
CHAPTER - III

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The Kraken wakes had certain science fiction elements but basically it was like a serious novel. But The Day of the Triffids is a typical science fiction which has a slight tinge of serious fiction. this novel was filmed and had gained Wyndham a lot of popularity. Since it was filmed it was more effective and enjoyable.

The science fiction elements here are the triffid seeds which were flying like clouds and got carried all over the world, though many seeds were infertile. Usually seeds could fly here and there but not all over the world.

Triffid is a kind of plant from which oil is produced. But the triffids Wyndham deals with is a plant about six to seven feet tall and it used to uproot the three roots from the soil and walked about here and there attacking people. A triffid walked like a man on the crutches.

The word 'triffid' has passed into the language to describe almost any kind of imaginery hostile and dangerous plant.

Wyndham's species, lethal and mobile monsters average 7 feet high were so called because of

their three-pronged roots, on which they
prohelled themselves.¹

Talking about the Triffids Wyndham described it as :

... means that somewhere in them is
intelligence. It can't be seated in a brain
because dissection shows that nothing like a
brain - but that doesn't prove there isn't
something there that does a brain's job.²

Triffids were looked upon as intelligent things as
they knew that sight was the superiority in man and so they
attacked the eyes, the uncovered part of the body. They used
to hid behind the hedges when they saw people coming towards
them. They could hear like the animals though they were only
plants. All these things prove that even without a brain they
could think. The rattling sound they made would sound as
though they were talking among themselves.

William Masen - the narrator was investigating the
problem the Triffids had caused. He had known the triffids
since he was a small boy, as there was one triffid growing in
their garden unnoticed and it was there since his father's
time. No one knew the name for it, but as a boy he had a
fascination for the triffids and thus he used to spend hours
together staring at the triffid.

In Wyndham's novels his characters first experience the problem and then they get to know the cause and the name of the trouble causer. We see the 'Cilia' in The kraken wakes and the 'triffids' in The Day of the Triffids. As usual people conveniently call it with different names. Here the triffid was called :

Trichots, Tricusps, Trinith, Tripedals ...

(P.45)

it was referred to as 'tri' in the beginning because it was a three pronged root.

The triffids were carnivorous and they ate insects and flies and digested them with the sticky substance in it. They had enough poison in them to kill a man if it did hit him on his unprotected skin. They required nearly two years to replace the dangerous sting. And their biggest enemy was man.

The bat was an animal that had learned to fly;
well here was a plant that had learned to
walk - ... (P.46)

Soon the world had been dominated by the triffids and had created a chaos everywhere.

But one weakness in the triffid was if the sacs of poison were broken they would not be able to attack. But they were very strong, Walter said :

"... a triffid's in a damn sight better position to survive than a blind man'. (P.85)

There were many nurseries near their company's plantations and they were raised there for the private buyers or for sale to a number of lesser trades. The farms also had started becoming an unpleasant place to pass by as triffids were growing there. Triffids were bred in the same way as people usually bred flowers and dogs.

Man always had enemies and they were usually animals or insects, but these triffids though biologically plants had turned out to be man's rivals. But people here knew how to protect themselves from these triffids.

"If you have a can of petrol to spare, throw some of it their way, and follow it up with a bit of burning rag." (P.249)

As most of the people had gone blind, finding the food and locating the food had become a great problem, followed by the problem of scarcity of food.

Wyndham compared this problem to the situation during the second world war when there was a severe food problem.

The food problem becomes very obvious when a poor old woman sitting on the roadside eating -

'The rummaged in a battered bag behind her, brought out a dirty spoon, and began to taste the beans as if they were one of the jams of paradise (P.171)

People had to eat anything in order to survive. They even went to the extend of eating mashed triffids. As the beggars, especially the blind beggars, could not be choosers.

Just because he was not blind he felt it was his duty to show the blind where the food was, but suddenly a thought came to his mind which stopped him from doing so.

'If I were to lead them to a food shop still intact there would be a crowd which would only have soept the place base in five minutes, but have crushed a number of its weaker members in the process. Soon, anyway, all the food would be gone, ... " (PP.68-69).

It was very important to have sight and be fit, as it was a world where only fit could survive. And there was a bit of selfishness in his thought, as all were slogging for survival.

Being blind was as good as being dead, according to the people there. So the man in the bar told the other people that his wife had killed hersely along with the kids, as soon as

she had learnt that they all had gone blind.

A person cannot survive even without one sense, he feels helpless and depressed and does not like to be dependent on others for any kind of regular help. And so being blind was a great sin.

