

C H A P T E R - I I I

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Brave New World is a futuristic novel, supposed to be the best-known and the most modern forecast. It is a satirical fiction describing a daring and penetrating attempt at examining the ills of modern society. Brave New World is, in the words of George Woodcock, 'a fantasy of the future and a satire on the present.'¹ Huxley criticizes our current Western civilization by describing in Brave New World the condition in which it might find itself some six hundred years from our time. John Wain's observation in respect of utopian novels is of relevance here : 'It is a well-understood convention that the utopian kind of pseudo-novel though set in a remote position as to period or place, is always a criticism of the author's own society'².

Brave New World is not just a clever forecast of things to come in the way of scientific development. It is a mirror where the age may see and shudder at the none-too-distant projection of its dominant traits. Huxley cultivates the distaste for too much upsurge of science and technology in modern times. The idea of Brave New World germinated in his mind a decade earlier when he was writing Crome Yellow. Mr. Scogan's prophecy in Crome Yellow is the basis of the fantasy in Brave New World. (cf. Ch.2, p.31)

Brave New World is a rich, rational fantasy. By 'rational fantasy', I mean fantasy based on logical thinking. What Huxley does in building his dystopia is to take some of the prominent evil forces in the present-day civilization and try to imagine what would happen if they are allowed their ultimate scope in development. While imagining the ultimate possibilities of these forces or tendencies, Huxley performs a small fantasy-jump and concretizes an absurd idea and once that is concretized he takes all the trouble to give it a local habitation and a name. For example, take Huxley's conception of the 'feelies'. We have in our civilization invented the movies which satisfy our audio-visual senses. Huxley performs a fantasy-jump and conceives of 'feelies' which satisfy not only the eye and the ear but also the senses of touch and smell—so that what you see on the screen you literally feel it, experience it with all your senses. Once 'feelies' are conceived by performing a fantasy-jump, they become a realistic part of the 'logically' constructed 'Brave New World'. Almost all the elements that have gone with the structure of the dystopian world have undergone this slight fantasy treatment to begin with and then subjected to a realistic concretization process. To give another example, the mass-production technique is, by means of a bit of fantasy-thinking, applied to biology, and lo, Huxley's

Bokanovsky process comes into existence !

'One egg, one embryo, one adult-normality. But a bokanovskified egg will bud, will proliferate, will divide. From eight to ninety-six buds, and every bud will grow into a perfectly formed embryo, and every embryo into a full-sized adult. Making ninety-six human beings grow where only one grew before, progress.'³

To begin with, Huxley starts with reality. It is quite natural to find one egg, one embryo, and one adult. This is the perspective of our narrative world. Huxley contradicts this very perspective of our narrative world, and creates fantasy. Ninety-six adults growing out of one embryo is 'anti-expected' and hence fantastic. After introducing fantasy Huxley continues to concretize the fantasy world and make it 'believable'. After introducing 'Bokanovsky Process', he goes on to describe the process giving minute details :

'He pointed on a very slow moving band a rackful of test-tubes was entering a large metal box, another rackful was emerging. Machinery faintly purred. It took eight minutes for the tubes-to go through, he told them. Eight minutes of hard x-rays being about as much as an egg can stand. A few died; of the rest, the least susceptible divided into two; most put out four buds; some eight; all were returned to the incubators, where the buds began to develop; then, after two days, were suddenly chilled,

chilled and checked. Two, four, eight, the buds in their turn budded; and having budded were dosed almost to death with alcohol; consequently burgeoned again and having budded-bud out of bud out of bud - were there after further arrest being generally fatal - left to develop in peace. By which time the original egg was in a fair way to becoming anything from eight to ninety-six embryos - a prodigious improvement, you will agree, on nature. Identical twins - but not in piddling twos and threes as in the old viviparous days, when an egg would sometimes accidentally divide; actually by dozens, by scores at a time. (PP. [7-18]).

Huxley describes this process so minutely with pseudo - realistic details that the fantasy at once becomes visible and credible. He describes the process as if it is a process in a factory. Test-tubes are arranged on racks; they are checked by machines. It takes eight minutes to x-ray each egg. In the next process, the buds are kept in alcohol. Finally, identical adults are produced. These details given by Huxley are unverifiable; and unverifiability is the major feature of fantasy. These realistic details concretize the fantastic ideas already presented. This concretization gives a local habitation and a name to the fantasy world.

