



THE INFLUENCE OF THE EPIDEMIC ON SOCIETY IN ALBERT CAMUS' "THE PLAGUE": PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: 4th January 2022 Accepted: 4th February 2022 Published: 11th March 2022</p>	<p>This paper discusses the extent of psychological suffering that prevailed in Albert Camus's novel "The Plague", which was published in 1947. In fact, suffering, especially psychological suffering, comes as a main character that affects every individual in the novel during the period of the spread of the plague and the isolation of the city of Oran from the outside world. Therefore, this novel explained the psychological suffering of the people of Oran while they were under the brunt of the plague through psychological conflict, panic and fear of the unknown future. Camus' descriptions of this novel and its accurate depiction of reality make readers understand the extent of the fatal psychological suffering that made their minds reflect on diaspora and absurdity. In the end, psychological suffering leads to life changes for most of the characters because it makes people realize a different side of life that was not known to them at all until the time of the plague.</p>

Keywords: Albert Camus, The Plague, Psychoanalysis, Psychological Suffering, Epidemics.

1- INTRODUCTION.

Certainly, the use of historical events such as wars, diseases, etc. as themes for innovative literary prose is not only in English literature in the twentieth century but in all literary periods. Therefore, many novelists of great stature have sought to enhance our view of the past by producing different novels according to the traditional literary standards of the period. But it was empirical writers such as modernists and representatives of the various historical avant-garde who consciously sought to elucidate what had hitherto not been elaborated by designing new literary strategies and generally neglected historical material. In fact, a large number of postmodern novelists turned as a source to give the true picture of reality, society and historical events that people lived in in different periods. Many of these novel's deal with episodes of 20th century history, such as the turn of the century, World War II, or the Cold War. In addition to the emergence of the epidemic in different periods, which led to the emergence of a book that conveys the suffering of societies, and the most important book of the postmodern period is the narrator, Albert Camus. (Wesseling,1991:1).

The Persian narrator of Algerian origin, Albert Camus, was born in Algeria in 1913. His family was poor and in addition, he did not know his father because he died in battle during World War I in 1914, so he lived with his mother, who was half deaf and illiterate, so he remained throughout his life Maintain close contact with her away from the usual parental contact. In 1935 Albert obtained a postgraduate degree in philosophy from the University of Algiers. That same year he wrote and directed a student play that was supportive of the community called Théâtre du Travail (Theater of Action). The main objective and program of this young group was to present purposeful and world-class literary plays at prices suitable for the poor classes in Algeria. At the age of seventeen, the disease chose him to be one of those infected with tuberculosis. Therefore, to survive and survive this disease he had to work continuously, so he worked in a number of individual jobs, which made him more fortunate when he moved between journalist, writer and investigative reporter to editor-in-chief. Then he published in Algeria two promising lyrical articles, "*L'Envers et l'endroit*" (Betwixt and Between) and "*Noces*" (Nuptials). In 1940, Albert's path was to emigrate to Paris in the same year he married Francine Faure. Indeed, Paris at the time was the cultural and intellectual center of the ambitious young writer, and here Tour Albert was very important in his life's path. However, Albert Camus will never forget his North African homeland and he has always felt like an outsider in the French capital. (Todd, 2015: 31).

Predictably, the writer Camus was prevented from enlisting as a soldier in the French army during the outbreak of World War II, and this was due to his illness, but that did not make him surrender. After the occupation of France in 1942, he created an anti-occupation newspaper. After the liberation of Paris in 1944, his newspaper, which was called "*Underground*", it was one of the most widely read daily newspapers of the period. His editorials were brilliant and inspiring, whose main essence was the infusion of morals and culture into all strata of society. In 1944, wanting to be

more distinguished than anyone else, he made a name for himself as a playwright with the publication "*Caligula*" and "*Le Malintendo*" (Misunderstanding) and here he declared theater to be his favorite activity and place. In 1945, he thought his first novel, "*L'Étranger*", would be a bestseller, but his second novel, "*La Peste*" (The Plague), published in 1947, was the best-seller. In that period, the narrator Camus had established himself as one of the most promising French writers and a rival member of the Parisian intelligentsia among Jean-Paul Sartre, Raymond Aron and François Mauriac. (Tekancic, 1998: 5).

