

Cyberpunk: Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson and Hard boiled Wonderland and end of the World by Haruki Murakami

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Abstract--- *The present studies are based on the topic of cyber punk, which is a literary device and a fact that is related to real world. To make the paper more informative and fruitful, the two novels are included, both of them are based on application of scientific technology and effects to mankind, they are Hard Boiled wonderland and The End of the world by Haruki Murakami and Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson . This study shows how cyberpunkism has progressed throughout the following period of time. Both of the works are eminent and has created breakthrough in the cyberpunk literature. After reading the two novels it is identified that even though the both of the writers are from two different continents their views about the idea of cyberpunk world is quite unique and they were also able to point out its relevance in the futuristic world.*

Keywords--- *Avatars, Metaverse, Dystopian, Cyberpunk.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The present paper is an attempt to show the influence of “Cyberpunk” in the contemporary society. Cyber punk is a sub-genre fiction that features advanced science and technology in an urban, dystopian future. Cyber punk began as literary movements but has become a sub cultural organism. Cyber punk was rooted from 1960s-1970s even today the role of cyber is unbreakable. Because of the progress in cyber punk, many writers used it as a literary device; as a result many novels were introduced to literature. Neal Town Stephenson an American writer who has introduced cyber punk in his work *Snow Crash* and a writer from the " Land of Rising sun" Haruki Murakami in *Hard Boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*. Murakami's novel is an amalgam of Science fiction, detective and post modern manifesto all rolled into one rip-roaring novel. The novel is build upon a very creative plot; it explores the depth of human thought and feeling and reveals the secrets of human unconscious mind and sub-conscious mind. *Snow crash* is breakthrough novels which represent contemporary American society were human beings were influenced by computer."This is America people do whatever they feel like doing."(2) Both of the texts presents a Futuristic world of technology and shows how it has influenced the human race.

Style of Approach

In exploring, the Cyberpunk part of novel, one can discover that this novel related to Hard-Boiled fiction. Haruki brings out, a tough, unsentimental style of American crime writing in this novel. He uses Graphic sex and violence, vivid but often sordid urban backgrounds and fast paced, slangy dialogues in this novel. This novel can considered

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as an example of Hard-Boiled Science Fiction , sometimes called “Future Noir”, and is a subgenre that exhibits the style of American detective novel. In these types novel specifically the male character are lonely , they conduct illegal business, wears guns and protagonists always unveils mystery surrounding them at the end of the novel.

Stephenson expresses his ideas in third person narration and through this novel the author reflects his own internal thoughts and observations with the help of the characters present in novel and these characters showcases the entire persona and distinct features of the author himself. As *Snow crash* is set in twenty-first century were America was involved with technology and industrial establishments. The book is divided into two, they are industrial southern California and virtual world of the “Metaverse” .In the beginning of the book there is no reference for time period but the end of book narrator reveals the time periods. In both novels the introduction part is bizarre, after reading the entire novel only the readers can extract information from it. The cyberpunk novels often appear to be mysterious, absurd and extraordinary this features can be seen in both of the novels.

