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Decoding of Psychological Consequences in Post-War Generation After World War II: An Analytical Study of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*

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Abstract:

The pages of the history of Britain prominently mark World War II. This world war second doesn't just remain to itself but with it brings its effect, its result that is the period of 'post-war'. This period in Britain's history came after World War II. This war doesn't just end by itself; it also has an impact and produces a legacy known as the post-war era. Post-war refers to the things that were created, produced, or experienced directly following World War second. Most of the children lost the opportunity of schooling and a good social life. The war not only affected children's life due to the loss of parents, but also adults. Many people suffered from illnesses, injuries, psychological traumas, economic distress, national ruin, and psychological issues such as sleeplessness. One of those prominent writers who wrote about the psychological consequences in post war generation after World War second was John Osborne. One such work where he very explicitly brings out the psychological consequences in post-war generation after World War II is *Look Back in Anger*.

Keywords: Psychological, youth, issues, depression, anger, frustration, isolation.

Introduction:

It is said after world war second the condition of families was such, instead of reducing the stress and illness they were increasing it, children and adults all were becoming victimization of this. In British history, the time after the second world war is known as the post-war era. It influenced all people of this age. Collective consciousness was something which was affected in such a manner that can't be ignored and most famous writers of that period wrote about it. John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* is a book about the post war period of world war second and its psychological consequences. The setting of this play is 1950s

England and is a realist play. It was written in 1955 and published in 1957. It is the most famous work by John Osborne. Some critics say that this play by John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* is actually an inspiration drawn from his own life. He married five times but the character of this play was inspired by his first wife. The play revolves around the struggles and marital tension of an educated and very intelligent man Jimmy Porter and his wife Alison Porter. Despite being a very intelligent man, Jimmy porter is jobless. The marital tension between the young couple is a result of the difference in status. Husband belongs to the working-class family and the wife on the other hand has an elite background. This creates frustration in the husband and the love and affection they had that led to this love marriage has now been clouded by immense frustration, agony, and anger. The class difference and its exasperation were a result of post war. Not only this but the vexation was also a result of alienation caused by post war. Post-war societies are always in the process of coming to terms with the consequences of war. Often people feel alienated and disillusioned with their present world, feeling that the old normal has gone away forever. This feeling of loss and disorientation can be felt by all members of society, but it is particularly acute for those who had lost loved ones or property during the war. This was exactly the case with Jimmy as he had seen his father die and now the accumulation of that feeling of loss, class discrimination, unemployment all led to his anger towards his wife Alison. This is the reason he usually said to his wife “you can’t understand human emotions since you have never experienced human suffering”, this doesn’t end here, once in frustration he also says to his wife,” I hope you give birth to a child one day and that child dies, only then will you know about true human suffering”. These all statements highlight the suppressed anger in Jimmy. The fact however is there was not just one Jimmy but many Jimmys which were born as a result of post war. The war brought vast changes in the life of people. During the war period, there was an increase in job opportunity, weddings, growing incomes, poverty and even some families being forced to relocate in pursuit of new employment. If we look at new factories’ orders, economists focus on products such as vehicles, automobile, dryers and washers as well as capital goods such as machine equipment. Although the post-war generation did not participate actively in world war II, it had consequences in the aftermath, such as national trauma, poor economic conditions, and insufficient health care and education. During world war II, residents suffered damage to their homes, trains, and industry. People required a variety of arrangements, including basic needs and employment. This is what the writer, John Osborne has tried to portray in his work *Look Back in Anger*. The play deals with themes of class conflict, love, marriage, and social injustice. It is widely considered a seminal work in the British angry young men movement, which was

characterized by its depiction of working-class people and its criticism of the British class system. The play explores the psychological consequences of the characters' experiences and their interactions with each other.

Decoding of Psychological Consequences:

Jimmy Porter is a character who feels alienated from the world around him. He is a working-class man who is educated and intelligent, but he cannot find a place for himself in the middle-class world that his wife Alison aspires to. His sense of alienation leads him to lash out at others, including Alison and his friend Cliff, and he becomes increasingly isolated and embittered as the play progresses.

The title of the play refers to Jimmy's anger, which is a pervasive theme throughout the work. His anger is a response to the injustices he perceives in the world around him, as well as his own sense of inadequacy. His anger leads him to say hurtful things to Alison, and he becomes violent at times.

The characters in *Look Back in Anger* are frustrated by the limitations of their lives. Jimmy feels frustrated by the class system, Alison feels frustrated by her marriage, and Cliff feels frustrated by his inability to help his friends. This sense of frustration leads to a feeling of hopelessness and despair.

