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## **Journey from sensuality to spirituality: A study of Aldous Huxley's "Time Must Have a Stop"**

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**Abstract**--This paper analyses the dreary condition of humanity as it is shown in Aldous Huxley's *Time Must Have a Stop*. Sebastian Barack's path from sensuality to spirituality is the subject of the novel, which also offers a dismal assessment of the politics of mutually assured destruction. Huxley's protagonists are escapists who strive to find refuge in some creative world of their choosing that has no interaction with the harsh reality because they are struggling with the conflict between passion and reason, between faith and knowledge. Here, an effort has been made to demonstrate how Huxley analyses the ills of contemporary existence and argues that man is no longer joyful because he has failed to live in harmony with nature. It demonstrates how Huxley transitions throughout his life from body to soul, from the material to the spiritual, and from lust to love.

**Keywords**--life, sensuality, humanity, spirituality, God.

**Introduction**

Aldous Huxley, due to his brilliant wit, mocking logic, and exceptionally predictive vision, holds a special position in the annals of modern literature. He depicted the generation that had lost confidence in humanity as an enthusiastic humanist and talented satirist, offering mystical illumination as the solution to all of humanity's problems. He depicts the characters' psychological states in his novels, showing how they swing back and forth between body and spirit. He has captured brilliantly how men always balance two opposing poles in life, whether it be art and science, brain and heart, or passion and reason. D.V. Jog's *Aldous Huxley; The Novelist* (1966) regards Huxley as "the most outstanding and the most representative interpreter of modern age who attacks vehemently the prevailing meaningless pursuit of ephemeral pleasures" (99).

Huxley's ninth novel, "*Time Must Have a Stop*", published in 1944. "*Time Must Have a Stop*", according to Barry Leal, is the novel in which Huxley's ideas on time "receive their clearest expression" ("Life as Time's Fool: Time in Aldous Huxley's Novels," 185). It centres on the young protagonist Sebastian Barnack, a talented poet who is in his adolescent. He has an angelic face and curly hair, and he is incredibly attractive. He dislikes the mismatch between his childlike appearance and the serious, poetical genius he believes himself to be. His father is a delightfully severe, unyielding, and communist lawyer who secretly dislikes his son's likeness to his late wife, a beautiful but unstable woman. Sebastian is denied every material benefit by Barnack Senior, including a nice outfit for an evening out. He believes that such extravagances tend to corrupt a youngster and that the impoverished boys in Whales who cultivate coal do not partake in such frivolities.

Sebastian is consequently made to live with his affluent British public-school buddies while wearing torn handouts, which only makes him feel self-conscious about his youthful appearance. When Sebastian is brought to Italy to meet Uncle Eustace, a worldly guy who shows him life's finer pleasures, even gives him a Degas, and even better, promises him some new evening wear, there is a small bit of satisfaction in Sebastian's life. At Eustace's home, Sebastian also develops feelings for the earthy but cunning caretaker and is enticed by her. Everything seems to be going smoothly until Eustace unexpectedly passes away. Sebastian chooses to exchange the Degas for a new tuxedo, but is severely deceived in the process.

The missing Degas is noted by the estate auditor of the deceased uncle, and theft claims increase. While others are implicated and punished, Sebastian keeps quiet. He finally understands the importance of getting the Degas back. Uncle Bruno, a dotty religious zealot, offers his assistance because he is unable to do it himself. Uncle Bruno succeeds in getting the picture back, but only after spending a lot of money and making enemies with the Italian Fascists in the process. Bruno is detained, treated badly, and his deteriorating health is hastened by the fascist police. Sebastian provides care for his dying uncle, and the generosity and spirituality of the elderly man have a great impact on him. Sebastian undergoes a transition thanks to Bruno, who aids him in developing a deeper perspective, awareness, maturity, and compassion for others. Years later in Sebastian's life, when he is post-war and without a limb, he continues to create poetry, an epilogue suggests that Bruno's influence on the young man is still felt.

