



REDEFINING ISOLATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

*Life in 21st century is all about digitalisation of everything. People are freely busying themselves on phones and devises. This paper deals with the paradigm shift in man's behaviour in comprehending **Isolation** which was desired for spiritual awakening or it was used as a punishment to rectify wrongs done. Today isolation is a desired phenomenon provided that the person has a device (cell phones) to spend time. People are found chatting or surfing for hours on their mobiles without speaking a word to the persons physically near to them. Hence, the word 'isolation' which was always undesired, needs to be redefined today. Isolation does not only mean to keep someone apart or away from society. It is being social on social networks individually. Thus, the paper attempts to redefine the concept of isolation from the observation of the present social situation.*

We find more Netizens than Citizens around us who are happy in their virtual world compared to the real world where they live. Such citizen live only to spend their valuable time on internet and social networking cites. Hence, isolation is no more a curse but a reward for such netizens.

Key Terms:- Netizen, Geworfenheit, Being Thrown, Dasein, e-isolation,

Environment echoes voices, yet I feel alone
Living seems lifeless; there is life in stone
All ears are busy, talking on the Phone.

Life in 21st century is all about digitalisation of our dreams, choices, and leisure. Everything is being digitalised into a small screen through wireless connection. People are freely busying themselves on phones and devises. Isolation was considered evil or antisocial condition where a man feels alone, neglected, unwanted or not loved by people around. In schools scoundrels were isolated by other students. In a peer group, dubious, notorious, hostile or unsavoury too were isolated. Hence, isolation was an indirect punishment. Isolation either made one to think of wrong or unpleasant aspect of personality hidden or it made them to rectify such unpleasanties. Colloquially it is termed as "the hotbox, the Hole, lockdown, "Segregation, separation, cellular, Supermax, Secure Housing Unit...etc in American English. It is said that Isolation or imprisonment was introduced in Philadelphia in 1829. In Isolation Policies of west, generally it is understood as "The supervised confinement and seclusion of a person, away from other users of services, in an area from which the person is prevented from leaving". The term isolation is defined in Cambridge dictionary as the condition of being alone, especially when this makes one feel unhappy and it is the fact that one is not connected to others.

Isolation has been discussed and debated in philosophy and literature from time immemorial. In philosophy it is considered a way to reach ultimate truth. Indian sages in the ancient time isolated themselves to have mystical or spiritual experience called self-realisation (Tapasya and Atmagyana). The Philosophers like Martine Heidegger, Soren Kierkegaard and Fredrick Nietzsche have talked about isolation with different concepts like thrownness, loneliness, being-in-itself, etc.

Martine Heidegger describes humans' individual existences as "Being Thrown" into the world which he termed as geworfen. It denotes the arbitrary or inscrutable nature of Dasein (man) that connects the past with the present. The past, through Being-toward-Death, becomes a part of Dasein. Heidegger describes that the arbitrariness of Dasein is characterized as a state of "thrown-ness" with all

its frustrations, sufferings, and demands. The very fact of one's own existence is a manifestation of thrownness. *Geworfenheit* is a kind of alienation or isolation that human beings struggle against. Further George Leon observes in his book *Kierkegaard's Existentialism*, "The self cannot live in the abstractness of either infinity or isolation. To exist and to know that one exists before God is what distinguishes the human from all other animals." (George Leon, *Kierkegaard's Existentialism*, 54)

Hannah Arendt in her book *The Human Condition* writes, "Action, as distinguished from fabrication, is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act."

There is a popular story titled "The Bet" a short story by Anton Chekhov which describes that isolation can be an instrument of gaining knowledge, if used appropriately. In the story there is a debate on capital punishment versus death penalty. The banker sided with capital punishment and the young barrister opts strongly for life imprisonment. The debate leads to a real bet where spoken words become practical reality for the young barrister. He opts to spend 15 years in isolation, in a solitary confinement. The bet is of 2 million rupees. Isolation in the beginning was difficult for him. He suffers loneliness, and depression, but later in the company of books, musical instruments, etc, he finds a good companion. He finds the ultimate knowledge i.e., 'Atma Gyan' in isolation and renounces the reward.