Influence of Cyber Punk in the Characters

The character of Calcutec in “*Hard Boiled Wonderland and End of the world*” is quite introverted, he isolates himself from the society. He works as a human data Processor; he created by the system for sole purpose of collecting secretive data. They acts as defenders/ protectors against the criminal groups of android known as Semiotecs, they steal data and sell in black markets. These Semiotecs and Calcutecs can be considered as two different faces of a same coin. They both manipulate data but of them protects it and others try to steal the data .Calcutecs are trained to use their subconscious mind as encryption keys they work for the government but heir counterpart Semiotecs works against the government . Hard Boiled Science Fiction deals with graphical sex scenes and violence and in this novel the love between the characters such as Calcutec and the lady librarian is quite sexual. There is no pure love in the dystopian world of “Hard -Boiled Wonderland” everything is purely physical. People only want to satisfy their own sexual appetite or as an act to continue their future generation. And in this novel it is observed that sex is not considered as an divine act but as an act of something physical /Mechanical there no feelings involved in this act, in this novel especially the conversations taking place between the character such as Calcutec and Professor reveals this facts, it is quite obscene fact that Professor asks openly to Calcutec to have sexual relationship with his own granddaughter “ Chubby girl” and not only that he openly talks about one’s sex drive and importance of sexual energy in one’s life. “*She ‘s bright, strong as can be, but doesn’t even try t,mix the world outside. That’s no good for young person. Got t’let your sex drive out in some constructive way, Tell me now, the child’s got womanly charms, hasn’t she*”. Professor talks these words to Calcutec .(Pg-47chpt 5, ***Hardboiled wonderland and end of the World***). Another ironic fact is that even though Calcutec is a machine, he posses human feelings and emotions which is quite absent in Professor who is actually a human being. He is an insensitive, unemotional and insane scientist who will go to any extent to complete his research and scientific experiment he does not cares about fact that if anybody a is hurt of his experiments for him everything is research .He totally insane that he even conducts experiments his own granddaughter the chubby girl as part his experiment of Sound removal technology he intentionally eliminated her sound from vocal cords only after the request of Calcutec only she regains her sound. The character of professor can be considered as distinct and unique part of cyberpunk world. He doesn’t believe human feelings or morality his life totally mechanized he believes in “Evolution of human

beings' and protests against the "Devolution of human beings" and he also prohibited use of handwritten texts in his laboratory because it is part of ancient technique and it may lead to Devolution. Insane love for scientific technology also seen in the character "Hiro" of *Snow crash*, both of the characters Hiro and Professor shows obsessions towards scientific technology. Hiro possesses erotic feelings towards machines, whenever he sees a machine he feels physically aroused. In chapter 3 of the novel *Snow crash*, Hiro talks about his love towards machines especially his computer with cameras; he envisions his computer as a "Female stripper". These were his exact statement "*He kept bringing them back from his stints in Far East, encased in many protective layers, so that when he took them out to show Hiro, it was like watching an exquisite striptease as they emerged from all that black leather and nylon, zippers and straps. And once the lens was finally exposed, pure, geometric equation made real, so powerful and vulnerable at once*". The given lines show the level of insanity in Hiro's mind towards the machines.

In *Snow crash* the main protagonist is Hiro who was initially referred to as a "Deliverator" later in the progress of the novel the narrator reveals his name as "Hiroakki", he can be considered as the main protagonist of the novel. If we observe the novel clearly, the initial part of the novel does not reveal much about the narrator, there was nothing more about him in the initial part of the novel. Only after the "Metaverse sword fight" discloses the fact about his origin which includes most of things like his name, parents were revealed. Initially Hiro was presented as a pizza deliverer who never makes late in his orders, he is quite punctual and diligent in conducting his orders. Hiro is presented as a character who is good in his occupation and also a pretty smart dude. Hiro is a person who is mixed up with two cultures. He is mixed up with two cultures because his father was an African-American from Texas and his mother was Korean. Neal presents him as a person who has more than one ability it is because in the society of cyber punk a person with more than one ability can survive in this particular world. The novel reveals the modernity and technical aspects of life. The technical aspects of life are reflected through the narrative of the main character of the novel "Hiro". The writer covers every nook and corner in Hiro's life and he also discloses every single detail about the things that had occurred in the life of Hiro which makes the readers able to understand how the scientific technology has influenced him in his entire lifespan.

When Hiro lost his pizza delivery job he came to California where he shares his room with Vasily Chernobyl. They had a luxurious life "The room has a concrete lab floor, corrugated steel walls separating it from the neighbouring units and this is a mark of distinction and luxury "and it also reveals the extravagant and luxurious lifestyle of Hiro and Vasily.

