

A STUDY OF CONGLOMERATED CYBORGS: AGENTS OF POST-HUMANIST ERA IN SHERRY TURKLE'S *ALONE TOGETHER*: WHY WE EXPECT MORE FROM TECHNOLOGY AND LESS FROM EACH OTHER

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Abstract:

The primary objective of the paper is to construe the post-humanist electronic age and its ramifications in terms of religious, biological, social and economic aspects of human society. These effects eventually affect the cultural core of any human society. The rapid rate of transit brought forth by the technological revolutions would leave the world entangled in its electronic chords and the humans disentangled from their emotional selves. The cybernetic organisms- 'cyborgs' will infest the world resulting in racial extinction. Technology is intended to enhance human lives in spheres. Gadgets from being facilitators have metamorphosed into cyborgs marking the end of mankind. Growing needs of sedentary lifestyle coupled with contrived innovations of the AI (Artificial Intelligence) scientists like robots and gadgets which could work beyond any human can imagine has resulted in a 'Power Shift'. The humans have started to play second fiddle to robots. Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together* has documented the effect of technological advancements on human of all section and age group.

Index Terms: Technology, Electronic gadget, Robots, Artificial Intelligence, Cyborg, Post-humanism, Rhizome, Liquid modernity.

The title may sound redundant but the modern era's cyborgs have conglomerated with human for them feel that it is a natural evolution. Human's innate ability to fantasize, when coupled with 'desire of more' and revolutionary technology has given rise to a post-humanist apocalyptic society. The impulse to revamp the present for future has dismantled societal structures. Zygmunt Bauman, a polish sociologist and philosopher considers the present cultural tendency as 'Nowist' cultural attitude that values immediate or quickly acquired satisfaction. Fast paced access to technology like mobile and other electronic gadgets accompanied by permanent state of busyness cannot be just graded as consumerist culture. For, the foundational human values are at stake because of technological advancements.

As written in Genesis 1:29-30, "The Crown of God's creation is a new creature, a creature that can sound the heartbeat of its Creator. That creature, made male and female, reflects God's own relational richness. The human family is to join God in the ongoing work of Creation. The Earth below and the sky about with all their inhabitants are too beautiful and too good to be left alone. They need the tender care and close attention that only God's favored creature can give" (*The voice*).

Technical advancements remove human from their value system interpolating them into mere subjects. This self-effacing use of technology reverses the cause called 'communication'. A human devoid of emotions and abstract values get dethroned from the high stature assigned by God to them. Zygmunt Bauman confronts of both the problems and possibilities of living in a new stage of social life. The contemporary society effaces the ethical selves in human. Technology and social media have reshaped human lives and their relationships with other being on this earth, for better and for worse.

Sherry Turkle in her *Alone Together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other* rips out the influence of technology on human beings and instabilities in how they understood 'privacy' and 'public', 'intimacy' and 'solitude'. The digital culture has made people contemplate on the essence of personhood. It did not merely change human activities but their thinking and the way they perceive themselves and how they formulate a relational identity in relation to other objects. Sherry Turkle interrogates the 'always connected' state of human which dwarfs their creative ability and innovative thinking and suggests that it will turn fatal for the human race if this persists.

The social psychologist Sherry Turkle has investigated the intersection of digital technology and human relationships from the early days of personal computers to the present world of robotics, AI (Artificial Intelligence), social networking and mobile connectivity. Technology has turned out to be the architect designing people's intimate life, companionship and at times by becoming their intimate companions. The more their tethered connectivity condensed the world into the size of their palms, the bond; human had with the real world was severed. This 'liquid modernity' has allured them with its free fall; floating experience making them unaware that it has engulfed them to get them drowned into the abyss of isolation.

The steady process of a master's creation becoming the master would ravish the entire mankind. The research findings of Sherry Turkle based on the interviews given by her sampling which includes children, college students, engineers, AI scientists, hackers and personal computer owners. This has melted human identity and amalgamated it with machines. For, the boundaries between human and machines were redrawn, when machines were programmed with human emotions. People today talk to machines like Google and rely much on them rather than human. The stimulated and the virtual world has become the real world making the real world a scarecrow.

Foucault in his work *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* reported "Man is neither the oldest nor the most common problem that has been posed for human knowledge... man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end" (421-22). The concept of machine has to be rephrased so as to fit the present scenario. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, has redefined the concept of machine on a Marxist background,

One can be 'enslaved' or 'subjected' to a machine (whether it be technical, social, communicational, etc.). We are enslaved to a machine when we are a cog in the wheels, one of the constituent parts enabling the machine to function. We are subjected to the machine when, constituted as its users, we are defined purely by the actions that use of the machine demands. Subjection operated at the molar level of the individual (its social dimension, the roles functions, representations and affections). Enslavement on the other hand operates at the molecular (or pre-individual or infra-social) level (affects, sensations, desires, those relationships not yet individuated or assigned to a subject). ("The Machine")