We have looked at the way Huxley creates his fantasy world, ^{and} attempts to lend concreteness and reality to it. Now the question we have to tackle is : what are the principles

of organization that Huxley adopts in structuring his new world? One set of principles is related to the writer's own ideological concerns, and the other set to his artistic requirements. Let us explore the first set first :

Ideologically, Huxley's intuition is to warn his readers about certain evil tendencies in modern technological society - those of mechanization and mass production and those of overorganization and power-centralization. He, therefore, makes these tendencies the principles of organization while constructing his dystopia. In the totalitarian technocracy that he conceived of, he puts in new values which are completely anti-human. 'Community, Identity, Stability' are the new watch-words. God, Nature, Poetry, Heroism etc. are just dropped from the list of new values. Love, too, is gone. Sex is there, but the principle governing sex is 'Everyone belongs to everyone else.' Father and mother are obscene words, since the normal way of getting born is in a test tube. Huxley, thus, uses the logical fantasy and creates a topsy-turvy world where to be human is a deviation and to be non-human is a norm. Overorganization is one of the principles behind the fantasy-construction of the dystopian society. The 'new' society is divided into four classes : Alphas, Betas, Gammas and Deltas, Epsilons. Alphas are manufactured as leaders. Betas possess high intelligence. Gammas and

Deltas have less intelligence, and Epsilons are ordinary workers with no intelligence. In the Brave New World, all are alike : each caste has its own distinct functions and its own dress of a particular colour; individuality is supposed to be a sin. Children are produced and conditioned in such a way that 'loss of individuality' becomes the chief feature of this society.

Huxley conceives of the idea of psychological conditioning on the basis of Pavlov's theories. Neo-Pavlovian theories of conditioning are already used in our times in advertisements and political indoctrination. In the Brave New World these theories are used for creating in children 'instinctive' hatred for books and flowers and so on. The main purpose of such conditioning is to establish happiness and virtue in the Brave New World.

'Set out the books', he said curtly

'Now bring in the children'.

They hurried out of the room and returned in a minute or two, each pushing a kind of tall dumbwaiter laden, on all its four wire-netted shelves, with eight-month old babies, all exactly alike (a Bokanovsky Group, it was evident) and all (since their caste was Delta) dressed in Khaki.

'Put them down on the floor'.

The infants were unloaded.

'Now turn them so they can see the flowers and books.'

Turned, the babies at once fell silent, then began to crawl towards those clusters of sleek colours, those shapes so gay and brilliant on the white pages. As they approached, the sun came out of a momentary eclipse behind a cloud. The roses flamed up as though with a sudden passion from within; a new and profound significance seemed to suffuse the shining pages of the books. From the ranks of the crawling babies came little squeals of excitement, gurgles and twitterings of pleasure.

The Director rubbed his hands. 'Excellent !' he said. 'It might almost have been done on purpose.'

The swiftest crawlers were already at their goal, small hands reached out uncertainly, touched, grasped, unpetalling the transfigured roses, crumpling the illuminated pages of the books. The Director waited until all were happily busy. Then 'watch carefully', he said. And, lifting his hand, he gave the signal.

The Head Nurse, who was standing by a switchboard at the other end of the room, pressed down a little lever.

There was a violent explosion. Shriller and even shriller, a siren shrieked. Alarm bells maddeningly sounded.

The children started, screamed, their faces were distorted with terror.' (PP. 27-28).

Hypnopaedia or sleep-teaching technique is another fantastic idea introduced by Huxley in Brave New World. The

children are taught by hammering a lesson continuously. Micro-speakers are hidden under the pillows. Psychology says that repetition of an idea makes it confirmed. The children are given lessons in sleep about elementary sex or elementary class-consciousness.

'..... all wear green', said a soft but distinct voice, beginning in the middle of a sentence', and Delta children wear Khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able to read or write. Besides they wear black, which is such a beastly colour. I'm so glad I'm a Beta.' (P.33).

The Brave New World is a world without class-conflict. But elementary class-consciousness^{is quite necessary.} In the Brave New World, death is taken as a normal activity without any terror. Here every inhabitant lives upto sixty.

'Death conditioning begins at eighteen months. Every tot spends two mornings a week in a Hospital for the Dying. All the best toys are kept there, and they get a chocolate cream on death days. They learn to take dying as a matter of course.' (P. 131).