(Chapter 3, 18). Also Hiro and Vasily possess a strong relationship and Hiro owns a nice Nipponese sword which he always carries with him. Hiro also possesses a computer which is pretty advanced in technology. Neal here presents two individuals of contemporary American society. The computer which Hiro owns is "featureless black wedge". It does not need power to function.

Hiro was not only a pizza deliverer but also a freelance hacker who works as a messenger for the central intelligence corporation in his free time. "The Deliverator used to make software"(ch-1,3). As a messenger he uploads information to the CIC database and Hiro would be paid if anyone buys the information. Hiro meets Y.T. accidentally when his pizza delivery went wrong and Y.T. saves him. Hiro and Y.T. work together for gathering information of

both the real world and virtual reality which is called as Metaverse .Metaverse is a collective virtual shared space created by the convergence of virtually enhanced physical reality and physically persistent virtual space including the sum of all virtual worlds, augmented reality and the internet. As the novel progress The writer discloses more information regarding the “Snow crash” virus.

“Snow crash is computer lingo which means that it is "system crash which controls the electron beam in the monitor, making ot spray wildly across the screen, turning the prefect grid work of pixels into a gyrating blizzard."(Chapter, 6 39). It is a virus that can hack human brains and is able to turn them into mindless minion. After a series of experiments and explosions, Hiro with the help of Y.T de-progress the people who were affected by the virus Snow crash. The novel is set ridiculously dystopian state. In this particular novel Neal also talks about mafia and he also reveals that how the mafia functions in a dystopian society. Neal is portraying how such viruses are capable of capturing and infecting the human brain and also the computer. The theme of cyber punk, which is post modern science fiction that associates with Technology, is eminent in the novel. Hiro and the hackers explain how hacking occurs spreading dangerous computer viruses which occurs incontinence to web users.

Both the characters Calcutecs and Hiro can be considered as the representation of contemporary society that how a human can survive in world .Haruki and Neal were able to established their ideas on cyber punk .Even though they were from different countries the ideas that they are trying to convey can be considered to be same. Cyberpunk has relevance in the contemporary society and it also reminds the readers that this relevance of technologies increases in futuristic society. Both the authors have done an excellent job to figure out that how human being is affected by the Technologies and industrialization or industrial privatization.

II. MECHANISATIONS

Professor’s research regarding sound removal technology quite advanced that he can remove sounds of natural resources like water, fire etc he is also able to minimize and maximize the sounds of human vocal cords. His inventions have both beneficial as harmful effect to the society. If his research anyway gets in the hands of wrong kind people it would cause mass destruction all around the world. This sound removing technology can be used as form of bio weapon for causing silent warfare attacks and mass destruction. So Professor is adamant in protecting his research information especially from The System and both the Semiotecs and Inklets. Professor’s brilliance in his scientific research is further proved when he introduces ultrasonic repel system in his underground laboratory in order to protect it from the attack of “Inklets”. Inklets are fish- like subterranean creatures basically known as Infra-nocturnal kappa. These are sewage dwelling organism and it is very dangerous creatures these kappas are cannibals. They consume human flesh and they also practice certain religious rituals in which they offer human flesh to underground subterranean gods to gain power and prosperity. According to Professor these kappas are very Disgusting Creatures, even they have some sort of human intelligence they very deadly creatures and they are saprophytic creatures, and they consume rotten materials as their food. People can communicate with kappas using Universal Translating device but Professor detests these creatures does not like to have any sort of relation with these creatures.

In novel *Snow crash* also, many inventions take place like Rat things which is a semi autonomous guard units which is powered by a nuclear isotope battery. This guard unit requires extensive cooling due a massive amount of heat is wasted. This process is taken place by the system heat sinks. They became heated when they runs fast to avoid this they remains in the hatches. Rat things were rarely seen by human eyes because they move at high velocities or for cooling they remain in their hatches. Another technology is smart wheels is a fictional type of wheel which is used on skateboard and advanced motorcycle. The wheel has small segments and it has ability to take the shape of cracks, curbs and bumps.