In fact, despite his cultural standing in France, he never felt comfortable there due to some racist behavior that bothered him. This concern was reinforced in the 1950s and beyond, especially after the French left emphatically rejected his second philosophical essay, "*L'Homme révolté*" (The Rebel), which was published in 1951 at the height of the Cold War. In 1956, his third novel, "*La Chute*", was a widespread misunderstanding among most of his fans and due to the biblical connotations of the novel's title, some readers felt that Camus was on the verge of converting to religion. Albert was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957, but then the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) plunged him into a deep personal crisis between defending Algeria and standing by France, so this case eventually prompted him to remain completely silent because this issue is thorny and very personal. Despite his attempts in his speeches and articles to find a compromise that defines the federal form of the Algerian government. Finally, Albert did not see the inevitable outcome of that struggle when Algeria became because he died in 1960 and Algeria's independence was in 1962. (Todd, 2015: 32).

The French narrator Albert Camus was one of the most important writers of the twentieth century, through his writings, which are distinguished by a special style of supporting society, in addition to the fact that most of his works reflected the historical and political realities of the period between 1930 and 1960 and the problems it created for human existence. He focused not only on the relationship between humans and nature, but also on philosophical questions regarding man's relationship with God and nature; Human happiness is the existential problem of freedom, human action and individual responsibility. and the moral consequences and limits of political ideologies. Against the background of Marxism, fascism, Nazism and Stalinism, philosophical ideas revolved around nihilism, absurdity and existentialism; And the intellectual and social developments of modernity and postmodernism, Camus' works explored the tragic conflict between the individual's search for existential and moral values, and the inhuman forces of ideologies and intellectual abstractions that determined the fate of man in that period. The foundations of Camus' works can be found in literature and philosophy, the humanism of the Enlightenment philosophers and their ideas of freedom, the materiality of the body, and the concrete facts of man's existence in the world. While Camus may not have been a systematic philosopher in the same sense as Hegel or Sartre, his focus on the opposition between physical and metaphysical facts belongs to a long philosophical tradition that extends through the Greeks, especially the novelists, through French philosophers, to the Russians. The French existentialists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Stephen et al,1999:xii)

Indeed, most of Albert Camus's works, through his novels, essays, plays, and editorial writings, are objectively classified as works of the absurd, in addition to the psychological suffering of all societies. Here, students had a better understanding of Camus's thought and the sequence of development he planned in his work, but after his death and with the passing of decades, his contribution as an artist and his popularity as an intellectual dwindled until it was dated as it seemed that the writings required additional readings to discover explanations and special psychoanalysis, so no new challenges or solutions. However, in 1994 with the publication of "*Le Premier Homme*" in France, the incomplete manuscript found with him at the time of his death sparked a new wave of interest in Albert. Through this novel that reveals his life and upbringing in Algeria and how he was an orphan and poor, he discovers the simple joys of life as well as the difficulties of life and the overcoming of the many obstacles that stand in front of him, and here he regained interest in him again among critics, scholars and students. In 1996, Olivier Todd wrote an extensive autobiography on Camus called "*Une vie*" which was well received in Paris. In 1997, Herbert Lotman republished an updated version of his 1978 autobiography on Camus. (Tekancic,1998:6).

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE:

In the twentieth century, specifically in the first decades of it, which marked the beginning of modern psychology, its distinct topics and new methods, which led to the development of psychoanalysis of literary texts through a group of famous sociologists such as Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, and before them Sigmund Freud. Psychology was first developed in society as a way to treat neuroses, mental spasms, psychological problems and mental disorders by Freud, but it was soon expanded in a different way to include many life topics and extensive developments and practices in the history of various civilizations, including war, religion, myths, literature and epidemics in addition to the arts other. In fact, literature of all kinds has been used as a source of psychoanalytic concepts in all societies and here we have noticed that literary criticism has used psychoanalytic theory to explain literature. Therefore, literature writers tried to exploit psychoanalysis as a positive theory to support society in addition to using it for creative purposes. Here, psychological criticism deals with literary themes primarily and primarily as an expression of the mental and intellectual state and character of the individual author. In fact, if we read the history of psychology, we will find that psychoanalysis began with the profession of medicine, but it spread in general to other fields of study where it eventually penetrated into literary studies as one of the different types of literature that deal with the psychological problems of society or some people from society who suffer from panic or fear or mental disorder. The

idea of psychoanalysis in particular revolves around people's actions through their old ideas of recurring and changing events. (Hossain,2017:41)