The author has portrayed discrimination through his play *Look Back in Anger*. The play's setting is post-world war II England, and it portrays the lives of a young couple, Jimmy and Alison Porter, who are struggling with their social status and their relationship.

Jimmy's sense of inferiority is a result of the class system that he feels is working against him. He is constantly reminded of his lower status, and this leads him to feel inadequate and unworthy. He is also resentful of the privileges and advantages that middle-class people enjoy. Throughout the play *Look Back in Anger*, John Osborne has presented the predicaments of people after world war II. The title of this play signifies the anger of Jimmy Porter's which is focused on the past, rather than living in the current situation or looking forward to the future. The condition of society's people depicts how people were divided into two different classes in post-war years. Discrimination separated the people into upper middle-class and working class. Jimmy's character in this play reveals all the problems prevalent in Britain during post-war years. Especially, focuses on the conventional politics, loss of faith, anger, and frustration as well as loss of cultural identity. In modern age these issues can be observed everywhere which gives rise to tension and bitterness in marital relationships. The play articulates against the lower-class youth people who are connected with the world. However, Jimmy calls himself

or identify with the working class but from the starting of the play, we see his attitude of intellectual superiority. This is actually a dramatic study of a psychotic marriage relationship between upper-class and middle-class people. In this play, a modern viewpoint has been expressed. Jimmy also discusses sexual satisfaction and the need of being honest with oneself when expressing one's sentiments. The story of the play *Look Back in Anger* begins with Jimmy and Alison Porter.

Through the story of Jimmy and Alison Osborne discusses the condition of the post-war generation, which has rendered the working-class youth completely depressed. The town where they live depicts an image of middle-class individuals living in England during the post-war period, though Jimmy is educated but does not receive the results as he expected from his education because he belongs to the working class. Even though Jimmy is a well-educated young man, he is unable to find decent employment due to his social level. He has a university degree and works as a journalist, a salesman for advertising, and a vacuum cleaner salesman. Following that, he begins to run a sweet stall with a friend at his home to make ends meet in a society where such a job is unsuitable for an educated man. As a result, he is enraged by his life. Jimmy's insecurity intensified as he tries to figure out where he fits into the world. We find him in the middle of a sexist and class conflict. Two of the four main protagonists in the play, Cliff and Jimmy, are from the working class, whilst Alison and her friend Helena are from the upper class. Jimmy also addresses the disparities of the class structure on an individual basis, in addition to complaining about his pointless life. Jimmy Porter experienced an identity crisis as a result of the social and sexual tension. Jimmy demonstrates his contempt towards his wife Alison's friend and mother by making the comment they embody predatory, selfish, uneducated, and insensitive society. He remains fail in creating pleasurable sexual impulse in his wife because of Alison's higher status. Jimmy's anxiety and identity crisis are aggravated due to his father figure. He experiences a 'stream of consciousness'.

As the writer Carl Bode recommends that, "Jimmy understands he is the displaced academic, which irritates him greatly." (Tecimer, 2005, p.12) He believes that his university degree will enable him to obtain a decent job, and he even claims that his university degree will not enable him to become a member of a higher social class; yet, he has tried and failed numerous times. The truth is that a university credential will not help him better in establishing his social standing. As a result, according to Bode, "Jimmy is a man who tried many times but was unable to become middle-class." (Tecimer, 2005, p.12) Jimmy Porter is often regarded as the modern British drama's first anti-hero. He is an anti-establishment, non-middle-class man who is angry with life, his friends, his wife, society, religion, and women. The characters in the

play are more likely to suffer heart disease, diabetes, and depression as a result of these factors. He doesn't compare himself to prior generations because his generation is still reeling from the disappointments of world war II. The protagonist, Jimmy, and those in his class who are related to him, have suffered greatly at the hands of those who are from the upper class. Alison describes her social standing as belonging to a high social class; the same is in the case of her parents and acquaintances. She appears in the play as one of the key characters. Jimmy, a working-class man, whom she married, is a university graduate in bachelor's degree. After a while, the working classes and the middle class begin to share plenty of common goals. Jimmy and Alison's marriage is the result of it, but there is a great chasm between them because they are from different social classes.