Metaverse is a collective virtual shared space and it is a sum of or a mixture of all the virtual worlds and reality and the internet. Stephenson creates metaverse as urban environment. It was owned by Global Multimedia Protocol Group a fictional part. The concept of metaverse is present in the first person narratives and also the appearances of the individuals are shown as avatars. The concept avatar made the novel snow crash as finest work. In the internet or computerized world the role of avatar is unavoidable. Avatars are fictional characters and these avatars were used in several fields like NASA, Research field is helped by avatars. Using these avatars many animated movies were created. The Avatar which is created by Stephenson is small and skilled. The narrator described about place "The Black Sun" which is a plain building in metaverse .It is not an architectural masterpiece .Hiro founds many avatars in street who were waiting for Da5 id's call, Da5id is the owner of the Black Sun . Among them one person was noticeable because he is taller than the rest. *"Talking to a black and white on the street is like talking to a person who has his face stuck in a Xerox machine, repeatedly pounding the copy button, while you stand by the output tray pulling the sheets out one at a time And looking at them."*(Chapter-5, 39)This person was influenced by the drug Snow crash, this event can be considered as important event of the novel because he is the one who introduces Snow Crash to Hiro.

III. CONCEPT OF MAFIA

Hard-boiled wonderland of Calcutec showcases the tendency of ever-growing violence and full packed action in various scenarios. The System represents as the powerful mega corporation of this particular world and The Calcutecs can be considered as the part of private security forces and The Semiotecs are the corruptive agents who carry out the underworld of illegal trade with the help of inklets. They are responsible for the causes corruption, and social upheaval in this cyberpunk world. In the chapter15 of this novel Murakami introduces the underworld of illegal trade and Mafia,(A network of organized –crime groups based on Italy an America). The two thugs Junior and Big boy are part of underground Mafia, they came to Calcutec's house to confront him about the information on professor's research. They received orders from unknown source, they destroyed the entire house of Calcutec their main aim was to deceive the System from the fact that Calcutec is involved in the illegal malpractice of shuffling data. They deliberately tortured him in a non lethal way; they caused serious slash across the lower abdomen of the narrator. The image itself is quite bloody and messy. The act of violence was done to avoid major crisis then also this act of violence cannot be justified.

The concept of mafia in snow crash is quite different; mafia has a major role in business and technologies. Uncle Enzo is head of mafia, a godfather. Stephenson creates a world without government was there many privatized

companies. The prominent example for this is the service of mafia. Here mafia footholds with many organizations like protection of society, pizza delivery, and also personal banking. Mafia is the backbone of the society. There is no failure listed in the society because a person who failed will never exist such type of society because they always eliminated from the world. Here mafia is considered as a police force and also it is considered as family culture and societal norms.

The concept of Mafia is used as two different sides of a coin, Murakami's approach had negative touch but Stephenson make it in a positive sense. Both of them try to present how a world would be without a rule of government and without any human commitment and emotions and they also show how such world exists. They both present the futuristic dystopian world where there no emotion commitment has any role.

IV. CONCLUSION

The present paper is an attempt to analyse the role of cyberpunk considering the novel *Snow crash* by Neal Stephenson and Haruki Murakami's *Hard Boiled Wonderland and the End of the world*. Both works are perfect example of a dystopian state of world where human are controlled by machines. This study aims to show how mechanization and artificial intelligence influence human consciousness and how mind and body is disconnected. This study also explores on the quest of truth, love suffering and also discuss about various kind of possibilities of futuristic world. Both of novels portray the isolation and detachment of characters from humanity. The presence divinity in cyberpunk is eradicated. The concept of god is itself is vanquished in this materialistic world. But in these two novels both of the writers talks about the worship of Gods especially Subterranean Gods. Through these writers state about the presence of extraordinary divine power and they tries prove that science and divinity are interconnected with each other.

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