

On Kurtz's Fear in The Heart of Darkness

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The small verbal gasps 'The horror, the horror' are reported to be 'Kurtz's' last vocal expression which gestures to his bleak state of mind breaking under the burden of death. It is perhaps the most substantiated form of fear 'Kurtz' might have felt throughout his entire lifetime. The colonial enterprise flourished on his exemplary treatment given to the Africans in 'Congo'. Kurtz is a grotesque presentation and an extremely appalling expression of the vociferous spirit ingrained in the fabric of colonization. His ominous presence is the very quintessence of the darkness used as metaphor for the viciousness of the enlightenment project. This 'remarkable' man seems to bear an extraordinary recklessness and courage which gives him a semblance of an awe inspiring horrific figure like Satan's. But 'Kurtz's' frantic violence and Cruelty brought him fears only. It gives an occasion to reflect on the differences and compatibilities of the idea of fear as a survival strategy (an evolutionary trait) and a fallacy born of human psychology.

'Kurtz' represents the miniature form and a model of colonization. The complete ideology of 'enlightenment project' seems to be entrenched into his individual way of working there. He is as overambitious and cruel for what this project received notoriety. They implemented a variety of strategies to control natives and resources and the idea of fear was one of most versatile one. 'Kurtz' was a messenger of terror and ruthlessness. He is never seen a bit of frightened of death lurking in the heart of the dark forests. It seems that all of his fear was overwhelmed by his greed for the ivory. To receive more and more ivory he spreads fear with such a brutality that is nightmarish and more than wild. Though one form of life eats up the other to live yet cruelty is not a norm (of the nature). It is misogyny of human psychology developed out of sheer greed, temptation and a fear of loss.

While fear is simply an innocent instinct at biological level but it appears most vocal at the psychological one. Fear is a risk oriented hypothesis which may be born of a miscalculation about future. A sense of loss associated with desires, hopes, expectations and attachment may also beget an intense fear. Feeling of disgust

may even lead to hallucinations and ignorance and 'lack of effort and action' are popular notions which are supposed to bring fear. Whatever the source and intensity of fear as simple as an idea of sacrifice would be more than sufficient to eliminate it. As a matter of comparison both 'Macbeth' and 'Kurtz' are too ambitious to accommodate a psychological space for sacrifice. It seems that their inability to part with even the tiniest bit of what they had was drastically induced a sense of fear in them. Macbeth becomes so fearful that he ends up in being ruthlessly cruel. Though Macbeth's conscience troubled him and he always had guilt feeling deep seated in his psyche. Guilt feeling begets a sheer sense of disgust and troubles one's conscience as is stated in in the play, "Conscience is but a word that cowards use, Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe". (Richard 111 Act, 5 scene). The fear intensified his disgust for what he did and made him mentally shipwrecked. With reference to Macbeth one can work out at least one of the premises of Kurtz's condition (his horrors) when he died. He never felt sorry for his brutal treatment to the natives. It seems that they have never been a part of his conscience yet he must have got fearful of these black diseased figures like Macbeth had been due to Duncan's apparition. The horror he spreads returns intensified to him. Kurtz's last words "The horror, the horror." Part3 (62) seem to tell a lot.

It seems that 'Kurtz's' sense of loss overcasts his psyche. His actions have always been cumbersome with overambitious designs which inspired the most appalling form of exploration. He had gone crazy after having seen the natural wealth in the African jungles and planned everything which helps him get away with all that. The problem is that he couldn't be contented with what he might take away.

He wished nothing less than the entire forest but was going with his hands empty. He couldn't keep his promises which he made to his family and fiancée before he sets off his journey into Africa. It seems that the terror his cruelty kept natives under brutal exploitation was just his insecurity deep entrenched into his insatiable greed. It was always with him even on his death bed. He seemed incapable of letting go of even what the tiniest he had. It appears like a psychological disorder now beyond repair. Certainly it had led him to develop a mental handicap; an inability to sacrifice. One may advocate his highly bold and painstaking efforts to survive and accumulate the wealth on the face of the deadliest risks. But it stood on the corpse of the idea of 'sacrifice'. His vicious temptation killed it gradually until he developed a void (of fear) into its place.