In the post-war year's psychological trauma faced by children, was in form such as emotional, physical or sexual abuse. Children experienced this trauma in the post-war years. It was depressing for those who had recently lost their parents or lovers and this shock made them mentally unfit. There was a change in people's behaviour, mood or thinking in the society. It occurs when people were experiencing stress as a result of social, job or family activities. Those who suffered from mental illness were at risk for a variety of illnesses, including heart attacks and diabetes. Many indications of adulthood are present in this state. They began to exhibit symptoms such as melancholy, anxieties, worries, upset, exhaustion, inability to focus, feelings of sadness, inability to sleep properly, hopelessness about forthcoming events drink or drug usage, excessive anger, low energy, tension, and violence or aggression. They also lost their identity in society and were unable to control themselves, when young people became depressed and anxious as a result of their suffering, numerous young people committed suicide depression is a major theme in John Osborne's play, *Look Back in Anger*. The characters in the play experience a range of emotional and psychological issues, including depression.

The loss, suffering, discrimination, alienation, male domination all combines to lead to the depression by the characters of the play. If we individually take into account each character then the depression in each character somewhere or the other is a result of the post war period which in turn is reflection of the psychological consequence caused by the post war of world war second. Which is clear, through Alison who is deeply unhappy her marriage to Jimmy. She feels trapped and isolated, and she cannot find a way out of her situation. Her depression is a result of the social pressures she faces as a woman in a male-dominated society and the sense of hopelessness that comes with being in a loveless marriage.

On the other hand Jimmy is deeply angry and frustrated with the world around him. He feels that the social system is rigid against him, and he is unable to find a place for himself in

society. His depression is a result of his feelings of isolation and his sense of hopelessness about the future. Cliff also feels depressed who is Jimmy's close friend, and he is also struggling with his own issues. He is deeply concerned about his friend's mental state and is often the one who tries to mediate between Jimmy and Alison. However, his efforts to help often leave him feeling powerless and depressed.

The play *Look Back in Anger* depicts the complex emotional and psychological issues that arise from the characters' struggles with depression. The play highlights the ways in which social injustice, isolation, and hopelessness can lead to mental health issues such as depression. It is a powerful commentary on the human condition and the impact of social systems on individuals and relationships. John Osborne portrays the psychological tension that results from class discrimination and social inequality. The play highlights the alienation, inferiority complex, resentment, and depression that working-class people face in a society that is dominated by the middle class.

Depression has been presented in the play through various different linked emotions as well like anger, gloom, and frustration. For a multitude of causes, Osborne's characters are clearly angered and antagonistic. Jimmy may treat Alison severely as a result of her lack of attentiveness and love for him. He is irritated because he wishes her to be more excited and active, but she is suspicious of him and remains silent. Alison should have remained in the flat and struggled with him to overcome his problems, he says. He claims that his father's death had a significant impact on him.

His father perished in front of his eyes. In post-war British society, that was an awful condition for him to suffer alone. Jimmy begins to assert his pain to his wife after their marriage, but he is unable to do it personally. Jimmy and Alison is a married couple that are having problems and are continuously yelling at each other, indicating that they are estranged from one another due to class discrimination. She expresses her own sentiments and thoughts concerning the traditional view of family life. Alison embodies upper-class principles and ethics, and she is unable to relate to those from the lower class. Colonel Redfern, Alison's father, was sixty years old. He has an upper-class appearance and a pleasant demeanour. He advises Alison and Jimmy to maintain a neutral demeanour among them and not exhibit their feelings. It will make it easier for them to live in society together. In Osborne's drama, he is the only character who approaches marital problems traditionally. He has known for a long time that Jimmy and Alison have troubles, and he is not in favour of divorce Jimmy. He believes that a quarrel is not the answer to their difficulties. Even in times of difficulty, they should maintain connected through marital relationship. John Osborne reflects the core qualities of the

traditional upper class in British culture. On the contrary, Helena Charles is from a wealthy household. She is Alison's best friend and stays with them for a few days in their home. She writes her father a note requesting that he should pick up Alison from Jimmy's place. Alison is persuaded by Helena to leave Jimmy's house owing to marital issues. Jimmy is unconcerned about pre-war British social traditions and establishes his own social rules. In the play, Jimmy Porter has been portrayed as an 'angry young man' who is irritated by the scenario and his living situation. As a result of his frustration with his wife's behaviour, Jimmy Porter transforms into an 'angry young man'. Jimmy is enraged for a variety of reasons. Anger is a prominent theme throughout *Look Back in Anger*, and he is described as an angry young man. In this play, the author uses a proper term for the main character Jimmy and gives him the title of 'angry young man'. Alison, Jimmy's wife, doesn't understand why they should stay married, but her husband is influenced by changes in family life and marital ideals during the transition from modern to postmodern. Jimmy Porter's anxiety over the current situation stems from his failure to connect with his own past, which has a severe impact on his personal and social identity.

