

# An Undying Quest for Escapism: A Study of the Alienated Minds from Romantic and Modern Era

Ms Antima Chamoli<sup>1</sup>, Ms Surbhi Payal<sup>2</sup>, Mr. Suresh Walmik Garud<sup>3</sup>

HSS, GEU, UNIVERSITY Research Scholar, Department of Visual Art, Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun, India

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## ABSTRACT

This paper questioned the subsistence of mortality through the literary works of selected romantics, existentialist and other modern writers from all over the geography. These works as a whole come under the sphere of literature, a means of reassembling the reality, which the intellectual of humanity created, explored and developed. The peculiar thing about modern playwrights was that they always gave an abrupt ending to the modern moral or existential plays, it was up to the audience to interpret, to find the answers and proper endings. The conclusions were subjective, optimistic audience would always find hopeful answers parallel to the escaping tendencies of characters. Thus, the notion of this philosophy can never be absolute and can further be analysed as per the going on cultural, political, economic and revolutionary changes. Being an extensive reaction to the enlightenment era and French revolution, The romantics urged to escape and depart, The modern man aliens himself due to the trauma after wars, tussle and destruction. The colonized and pre-colonized population struggled because of corrupt leaders, oppressions, poverty and lack of power in the hand of common man. The reasons and causes of escapism are within the society, it is what that is controlling the psyche, these are the cultural, political and economic boundaries set by the people in power, where in communities on the bottom suffers and detach themselves for peace. Capitalism is one of the foremost element of the prior. The paper also described Marx's notion of working of capitalism, physical and emotional struggles of both the working class and the bourgeois. How the 'orients' in Said's terms were made psychologically dependent on the west that their mere existence became an imitation of western culture, fashion, politics and believes. The numb portrayal of the characters by Indian post-colonial writers reflected the effect of the universal scientific and industrial race of domination where the 'supreme' won again and again and suppressed stayed the same. Thus, Camus stressed the quest behind searching 'meaning' of life can be distasteful and futile. David Malouf also quotes in the same respect "Life wasn't for anything, it simply was". We all are Sisyphus, escapism comes when we aren't optimistic about pulling up the boulder of life.

**Keywords:** discourses, escapism, materialistic quest, disillusionment

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## INTRODUCTION

"Being" is not just word preceding Human, it's a term behind the quest to live a meaningful life

which has always been a never-ending marathon to the top of a mountain named fulfilments with the entire world participating. In this battle, swords are the human minds and so are the wounds. Escapism can be defined as an impulse to seek, or the practice of seeking, distraction from what is in front of us or normally has to be endured.

Many critics have claimed that the term escapism often carries a negative significance and its obsessive nature could harm a human mind, carry it into an impotent state where a human would struggle extensively to cope up with everyday humdrum of a rapidly moving world. Ever the world started to take expeditious turns to inventions, glory and grand races of development, there is a man making discoveries, climbing the ladder of worldly pleasures and scientific evolutions. However, the same man is running away from it all since the ages through the means of deriving pleasure from various sources of unrealistic activities that somehow proved to be a gift to mankind as it gave birth of various creative forms of art and sciences which practically runs the whole modern world.

The entire concept concerning human's state of mind did not come to the great light of criticism before the last century. However, the golden age of romanticism has already given a radical glance of the whole concept of materialistic course of the society by connecting the magic of nature to the lost and tired humanity. It was in late 19th century that this matter was given a massive light and the charming term "escapism" grabbed worldwide attention. It came into existence in 1930s, grew rapidly and become the staple of all kind of criticism - historical, social, political and literary. Perhaps, that is the reason the modern generation embraces the concept of it way more than our progenitors as we consider 'escape' as a medium of dealing with imperfect existence. However, the notion turned into a huge discussion and gradually it became an economical strategy to fancy the races. In order to run in the commercial markets, literary works and other art forms derived the grandiosity of the title and themes concerning "escaping the mundane". Ironically, many critics have also questioned if we all regard ourselves as prisoners and do, we all wish to break out?