In particular, the psychoanalytic theories, which are among the components of the analytical criticism of a type of literary fad that provides for the idea of supporting people or a community through the psychological suffering they live because of a harsh circumstance, an epidemic, wars, or other problems, as is the case for the plague novel for the narrator Albert. **"Psychoanalytic theories assume the existence of unconscious internal states that motivate an individual's overt actions"**. (Monte,1977:8). Here, the psychoanalytic movement is supported by Sigmund Freud (1859-1939), who is considered one of the founders of this movement, and then his student Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) redirected his viewpoint to suit his social environment through a more accurate understanding of psychoanalysis. In addition, Young sees basic human behaviors in myths. Then the development of psychoanalysis through Alfred Adler (1870-1937), who believes that man is a social being exposed to all kinds of psychological disorders, and therefore writers should have a role in helping, **"we are self-conscious and capable of improving ourselves and the world around us"**. (McConnell, 250). Here, it can be said that there is a mutual fascination between the various fields as the field of "psychoanalysis and literature" is the main "mediator" between the two disciplines. (Black,1970:71)

Analytical treatment of psychological suffering is a detailed retelling of people's lives by giving great importance between the aspect of thought processes and the processes of the subconscious mind. Therefore, awareness of this aspect through psychoanalysis is very important, therapeutic and vital to a healthy mind. Here, psychoanalysis emphasized the specific motives for the importance of psychoanalysis in literature by focusing on the motives that help clarify literature in general and on two levels, the first level of writing itself through the work of a controversial figure within the novel. The second is to focus on psychoanalysis through the topics related to the characters of the novel and how to explain their relationship to meaning and identity, and to psychological and cultural forces. In fact, psychoanalysis is of great importance in the contemporary understanding of readers as well as meaning and the relationship of literature to culture. Psychoanalysis is seen as one of the forms of psychotherapy that aims to treat mental disorders by investigating the conditions of people who suffer from psychological conditions or society through special circumstances such as wars and epidemics, so the book uses the method of interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in minds in order to treat these cases. Psychoanalysis clarifies ways to express our most culturally specific fears by giving us a perspective on them as cultural constructs. In the end, we live in a post-Freudian era so we cannot escape from the reality of human life differently from the way people were thinking in the past. Psychoanalysis is distinct from other literary criticism theories. (Hossain,2017:42).

3- THE IMPACT OF EPIDEMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING ON ORAN SOCIETY IN "THE PLAGUE".

Since God created mankind and to this day, a number of epidemics have appeared continuously, which have caused mass death and in very short periods, in addition to the psychological collapse of most societies that had the misfortune to be chosen by the epidemic, such as tuberculosis, plague and other diseases. For example, tuberculosis was particularly prevalent in Britain, specifically in the romantic period of the nineteenth century, and with the development of treatments for those epidemics in that period and before that, another epidemic appeared, namely AIDS and cancer as a new type of black death at the beginning of the twentieth century period. The period of the twentieth century witnessed the plague in the city of Oran in Algeria, and here Albert explained in the novel of the plague that was published in 1947 in French under the name *"La Peste"*, the reactions of the government, religion and medicine, and the most important of them were the psychological state of the community on this epidemic, which is similar to the bubonic, which spread rapidly in it, causing I became completely isolated from the world. Through this isolation and quarantine imposed on the people of this city, Camus explains and diagnoses the effects of psychological illness on society. (Bonk,2010:13).

In fact, physical suffering and especially psychological suffering dominate most of Albert Camus's work. In *"The Plague"*, the psychological suffering that has become intolerable haunts most people, and in most cases this suffering leads people to a hopeless situation, which makes them in a fatal psychological state, reaching the stage of abandoning their lives. Since we are born and live in this world by God's will, we are subject to everything in this life from plagues of diseases, psychological conditions, suffering and happiness. Here, the narrator Camus shows through his novel *The Plague* that disease and epidemics do not distinguish between classes of society, as is the case in Oran. Therefore, Camus believes that life is full of absurdity which he does not wish to continue by causing people to rebel against it. The suffering of the country of Oran comes with the spread of the plague, which was the cause of creating a psychological conflict in that city through the great amount of suffering experienced by the people in that period. The people of Oran were not accustomed to such suffering before the arrival of the plague until that time, which moved them from the luxury of life and the pleasures of the world in this city to the pain accompanied by physical and psychological suffering. The plague comes unexpectedly with no known reason for its coming through the image of death in large numbers of mice and then turns into the death of a large number of humans. (Sreekumar,2019:146).

Absolutely, the psychological suffering in this novel accompanies every person in this city, but the most suffering was with the victims of the bubonic plague. The human victims of this disease began with the first human victim, and Michel's death made people in Oran think about it seriously, because they believed that the death of mice was just a normal case, but then Michel's death came and here a large number of people became victims of the plague, which

made them suffer from blocks, dumbbells, fever, Severe delirium and extreme thirst, in addition to the psychological state that makes them see death before their eyes, and then death comes at the most comfortable for them. At first, officials were the cause of this outbreak of this disease by refusing to take immediate action by isolating the infected. After the situation worsened in Oran, the government decided at the time to isolate the city, which caused a psychological conflict among the people through their feeling that they were isolated from the world and that their lives had ended. In fact, many people would burn their homes in the hope of killing the plague and escaping from it. Describing the scene of the death of Jacques the son of Othon lets readers know the horrific devastation wrought by the plague. (Abdelhamid,2021:20).

