DIGITAL HUMAN RIGHTS: TEACHING IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

Dr. Alka Singh
Assistant Professor of English (Selection Grade)
Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow

Abstract

Digital Human rights is a significant domain of studies in the contemporary geo-cultural milieu. It warrants several patterns of discussing socio-cultural engagements of literary and visual texts. While analyzing the patterns of Digital Human Rights with reference to language and literature- studies, it is important to understand reading and realization culture in academia pertaining to intellectual conflicts emanating from information concerning social sympathy, moral duty and preventable destruction of unjustly treated narratives on human rights of individuals, organizations and other democratic set-ups. Discourses on Digital Human Rights, today, immediately draw growing attention towards a dozen of liquid variables in teaching and research, particularly in post-colonial and postmodern classes of higher education institutions. Digital Human Rights may be read from the perspectives of Engaged Literature and literature with a cause. The philosophical concept of "engaged literature" relates to the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre, who talked about the responsibility of an artist towards society. It is understood as an application of an art by an individual who defines himself or herself by consciously engaging in an action for the cause of a society. The present research paper aims to look at Digital Human Rights and Engaged Literature in select visual texts with special reference to Tony Scott's Enemy of the State,a political action thriller film.

Keywords: Digital Human Rights, Engaged Literature,Academic Discourses, Visual Culture, Literature and Cinema,*Enemy of the State*

Introduction

In the fast-changing phase of human life, perceptions and emotions are changing so fast that defining any construct from any objective pattern becomes quite a flashy, uncommon thing. In this context,Digital Human Rights is a New Research Challenge that reorients the paradigms of post colonial and postmodern literature and language Classes of HEIs from the perspectives of the canons of human rights.The concept of Digital Human Rights can be scaled with the philosophical concept of "engaged literature" (the literature with a cause).

Arts and Humanities are brilliantly spaced in today's technological era. Cinema as a mode of engaging the socio-cultural, legal, ethical, and moral issues connected to human rights has emerged up an exemplarymode in teaching and understanding some specific humanitarian issues*a proposto*the human rights crisis. By virtue of their treatment of tackling serious, grave, and moral issues, and the ability to convey a powerful message in a short period, short movies or visual texts and full-fledged long feature films have become quite popular in recent years. These cinema forms as visual texts are also used as a tool by many human rights defenders, towards raising awareness about a particular human rights issue and to inspire the need for social change.

It is Jean-Paul Sartre who talked about the responsibility of an artist towards society. This idea is understood as an application of an art by an individual who defines himself or herself by consciously engaging in an action for the cause of a society. Sartre's "argument really turns on the nature of our concept of the individual's relation to reality and that to our attitude toward life in the world. Here, Sartre addressing himself to those of us who believe that the great social and political questions of our time should be the concern of every member of society. He writes as one sincerely convinced that we can no longer afford to ignore such problems but must seek to meet them face to face and contribute in whatever way we can to their solution."It is appropriate to mention that any "human rights literature" is based on the idea of "engaged literature" as defined by the French writer and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in his famous book *What is Literature?* . As per the idea propagated by Sartre, the role of literature is to influence the action for the cause of welfare of the society, the needy, and the oppressed. The intellectuals, the ordinary citizens, and those who have the power to act are influenced through the power of literature to take stand against the odd and wrongs done to subjugated ones or the exploited ones in any society. Such literature is a committed literature. Committed Literature is a source of inspiration and guidance for the marginalized, the subjugated, or the oppressed ones and it functions as a mirror for those in power or who are the oppressor. Therefore, this literature contributes to the structure of society through the realization of socialist democracy.

Engagement in common parlance may be understood as an individual moral challenge that involves a genuine responsibility of adapting freely made choices to socially useful ends, rather than as taking some position on particular political, social, or other issues. To a great extent, any human rights literature deals directly or indirectly with the morals and psychology of its readers and writers who havea genuine understanding of human rights, human dignity, and human problems, regional and global social crises. Human rights literature does not believe in art for art's sake; rather, it inspires moral-social duty through the power of creativity that calls for right actions and thoughts that bear fruit to ensure a better future.