This novel, like others by Aldous Huxley, explores women's sexuality in the 20th century. They are no longer "passive" recipients of male aggression; instead, they take the initiative to pique the desire of their partners and anybody else they find attractive. Italian woman Laurina tempts Eustace Barnack in an effort to fulfil her sexual needs. She reads a letter he wrote to her years ago when she speaks to him on the phone to rekindle his earlier passion: "Listen to this", said Laurina's husky voice, "You have the power of arousing desires that are infinite and, being infinite, can never be assuaged by the possession of a merely finite body and personal mind" (97). However, Eustace is more drawn to the smaller, courtesan in his room named Mimi, and he hardly ever shows any interest in Laurina.

Through the persona of John Sebastian Barnack, the story also explores the tension between the senses and the spirit. He struggles between his desire for Mrs. Thwale physically and his commitment to the principle of non-attachment promoted by Bruno Rontini. He initially experiences a period of tense disturbance because he is so overtaken by physical needs and pleasures. He experiences total disappointment in his life as a result of a string of misfortunes that prevent the fulfilment of his ambitions. He is rescued from his precarious circumstances by Bruno Rontini, who also teaches him how to overcome his unhappy state by reining in and regulating his appetites, feelings, emotions, and intellect. Sebastian seeks to transcend his just human knowledge and aspirations in order to reach a spiritual wisdom. The novel charts his transition from the physical world to the spiritual one, from selfishness to selflessness, and from seclusion to oneness with the Absolute.

In "*Time Must Have a Stop*", Huxley explores the effects of unhappy marriages via the experiences of De Vires and his wife. De Vires is a thinker, while his wife is only interested in practical things. De Vires has a plan for promoting international harmony and understanding. On the other side, his wife has little interest in ideas or logic and longs for a passionate love. Their unhappy and tragic relationship is caused by their incompatibility. In order to satiate her carnal needs, Mrs. De Vires commits adultery, and De Vires goes through a lonely and discouraging life.

Huxley asserts that a man will always struggle with the issue of self-division between society and self, body and spirit, matter and force on the physical plane, and body and matter. He is confronted by this dichotomy, which also perplexes and mystifies him. However, the author of "*Time Must Have a Stop*" addresses the key philosophical issues of truth and illusion, the essence of good and the potentialities of evil, and the problem of slavery and emancipation, giving this battle philosophical and metaphysical dimension.

The battle between slavery and freedom, as well as between time and eternity, is distilled in the story. Significantly, Huxley uses a Shakespearean line to address the core of this issue: "But thought's the slave of life, and life's time's fool, and time, that takes survey of all the world, must have a Stop" (290). Huxley asserts that "time must have a stop" when he examines the pointlessness of our menial life in time in the globe. We always look either in the past or the future, which is pretty foolish and sad and causes us to feel anguish and aggravation. He states "...either past time, in the form of a rigid tradition, or future time, in the form of Progress towards utopia. And both are Molochs, both demand human sacrifice on an enormous scale" (3).

Huxley addresses a significant metaphysical subject in the novel through the straightforward tale of Sebastian Barnack's quest for a dinner jacket. Because of Tom Boveny's party and the required dinner jacket, Sebastian is emotionally upset and becoming agitated. He goes to his father, who confronts him and demands that the child understand his duty to the poor and working classes. His cynical uncle offers him a dinner jacket, but before he can deliver, the kind man passes away from heart disease.

Sebastian steals the artwork and throws it away, but when the theft is discovered, a tiny peasant girl is held responsible and put through a lot of agony and teasing. Sebastian is experiencing heartache and is in a precarious position. He does not care about the dinner jacket; all he wants is to save the helpless girl. In order to get the painting back from Weyl, he asks Bruno for help. Weyl returns the artwork to him, but not before subjecting him to humiliating situations. Weyl arrives to give Sebastian advice on how to properly preserve art before Sebastian can place the picture in its proper location. Weyl pulls the photograph out of his grasp and announces with a cryptic smile that the nephew spotted it at a hidden spot within the actual house. Even the moral fulfilment that comes from confessing is not to be his.