But fortunately it is noticed that when one sense fails the other senses work better, they compensate for the lost sense. This point became very clear when a man was seen walking on the street and was wondering :

'... what the devil's happened.' Why is it so quiet? I know it isn't night - I can feel the sunlight. What's gone wrong with everything?'

(P.61)

So when his sense of sight became weak, his sense of touch became powerful.

There was a lot of contrast between the people with sight and people without sight. The people without sight spoke very less as they had to rely on their ears for the things happening around them. Whereas the people with sight were busy with their day to day affairs.

'so you can see, can you: 'he said. 'Why the hell should you be able to see when I can't - nor anyone else?' (P.75)

A person with sight was look upon as a thing of envy and was used by the blind as a tool for seeing around.

When William used to enquire about Josella, he used to ask as the girl who can see because all the rest were blind. A girl with sight was Josella's identity.

Josella was a very brave girl, when her father rejected her love affair with Lionel, just because he was a spizzard, she cut herself off the family and went away and lived with a girl she knew, who owned a flat.

In 1950s girls had become quite independent and no longer depended on their parents to take decision for them.

In order to earn money Josella wrote a book called 'sex is my Adventure'.

People of that time were flabbergasted as a young unmarried girl had written such an erotic book. And it was an unexpected blow to the society as the conditional ideas about the women were shaken. But at the same time they were slowly getting used to the liberal feminism.

William Masen, the narrator who was tired with the problem, literally applied for transfer, in order to get rid of the problem, thus his escapist quality was seen.

He compared his father's past experiences with his own present experiences, his father had told him that before

Hitler's war he used to go around in London watching the beautiful buildings which he had never noticed before. And then the narrator had started feeling the same, but a bit worse.

While William was looking for Josella after the accident he had come across two kids Susan and Tommy. Tommy was killed by a Triffid's attack and Susan was running about here and there seeking help. The accompanies William in his further journey.

Susan was not very sure about the future as she thought that she was going to grow up in a world where there would be no nicetics and uphemism which she had learnt as a child. She had a fear that she was growing up in an unsafe world.

This fear had begun on the 7th of May when Earth's orbit had passed through a cloud of comet debris.

'The sky's simply full of shooting stars', she said "All bright green. They make people's faces look frightfully ghastly ...'(P.14)

One similar thing in these two novels of Wyndham is both the problem causes descended from the sky on to the land and water. Wyndham is mainly interested in presenting a theme of the struggle for survival, so all his novels mostly deal with this problem, and all his characters honestly slog for survival.

In this particular novel we see that the whole mankind is struggling to get certain things in order to survive like food. Petrol lighting system, hens for eggs cows, etc etc. And also medical necessities for Mary who was exploiting a baby and a list of sundaries.

"More important, it is big enough to afford time for teaching - teaching both the present blind these and the sighted children they'll have later on". (P.228)

This teaching of blind and the future sighted was done for their survival. They had to learn certain necessary things to survive in this world.

As there was scarcity of food they could not afford to support more people so they said :

"We can afford to support a limited number of women who cannot see because they will have babies who can see. We cannot afford to support men who cannot see. In our new world, then, babies became very much more important than husbands". (P.133).

All they wanted was a very good and strong future which would be the result of only good and healthy people.

They were ready to sow only if they would reap a good crop. So they all were interested in the babies with sight

which the blind women would give birth to and they totally neglected the husbands as they were only a means to it. This was the only way they could hope for a good future.

Coker expected everyone to take an equal part in the work. He felt that each and every person had to know everything about any kind of work.

'... Everyone starts by knowing nothing about anything, but God gives him and even her - brains to find out with. Failure to use them is not a virtue to be praised: even in women it is a gap to be deplored'. (P.194)

Every person was gifted with a brain and so he had to make use of that in the right way. According o him women don't make the right use of their brains.

Joselle was annoyed with this statement and said :

'That's all very well, but different people's minds work on different lines. Men understand how machines and electricity work. Women just aren't much interested in that kind of thing as a rule'. (P.194)

It is not necessary that if a man does a particular work a woman also has to do it. As there is a lot of difference between their likings. If a man likes electrical work, it is

quite possible that a woman would like to do any other work in the external world. So again there is the distinction of sex.

But Coker somehow does not agree with her justification and argues that time has changed so each and every person has to do his own work, no matter what it is without depending on others.

'... Nobody is going to be muddle headed enough to conjure ignorance with innocence now - it's too important. Nor is ignorance going to be cute or funny any more. It is going to be dangerous, very dangerous ... (P.196)

If a person does not know a particular work it would be nothing but his ignorance. And being ignorant about something was not a appreciable quality. If a person is ignorant about something, only he is the loser and it would be very dangerous too.

2 | During the 1950s there was no distinction of sex, and both man and woman were considered as equal. And women were not underestimated anymore.