(Peer Reviewed and Refereed Journal)

While human rights literature is about social sympathy, equitable treatment before the laws, comfort, hope, passion and strength to create a better human world, digital human rights talk about new digital world of technology that provides various means to exercise human rights under threat, for instance data protection and privacy issues, the use of surveillance technologies and related assumptions, digital identity, online violence and hidden terms of harassment, risking access to various communication networks etc. In another words digital human rights are extended human rights in the global network of networks i.e., in an age of internet. The role of literature is very powerful in the protection of human rights in the digital era in broader terms of promoting human values that inspires and motivates an individual for the cause of rightful social action. Internet connectivity has increased the capacity of every individual to connect with hearts and mind of the masses, exercising their human rights in the overall architectural design of the internet. Therefore it is significant to map the relationship between internet protocols i.e., the standard parameter that regulate the internet functions and human rights. This also implies that having open, secure and reliable connectivity is the basic requirement to the rights to privacy, speech and expression, and assembly.

While analyzing ruminations on Digital Human Rights with reference to language and literature studies, it is important to understand reading and realizing the culture in academia pertaining to intellectual conflicts emanating from information concerning social sympathy, moral duty and preventable destruction of unjustly treated narratives concerning human rights of individuals, organizations and other democratic set-ups. Discourses on Digital Human Rights today immediately draws a growing attention towards a dozen of liquefied variables in teaching and research particularly in post colonial and postmodern classes of higher education institution. For instance, States with myriad laws to regulate internet, the "network of networks" with increasing difficulties in mapping the relationship between human rights concerns online and internet standardized protocols that regulate the functioning of internet in the architectural design of its technological management. Promoting a safe, open and reliable network towards right to privacy, freedom of speech and expression, assembly and related enabling rights are under threatening attacks, if the "network of networks" protected and enabling characteristics will not be properly described and strengthened towards human rights issues and challenges in the digital era. A sincere study of online readings and perception of development in language and literature researches reflect on the power of art forms, visual texts, films, different genres of literature, and language or lingua franca concerning human rights issues and concerns as " engaged literature'. A reception and interpretation of Digital Human Rights insist on professional commitments to call for action on the issues of "Right to Privacy", "Right to Freedom of Speech and Expressions", "mass surveillance", algorithmic systems risking "low" or "minimal" technologies claiming detection of individual's inner emotional states based on physical, psychological or

behavioral pattern, advance technologies of "artificial intelligence" dystopia and "censor monitoring" concerning online human rights or human rights in the digital era. Discourses on online and offline human rights literature pertaining to various academic disciplines and film or visual textual discourses on advance technologies, especially when the European Union is on the cusp of adopting Artificial Intelligence Act and promotion and safety measures associated with "human emotions recognition systems" in European Market is highly alarming, conscious and chilling potential revelations that are disproportionate and odd with human rights issues. The popular known " Lux_Leaks" case with reference to the decision of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in Halet v. Luxembourg Case in relation to safeguard the rights of whistleblower stands a relevant and enriching literature that reads how hundreds of multinational companies plotted complex strategies to reduce their tax bills to almost nascent. The case is informative of fresh insights into corporate taxation leading to debate on tax evasion techniques, transparency, fairness and justice in broader sense of the term. However, civil and democratic societies and legislators shall always infer from such derivatives to take stand against violations of human rights, principles of trustworthiness and justice to human - centricity. Againreferring to the completion of one year war and related crimes on the pretext of Ukraine -Russia War , the talk about being sensitive to safeguarding the rights of Media and Press people should not be allow to escape our much needed attention. MFRR i.e., Media Freedom Rapid Response is giving voice to collective consciousness towards fundamental security issues and human rights concerns of professionals and journalistic sector who has kept the world informed with extreme courage in covering the war and valuable information sensitizing public consciousness in hours of need and distress. An action speaking of public interest is of paramount importance. Influx of largely gathered information, related to literature and technical language nuances with reference to Digital Human Rights are heard globally as a need to understand the relationship between human rights and standard internet protocol s with a need to understand the technological management of internet architectural infrastructure being network of networks. A plethora of ideas, content, and literature and its manifestation and perception in different form of arts and cultural studies are opening vast vistas horizons and doors to adopt and adept teaching and research proposals in classrooms of higher education institutions.

There lies a great power in arts, films, visual texts and other relevant manifestations of different genres of literature that read and speak of responsible human society and social crisis, exploitation and human relationship of human rights concerns. There are some powerful movies which stand as worthy exemplary visual texts that have sensory experiences and triggers human emotions. They connect audiences to emotions they might not feel in other contexts. These emotions can inspire awareness and just action. In fact these visual

texts may be read in classrooms to raise intriguing questions about the depiction of human rights issues, history, and real-life people's experiences.