"In the small face , rigid as a mask of greyish clay, slowly the lips parted and from them rose a long, incessant scream, hardly varying with his respiration, and filling the ward with a fierce, indignant protest, so little childish that it seemed like a collective voice issuing from all the sufferings there. Rieux clenched his jaws, Tarrou looked away. Rambert went and stood beside Castel, whose closed book was lying on his knees. Paneloux gazed down at the small mouth, fouled with the sores of the Plague and pouring out the angry death-cry that has sounded through the ages of mankind." (Camus2010:206)

In this quotation, the writer explains the extent of psychological and physical suffering, the severity of the impact of the plague on a person with this disease in Oran, and how the patient's location affects the psychological state of others. Tarrou also becomes a victim of the plague, and he is one of the rich layers of society, so we see that the plague does not differentiate between the classes of society, as death rates have increased, which is illustrated by the size of the bodies one above the other in large pits and buried. In fact, the rapid growth of the plague and the closure of the gates of the city of Oran and its isolation from the world caused the spread of panic and psychological conflict among the people in the city. The feeling of exile and isolation throughout Oran was completely new to the people of Oran. In addition, commerce, cinemas and restaurants were forced to close, which made citizens more anxious and irritable and trying to escape from this hell. After that, all kinds of communications and transportation were stopped, except for telegrams. With time, the supply of food and other necessities decreased, and here the amount of psychological suffering increased, which made them live in a spiral of deadly psychological thinking in the shadow of a constant fear of the plague.

"In spite of such unusual sights our town folk apparently found it hard to grasp what was happening to them. There were feelings all could share, such as fear and separation , but personal interests, too , continued to occupy the foreground of their thoughts. Nobody as yet had really acknowledged to himself what the disease connoted. Most people were chiefly aware of what ruffled the normal tenor of their lives or affected their interests. They were worried and irritated." (Camus,2010:73)

Here, the writer explains another type of psychological conflict in this novel far from the struggle of fear of death and disease, which is the psychological struggle in order to escape from this city, as is the case in the character of Rambert, who is trapped in Oran and separated from his lover in Paris, so his only concern was to escape in order to returning to his wife, so he is going through serious psychological suffering that makes him rebellious and tries by all means to get out of Oran, and thus the siege on the city made people mentally and physically weak, in addition to fatal psychological conditions. (Abdelhamid,2021:19).

In addition to the psychological and physical suffering, the remorse of conscience had a primary role in changing the beliefs of society through people's belief that the plague is a punishment from God for the sins and evils committed by man, especially in the city of Oran, through the Paneloux sermon, which made them suffer and try to bring out the evils within them. Here, Paneloux believes that repentance for sin and a return to good deeds is necessary to overcome this epidemic. Therefore, many people in Oran were affected by his speech, Paneloux, but the extent of suffering was greater than the size of religious faith. The psychological suffering through the plague brought many changes in the society of Oran, where some become sick with fun, some panic and others act crazy, in addition to being wary of communicating with people for fear of the plague. With time and with the increase in psychological suffering, many lose their faith in religion as people seem to be lost emotionally. Despite the amount of psychological suffering and fear of illness, watching the death of Jacques, the young son of Othon, had a role in changing the psyche of most people in Oran, as in the case of Banlou, who joins Rieux and Tarrou in the process of aid, and Cottard, who has become social and tries to make friends as he takes advantage of the crisis to make money by selling cigarettes and lower quality alcoholic beverages. In addition, Othon, the magistrate of Oran who was cruel even with his family, is also undergoing a radical transformation after the death of his son which weakens his character and before indulging in more kind charitable activities he dies of the plague. Ramper, a journalist, finds himself trapped in the city of Oran and initially tries to escape from Oran to reach his wife but later changes his mind and decides to stay in the city and contribute to the aid in order to fight the plague. (Sreekumar,2019:148).

