

An Opinion on Melancholia and Modernism

Rafeeq Alam Khan^{1*} and Sarah Khan²

¹Department of Pharmacology, University of Karachi, Pakistan

²Department of Psychology, University of Karachi, Pakistan

Opinion

*A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
(Samuel Taylor)*

How fitting could any other words be except the ones mentioned above to depict what the onslaught of major depressive disorder feels like? Blank faces, blank eyes and blank minds reflect the existence of depression in any individual. I have been fortunate enough to observe many closely. With an idea germinated in my mind, I set out to get my numbers. No, I hadn't set a hypothesis. I had formulated a statement. I was adamant to prove that there were more depressed individuals compared to non-depressed ones. Oh the joy when I turned out to be absolutely right. The inhumane feelings had yet to be suppressed and humanity had to take their place in order for me to realize that there was a bummer right there for me. As each sheet of paper marked with a big red 'D' went down, so did my zeal. Yes, I had gotten my numbers right but the cost for their acquisition that awaited me towards the end wasn't pleasant.

Ferrari et al (2013) revealed that more than 4 percent population of the world had been identified to have depression. Greater than 5 percent have depression in the Middle East, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean. However depression has been reported to be lowest in East Asia, followed by Australia/New Zealand and Southeast Asia. Meanwhile maximum numbers of depressed people have been found in Afghanistan, where more than one out of five suffers from depression. Peoples in Japan are least depressed, having diagnosis rate of less than 2.5 percent.

Depression is increasing continuously. Martin Seligman (1998), president of the American Psychological Association, addressing the

National Press Club about depression in American said that we have found two amazing facts regarding the rate of depression through the century. The first fact that depression is now 10 and 20 times as much as it was 50 years ago, and second one that it has become the problem of young persons, since 30 years ago the average age for start of depression was 29.5 years but now the average age is from 14 and 15.

This poses a question; is depression linked with evolution in our lifestyles? Stephen Ilardi, clinical psychologist at University of Kansas, puts forwards the statement that depression is a disorder of modern lifestyle e.g. Ilardi matched present culture to the Kaluli people — a native community living in New Guinea, he revealed that from more than 2,000 Kaluli people only one exhibited the symptoms of clinical depression, although the Kaluli were overwhelmed by high rates of infant mortality, parasitic infection and violent death, hence regardless of their tough lives, they do not experience depression like we do.

Lack of empathy, disconnectedness with both living and non-living (nature) and obsession to achieve everything whether it is tangible (money, property, automobiles etc.) or non-tangible (love, fame, respect, relations etc.) are the fundamental errors stemming from the trunk of modernism. Balance or mediation is the key to maintain mental and physical health. After all, life is nothing but a struggle to attain a perfect balance between desires and needs. Desire is the root cause of all evil. This evil shall haunt our minds if not kept in check. Our needs are few but desire has no limit. In the modern world, happiness has been associated with an acquisition or fulfillment of certain desire. What we fail to grasp is that, happiness is not a destination or milestone rather a feeling that can be felt by the simplest of things. It can be secured by sharing other people's grief and difficulties and attempting to lessen them. Taking some time from our busy routine to appreciate what we 'have' and forget what we 'want' will surely dissolve our anxiety and depression.

***Corresponding author:** Rafeeq Alam Khan, Meritorious Professor, Department of Pharmacology, University of Karachi, Pakistan, Tel: 9243173-2206; E-mail: rkhan1959@gmail.com

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