While searching for Bruno, Sebastian is surprised to learn that he has been detained for treason against the Fascist regime. The poor child has already endured interrogation, corporal punishment, starvation, and poisoning of the fog. Finally, after he obtains his jacket, his father asks him for assistance with his election campaign. It is a cosmic comedy about how frustrated it is with itself. The history of the offence has him very troubled. He starts to reflect on the lies he has said, their ramifications, accompaniments, and outcomes.

These ideas distress Barnack, who feels betrayed. In light of his current predicament, Bruno offers him the theory of non-attachment and knowledge of God in opposition to the notions of self-indulgence and general ignorance. Bruno tells him

“about the necessity of sacrifice ... ‘the sacrifice of self-will to make room for the knowledge of God’ ... Don’t try to act somebody else’s part. Find out how to become your inner not - self in God while remaining your outer self in the world.” (282)

In his notebook, Sebastian expresses his conviction in the transcendent and immanent Divine Ground or Godhead of existence. He thinks it is possible for people to genuinely become identified with the Ground.

Sebastian’s introduction to spirituality and instruction in the virtue of non-attachment come from Bruno. He now understands that the only way to become oneself is to live a saintly life, just as one learns to love by actually loving. Keep your heart and mind open to God’s presence. Finally, he claims that direct intellectual recognition, which enables the freed spirit to identify with the subject of its knowledge because the “Atman” is the same as the Absolute, is not only a possibility but also a necessary for knowing the Absolute. The ultimate goal and purpose of all human existence is to attain this unitive awareness of the Godhead. Sebastian also gains the gift of a mystical experience, which is something we ourselves are unable to explain. The language of this experience is silence. Because of the passage of time, Goodrich argues that Huxley’s novel plunges the reader into a religious experience:

“By getting involved with the story, the reader approaches a sort of simulated version of mystical experience by being forced to release insistence upon a novelistic presentation more respectful of chronological time and pace. *‘Time Must*

*Have a Stop*' thus invites its readers into a controlled experiment in extending the boundaries of time. ("Bringing Order Out of Chaos: Huxley's '*Time Must Have a Stop*' and '*Vedanta*,'" 147)

Huxley is a proponent of the notion that unity is an unchangeable essence. He thinks that because of the mind's habit of separating and deluding, objects are perceived as being various and numerous when they are actually just one. He is convinced that only when diversity is made the precondition of unity can the Vedantic idea of unity-in-diversity be true. It would not be presumptuous to describe him as a monist on par with Bradley and Sankara given how similar their conceptions of reality are to his. He notes that Sankara's monism is superior to Bradley's since he is aware of the philosophical differences between the two. He references Bradley's and Sankara's views on reality as supra-intellectual, a supreme oneness, and a coherent whole with approval in "*Time Must Have a Stop*". According to him, the distinction between metaphysics today and metaphysics in the past is between a way of thinking connected to a discipline that is undergoing transformation and a way of thinking that is simply the same for everyone. "Short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and having reached that goal, He is lost and religion with Him" that's Bradley's view, the modern view.

Sankara was as ardent an Abolitionist as Bradley, but there is a huge difference between them: for him, there is not only the possibility of discursive knowledge about the Absolute, but also the possibility of a direct intellectual intuition, which allows the free spirit to identify with the subject of its knowledge. 'Bhakti, or devotion, is the highest method of emancipation. To sincerely try to discover one's true essence. It is stated that this is devotion. In other terms, devotion might be characterised as the quest for one's own Atman's actuality. The spiritual principle that exists in each of us and is identical to the Absolute is known as the Atman. The more established metaphysicians did not lose religion; rather, they discovered it in its highest and purest form.