The present paper is bringing into discussion some select amusing short movies and one long feature film that deal with an array of human rights topics and social concerns with important legal dimensions as engaged literature– from the rights of the disabled to environmental issues. Each of these art pieces stood important visual texts in understanding the relationship of digital creativity, freedom of expressions, privacy issues with reading experiences of visual texts that have motivation for a healthy society. For instance, BotandPüsök's*Angela*(2015)is a short film of 33 minutes that deals with the issues of discrimination towards the Roma people in Southeastern Europe and the everyday struggles they face. The story is set in the Romanian region of Transylvania where a majority of the population is Hungarian- speaking. A young Roma girl (Angela) is planning and preparing to give birth here. She discusses her relationship with God, the gender roles in her communities, and the difficulties that Roma girls encounter during their upbringing. The viewers soon find Angela in a difficult situation due to her disadvantageous position in the past. She was kidnapped to be married. She was then taken again by her future husband. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the movie *Angela* is not only about Angela, it is about all the challenges that Roma people face in Romania and Hungary as well as elsewhere in Europe, as they try to integrate into local communities. *Angela* contains raw footage of the everyday lives of Transylvanian Roma. It depicts how they cope with their living as marginal of society. David Fedele's *E-Wasteland*(2012) is another short feature, in 20 minutes' only. For people in the developed society, buying new electronic appliances and gadgets and discarding the old ones is a common thing. However, it is important to think on a very pertinent question i.e., what happens with our old electronics?

The data on global e waste mentions that

> humans produce around 50 million tons of electronic waste every year. It is also said that some 200,000 tons of these electronic goods are sent to Ghana in West Africa. Percentage-wise, this could be a small figure, but it is still a lot of waste for a not-so-large, developing country. Many of these electronics are sold and used as second-hand goods, while others are simply thrown away at a dump. *E-Wasteland* is a movie set in one of the slums in Ghana which were built around a dump site where many of these electronics end up. The movie portrays the people who live in the Agbogbloshie slum in Ghana's capital Accra. Agbogbloshie is, in fact, the largest electronics (or e-waste) dump site in the whole of Africa.

The backdrop of *E-Wasteland*   informs that there were over 30,000 settlers from different poorer regions in Ghana for whom the slum was their home. These are uneducated people ignored by state authorities. They have no job prospects or marketable skills. These

people resort to this e- waste that surrounds them and try to make a living by recycling it. The viewers, here, are taken on a visual tour through the consequences of unregulated e-waste. The viewers find development policies as great failures, while at the same time there happens alearning about another defeat of the modern economy.Directed by Alfonso Moral and Roser Corella *Machine Man* (2011)   is another short visual,spanning fifteen minutes. Concerning the issues of modernity and global development in the 21st century, it draws our attention to the millions of minimum wage labourers who tirelessly work day and night like machines.The plot and story line revolve around several workers in Bangladesh, one of the most populous and poorest countries in the world. Bangladesh is known for being a supplier of cheap labour. In this small, but crowded country, thousands of people do machine-like repetitive work with their hands. The viewers are taken on an inner journey through many different industries. We see women who collect coal and work all day with their bare feet. Young boys who should be in school make bricks. Other children collect and sort plastic bottles for as long as twelve hours a day. Thin, starved men transport heavy sacks. We find these labourers being destroyed out of their health by working in inhumane conditions. Yet, they have no other options as hundreds of employers exist eagerly to pay the minimum wage for the worst possible conditions. The featured text shows that in a society of modern technologies, there are producers in abundance who hire a large human labor force to perform the most difficult tasks, ignoring their workers' inhumane conditions and human rights.

Directed by We Ra *The Glass Man*(2013) is another brilliant visual of 20 minutes only that stood as one of the most inspiring human rights short movies. *The Glass Man* deals with a topic much ignored i.e., the rights of the disabled. It discusses the stigma that comes with physical or mental disability. It peacefully leaves us with great optimism and realization in our hearts. It ensures that things can be improved.

The Glass Man(2013) brings us a story of a young disabled boy named Kaung Htet. He grew up in poverty in a society of Myanmar. Kaung Htet suffers from osteoporosis. Consequently, due to osteoporosis he had been through breaking of his bones over 40 times since his birth. He could not afford medication and continued to live without proper treatment. Since his childhood, he has been treated as odd and different by the members of his community. He never got a chance to develop to his potential. Nevertheless, Kaung Htet perseveres his courage and spirit. He volunteers as a teacher in a local school. He started giving support and advice to other disabled children and adults who want to improve their lives. Slowly the young man feels empowered, and is full of hope that others can be empowered, too. The Glass Manportrays an incredible struggle for the rights of the disabled in a small, local community as well as in the entire country. In a brilliant 20 minutes show, this visual text teaches us lessons which can be taken and applied in different cultural contexts.