To take dying as a matter of normal course is to contradict the perspectives of our narrative world. In our world dying is taken as a serious and sad event. When these perspectives are reversed, fantasy is created.

Brave New World⁴ is regarded as a 'master-piece of satire.' Huxley uses satire as a chief device to mock at the so-called advancement of the new world. In the Brave New World, religion has been totally abolished. God has been replaced by Ford. One of the most famous slogans in the Brave New World is :

'Ford helps those who help themselves.' (P.168).

The world-controllers have chosen science instead of God. Mustapha Mond says :

God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness. You must make your choice. Our civilization has chosen machinery and medicine and happiness.' (P. 183).

The domination of science in modern life has been satirized here. Huxley attacks the modern tendency to pursue material pleasures at all costs. In the Brave New World god and happiness are two different things. Huxley's fantasy operates on the basis of the 'anti-expected', thereby directly contradicting the perspectives of our narrative world. Huxley uses this strategy for the purposes of satire.

In Brave New World fantasy often manifests itself in irony. The title of the novel Brave New World is itself ironical. It is taken from William Shakespeare's The Tempest. Miranda looking at handsome Ferdinand and others utters,

O, wonder !
How many goodly creatures are
there here !
How beauteous mankind is ! O brave
new world
That has such people in it !' 5

Ironically these are people like Antonio who had plotted against Miranda's father, Prospero. Huxley's fantasy operates here on the basis of the 'dis-expected.' He attacks indirectly all those who consider scientific advancement as an unsullied good. Dr. D.V. Jog says in this context:

'Shakespeare knew that the world Miranda was admiring had its Calibans as well as Prosperos, its drunkards as well as its handsome lovers. Here Huxley tells us that the scientific utopia for which we are heading, though it may constitute the material millennium, will certainly not be what scientists and industrialists imagine. Intellectually, spiritually and morally it will be far worse than the present age and yet we are unmistakably going forward to such a utopia.'

John, like Miranda, is wrong in his assumption about the Brave New World. During his visit to the factory of the Electrical Equipment Corporation, he finds that each process is carried out by a single Bokanovsky Group. The

Group consists of Deltas, Gammas, Gamma Pluses, Delta-minuses and Epsilon semi-Morons. Looking at these creatures in their typical uniforms, John ironically exclaims :

'O brave new world
..... that has such people in it.' (p. 129).

John's dream of the Brave New World gets shattered into pieces.

Huxley's irony becomes sharper while describing the loss of social values and institutions in the Brave New World. As the children are produced in bottles, and shaped in the conditioning rooms, there is no place for father, mother, or for family in the Brave New World, where the word 'mother' is considered obscene.

'To say one was a mother - that was past a joke : it was an obscenity.' (P. 124).

'Home, home - a few small rooms, stiffingly over-inhabitted by a man, by a periodically teeming woman, by a rabble of boys and girls of all ages : No air, no space; an unsterilized prison; darkness, disease, and smells.' (P. 40).

This is the idea of 'home' presented before the inhabitants of the Brave New World, who have nouse for institutions like home, family etc.

'The world was full of fathers - was therefore full of misery; full of mothers - therefore every kind of perversion from sodism to chastity; full of brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts - full of madness and suicide.' (P.41).

.... This description of 'family' or 'home' appears irrelevant for the people of the Brave New World because they have certain perspectives which do not include the perspectives about home or family. Hence these concepts remain untranslatable for the inhabitants of the Brave New World.

Psychology says that wish fulfilment is one of the sources of human fantasy. Huxley's conception of 'Soma' is based on the desire of man to invent a narcotic without bad and harmful effects. 'Soma' is Huxley's fantasy-answer. 'Soma' is a harmless narcotic which removes incidental unpleasantness or disappointment. It ensures perfect freedom from anxiety and boredom.' The World Controller, while praising Soma, says :

"And if ever, by some unlucky chance, anything unpleasant should somehow happen, why there is always soma to give you a holiday from the facts. And there's always Soma to calm your anger, to reconcile you to your enemies, to make you patient and long suffering Anybody can be virtuous now. You can carry at least half your morality about in a bottle. Christianity

without tears - that's what Soma is.' (p.185).

Huxley sometimes uses the technique of partial wish fulfilment and partial disappointment. In the Brave New World, sex is free ('Everyone belongs to everyone else'), but love is taboo; children become sexually mature at the age of four and fully grown at six; there are pneumatic sofas and sex hormone chewing gums etc. The past has no existence ('History is bunk') and the present is the only thing that counts.