We are living in an age that is obsessed with escaping but we also denounce of escapism in the practical life. It is indeed a kind of paradox and we are living in it. Literature of absurdism, a divergent form of an entire concept of existentialism was originated through the post-war disillusionment and the considered pointlessness of finding 'a purpose' in the course of life. Nietzsche's widely known phrase "God is dead" was somewhat a reaction to the atrocious destruction and death of innocence which gave rise to the unbelief in God and faith as the propagation of political cruelty gain momentum.

W.B Yeats introduced the theory of civilization wherein he refers to the rise and fall of civilizations. According to Yeats, the nature of civilization changes after almost every two thousand years. In his view, it is a cyclic process and both the civilization will likely to overlap each other in its attributes, culture, mind-sets and movements. For instance, after the fall of rigid period of enlightenment that worked on absolute discourses and conducts, romantic period was a mark of liberalisation and freedom from the bluntness of the prior. This period of art and poetry bought the source of exquisite sense of escapism and liberty. The great immortal works of romantic writers and other artists are to be considered the gift of 'addiction to escape', "O for a draught of vintage! [...] With beaded bubbles winking at the brim, and purple stained mouth; That I might drink, and leave the world unseen, and

with thee fade away into the forest dim;" (Lines 11-20).

The prior lines from "Ode to a Nightingale" depicts Keats' longing to escape the mundane course of life and "fade" into the woods. Quite like all other romantic poets, John Keats, a pioneer was too an escapist. He wishes to fly and longs for an ideal world where the nightingale lives harmoniously. He was too taking the assistance of materialistic way to desert himself from the reality. The assistance of alcohol and drugs backed him to attain an exquisite imagination power that will be highly appreciated in the coming times of hustle. success of "Kubla Khan" was yet another allowance of Coleridge's addiction to opium and the dream. Poem's subtitle, "Vision in a dream" embellishes Coleridge's yearn for a fictional world of riches and magic.

The work is also considered to be a paradox between man's materialistic quest and nature. Poet describes giant walls and towers are built around "twice five miles of fertile ground" covered with magnificent garden and dense green melodies "I would build that dome in air, That sunny dome! those caves of ice" (Coleridge,46-47) Poet also talks about building a dome and caves through melodies In just six days, R.L Stevenson wrote 60,000 words, critics consider the reason to be cocaine. He too aspires to depart to a place where he wouldn't be tormented with problems and anguish of life. One cannot talk about existentialism and not Jean Paul Sartre, who too was an amphetamine addict and wrote many of the revolutionary discourses under its influence. In the intellectual world, this subversive phase is often allied with the deconstruction of Theo centralism and lost faith on the 'centre ', i.e., God. However, it's existence is ever since the human mind started inventing ideas, emotions and discoveries.

With all the hustle, a never-ending journey of mankind and its creations, the ardour of escapism and the question regarding the 'purpose' will never really leave the human minds. In the modern times, amidst the bodies of dead soldiers, violence, ruination of the innocence led the world believe in the absence of the almighty who was preached to be the actual warrior, protecting the peaceful lands. This paper also talks about the repercussion of wars and the effect it has on people's psyche for decades. The estranged and faithless minds constituted the central effect of the destruction that came with the disputes of West and imperialism in Eastern colonies. The literature of Existentialism revolves around post war and post-modern traumas and lives that have no meaning left.

Colonies first exploited by the oxidants then polluted by the corrupt native nationalists, politicians and people in power. Injustice that the subalterns had gone through reflects the pathetic state of humanity. Writers like Chinua Achebe, Homi K. Bhabha, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Anita Desai etc wrote extensively about pre and post-war period in Africa and India They highlighted the atrocious darkness prevailed in the colonies where workers were not considered humans but mere commodities. In Conrad's novella, Heart of Darkness, the exhausted, sick workers were being scattered like garbage around the fields or roadside and were executed for slight disobedience as we could assume by the image of skeleton heads being decorated around Kurtz's house. The post-colonial writers described various aspects of society that had just gain the freedom to spit the conducts and discourses on its people. The results again was gloomy mind-sets of exhausted poor individuals and unfulfilled dreams that would shatter the perceptions and visions about exquisite journey of life. With regards to the world of literature, this thesis will explore the profound

existential,

escapism and frustrated thoughts of the selected novelist and playwrights of different eras who examined the issues which are extremely essential for human existence.

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