The rhizome structure of electronic era can never be uprooted. These technological structures will re-territorialize the world de-territorializing human beings. The essay "The Philosophical Concept of Rhizome" extends the concept evolved by French authors Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, respectively a philosopher and a psychoanalyst:

A Rhizome does not start from anywhere or end anywhere; it grows from everywhere, and is the same at any point. As such a Rhizome has no center, which makes it difficult to uproot or destroy; you might think of a mold or fungus, which can reproduce from any cell....This rhizome, is a- linear, multiple, spread out, all proliferating and without boundaries, centres/margins or limits. (Mambrol)

Sherry Turkle's concern is how genuine social interactions become degraded through constant exposure to illusory meaningful exchanges with artificial intelligence. People seek safety at the cost of their privacy ultimately becoming the irony of the system. The world is striving to globalize by decorating human of their humanity, rationale, identity and elements that constitute it like individuality, religion and ethnicity. She asserts: "We are all cyborgs now" (*Alone Together* 152). 'Cyborg' was first coined by Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan's Kline in their work *Cyborgs and Space*; "The cyborg deliberately incorporates exogenous components extending the self-regulatory control function of the organism in order to adapt it to new environments" (27).

Robots have started to replace human in all possible ways which were treated impossible. Science is acting on the fulcrum of making the 'impossible,' 'possible'. Robots have been used for enchanting and comforting purpose; but they are illusory in nature. The robots have updated to be more responsive and lovable than any human or pet animal. Those that were initially used to perform menial domestic chores have been domesticated for intimate reasons. A form of self ostracism has crept into the lifestyle of individuals in modern era, eventually disturbing the communal harmony.

Individuals have developed an affinity towards technology because they keep people engaged providing a vent out from isolation. The irony is, the more they look for mechanized companionship, the more they become isolated; ruining interpersonal relationships. Stephen Hawking in one of his interviews to British Broadcast Corporation (BBC) warned: "The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race" (Cellan Jones). His cautionary note is that, the world of AI and further development can surpass human, "Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete, and would be superseded" (Cellan Jones).

The rise of robots when conglomerated with advanced AI might prove fatal, "We cannot quite know what will happen if a machine exceeds our own intelligence, so we can't know if we'll be indefinitely helped by it, or ignored by it and sidelined, or conceivably destroyed by it" (Cellan Jones).

The 18th century scenario is repeating by reorganizing itself by replacing electrical machines with electronic machines and gadgets. The intensity of devastation of Robotic revolution will be higher than Industrial Revolution. The Cyborg revolution will eventually give rise to 'voluntary human extinction'. Robots have already replaced human divesting them of their jobs. The robots have started imperializing the world. Colonization will no longer be a phenomenon of the past and present; because the future is already in the clutches of technology. Super powers like Europe and America have yielded their control to ultra-powered Robotic technology.

Robotic culture has made the ambience conducive enough for generation of 'new forms of life', "Love with robots will be as normal as love with other humans" (*Alone Together* 05). David Levy an entrepreneur and computer scientist prefers personalized robots like 'Paro' over humans as intimate companions because with robots there are no room for cheating and heartbreaks. The question of authenticity is at stake for the machines can respond as programmed and can never replace human, for humans are emotional mortals. Immortal robots can never understand the core philosophy of human existence. The machines are devoid of emotions and even emotional responses are not genuine but programmed.

People embrace robotic companions on grounds of stability. It is an irrefutable fact that robots are 'stable' and 'pliant' but 'frailty' and 'incompliance' is what makes a human. Technical advancements are accelerating that one day all mobile phones will be replaced by robots, "Technology presents itself as a one-way street; we are likely to dismiss discontents about its direction because we read them as growing out of nostalgia or a luddite impulse or as simply in vain... Winston Churchill said, 'We shape our buildings and then they shape us' " (*Alone Together* 19).

The condition has been turning worse with children that they fall prey for fantasy. They staunchly believe that robots are real beings which are recently gifted with lives like any human on earth. The purpose of these playmate robots may sound noble but it distorts the smutty truths behind the creation of those machines.

Robots like 'My Real Baby', 'Nexi'- Torso humanoid robot, 'AIBO'- beautiful female robot, 'Roxxy'- female erotic robot, 'Cog'- full human torso with mobile arms, neck and head, and 'Kismet'- interacts emotionally have become an integral part of human lives. Sherry Turkle rightly attests, "These robots don't belong to you, they belong with you, they are not for you, in some important way, they are like you" (*Alone Together* 86). Caring machines like 'Paro' had great demand and was well received by people. Sherry Turkle questioned AI scientists, Physicians, Nurses, Philosophers, Psychologists and representatives of Insurance companies: if machines can be made to care? They said: "Caring meant that machines would take care of us, not that they would care about us. They saw caring as behaviour, not as a feeling" (*Alone Together* 106).

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