But since the women were so used to being suppressed and not given much importance they were very immune to such healthy change in the society.

So Coker says women have all the capacities.

'Great God! And have I been explaining that women have all the capacities if they only take the trouble to use them'. (P.196)

Women did not take the pains of using their brains. And right from the beginning they were dependent on man and so they had got used to acting like parasites, which they wished to continue.

But she shouted back at him at the use of word like parasite, as woman was becoming independent then and hated the idea of being dependent on someone.

Life was not normal then, there was a chaos, it was not at all the usual style.

'But this morning was different. Disturbingly because mysteriously different. No wheels rumbled, no buses roared, no sound of a car of any kind, in fact, was to be heard. No brakes, no horns, not even the clapping of the few rare horses that still occasionally passed. Nor, as there should be at such an hour, the composite of work bound feet.' (P.9)

Everyone was blind and most of them were admitted in the hospital. The blind could not go about in the city on

vehicles. Everyone was in a confused state of mind which resulted in a very quiet city.

Wyndham usually presents something unusual, here we see that all the mankind had gone blind at one instance and life had literally stopped. It becomes very obvious when we read these lines :

And then I noticed that no chimaney, large or small, was smoking ...' (P.17)

William was doing his job with lots of sincerity and so he joined the Beadley Party, but he was more interested in finding Josella.

Man is a social animal, so even if he had a very hectic schedule, he longs for love and affection from his peoples. he did not have any such relative and he had only Josella who could give him love and understand him, a sense of longing for personal or domestic life was seen there.

Most of the villages were destroyed and the outskirts of the villages were totally deserted as if the whole human race was wiped out.

Everyone was disappointed with the condition in the city. They all had been longing for past which was better than the present.

'... I suppose that if there were wishes that could be granted I would wish the old world back...' (P.272)

A kind of nostalgia had started developing in them, they all started longing for past. And given a choice between the present and past anyone would prefer past because with such a horrible present they were obviously marching towards a worse future.

Life was disturbed and was getting worse day by day, there was no hope of a smooth life and there was a fear that the world would just come to an end.

'Tomorrow this garden will be full of noise. The red buses will be roaring along over there, crowds of people will be scurrying along the pavements, the traffic lights will be flashing ... A world doesn't just end like this - it can't - it isn't possible...' (P.123)

Suddenly she says the world does not end like that. Then she talks about the normal life which could be regained any minute. But there was one doubt regarding the triffids and their work. Still she was sure nothing would happen as she says :

'...., 'I suppose that if they had been able to think at all the dinosaurs would have thought much the same thing. It just does happen from time to time, you see'. (P.123)

Actually there was nothing to worry about because when such big animals like dinosaurs could not think and could not cause any harm to mankind, how could those much more tiny creatures or plants compared to the dinosaurs would do any harm to man.

'... But it is inescapable conclusion that life has to be dynamic and not static ...'
(P.123)

Life can never come to an end all of a sudden, some push will be given to it in one or the other way. And an optimistic attitudes is highlighted here when the narrator says : till there is life, there is hope, which shows the importance of life.

There was a ray of hope of having a good future and the existence of mankind till they all were fit.

'... As long as there are many of us left sound and healthy we've got a chance - a thundering good chance'. (P.124)

There was one big question of the survival of the race, and what should be done in order to make it work. Some proper way had to be found to deal with those troublesome triffids as they were not only worried about themselves but also about the next generation.

For the rescuing campaign a team of experts was necessary to deal with the triffids for the good of mankind. Only then something could be done.

'... If we could produce the right hormones to create a state of imbalance in triffids, but not in other things ... It must be possible - if you have enough brain, power turned on to the job ...' (P.270)

Triffids were not very easy to deal with as they were very unpredictable. One had to know the problem thoroughly and only then he could deal with it. They had to solve the problem as early as possible because they were worried about the next generation.

'The future seemed to me at that time a choice between a lonely existence, always in fear of capture, or a gathering together a selected group which a selected group which we could rely on to protect us from other groups.'
(P.79)

The future seemed very uncertain as they did not know whom to rely on in the time of danger. As all the mankind was experiencing the problem, they all had to rely on each other for help.

The present is always connected with the past and though there may be certain development in the present, one never forget the past. Similarly Josella here expresses a sense of nostalagia when she talks about the things which she cannot do.

Josella used to feel very sentimental when she heard records of music but that feeling could not be compared to the sad feelings of the eighteenth century. But at the same time she was not so much affected by the orchestra, where a group of people played it. Records were gradually growing primitive and she felt very sad as she could not listen to them again and again.

