



Portrayal of Dark Realities in the Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis*

M. Refin Ruslin Raj
M.A. English Literature
Dr. N.G.P. Arts and Science College
Dr. R. VithyaPrabha
Professor, Department of English
Dr. N.G.P Arts and Science College

Abstract:

Drug addiction creates a dark reality of desperation in Mumbai's shadows. The features of individuals entangled in addiction of drugs which exhausted the reflections of the dark side in the streets of Mumbai. Behind the closed doors, people sink and fall into confusions, their humanity being worn away by the attractiveness of drugs, and families collapse under the weight of drug abuse. Under the ruthless grip of addiction, innocence is lost, dreams are crushed, and potential is wasted. The distinction between self-destruction and survival becomes unclear in this current scenario, causing chaos in the streets of Bombay. Jeet depicts a dim fact image on the city of Mumbai which encompasses the most dangerous inclinations of drug world. *Narcopolis* encompasses the loss, redemption and struggle for survival. This article exemplifies the intoxication, the drugs and alcohols in the dark reality also interweaving it with the present world.

Key words: dark reality, drug abuse, irresistible, survival, intoxication.

Bombay (now Mumbai) was deeply involved in the global battle against drug spread behind its borders all over the 1970s. The entry of illegal drugs into the city was made easier by geopolitical reasons, such as its advantageous position as a major port on India's western coast. Syndics of organized crime were able to operate with impunity due to corruption inside government and law enforcement organizations, which further fuelled the drug trade. In the meantime, high drug demand was seen in marginalized areas due to social inequalities and urbanization; drugs were frequently used as a coping strategy as well as a source of revenue. Drug networks were allowed to grow because of the ineffectiveness of the judicial system and the

law enforcement of drug prohibitions. Furthermore, the growth of the world drug trade during this time. The drug situation in Bombay's streets is shown in Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis* as a complicated process.

In Thayil's visualization, a city that exceeds with drug users, dealers, and addicts where the lines between right and wrong may not be clear and many people make intoxication the pursuit of their life. The city is shown as having essential elements such as underground sales of drugs, opium dens, and the endless need for the next dose. By going deeply into his characters' lives, Thayil provides insights into their motivations, challenges, and the terrible reality they deal with while struggling with addiction. The novel *Narcopolis* also looks at the socioeconomic elements that fuel the drug trade, highlighting problems like marginalization, poverty, and urban development. *Narcopolis* takes its characters on a dangerous journey into the depths of their own desires in the maze-like alleys of Bombay's underworld, where the muted murmurs of addicts mixed with the distant echoes of street sellers and the humid air hangs heavy with the smell of opium. With her frightening beauty and broken identity as a eunuch, Dimple finds comfort in the seductive embrace of opium, her weak figure swinging in Rashid's den's flashing candlelight. A dark and attractive figure, Rashid rules his opium empire with a combination of kindness and cruelty, attracting spirit foreigners like Dom who is an American expat who lost hope and has turned to addiction and a pit of wallow in search for meaning in life. The lines separating truth from delusion become less distinct amid the dizzying rush of heroin and the swirling shroud of smoke, showing how insecure life is in a city on the verge of collapse.

In this environment of deterioration, Thayil crafts a tapestry of human longing and dejection in which the pursuit of transcendence becomes entwined with the harsh realities of survival and the promise of oblivion beckons like the song of a siren, drawing the unsuspecting into the shadows. The characters go with the flow of the drug, they are unable to comprehend the concept of how addicted they were to the drug. Similar to the descend of a waterfall the characters depicted in the novel also go through a downhill course from where they were unable to come back from. All drugs are like crutches and addicts are people who when left to their path use this crutch for as long as their bodies can function. As depicted in Thayil's novel, the protagonist along with the other major characters are all addicts of the most latest and potent drug, opium and all except the author use this crutch till they meet with their demise. Though times have changed and the human populous have improved their way of living there still exist the dark shadow of the drug society and its influence.

The present young generation get addicted to drug as they can get it easily for their pleasure. The survey by national library of medicine said that, “In the mid age of 13, the person consumes alcohol and those in the age group of 15 started using drugs like heroine and cannabis”. In a 2020 survey conducted by NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985) they concluded on the fact that Mumbai have the highest rate of drug abusers, most of who began from the early ages of puberty. The modern day India have seen a rise in the consumption of illegal drug and as a repercussion the young minds are slaves to instant gratification and drugs, the leading reason for the recent hike in drug usage is the human inability to maintain or safe keep their mental health. Another reason for the increase in drug abuse is the ready availability of the illegal drugs. The major issue that arises from the consumption of psychedelic drugs is dependence, the compulsion to use drugs despite any deterioration in health, work or social activities. The hallucination or the psychological relief of the mind that one gets from consuming opium is not enough, thus making the person to fall into the mind-set where he/she has not explored the other psychotropic drugs which may take them to more severe delusions and hallucinations. Throughout the years many surveys have been conducted regarding the usage and users of illicit drugs the main and obvious reason for this is the increase in the use of such drugs, as mentioned in a survey, “there are over 190 million drug users around the world and the problem has been increasing at alarming rates” (Robertson)

The Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are the biggest government approved producers of poppy or opium plants. “We cultivate the poppy under pressure from Government, otherwise we would not do it, and our prayer is that we may be released from this trouble”, (Singh) the farmers having no other means of livelihood are led to farm such plants and most of the time thieves enter the field to rob these plants which are then converted to potent drugs like heroin and are sold in the black market. In an under developed state like Uttar Pradesh or Haryana the availability of drugs is not as hard as in metropolitan other states and thus the youth of the above mentioned states are open to the usage of drugs from a very young age which further leads them to mental and health issues. Jeet Thayil’s novel depicts the eradication of the future generation and how drugs play a vital role in it

The sad existence of the characters, where hope seems elusive and forgiveness seems out of reach, is highlighted throughout *Narcopolis*. The characters in Thayil's work navigate through a world of poverty, violence, and drug addiction as a means of escape from reality. However, even in the midst of the sadness, there are brief moments of beauty and connection that highlight the complexity of the human experience. In

the end, *Narcopolis* presents an eerie examination of the human condition, forcing readers to face up the hard realities about neglected and disadvantaged citizens of society. It is an honest assessment of the serious implications of addiction and the human spirit's enduring strength in the face of suffering.

The paper examines the connection between the author's fictional world and the present world and how both are connected through drugs and the present world may be more brutal and violent, it includes a higher rate of drug addicts and sellers. The paper also explores how the usage of drugs and other instant gratifiers have increased as the years have passed.

WORKS CITED

Thayil, Jeet. *Narcopolis*. Faber and Faber limited, Bloomsbury House, 2012.

Singh, Nivedita. "Drug Abuse in India: Mumbai Recorded Highest NDPS Cases Among Metros in 2020; Uttar Pradesh Top State"news18.com, OCTOBER 25, 2021,<https://www.news18.com/news/india/drug-abuse-in-india-mumbai-recorded-highest-ndps-cases-among-metros-in-2020-uttar-pradesh-top-state-4361495.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/books/2024/02/08/amitav-ghosh-smoke-ashes-opium-history-review/>

Robertson, Sally. "What is Drug Abuse?" News-medical.net, Feb 17, 2023, <https://www.news-medical.net/health/What-is-Drug-Abuse>.