Fantasy works in language, too.

'The light was frozen,
dead, a ghost.' (p. 15).

'But the man bent over the bed towards him and his face was huge, terrible; the black ropes of hair touched the blanket.' (p.102).

'Still leaning against the incubators he gave them, while the pencils scurried illegibly across the pages,.....' (p. 16).

In the above examples, linguistic fantasy appears through metaphor, simile^{and}, personification.

There is fantasy in the thinking and day-dreaming of certain characters :

'Linda's eyes fluttered open; she saw him, knew him - 'John !' - but situated the real face, the real and

violent face, in an imaginary World - among the inward and private equivalents of patchouli and the Super-Wurlitzer, among the transfigured memories and the strangely transposed sensations that constituted the universe of her dream. She knew him for John, her son, but fancied him an intruder into the paradisaical Malpais where she had been spending her Soma holiday with Pope (PP. 161-62).

Thus Huxley presents Linda's mind soaring in the world of imagination. Her mind jumps from reality to the imaginary world, to the past.

In Brave New World Huxley presents fantasy within fantasy ! The description of the Brave New World is a fantasy for John. As the perspectives offered by his narrative world are totally contradicted in the Brave New World, the new world appears fantastic for him. The same is true of the people of the Brave New World. When John comes to London, John and his civilization appear fantastic to the inhabitants of the Brave New World.

In this way, Brave New World is rich with all varieties of fantasy. The novel is recognized as 'one of the two most widely discussed English fantasies of this century.'⁸ Though the novel is a product of imagination, it is not extravagant or unrestricted imagination that operates, ^{init,} but ~~the~~ most controlled kind of imagination. The ~~controlled~~ is exercised by Huxley's satiric purpose - which

is to hold to our critical attention certain inhuman tendencies of the modern world and warn us of the dangers of too much technology and too much of centralization of power. So there is a systematic logic that controls his fantasy. If we look at the descriptions of fertilizing process, Bokanovsky Process, conditioning etc. it becomes clear to us that a wealth of imagined, social, political and technological details has gone with them. Keith May says : 'Bokanovsky Process is described with such pseudo-scientific elaboration that this process alone is sufficient testimony to the author's ingenuity.'⁹ He also makes some revealing statements about the relevance of the fantasy to the present-day reality:

"Brave New World describes an imaginary Commonwealth in order to comment upon an existing Commonwealth."¹⁰ The novel is a sort of warning against the optimism of the thirties when people believed that ultimately all would be for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Brave New World is not just a scientific romance or a fanciful vision of the world to come. Beneath its many scientific and technical details lies a penetrating analysis of our civilization - '..... our machine - ridden and efficiency - obsessed civilization.'¹¹ Hence, as Paul Gannon says, it is a 'clever juxtaposition of fact (scientific details) and fiction (future life on earth.)'¹²

In Brave New World fantasy has multiple relations with reality, and as such it is the highest kind of fantasy, far superior to the so-called pure fantasy of the fairy-tales. Fantasy here is not only criticism of life but also a source of aesthetic joy. The fantasy-creation of Brave New World has a structural beauty that pleases the mind's eye of the reader. The story moves consistently on the fantasy-level established in the first chapter of the novel and the surprises and suspense-moments with well-timed climaxes and denouements have been worked out with great artistic precision and ingenuity. Huxley does more than this with his fantasy - he creates humour and continuous amusement by using the fantasy with intelligence and wit. For example, Fanny Crowne is highly critical of Lenina who is going out with the same lover for months. She says :

" It is such horrible bad form to go on and on like this with one man.... And you know how strongly the D.H.C. objects to anything intense or long-drawn..... He would be furious if he knew...."

(p.42).

It is amusing to see that love is taboo in the 'new' world and free sex is most acceptable ! There are a number of witty sayings, quite amusing in their topsyturviness : "The more stitches, the less riches,"

"Civilization is sterilization." "Was and will make me ill. I take a gramme and only am."

There is a great deal of intelligence, scientific erudition, profound wisdom, subtle comic sense, and clarity of vision that are blended properly and uniformly with fantasy. Huxley's fantasy, therefore, thanks to the dimensions he lends to it, is transformed here into something 'rich and strange' - into a commodity of great value !



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