Unprecedentedly on the extent of psychological suffering in most of the novels of the writers of that period, the narrator of the plague novel pictures the mood of the novel, the level of suffering through the gloomy and boring atmosphere of the city of Oran, which lacks positivity because it is not an attractive place, but rather a commercial city. So, it can be said when we can that its place increases the scorching summer heat that makes matters worse as the death rate rises by more than a hundred. Moreover, we feel that the world is indifferent to human pain and here Albert describes all the scenes of death and lamentation of people when they take their relatives and families to the cemetery due to illness, which depicts the immense suffering of the people. Excessive psychological suffering and its

distracting conflict even affect people's mind as the moods of 'Cottard' fluctuate when the pandemic loses his mental balance and shoots random people. (Tuffuor, 2017:401)

Indeed, the writer (Camus) believes in the existential and humanistic philosophies of supporting people in various ways and did not believe that death and its reality on human life and rationally through his fight in all his novels of death and human suffering, as in the novel *"The Plague"*. Here, the writer explained how the plague brings physical and psychological suffering into people's lives and how people react to suffering in different ways so people criticize that instead of sitting perfectly and blaming the situation or giving up on life, one should act against the pain. He clearly showed that the hierarchy of suffering and death became just a myth that made the suffering of the people of Oran think about the absurdity of life, criticizing people that before the plague they were preoccupied with ideas of making money and seeking pleasure and they had no imagination or spirit, but after the arrival of the plague their normal lives were completely disturbed and they became isolated from world but this intense suffering and isolation taught them humanity and love towards their fellows and because they had not been exposed to such a situation early on in their lives, they became frightened, desperate and helpless. (Abdelhamid,2021:21).

At the beginning of the epidemic, the residents of the city of Oran were indifferent to each other's pain because they were acting selfishly, but as the suffering rose, the selfishness of the people declined until it reached the level of solidarity for survival. Camus believes that a person cannot conquer death but believes in fighting for suffering and death through support that increases the energy of hope in life. Here, when suffering gets out of control, the people of Oran consider it their common problem, so they join the action against it. Leading the aid work is Rieux, Tarrou, and many other people in that town who join in to help, including Rambert and Paneloux, so they start working long hours ignoring their personal lives. The rise of Oran from suffering becomes the slogan of their work, even if it takes their lives. Here, Rio is a perfect man who believes in deeds other than perfect sitting and preaching as he works day and night even harder to bring Oran back to its early days. (Tuffuor, 2017:403)

In the end, Camus' belief in optimism for the future is clearly demonstrated even in times of despair, sadness and suffering through his belief that life is full of vicissitudes, happiness and suffering, but it becomes distinctly meaningful when he tries to rebel against the negatives through this novel. In fact, Camus believed in human action and not in any external forces and for this reason he criticizes some people, especially religious people, and their way of judging suffering by saying that the epidemic is a punishment from God. How suffering is viewed differs in that some confront it with fear, others regard it as a punishment from God and others completely collapse due to fatal psychological suffering and suicide but only idealistic people with sound thinking and understanding fight against it. Finally, we see that the people's struggle against suffering and plague has become fruitful when the door of Oran is opened again. Here, the novel ends with the value of human love that makes happiness possible. The work indicates that there will be suffering in life, but the important thing is to find meaning in suffering and how to defend it. Therefore, suffering makes the people of Oran think and act wisely according to situations, from suffering the strongest souls arise and from the womb of suffering, societies rise again and in a pure and pure manner with innocence, as is the case in the society of the city of Oran. (Sreekumar,2019:149).

4- CONCLUSION:

In *"The Plague"*, Albert Camus discusses a number of issues, including the psychological suffering that accompanied the novel's characters from the beginning of the epidemic to the end. In fact, it is difficult to accept what is afflicting man, so dealing with this changing world is one of the things that increases people's panic and fear through increasing death rates with the destruction of the economy in addition to the disruption of all areas of life due to such epidemics and it was one of these cities It is the Algerian city of Oran, which was the subject of Albert's novel.

In fact, after the outbreak of the epidemic in the city of Oran and the huge numbers of infected people and the increase in death rates, this city was completely isolated from the outside world, and this isolation was a major reason for increasing the psychological suffering of people through panic, inability to think and fear of the unknown future. Suffering causes some people to commit suicide because they cannot bear the scale of this epidemic. Through this catastrophe that occurred in the city of Oran, some religious people believed that the cause of this epidemic was a punishment from God for sin, and the most appropriate solution was to stay away from evil, as in the Paneloux sermon.

Here, this suffering had a major transformation in the society of Oran by changing the idea of some personalities from love of self and money to join in helping plague patients. In fact, this disease had a positive role in building society by rejecting class in society, in addition to uniting among them in order to save the city of Oran from this disaster. In the end, we conclude that this novel is one of the most supportive of human beings in order to survive and not succumb to any disease or epidemic. Indeed, after a period of time, through solidarity and cooperation between people, Oran returned to its former glory.

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