In terms of psychology, Jimmy is angered and dissatisfied with his life in Osborne's play, and unable to blend in with his environment and others. Jimmy's dissatisfaction with social ideals and moral principles turns into a scathing critique of society's moral foundation. He becomes frustrated and enraged when he recalls the past, and for this reason, he refuses to accept it any longer. Because of his dissatisfaction with his existence, Jimmy despises everybody throughout the play. He remembers his old companions' names. He becomes depressed and frustrated when they are not present in his current life, since he misses them. He attempts to fit into upper-class society as a soldier and wishes to share a traditional people's lifestyle with them. His wrath appears to be directed at the contrast between his working-class background and that of his wife. His repetitive lifestyle, which lacks variety and excitement, is also a source of stress for him. Most writers at the time understood the play to be a drama of political and social opposition, referring to the movement as 'angry young men'. In a way, Osborne's characters, unlike Jimmy, are no longer looking back in wrath, but rather fearfully to the future, believing that nothing will go as well as it had before. Since Jimmy Porter is a young man who is not afraid to take chances in this play. He is enraged by every British organization, including the Church, the monarchy, and the government. He is also opposed to Sunday papers, despite the reality that he delivers them every weekend.

Isolation is the feeling of separation, loneliness, internal conflict and estrangement of a person, which makes him to suffer in the society. This is another psychological reflection of the effect of post war period in the minds of people. It refers to the person, object, or group

which removes him from the society. The origination of the word 'Isolation' is from the Latin word. In other words, various words are used instead of the word isolation, such as alienation, detachment, estrangement, separation and so on. Alienation as a fundamental theme appears frequently in postmodern literature. It has been utilized in a variety of religious, philosophical, literary and social works. Self-destructive behaviour follows a feeling of loneliness or isolation. Alienation has reached on dangerous dimensions in the modern society.

Throughout the play *Look Back in Anger*, the author tells us about his own life and his experience through the character of Jimmy. This play also focuses on the theme of alienation, inner conflict and hostility which is faced by the central character Jimmy in the post-war years. It explains how Jimmy feels frustrated from his life, society, friends and wife. This play presents a picture of younger generation, how they are affected by the loneliness and feel insecurity in the society. According to the play, isolation in the society takes the first position in new youth. Secondly, isolation in religion and anger against the Church drive individuals towards alienation. Thirdly, the condition of the middle-class marriage has been revealed to the reader as one of the most remarkable problems of the post-war Britain, resulting in alienation. Fourthly, the lack of connection with the past produces frustration that leads to alienation in the process of reconstruction. These types of isolation were the compounds of alienation among the youth generation of post-war British society. These forms of isolation are mostly responsible for the alienation of today's youth.

In this way, alienation is defined as a psychological condition in which an individual's dissatisfaction with his or her current situation, social norms, and society as a whole causes frustration on a conscious level while preventing the individual from adapting to social norms and values in daily life. Mental illnesses have a significant negative impact on society. Similarly, people are losing their courage as they struggle for survival and face social challenges. As a result of emotional tension, they become quickly discouraged. Imagine a human with mental, psychological, or societal challenges in the post-world war II era. Osborne conveys a number of moral lessons instead of confronting the issues, the protagonist complains about the people and circumstances in which he finds himself. Jimmy's representation is meant to reflect the changing moods of today's generation. His love-hate relationship is one of the reasons for bringing bitterness in his marriage life. Loss of emotion, endurance, and compatibility, according to Osborne, leads to the loss of relationships. The relationships of marriage cannot last without emotion, honesty, endurance, and, most importantly, compatibility. The thought that modern society is suffering from a lack of sensation and words appears to be a recurring topic throughout Osborne's English plays. It portrays how the hero's

isolation develops into impatience with modernity and an utter rejection of it. The thirty-six-year journey that began with social protest has resulted in alienation and loss of self.

Conclusion

The psychological effects of World conflict II on the generation that followed the conflict are intricate and multifaceted. The trauma of war and its aftermath had a significant impact on people and communities, influencing their attitudes, convictions, and actions for years to come. Individuals' sense of identity was profoundly affected by the conflict on both a personal and a societal level. People felt alienated, depressed and isolated after the war. The class difference created tension and depression. Discrimination between different slabs of society lead to tension, humiliation, aggression, which all summed up to psychological tensions. The suppression caused anxiety amongst many. This created tussle in the minds of individuals. As per Dominic Dromgoole, English theatre director "Osborne's characters, more than any in British theatre before them, spoke directly to a generation, articulating the fears, frustrations and disappointments of post-war youth." This is clearly visible in the work *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne where the young couple Jimmy Porter and Alison Porter, and their friends Cliff Lewis and Helena Charles represent the frustration, suppressed anger, confusion,

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