

Cyberpunk: A Dystopian, Dehumanized High-Tech Future In Indian SF Virus

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Abstract:

Cyberpunk -is a subgenre of science fiction project a future where humans are trapped in a dehumanized, high-tech future leading to a dystopian future. The Indian Science fiction by Jayant Narlikar titled Virus (2003) deals with cyberpunk and the destruction through it. The fiction raises the question of human existence on the earth with technological advancement. The objective of the present endeavor is to explore destruction through computer's. The fiction portrays a future where automation is affected with virus planted by extra- terrestrials; and how the future society and government will become wimpy and pathetic due to cyberpunk. It portrays a gloomy vision of the future where mankind can become a victim of cyberpunk which can lead to a dystopian dehumanized high-tech Future

Keywords – cyberpunk, extra-terrestrials, dystopian, society, humankind, education.

Introduction

Science fiction as a genre portrays scientific advancement with its utopian and dystopian shades. With advance infrastructure & technology the future of society will be dominated by computers; with an alarming bell of cyberpunk. The cyberpunk portrays a society dominated with computers. The website Britannica states, "cyberpunk a science fiction subgenre characterized by countercultural antiheroes trapped in a dehumanized high-tech future." 1(Britannica). Cyberpunk was derived from the word 'cybernetics'- the science of replacing human function with computerize once. The genre bloomed with the publication of William Gibson's novel **Neuromancer** (1984). In Indian SF we can trace the footprint of cyberpunk in Jayant Narlikar's fiction Virus. Narlikar who is a scientist and a SF writer efficaciously portrays the bleeding edge of computer advancement which is destroyed with a virus planted through an extra-terrestrial source.

The Indian SF titled Virus (2003) projects a dystopian future due to computer advancement. The rat race of human development had converted into a mouse race, leading to destruction of mankind. Virus presents the idea of sharing our space with an unknown who can possibly be technologically more advanced. The limited resources of

planets will force everyone to explore further in the space, by overpowering others space. This rat race and the need of better place for survival are paving the path for cyber war. The fiction represents the combat of space with humans and extra-terrestrials through cyberpunk.

Virus as a 'cyber science' fiction deals with the effects of advanced cyber world on our future. Making a conscious effort to make us realized the consequences and effects of exploring in the space. Norman Rulif Augustine says, One of the most feared expression in modern times is 'The computer is down''². Virus -the Indian cyber SF portrays such computer breakdown and its effects on the future of mankind. The fiction talks about a gigantic radio telescope project, VIRAT- a future project tracing the footprints of extraterrestrials. The landmark of every advancement and technology has its own adverse effects, project VIRAT was not untouched with it. Jayant Narlikar's through the fiction Virus projects a near future; where increased human dependency and development of cyber world will lead us to a dystopian future. Through the character named Francois Pecker's Narlikar's critical comment on automation, presenting the gravity of cyberpunk.

This is what you get if you get it you put all your eggs in the computer basket." Muttered François to himself. "But will we learn anything from today's experience? Hardly!" (Narlikar28).³

Narlikar, as a scientist and a writer wish to cut the mustard with a conscious thought, towards the adverse effects of automation and human's ignorancetowards the adverse effects of computerization. The cyber world hit the ground to revolutionize our human life, but while advancing humans have lost their train of thoughts by ignoring the consequences. The fiction presents the dystopian side of 'machine revolution' through Virus with a focus on cyber revolution with consciousness.

Through the fiction Virus Narlikar delineate the picture of destruction - without a weapon. The advance computerization has increased the possibility of a technical war. Our heart missed a beat while imagining a complete shutdown of a cyber world. The Cyber world have changed the way we live and the way we communicate. Cyber communication has reduced the space on earth creating a complex network of communication; which can be hacked, creating a threat personally, countrywide, globally and can also be a threat to our planet. Narlikar in his fiction refers it as a 'technical war'. He takes a leap into the dark future with the cyberpunk.

