



THE PRESENTATION OF THE YOUTH IN “THE BET” AND “A FALLEN MAN'S HEART”: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

The stories by Anton Chekhov often explore the themes of isolation, loneliness, and unrequited love, as well as the struggles of the working class and the complexities of human relationships. Chekhov is also known for his exploration of the human condition and the human experience, often focusing on the mundane struggles and moments of daily life rather than grandiose events. “The Bet” by Anton Chekhov is a thought-provoking story that encourages reflection on important issues, including the plight of youth in today’s world. The short story “A Fallen Man's Heart” by V. Swamy talks about the writer’s prison experiences that prompted him to plead for legal and jail reforms to save the prisoners from mental torture. Addressing the plight of youth in today’s world requires a multi-faceted approach that includes addressing issues such as access to meaningful education, mental health, economic inequality, civic engagement, and creating safe spaces.

Keywords: Literary style, human relationships, plight of the youth, marginalized communities, discrimination and prejudice

Anton Chekhov is remembered for his insightful and empathetic observations of human behavior and psychology; and his legacy as one of the most outstanding writers of the 19th century remains intact today. Chekhov’s works continue to be studied and admired by scholars and readers around the world. He is known for his unique literary style, which is characterized by his concise, understated prose that focuses on character development and subtle psychological details rather than elaborate descriptions or dramatic plot developments. His stories often explore the themes of isolation, loneliness, and unrequited love, as well as the struggles of the

working class and the complexities of human relationships. Chekhov is also known for his exploration of the human condition and the human experience, often focusing on the mundane struggles and moments of daily life rather than grandiose events. His stories often depict the small triumphs and failures of everyday people, highlighting the beauty and fragility of the human experience. Chekhov’s literary style is characterized by his use of precise language, understated prose, and focus on character development and psychological insight. His stories often explore the universal themes and struggles of the human experience,

making his work enduringly relevant and powerful even today.

“The Bet” (1889) by Anton Chekhov is a thought-provoking story that encourages reflection on important issues, including the plight of the youth in the world today. Here are some reflections from different aspects of the story and these can be related with the challenges faced by young people today:

- Providing meaningful education: One of the biggest challenges facing young people today is a lack of access to quality education. Providing meaningful education that equips young people with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the modern world is essential. Education that focuses on developing critical thinking skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities can help young people tackle the challenges they will face in life.
- Promoting mental health awareness: Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety are on the rise among young people. Creating awareness about mental health and providing access to mental health resources can help young people deal with these issues effectively. This includes access to counseling services, peer support groups, and mental health education.
- Encouraging civic engagement: Young people need to be encouraged to engage with their communities and participate in civic activities. This can include volunteering, community service, and political activism. By engaging in these activities, young people can become active agents of change and contribute positively to their communities.
- Addressing economic inequality: Economic inequality is a significant challenge facing young people, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Addressing economic inequality and providing young people

with opportunities to access education and employment can help alleviate this issue.

- Creating safe spaces: Creating safe spaces for young people to express themselves and connect with others can help create a sense of belonging and foster a positive outlook on life. These safe spaces can include youth clubs, community centers, and online forums.

Young people today face a multitude of challenges that impact their personal and professional lives. Below are some of the current challenges faced by them:

- Financial difficulties: Young people face economic challenges as they try to establish themselves in their careers. Student loan debt, low-paying or unstable jobs, and poor access to healthcare often lead to financial stress.
- Unemployment or Underemployment: Unemployment, particularly for those from marginalized backgrounds, can lead to a lack of opportunities and cause long-term financial instability.
- Mental Health Issues: Young people experience a lot of stress and anxiety. Academic pressure, social media criticism, and the impact of the pandemic can lead to mental health concerns.
- Social isolation: Young people can feel isolated from traditional family structures, can lack support from peers, and can experience social isolation.
- Discrimination: Young people can face discrimination because of their identities or beliefs, and it can limit their opportunities and negatively impact their mental health.
- Political and Socioeconomic Issues: In many countries, young people are grappling with political instability and economic challenges that impact their future prospects and unsettle the idea of stability.

- Lack of Affordable Housing: Young people often struggle to get affordable and safe housing, which can undermine their stability and social integration.

Overall, young people today face a myriad of complex challenges that can significantly impact their lives. Addressing these issues will require targeted policies and programs that support young people's economic, physical, and mental health, as well as their overall wellbeing.

The societal and systematic issues that affect youth are complex and multifaceted. They are the result of social, political, and economic factors that interact with one another and impact the lives of young people in a variety of ways. Some of the key issues that affect youth include:

- Poverty: Young people who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes, such as poor health, limited educational opportunities, and lower life expectancy. Poverty can also lead to social isolation and feelings of hopelessness, which can have a significant impact on mental health and well-being.
- Lack of access to quality education: Education is a critical factor in determining long-term success, yet many young people lack access to quality educational opportunities due to systemic inequalities in the education system. Factors such as socioeconomic status, race, and geographic location can all impact a young person's access to quality education.
- Discrimination and prejudice: Young people who belong to marginalized groups, such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities, may face discrimination and prejudice in various forms. These experiences can have a significant impact

on self-esteem, mental health, and opportunities for success.

