

Teen Nihilism in Select Plays of Simon Stephens

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ABSTRACT - The paper deals with plays like Punk rock, Herons and Wastwater and the teen nihilism depicted in them. The adverse effects of Nihilistic approach towards life are observed through various characters of the plays of Simon Stephens. The paper tries to understand the ever creeping mental agony among teens due to over exposure to nihilistic approach by their fellow peers. The paper also tries to observe the factors that induce the nihilistic behaviour among teenagers in Simon Stephens' plays.

KEYWORDS: Plays, Simon Stephens, Nihilism, Nihilistic approach, teenagers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Plays inculcate hope, life or love among the masses. They redeem the lost faith through appealing characters. Plays also address the existing dent in social structure or the burning problems of the contemporary or historical world. If not they can address, they ignite a spark among the readers, thus paving way for a plethora of questions needed to be addressed. Such is the power of modern plays.

Simon Stephens is a modern playwright who is known for his edge of the seat, nerve jittering plots and portrayal of bold characters to address important problems present in the modern world. The paper deals with select plays of Simon Stephens. The theme that will be observed or analyzed in those plays will be nihilism.

Nihilism is the outcome of extreme anger towards the world or extreme rejection by the society which pushes one to a point where they do not find meaning in whatever they come across. A sense of detachment is seen in people who are nihilistic. No real joy or no real emotions will be exhibited by them. Nihilists tend to devalue values that exists in the society. They show lack of interest in anything and everything. They no longer feel the need to meet the demands of the society; need to follow values or order established by the society. Deeply entrenched traditions will not entertain them anymore. Turning of dead eye towards everything is what teens with nihilistic approach towards life do.

We can also call the process that has led us to this situation "nihilism." For the world appears to be without value precisely because the values we have invested in the world are failing; they no longer perform their ordering or organizing function.

NIHILISTIC CHARACTERS IN SIMON STEPHENS' PLAYS

In his play Punk Rock, Simon throws light on the adverse effects of bullying and spewing hatred among teenagers.

Punk Rock is a nerve jittering intense play depicting teen violence. The characters presented in Punk Rock are violent, vehement and has a nihilistic approach towards life. Uncontrollable rage, excessive hatred and illogical behaviour are the common traits of the characters of Punk Rock. The story revolves around six teenagers in a Stockport library of a private school. It is about how anxiety gets the better of a teenager named William. The real question is; what caused him the anxiety? The ever rude and vehement behavior of his peers Bennet or the heartbreak induced by his crush, Lilly. It could have been the result of both. Gradually losing faith in humanity and choosing violence happens only when someone is pushed beyond all boundaries that they have set for themselves.

In the play, Punk Rock, one character that needs to be scrutinized is Bennet. He appears dodgy and rude and has a thing for strong language. He snaps anyone abrupt if found that their ideologies or sayings distort with him. He goes a step further to abuse his fellow peers if he finds their theories or ideas wayward. Simon's portrayal of Bennet is very essential for the readers. Understanding Bennet and his nature is very essential because it takes the readers on a ride of emotions. Simon emphasizes that values devalue themselves for nihilists like Bennet and Lilly. Simon's narrative and the character assessment makes the readers think that the rude behaviour happens when teens give up trying to satisfy the established order by the society. When this happens to the highest values, that is, when the basic principles organizing our reality no longer organize or order our lives. By assessing the characters of Simon's plays, it is understandable that nihilism is much more than an outlook. Specifically, the nihilism he speaks of is not the view that everything is meaningless, that there's not really any point to anything we do, that what seems to us to be "everything" is really "nothing." The nihilism that can be seen in the characters of Simon Stephens is first of all something that happens and not something that the characters perceive it as good or bad, thinking about reality. Nihilism is therefore a

sequence of events leading to gradual change in one's character. Consequently, overcoming nihilism cannot depend on discovering the falsehood or moral error of "nihilistic" attitudes or views and convincing their proponents of other, non-nihilistic ones. Overcoming nihilism must mean, first of all, the modification of reality, the modification of what happens, and not of one's outlook. Teens should give more importance to what is inside than judging others by their outlook.

The common view of the nihilistic characters of Punk Rock is that the revaluation of all values is not an affirmation of life as it is. Life finds no values, no order independent of it, to which it could correspond or not; it creates its own values. This does not mean that each of us is free to create our own rules. The dark theme portrayed in Simon Stephens' plays suggests that rules cannot be formed by teens until they begin to act; they are not prior to our life. The affirmation of life is therefore not a supplemental, reflexive act of assessment but is life itself. To "revaluate values" does not mean to replace one set of values, one list of rules (which negate life and are therefore nihilistic), with another (which affirm life).

