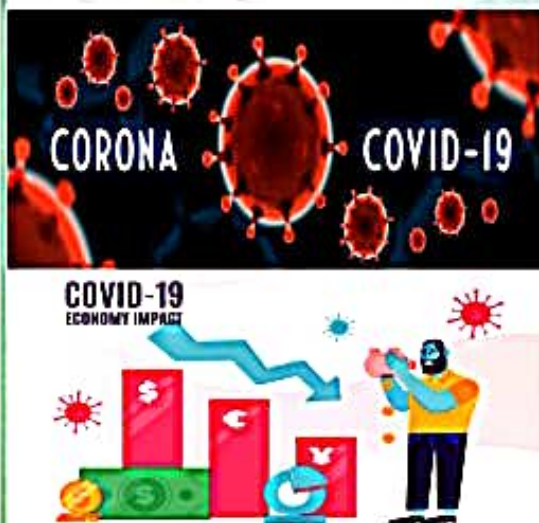
SPECIAL ISSUE

Raja Shivchhatrapati Arts and Commerce College, Mahagaon
One Day National Level Seminar

on

Impact of Covid-19 on Various Sectors of Economy

Dated: Saturday 29th April 2023



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**Pandemic and Apocalyptic references in the novels of Margaret Atwood
with special reference to: 'Oryx and Crake '(2003)****Sagar Ramu Sawant**

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Abstract:

Literature is an imitation of society; it reflects the true nature of society as well as its good and ill values. It has voiced the voiceless. Many theories and literary writings are attributed to human survival which has become the concerning issue after deadly and ferocious advent of Covid 19. An outbreak of corona virus disease 2019 (covid 19) occurred in Wuhan city in China. Such outbreak was declared as a public health emergency throughout the world-by-World Health Organization on 30 January,2020. It caused dangerous and irreparable consequences to the whole world. The social, economic and health crises were beyond human capacity and scientific innovations. Whole human species were on the outskirts of extinction and this fear was created due to covid 19 on all human beings. During this critical ambience, literature also plays a significant role. Apocalyptic literature has shown the disastrous consequences of the behaviour and selfish attitude of human beings towards the world and nature. My research paper aims to take the literature out from the world of imagination and presents the harsh and dangerous realities of present world. This paper will also reveal how literature is a reflection of truth and also reveal the dangerous consequences of inventions which can be responsible factor for the extinction of planet with the help of analysis of the novel 'Oryx and Crake '(2003) written by Margaret Atwood.

Key Words:

Covid 19, apocalyptic literature, pandemic, lockdown, eco-friendly, disaster, science fiction, dystopian vision, scientific inventions, personification etc.

Introduction:

The covid-19 has led irreparable loss of human life and property and presents an unprecedented challenge to the public health. It caused devastating effects on economy and society. Even it numbed the human sentiments. Poverty, death of beloveds and struggle to be alive are the consequences of covid 19. Millions of enterprises have experienced an existential threat. Almost half of the world is at the risk of losing their livelihood. Without having the source of income during the lockdown, many people were unable to feed themselves even to the family. It destroyed and paused the whole world. Despite the antibiotics which is the scientific and medical hope upon the diseases, the infectious diseases have created fear in the mind of whole world. literature is a mirror of life; it reflects the society as it is. So, epidemics situation was also one of the themes in literature since early years. The health issues like plague, chorea typhus, tuberculosis leprosy etc. had their devastating effects on personal, social and economic relations. Medical science was not advanced as compared to present situation. Now the whole world is efforting collectively to fight against covid 19, we can't side-line or ignore to learn about the history of epidemic and its portraying in contemporary literature. Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales' published in the year 1392 and Giovanni Boccaccio's 'The Decameron' published in 1553 had the reference of epidemics and its black consequence that devastated Europe in those days. Even a Dracula (1897) of Bram Stoker and Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' (1818) can be called as allegories of epidemics. 'The scarlet Plague' originally published by Jack London in the year 1912 is one of the examples of pandemic fictional novel in modern literature. With above references the term 'apocalyptic literature' is very meaningful here which means the documents or piece of writing that share common concern, themes, and literary devices. It also describes the conquest, war, hunger and death respectively.