Today, in the 21st century, isolation is considered as desirable. We find everyone sitting alone in a group and wanting to be in a company of someone who might exist or does not exist. They spend time chatting, gaming, tagging or liking comments on the digital display. People have no time for the one near them, but chats for hours with someone unknown at a far off distance. Many search to be alone so that they can give time to their cell phones. It is said that if a man is left alone on an island with only a gadget, i.e., his android device, where there is no one to talk, he will still be hale and hearty. Today, isolation is no more a punishment but a boon for such netizens.

There was a time when people wrote letters, post cards to wish near and dear one's. Today we find wishes flickers on screen every moment or every hour. Devices have reduced the distance but it is also not wrong to say that devices have widened the gap between people who always find pleasure on five inch screen. Moreover, Use of internet has brought everything at the touch of figure. One can get everything on door steps without going out and bargaining with the real person. Vegetables, groceries, cloths, electronics, books, and everything man wishes is available there on the screen. Such application or sites that offer everything at the door steps have added to isolation of man who need not go out in the real world and interact with real persons. Not only things but the modern technology has paved a way for virtual existence of man. Things impossible a few years ago are real today. Boundaries, oceans or fences are no barrier today for a man who wishes to communicate with a person in any country. Positive aspects are many to list but adverse use of devises have reduced the relation among people. Liking something or someone has become a common practice on screen than an emotion. Friends group, family group and many other groups, i.e., groupism have increased but the real love and relation with human being around has no value. The book *The Lonely American* by Jacqueline Olds and Richard Schwartz writes about their observation on isolation. They described, "We possess all manner of "connectivity" technologies — Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, text, etc — and we put huge amounts of time and effort into "connecting" online. But the question is, do these online "connections" assuage our sense of loneliness and alienation, or make it worse? We can interact with all manner of people online, but can we be ourselves — and be accepted for who we are?" the book has brought out the problems we face today due to social networking. We have forgotten our own existence and environment. Matthew Arnold in his poem *Isolation: To Marguerite* writes:

Of happier men--for they, at least, Have dream'd two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith released

From isolation without end Prolonged; nor knew, although not less Alone than thou, their loneliness. Of happier men--for they, at least, Have dream'd two human hearts might blend In one, and were through faith released From isolation without end Prolonged; nor knew, although not less Alone than thou, their loneliness.

The poet finds happiness in union and living close to loved ones. Living in isolation is a curse where a person lives but without love, joy and happiness of life. To reiterate this feeling of isolation the poet writes in Marguerite: Continues, "We mortal millions live alone" this line depicts the nature of man who lives alone in a crowd. Physically he lives among the people but mentally he is alone. Thus, isolation was an undesired phenomenon. The present situation or recent observations lead us to think again of isolation. Is it still undesired? Do people like to live in a community? Are they happy with their family members and friends around them? There are many questions that one might think of in present scenario but what is generally observed is that a man is happy alone in his virtual world. If someone physical talks to them, they are disturbed and desire to be left alone.

Is there any solution to this growing problem of 'e-isolation'? Recent reports have stated that over use of mobiles and devises lead to dependency and it is one type of psychological disorder called Nomophobia. To add to this, it is said that man is nothing more than a machine controlled by an electronic devise. Scientists call it a growth of man towards science and technology; others call it a generation of modern technology. In fact, is it a change to positive or negative development? Solutions proposed by sociologists are to refrain from over use of devises and give time to family member, friends and society. Environmentalists call to go back to nature and ravish in the nature away from the hustle and bustle of the polluted world. Spiritualists call for the purification of self and meditate on ultimate reality which may lead to self realisation. Others envisage living life happy-go-lucky, come what may. Hence, there can be no instant solution to this type of isolation. What is needed is to bring awareness among young generation about the positive use of electronic devises and giving valuable time to family, friends, books, and to self than devises. Isolation can cause one to deviate from his social responsibility and relationship. Bringing a strong awareness among people only can lead to positive use of electronic devises and reduce the growing phenomenon of isolation.

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