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Apart from these short films on human rights issues and socio-cultural dialogues, we can refers Tony Scott's *Enemy of the State* (1998), an American political action thriller on digital technologies explaining human rights issues. The students and professionals can also use this full long feature film to educate themselves on data protection and privacy issues, digital identity, the use of surveillance technologies and other extension of human rights concerns in the internet age. *Enemy of the State*tells the story of a group of National Security Agents who conspire to kill a congressman who would not allow to pass a legislation that would be a threat to people's breach of privacy and other related human concerns. A good entertainment, the film holds significance on some very pertinent issues of public importance. The film portrays a Lawyer Robert Clayton Dean (played by the actor Will Smith) who unknowingly possess a video recording where Thomas Reynolds (Jon Voight), an official in the National Security Agency is seen involved in the murder of a congressman who was attempting to block a bill granting greater powers to the National Security Agency. Reynolds and his team use the vast resources of the agency rich in digital technologies to hunt down Dean, who is forced to go on the run and escapism. Through various twists and turns, Dean eventually joins up hands with a hardened loner and former NSA agent (Gene Hackman). Both of them, together, decide to fight back.

The movie initially seems paranoia but with the passage of time, the viewers find the plot befitting in the world of technology today. The plot of the movie seems to broaden the realm of conspiracy theory, then in 1998, but now it seems like a matter of fact and likely a possibility. Interestingly, the spying arsenal of the NSA shown in the film like satellite surveillance, wiretapping, electronic bugs, and security cameras ,seem comparative acquaintances in today's mass surveillance of emails and instant messaging, the tracking of cell phones, and the omnipresence of personal cameras and other tracking devices and freedom of utilizing digital data and information available on the internet.

Enemy of the State, brilliantly, outshines the surveillance technologies of the State that may mar the privacy of its people and raise an important question as to whether they stood for security of the State or are the enemy of the State. At the same time,*Enemy of the State* shows certain cultural significance and interests its viewers in a society of responsible humans. For instance, a fleeing man slips the videotape into Dean's bag, the lawyer, when he just happens to be shopping for lingerie for his wife in a store where the sales women model the merchandise. *Enemy of the State* is technologically driven visual text before its viewers that involves non-stop plot turns, revelations, chases, crashes, chiefly told with close-ups and extreme close-ups and fast hurried worried lives of professional in today's world. With the director's style of handling the issues concerning freedom of speech and expressions and privacy issues using technology generated thrills, the film also moves very fast as the life of a professional in a world of technology today that it becomes difficult to notice what doesn't

quite work. Gene Hackman as character and an intertextual text creates a way to endow Dean with the abilities and means to fight back against the rogues in the NSA. In the end, *Enemy of the State* viewers find criticism of authorities who should be ultimately restricted to bad individuals and rogue factions within the present authority. The problem, *Enemy of the State* suggests, was Reynolds and his minions, and not the NSA or legislation seeking to erode privacy rights. Hence, the film moves from subversion to resolution. Once the villains are inevitably weeded out, the viewer is encouraged to believe that the problem has been fixed, and the systemic issues that may have facilitated such abuses are checked.

Thus, it is here to argue that engaged literature manifested in different art forms, continuously aim to develop and improve readers and writers or its creators' intellectual level, offering the masses something beyond the familiar,and provide an opportunity to expand horizons for a social cause and welfare of society. This kind of engagement with art and technology, and consequently resulting literature and visual texts,carry powerful imagination, and it is producing a cultural behaviour of greater talent and wider knowledge in producing a new generation of litterateurs, readers, interpreters, lawyers and social scientists. It is appropriate to quote Halpin and Hoskins, who state that "the internet has expanded the power of the human rights movement by improving communication between activists in different physical locations", which Leah Lievrouw calls "mediated mobilization", when he says, "individuals who are using their voices to communicate about the injustices are now able to communicate with likeminded people who use their voices through participatory journalism."

Conclusion

Engaged Literature, thus in the era of technology may be seen as an adequate tool for generating social action and understanding substantive social issues and commitment to putting a stop to violation of human rights issues offline and online. The visuals, film and literature available today have revolutionized communication and communication technology offering immense ideas, data and information. However, the same technology may be utilized to limit access to information, data etc., through content blocking or internet shutdowns or maybe via more stringent technology through surveillance, previously unimaginable. It is therefore proposed that monitoring the relationship between human rights and internet protocols is necessary to ensure the survival of dignified public spaces and literature created as a guiding force.

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