'Oryx and Crake' is an apocalyptic novel written by Canadian author Margaret Atwood in 2003. This novel is a science fiction and adventure romance. Atwood has a described Oryx and Crake as a speculative fiction. The world of Oryx and Crake extrapolates upon rapid advances around the 21st century. It is also very dark dystopian story which leads the reader towards post-apocalyptic situation where the earth is on the edge of destruction and human beings have been completely



eradicated or distinct from the earth and the same situation, we have experienced in covid 19 ambience. The novel *Oryx and Crake* makes the readers to brood on the existence and survival of human beings and connects to the present situation. The novel focuses on the protagonist Snowman who is known as Jimmy before the advent of devastating plague, is struggling to survive in the world in which he may be the last human being and also mourning due to the sad demise of his best friend Drake and beautiful Oryx whom they both loved. Protagonist Snowman lives in the post-apocalyptic world with small group of innocent and primitive creatures Which resemble the human beings whom he calls crackers. Flashback narrative technique is used which reveals that snowman was once a boy named Jimmy who grows up in the world where the corporations build wall compounds to isolate and protect their employees and their families from outside society. The companies have been operated by developing the new technology products. Snowman wants to return to the remains of the settlement named Rewoven Essence in search of food. He provides an argument for the crackers who see him as a trainer and continue his adventure. His recollection of past events tells us that his father works as a genetic engineer his mother quits her job when he is young. The novel is engaged in symbolic struggle between science and the art in which Crake is representing the face of science and Snowman representing the art side. With the help of the setting of the novel we can say that the science strongly overshadowed the art in which Crake one of the characters of novel reacts to the word 'paradise' was sarcastic. He not only creates new brand of humans but he also went out of his way to wipe out entire human species. Margaret Atwood leads us through the novel in distant future which is beyond the imagination of lay people. Collapsed civilization is also one of the concerning issues which is significantly dealt by the writer with the help of this novel. More dangerous aspect is Crake produces the eco-friendly crackers and the intention is to replace humans with them it is nothing but manipulating nature and intense type of biocentrism. It produces creatures that are radically adjusted to their climate. The new creatures are not inclined to any religion. Oryx and Crake track the human path with manipulating nature with the help of producing new organisms and making the current ones to experience extinction.

Novel concludes with exciting love tale and convincing glimpse of the future. Snowman the leading character born as Jimmy before epidemic experience, is fighting to leave in the society where he might be the last human being and lamenting to the death of his best friend Crake. Snowman embarks on the quest in pursuit of answer of existing through the forest which was recently a great community. It entails that novel concludes with the promising dreams of existence of human beings. Novel is set in the new England after the outbreak of the apocalyptic plague. The problem of climate change is also depicted through the novel Bioengineering is the dominant theme in the novel especially when there is gene splicing takes place in all aspects of life. The creation of new species like 'Pigoons' and 'Wolvogs' or 'Rakunks' are main drive of economy in '*Oryx and Crake*'. Even bioengineering is focused as the main field of future change in economical ecological and scientific terms. Margaret Atwood depicts the pandemics can bring a deep fear and modify human behaviour thoroughly. She criticizes contemporary social structure for which she used to apocalyptic genre This novel is published in the year 2003, near about 20 years ago but it presents the same concern and the problems which we face today. The Apocalyptic setting tells us about the current timing of the novel. While reading the novel, we can relate the situation of the novel to current uncontrolled covid-19 which we have faced and the fear and the hysteria that human beings feel. *Oryx and Crake* is dystopian novel with having strong satirical elements which are related to the innovations of gene splicing and their consequences. Protagonist of the novel Snowman, survivor of the apocalyptic and global plague is remarkable and ideal figure for today's generation. Like Atwood, many other writers in their fictional work concerned with plague, epidemics and other medical crisis which are as follow:

Camus' novel '*The Plague*' (1947) tells us that the tale of epidemics in which the citizens of Oren become prisoner of the plague when their city falls under total quarantine, the situation resembles to the unbearable lock down of covid 19 which we have for faced recently. Defoe's '*A Journal of the Plague Year*' which is published in the year 1722 tells us the story of dangerous plague in 17th century London. With this Manaluae and Cheer (2017) points out the relationship between culture and science fiction and how science fictions represent the culture. '*Dracula*' the novel written by Stoker and published in 1997 has created several vampire fantasy traditions with the help of the



character count Dracula. Butler's novel 'Survivor' (1978) is a contract between missionaries experiencing plague and Kohn, articulate inhabitants of the world where the missionaries have landed.

Conclusion:

'Oryx and Crake' written by Margaret Atwood can be used as a deadly and ferocious personification of epidemics which we have experienced recently. There are some tragic incidents in the novel which are direct consequences of pandemic situation which resembles the worse situation that we have faced in and after covid 19. The thought of Atwood in this regard is significant where she points out that unless a single species becomes beneficial or valuable to human society, it may undergo practical exploitation as opposed to extinction only.

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