- Mental health: Mental health issues affect people of all ages, but young people in particular may struggle with depression, anxiety, and other issues that can impact their ability to succeed in school and beyond. Stigma around mental health can also make it difficult for young people to seek help and support.
- Lack of affordable healthcare: Access to healthcare is essential for maintaining good physical and mental health, yet many young people lack affordable access to healthcare. This can lead to untreated health issues, as well as financial strain on families and individuals.

The societal and systematic issues that affect youth are complex and interrelated. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account the unique challenges faced by young people in various communities. It requires a commitment to ending systemic inequalities and promoting equal opportunities for all young people to lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

Societal and systemic issues affecting youth are not isolated problems, but rather are interconnected and have deep-rooted effects on young people's lives. For example, poverty and lack of access to quality education can lead to limited job opportunities and financial struggles in adulthood, perpetuating a cycle of poverty. Discrimination and prejudice can also limit job opportunities, particularly for marginalized groups, leading to lower income and less stability in their lives. Additionally, the lack of affordable healthcare and mental health resources can make it difficult for young people to access treatment and get the support they need. This can lead to worsening physical and mental health issues, making it even more challenging to succeed in school and beyond. Furthermore, societal stigmas about mental

health can lead to shame and isolation, making it harder for young people to seek help and support.

To address these issues, it's important to recognize that they are not individual struggles, but rather a result of systemic inequalities and social structures that impact young people's access to resources and opportunities. It's essential to prioritize equity and ensure that all young people, regardless of their background and circumstances, have the resources and support they need to thrive. This includes addressing systemic issues such as poverty and discrimination, improving access to quality education and healthcare, and reducing the stigma around mental health. By addressing these issues, we can create a more equitable and just society for all young people.

The short story "A Fallen Man's Heart" (2014) by V. Swamy talks about the writer's prison experiences that prompted him to plead for legal and jail reforms to save the prisoners from mental torture. The narrative consists of a dialogue between two major characters. One of them is Gandaiah who was a prisoner serving long term for some unknown reasons. Thirupathaiah is the other who is the Dafedar or the warder. Their discussion turned out into an argument between a prisoner and the representative of the prison agency.

The prisoners were talking in groups of two and three here and there, about the fellow prisoner who was hanged that day. As soon as Thirupathaiah has come, they dispersed and sat in their respective places.

"Hasn't Gandaiah come?" Thirupathaiah asked.

"No sir. He hasn't" replied a prisoner.

"No amount of preaching can set him right. He always keeps roaming somewhere. Since the term of his punishment is long. I had been talking a bit closely with him. But I fear he will

bring a problem for me" said Thirupathaiah. Then leaving the shed, he ordered: "Let the looms be in motion" and went for searching Gandaiah.

Immediately after Thirupathaiah left, the prisoners resumed their chitchatting

"Have you noticed? There's not an iota of sorrow in Thirupathaiah's face," said one.

"Why sorrow? Who is that fellow and who is this bugger?"

"Poor fellow, we don't know whether they will tell his kith and kin about his hanging, or not"

"Even if they are told, what will they do? He went back to the place from where he had come"

"That's OK. But when a person's hands were tied and he was hanged, how could the people standing around, watch with their eyes open? I didn't even feel like seeing his corpse"

"What a strange deluder are you? Tomorrow if you are made a jawan and asked to hang a prisoner, what can you do except obeying the order? As per the law, everybody has to obey. Do you think law is a child's play?"

While the prisoners were discussing in this manner, Thirupathaiah returned to loom shed along with Gandaiah. Noticing that weaving was stopped, he warned "What happened to you all today? You are not working at all. Listen carefully. I will take you all to Jailor saab and you will have to face him"

Gandaiah who was standing behind Thirupathaiah with face turned to the ground sorrowfully, wiped his tears and said "Why to Jailor saab? Take us to the hanging place" (p. 35-36)

The realistic picture with a rural background has been made through the setting

of jail and the loom shed. The detainees are talking about the capital punishment of a 25-year-young prisoner on that morning. They are sad, but Gandaiah is infuriated with the cold stance of Thirupathaiah. He is not ready to let off the warder for not shedding a tear. The warder, on the other hand, asks questions what he might do if he were instructed to perform the same task as a jawan. To the warder it looks proper to forgive such actions done as part of duty. But Gandaiah does not agree with this logic and questions the propriety of capital punishment, while people condemn killing by criminals. He prefers the longest term of punishment of sixty or seventy years rather than capital punishment.

In fact, addressing the plight of youth in today's world requires a multi-faceted approach that includes addressing issues such as access to meaningful education, mental health, economic inequality, civic engagement, and creating safe spaces. By focusing on these areas, we can help young people reach their full potential and contribute positively to society.

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