Fear is risk oriented hypothesis which may be born of a psychological miscalculation of future. How mind creates horror stories and lets one fall blind folded into a well of fear. How far fetching are the consequences of unsubstantiated fear and a sense of insecurity; the ferocity of this misbegotten insecurity. Can't it be escaped? If yes, then how? Courage a temporary victory over fear and bravery a behavior turned habit or a spirit of adventure which one relishes. It would be highly premature to categorize fear into just two types as to define them in accordance with the limitations of scientific theories. The rational and irrational fears appeal differently to the body and to the mind. It is one of the survival strategies made available as an evolutionary trait and a consequence of the consciousness of the flow of time for humans. The most ferocious form of fear actualizes at the level of psychology and the human mind becomes an absolute location for it. It is an effort to comprehend the anatomy of fear at biological level and extremely subtle and coercive nuances at psychological one. It is an overwhelming feeling which stuns the body and the mind into a disorienting shock. An inquiry would reveal that fear and courage are binaries consequent upon a maneuvering of sense perceptions, emotions and reasoning. A sense of loss is an ocean of fear where all factors like ambitions, obsession, desires and attachment merge together only to place one into a state overwhelming insecurities and unknown fears. Fear matters so much with us as it seems to be a fanciful imagination and elongated sense of security. We tend to create a prolonged sense of insecurity due to our competence to be curious and conscious. Fear is embedded in our ability to think and recollect. But psychology is a middle stage; an ocean of absurdity and clash which has to be overcome for the attainment of fearlessness. Psychology needs to be silenced but the nature of this silence be well noticed. "It was a stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looks at you with a vengeful aspect."

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It's not a silence brought about by death in the utter dark of the forests (may be used as a metaphor for an ignorant mind) but a beautiful state of solitude and simplicity. It doesn't provoke a chilling feeling of horror rather illuminates the darkness or say the darkness transforms into light and the blissful atoms of stillness construct an ecstatic consciousness and fearlessness. Fear may be mathematically proved as a false idea but it is interesting to see how it exterminates a real bodily instinct leading to stage where the biological and the psychological cease to bother anymore.

But the faith and the love are all in the waiting.

Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:

So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

The terms 'hope' and 'love' are the most probable representation of material wishes which never cease to grow and one's attachment to them respectively. The 'wrong thing' Eliot speaks of may be 'the fear' which appears as a consequence. Hope and love for the most instances are defined against the grain of their actual character. In fact it is a common popular understanding of the terms which acquire their wholesome import only when they are bereft of them (popular notions). Hope should be blanked out of a sense of waiting for results and a dread of failing. Love should be devoid of attachment. It is the inherent source of insecurity and fear. Desires and attachment make one form a sickly attitude only to indulge into a chaotic over thinking and deformed decisions under a false sense of future. It is a deliberate denial of action in the present which is an outright rejection of the most potential option to the healthiest sense of life in the present.

Psychology may as well be a source absurdity and complications yet it is a factor of distinction between human and the rest of the living world. If it is annulled we come down on the same plane with all the other creatures and the typical content which makes us special would be over. The idea of fear cannot entirely be termed as a flaw at least at level of biology. It is obviously no good to be at par with the animals. It is our psychology that makes all the difference. It is infinitely creative which may go on either sides of the scalar. (Because it is bipolar in nature so it needs balance between the two extremes). It may direct thought in a desired direction which follows its maneuvering. Whether you take a positive approach or negative one, it tends to multiply the ideas under both the heads with great intensity. One may deliberately reject the fear born of bodily feelings or may get depressed to an abnormal extent. It needs to be harnessed and smoothed out on regular basis and one may work out the whole mystery of fear on such grounds. (How Macbeth is provoked?) "Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff, beware the thane of Fife." (4.1.71-72)

Though fear is an integral part living subjects yet it is a consequent product of certain other factors at the level of human psychology. If these factors were to perish, the conception of the idea of fear would be extinct. Fear is an innate timely response of the body which must accommodate certain benefits. But it receives a different form and character when operates on psychology. Here it thrives in the form of an overwhelming 'emotion' with an intensely retrograde impact on creativity. It overshadows one's creative force only to let him grope into a dark cell of insecurities. Now, what he thinks and the way he makes decisions would be directly affected. Here substantiates insecurities in form of highly misconstrued security measures and precautionary processes. We always feel so desperately defenseless that we discover, own and implement new means of security and defense mechanisms each new day. It constructs the whole way of the people's life style.