The revaluation of all values happens just when our lives push off the weight of the illusions that burden them and request themselves around new sorting out principles, when these principles—these "values"—are the result of a life that depends just on itself, not on manages "from outside." Which implies: seeing that life winds up unrestricted creation and is never again a reaction to challenges forced "from outside." The revaluation of values ought to free life as opposed to try—in vain—to bring it leveled out. Which implies: if basic values are to experience a radical revaluation, it won't be sufficient to comprehend them in an unexpected way: one should live in an unexpected way. The "revaluation of values" is conceivable just on the off chance that it is a plausibility of your life or mine. It's anything but a scholarly task. Philosophy can fix the world's sickness and call attention to way out of crisis just seeing that the "life" in the expression "philosophy of life" isn't only the article yet the subject too—just seeing that a "life philosophy" is itself life and not only a hypothesis of life. Which additionally implies that one can't initially comprehend it so as to apply it to life later? Here, the action of comprehension and the action of application can't be isolated from each other

Different characters of Simon's plays advanced a question, is "truth" only a value, a state of life? The appropriate response is unmistakably yes: it is just with regards to a specific life, just by prudence of its centrality, the "weight" it bears for a given life that knowledge implies anything. Knowledge, cognition, can't be isolated from the self confirmation of life. Which implies—on the off chance that we consider that the insistence of life isn't, as we have seen, an optional demonstration, the acknowledgment of something that as of now is, however a demonstration of

life itself—that knowledge can't be isolated from action. On the off chance that our cognition conveys something fundamental about the world to us, this happens simply because we are experiencing along these lines, not some other way. Knowledge expelled from this component, from life—awareness or figured left to itself—would be totally dumb, perplexed, blind. It is life that opens the world and gives us knowledge. The pathology of life is, in the meantime, the pathology of knowledge: a sort of idiocy.

WAYS TO OVERCOME NIHILISM

A decent way to manage nihilism is balance it with the diametrically opposite probability. A situation where there is ideal meaning to life, with impeccable bliss, no distress or shameful, and where the advancement of nature guarantees this all around. On the off chance that you see the psychological issues humans would have with this, you will start to value the need of the psychological elements that likewise lead one to nihilism.

On the most proficient method to manage it, you could likely peruse Nietzsche. Nietzsche had supplanted Plato's concept of self knowledge, with the idea of self creation, the drive to take control and form nature in the way you need, and find meaningful. So what ever be the variables that influence you to lose trust, demise, lose hope, infection, love, failure and so forth the substance of the human spirit is to have the capacity to take control and react, and in this way discover meaning in at any rate the exertion, if not in its success. The stoic and platonic philosophers offer another point of view on this. Utilize the brain to comprehend your general surroundings, including yourself, and discover meaning through this process. Another methodology is offered by philosophers like Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, which includes tolerating nihilism as guaranteed, and psychologically adjusting to it here and there. The appropriate responses that endeavor to do some sort of experimental brain research on this inquiry, (you can't be totally nihilistic in light of the fact that you get up each morning) are feeling the loss of the central matter.

On the off chance that you leave a general suspicion aside, you are a being in time, on the planet. The progression of time itself makes a need to choose activities that lead to various conceivable universes. The not doing anything is itself one conceivable choice of unendingly many. Along these lines choosing to do anything or nothing consequently attests value to said explicit activity, giving it all the more meaning than different options. Indeed, even a picking an activity arbitrarily would offer value to choosing to state additionally meaning to the arbitrary picking over the determined perception dependent on result.

Some meaning statements are better for organic frameworks. Attesting additionally meaning to eating then not eating or mating over not mating make a survivable framework while different ones don't.

One can theoretically envision a framework where meaning isn't given yet this framework is free of an eyewitness and options. Watching something and in this manner being a subject itself assumes meaning for such a substance to emerge. This presupposition is given in the human on different layers like, needing to eat, go to the latrine, and so on all the time, having a heartbeat or mind movement, watching the world and organizing it dependent on specific standards, utilizing language to transmit meaning, etc.

So existing as human is itself a meaningful structure which is required for nihilism to exist. The activities picked and the observations one has along these lines nullify nihilism. Nihilism is simple to the sentence "This sentence doesn't exist." refuting required presuppositions and in this manner fizzling. To me nihilism appears to commit an error in its decision that can be best portrayed with this analogy: There's no natural number with the highest value (extreme meaning), subsequently the numbers have no value (there's no meaning) or are generally little (moderately meaningless) in examination.

I think many individuals commit this error while hunting down the meaning of their life. Anyway in the individual case you depict the particular practical options have distinctive values that can be thought about. As opposed to being pitiful about not getting a definitive meaning you ought to be upbeat about you picking the highest conceivable choice and how huge it's value is contrasted with the other realistic options you had.

II. OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the nihilistic characters in Simon Stephens' plays and the way they perceive life.
- To understand the importance of compassion and how it acts as a remedy to overcome hatred.
- To understand the emotions of various characters portrayed by Simon Stephens.
- To suggest ideas to abolish hatred spewed by modern teenagers.

III. CONCLUSION

Teenage is a tricky part in life. A little banter about your favourite star or a little jibe about your favourite mathematical theory, the one you have based your belief on, bam! Teens get triggered and lose their chill. Easy provocation and confrontation with their fellow peers will be the outcome. The major theme Simon has painted in his plays is violence and bullying among teens apart from sexual abuse. As discussed in the paper, teenagers' behaviour is dependent on various factors like proper parenting, proper upbringing during the early part of their teen, i.e.; regular conversing, talking about what is bothering them and so on. Failing to give them constant care and attention, failing to teach them morals would result in the emergence of nihilism within them. Hence it is very important to shower them with love and care and teach how

values at a very young age. Compassion and love must be the two traits every teen should possess to make the world a better place to live in.

IV. REFERENCES

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