Huxley eloquently conveys the Hindu concept of spirituality, which argues unequivocally that mundane existence is undesirable since it does not elevate man. Since it is flawed, man must make an effort to adopt a spiritual lifestyle that will elevate him. Sebastian reaches this beautiful condition of existence:

"Those fifteen weeks ... the most memorable and in a certain sense, the happiest. There had been sadness, of course, and the pain of having to watch the endurance of a suffering which he was powerless to alleviate.

And along with the pain and sadness had gone the gnawing sense of guilt, the dread and the anticipation of an irreparable loss. But there had also been the spectacle of Bruno's joyful serenity, and even, at once remove, a kind of participation in the knowledge of which that joy was the natural and inevitable expression – the intuition, direct and infallible, that apart from the desire to be separate, there was no separation, but an essential identity." (280)

Huxley thinks that without divine grace, man cannot rise above himself or carry out any kind of great deed. According to him, a person is also affective in addition to cognitive. In the face of the never-ending and terrible battle of life, man is

certain to seek for and ask for supernatural intervention by virtue of his basic character. When faced with troubles in his life, he longs for the rehabilitating assistance of an all-pervasive, almighty Being and declares his belief in the religion. In "*Time Must Have a Stop*", he asserts: "Grace did not fail thee, but thou wanted to grace. God did not deprive thee of the operation of his love, but thou didst deprive his love of thy co-operation, God would never have rejected thee, if thou had'st not rejected him" (84). As a result, Huxley's fundamental message in the novel is that worldly existence is terrible since it does not elevate man. He declares with unwavering confidence in God that human transcendence is not conceivable apart from divine grace. Man is not only cognitive; he is also affective. In the novel, Huxley shows his distaste for science and technology, arguing that they prevent mankind from understanding what it is to live and love honestly. Men only experience the futility and triviality of existence due to their incomplete knowledge. In the confusing tangle of science, they discover their sense of creativity and sensuality lost. Huxley contends that the only way to balance the negative effects of these impersonal forces is to live a life of complete awareness. In the novel, Huxley expresses his strong belief that, with God's blessing, a man's soul can be changed from bad to good. His vision of the perfect lifestyle is based on the belief that the best kind of living is one that allows for the freest, most complete, and harmonious growth of the human soul. However, man must take a significant role in its growth and should not just stand by and observe.

Natural scientists are criticised by Huxley for downplaying the significance of religious, moral, and aesthetic experiences in human life. These priceless encounters give us a wealth of knowledge about the natural environment, human nature, and the wider world. His characters express their disenchantment with consumerism and their search for idealism, demonstrating his opposition to it. They focus primarily on the problem of self-awareness and treat "self" as the unity of experience that underlies all human consciousness, rather than as an occult or abstract concept.

In Huxley's writings, self-awareness is a recurring theme. According to him, the individual's life is currently fragmented, perplexed, and unsure; it is marked by sufferings, constraints, and warped consciousness and must, for that reason, be transcended. This argues that there is a final state, one in which concepts like time, space, matter, and causality are meaningless. Realizing that the individual self is boundless, universal brahman is the ultimate objective.

From the debate above, it is evident that Huxley was able to achieve transcendence as a writer and a spiritual being in the latter stages of his literary career as a novelist. He displays disenchantment with everyday concerns and seeks liberation. He makes it apparent that he has taken on some aspects of the Hindu philosophy of life, and he believes that the West should seek to the East for guidance on spirituality because only it is capable of curing the ills that plague it. He further reiterates that OM is a symbol for the all-encompassing God. But as an academic, he cannot help but see a gloomy future for humanity, one in which people would finally commit suicide and be relegated to the status of animals, especially apes. He predicts that in the future, humans would occasionally live in utopia and other times in dystopia. As a result, he has both hopes and concerns for humanity.

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