Courage is a reaction against the disgust for fear. It is temporal in character and makes up for a binary opposition. It involves a spirit of sacrifice to some extent. Sacrifice is in fact the strongest antidote to fear. Bravery is a courageous behavior which can be kept intact though a regular dose of inspirations until it becomes a habit otherwise it may fade away. It is not an absence of fear but a slight suggestion of fearlessness. Fearlessness is timeless and goes beyond the psychological. It is a trans-psychological state where fears break down to renovate and contribute to human creativity. Human mind is extraordinarily fertile but fear is one of the strongest mental weed which sucks out all the healthy content. The behavior of our sense organs ends up in attachment which brings in a fear of loss. It keeps one up in agitation forever. In fact it is consequent upon ignorance and a lack of will to know. Fear is one of the most vocal feelings of living beings and finds its extreme expression in humans. Besides being an essential biological component it occupies a prominent place in human psychology too. The living or non-living objects are supposed to behave on certain patterns of nature but human is a rebel whose behavior is remarkably different. It seems that the most intelligent creature is the most fearful too. His fear manifests through different forms which may be termed in accordance with convenience. Cruelty, bravery, ferocity, anger, courage, disgust and many others terms and adjectives are but fear in disguise and security and protection are the key words to be pushed in as rational concerns for them. The 'rational' and the 'irrational' fears seem to emerge from different locations. Security is a natural concern but it appears in two drastically different versions in case of human beings. It is a biological instinct like the other ones for all living organisms but a

wicked prompter of ferocity, cruelty and wretchedness. It affects human awareness and behavior in a calamity like manner and opens the doors of misery ad infinitum. Instincts are basically survival strategies which have evolved to sustain life. These sincere feelings are in fact nature's timely instructions to let the continuum of life go on. For example, it is through (may also be a very brief one in certain cases) their attachment for the new borns that instructs living organisms to protect and proliferate their species. Though it is only one of the survival schemes of the nature. One may give several examples of this sort which is proof that instinctual feelings get prolonged and become enslaving in case of human beings. It is reasonable as a means to sustain the life but treacherous when causes psychology to manipulate.

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Courage is also a survival stratagem like fear which holds a tendency to protect in humans and animals alike. But it remains a strategy for animals while human may behave bravely for a longer term. The line of thought is to explore how fear operates differently on body and psychology. What are the immanent means of fear and how the very comprehension of its making would reveal the secrets that lie beyond? Psychology may retard as well as augment the biological fear but what should delay the psychological one (fear); must it be sacrifice. T.S Eliot seems to eliminate the very idea of fear through the lines in 'Four Quartets' as he says 'Hope without wait'. If hope is devoid of a sense of waiting, expectations for results and fear of impending consequences it changes its character. It turns into a stability or faith. It is the burial ground where one's sense of loss heaves its last sigh and an aura of 'sacrifice' takes on. Here one attains an absolute faith in the merits of sacrifice. Sacrifice turns a demon into an adorable creature. An imposed fearlessness is a temporary pretension which is just a propelling made effective under certain sort of ignorance (turning innocents into terrorists).

Kurtz was cruelty personified yet he was the most fearful. Cruelty is no way akin to bravery rather it is the other face an intense fear. It has boomerang effects; it comes back to you as it in the same manner and the same intensity (substantiate it). He was to lose his hard earned ivory and a regret of his inability to get back to keep his promises. His temptation seems too born of his attachment with his dear ones. Fear comes of future.

Hope is taken for a positive attitude which gives one strength to move on ceaselessly. But hope has its own dangers. It involves an inclination for results which if are not achieved brings pain, disappointment and disgust. They bring our psychology very close to our biological behavior. So the emotion we call fear works like an instinct even on the psychological level. Ego is a source of a huge fear which begets a formidable sense of honor and reputation. Fear in fact manipulates and beguiling. The colonial enterprise flourished on the exemplary treatment 'Kurtz' gave to the Africans in Congo. Kurtz is a grotesque presentation and an extremely appalling expression of the vociferous spirit ingrained in fabric of colonization. His ominous presence is the quintessence of the darkness which is used a metaphor for the viciousness of the enlightenment project. Fear forms an inseparable dimension to the continuum of life. Nature enables fear not for cold-blooded brutality and excruciating violence but for survival.

Until Cruelty gives place to Compassion, the sense of loss to sacrifice, ignorance to knowledge and guilt-feeling (disgust) love fear cannot be eliminated. Courage is a psychological effort to outsmart fear and bravery is a courageous behavior. They outsize the feeling of fear when assisted by a regular ideological varnishing.

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