They were experiencing problems one after the other. They had run short of fuel and were very much worried because they had to keep themselves going and that was not possible without food. They had no wire to mend the fences and thus there was no assurance of any security.

Tiem was on the triffids' side (P.288)

Whatever the human beings did they could not win over the triffids, but the triffids had taken over man as all the luck

was on their side.

But later on they discover a triffid gun which could be used to kill the triffids, but all of a sudden Dennis developed a soft corner towards the triffids.

'... What is surprising me now is that I'm suddenly feeling quite kindly towards the triffids ...' (P.299)

There is a reflection of one of the human qualities. Dennis had got to know a lot about triffids and so he had started feeling for it. Even triffid was a living thing and even it was struggling for survival, and even it must be feeling ill about the human beings.

Windnam ridiculed all those people who had faith in God and his characters are the ones, who do so.

'My friend, it is fitting that at the end of another day we should renew our thanks to God for his great Mercy in preserving us in the midst of such disaster ...' (P.186)

All people after prayer to God in order to thank Him for protecting them till that day and pray for the next day. They pray God to look upon them with lots of compassion, upon those that were still wandering in darkness and guide their feet. They pray for strength to endure all the sufferings.

All Wyndham's characters have faith in God and in the time of danger or suffering they call upon God for help.

'Oh, God! Bill. Does it have to go on being like this? (P.251)

They were all stuck up and they had no one to rescue them. They heard a helicopter and they all waved frantically at it, but the helicopter goes away.

'If it can come once, it can come again,' said Josella sturdily, but not very convincingly. (P.278)

There was a lot of confusion as she was hoping it would come but was not fully convinced. So the attitudes were a combination of both optimism and pessimism.

'you're going to go away from here?' she said. It was half question, half statement, in a quiet voice, a little unsteadily.' (P.162)

When majority of the crowd was blind only a handful of sighted people had proved of great help to all the blind. When one of those person with sight i.e. William decided to leave, the little girl felt very bad.

William honestly felt that he could not help them to get over their blindness and he was just a temporary help.

...I'm not doing any good, I tell you. I've been like the drugs they inject to keep the patient going a little longer - no curative value : just putting it off'. (PP.162-163)

Their blindness was not curable and so they had to get used to living like blind. If the people with sight would stay there helping the blind then, the blind would ~~become~~ dependent on the people with sight. And that was just a temporary solution and would not be of any help in the longer run. Thus getting used to the blindness was an appreciable solution.

For the benefit of mankind they even go to the extend of abolishing the law of marriage.

King Soloman had nearly five hundred wives and a Mohammadan man could have three wives. But in any other religion one man could have only one wife. But here they make a rule that every man who married one girl with sight had to take two blind girls.

And there was no compulsion, they expected willingness and fruitfulness. The babies were given more importance than the husbands, because these babies would have sight and they would be the next generation. So priority was given to anything connected to the future.

Wyndham gives a references to literature in his novels and here we see him characters discussing Shelley's 'My name

is Ozymandias'.

When Coker and William were discussing about the problem and the solution for it. Coker tells William that if all the people had to understand what he said then he had to speak the simple and ordinary language. If one talks and quotes Shelley while he is talking that will only help him to show off and no one would pay any attention to him.

Wyndham added music here and there to show the intensity of sorrow and pain. here a ballad by Byron was used.

In chapter three we find that when all the blind had gone to the circus they heard a very unusual tune of music.

And when I die,
Don't bury me at all
Just pickle my bones
In alcohol ... (P.63)

It sounded very dreary and untuneful, it was echoing back and forth in the empty streets. All the blind crowd was looking here and there trying to locate it.

Wyndham had used a very unusual or rather a very horrible expression in this song.

Some good accommodation was made for all the blind and people with sight to stay. Susan was being sent to the headquarters and was going to be offered the charge of a unit. But William does not like the idea of sending Susan away and so he says :

'My wife and I regard Susan as our own daughter'... (P.298)

Lots of importance was given to human values. Both the husband and wife had taken a lot of liking towards that girl as she had also been a great help to them, when they needed it. She had been living with them since the death of her brother Tommy. So they had started considering her as their responsibility and had liked her like their own daughter.

'We think now that we can see the way, but there is still a lot of work and research to be done before the day when we, or our children, or their children, will cross the narrow straits on the great crusade to drive the triffids back and back with ceaseless destruction until we have wiped the last one of them from the face of the land that they have usurped. (P.302)

His worry for the present was getting reduced but he was getting worried a lot for the future. He always thought about the next generation which included his children and grand children. His concern for them made him leave a spotless and clear world for his children. And thus he was taking all the possible pains to get rid of that horrible creature which had conquered them in a wrong way, and to leave a very safe world for the next generation.