Science fiction have projected the human life with technology either in an dystopian or an utopian way; so that while advancing with time and space we should anticipate of its consequences. Through the SF Narlikar urges mankind to comprehend the futuristic problem that we would be facing in our nearest future with cyber development. With advancement and a human urge to find a new planet is paving a path of, space cyber war. Which would be initiated by extra-terrestrial, who are still unknown to us. Our space is full of surprises, the more we explore it the more we are left with new questions. In the Indian SF Virus, Narlikar focuses on cyber development with consciousness. The Indian SF portrays a futuristic plot where our planet is facing a cyber space war. Through Virus Narlikar is projecting a future where we will be witnessing the traces of extra- terrestrials, facing cyber war on the earth. Ratnakar Bhelkar in *Encounter with extra-terrestrials* in Jayant Narlikar's *The*

Message from Aristarchus and Virus compares the approaches by Jayant Narlikar, Arthur C. Clark and H. G. Wells:

Narlikar and Clarke, both have to assert that human knowledge has limits and it does not comprehend everything in vast cosmos. Like H. G Wells and Arthur C. Clarke, Narlikar speculates that ET's are intelligent and powerful; pose a threat to human existence on the Earth and human endeavor (Bhelkar 18).⁴

The extra-terrestrial targeting our system will make us disable. Stephen Hawking's while talking about virus says, "I think computer virus should count as life. I think it says something about human nature that the only form of life we have created so far is parley destruction. We have created life as our own image"⁵(Hawking). Cyber war will destroy mankind without any weapon. While portraying the devilish form of virus the character Jagtap in the fiction says,

Sir, it is a computer programme that mingles with the existing programme in a computer. It seems to have a devilish design in the sense that it does not affect each and every time like a naughty boy sitting on a chair who advances his leg at random to trip whatsoever is passing him, this virus strikes unexpectedly. Where we see it in operation, we can take remedial measure to take it out. But that does not mean that it has gone forever. (Narlikar 101).

The fiction shatters the human's perspective of being the only advanced being in cosmos. Through Virus, Narlikar focuses on the adverse effect of automation leading to problems of cyberpunk. Jerry Michalski, Founder of REX, The Relationship Economy Expedition says, "Automation is Voldemort: the terrifying force nobody is willing to name"⁶(Michalski). Every sphere of human life is automated. Cyberpunk is enough to destroy humanity in the future. Therefore, with every progressing steps, we need to think about its adverse effects on society present and future.

Space cyber war through an extra-terrestrial is projected by Narlikar in his Indian SF Virus. Ratnakar Bhelkar while talking about advancement, destruction and space war says,

“The calamity of the invasion from the technologically progressed ET cannot not be averted and so human beings have to prepare to face colonial aggression by aliens and stresses the necessity to retain values as love for nation, co-operation, unity, tolerance and understanding. This stance is an alertness and remedy for it too”⁷(Bhelkar 18).

A future with immense cyber development and a fear of space cyber war is an horrifying portrayal. The fiction express that advancement is important; the unknown is to be known, but to what extent? Development of cyber is essential unless it leads to destruction. Exploring the cyber world without conscience, is like a voyage of destruction. Talking about Narlikar's approach towards space cyber war due to extra-terrestrials and human existence Ratnakar Bhelkar says,

Jayant Narlikar possess an ambivalent view about ETs who are intelligent, and power and though they are benevolent or malevolent, human race has to prepare for the future cultural shocks in the garb of an alternative abode ETs. In both SF, TMFA, VRS fantasy functions as a preventive and alerts human race about an encounter with ETs. Narlikar's speculative vision of reality is that human society has to nourish the constructive values tolerance and constitute global policy for the survival and welfare of human society in the wake of encounter with ETs.⁸(Bhelkar 18)

Human wants clarity and certainty, but sometimes uncertainty fascinates us. In the process of –to know more and to learn more. The discovery of other planet is astonished and excited and is fearful too. The web site ‘SPACE.com’ very clearly state about the

approach towards the aliens, “ When considering the prospect of alien life, humankind should prepare for the worst, according to a new study: Either we're alone, or any aliens out there are acquisitive and resource hungry, just like us.”⁹(“When considering the prospects of alien”). Future will ask us to make a difficult choice- a choice between advancement and existence of mankind.

The Indian SF of Narlikar's nurtures a vision of and a utopian future should be nurtured while scientific development is done. Being elite in the space is a myth; fiction like Virus is helping us project the near future where we can get acquainted to extra-terrestrial and its complex cyber system, the technical advancement used by human for further advancement can also turn as destruction through which the extra-terrestrial I can reach us. Jayant Narlikar alerts human society about the increased reliance on computers information technology devices will compel us to face the problem of cyberpunk and human survival. Cyber culture in the space of this Indian cyber science fiction has a threat of virus from the other planet, and raises the issue of political power, conscious and responsible leadership to save automation, business, farming's, military services and cyber culture. The space in this fiction deciphers that man is not the only intelligent being in cosmos; extra-terrestrials are more progressed than human beings. In future, human society has to prepare for cyber cultural shock, and search for an alternative space to inhabit, with the nourishment of the spirit of unity, equality, keeping aside differences.

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