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**Blindness and the Critique of Society:
Dystopia in “Blindness” by José
Saramago**

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Abstract

This paper addresses the new coloring in the concept of dystopian society as represented by the positive role of one of the characters vs. the passive role of the government and its mutual effect on the people of the society. In addition, it describes how all men in the dystopian society victimize and degrade the other through unlawful acts, like: stealing, rape, and fear, which are the lowest points in a moral decay. However, it offers hope by illustrating a positive sense, as exemplified by the doctor's wife out of Saramago's optimistic view that men may be descended from good women. Accordingly, the paper aims to examine the effect of the government's role in the lives of the people who have later turned into blind in a dystopian society and of people towards one other, and to clarify the positive sense as represented by the doctor's wife. To meet this, the researcher is to adopt Tom Moylan's (2000) concept of Dystopia when analyzing José Saramago's novel, *Blindness*. This study has uncovered the erosion of trust in others and clarified the heinous injustices committed by both authority figures and

laypeople. The troops' cruel treatment toward the blind has led to their sudden infection with that disease. Saramago expressed his upbeat belief that men can change just, they derived from good women as the doctor's wife. The study further has exposed the impact of the violent behavior of both the government and the people towards one another on the confusion and degradation of the humanity.

Keywords: Blindness, brutality, deterioration of humanity, dystopian

**العمى ونقد مجتمع الديستوبيا في رواية العمى للكاتب
جو ساراماكو**

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المستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث لون جديد لمفهوم المجتمع البائس الذي يتمثل بالدور الايجابي لإحدى الشخصيات مقابل الدور السلبي للحكومة وتأثيره المتبادل في أفراد المجتمع. فضلا عن وصفه كيف أن الرجال في المجتمع البائس يقعون جميعهم ضحية للآخر ويحطون من مكانتهم عن طريق أفعال غير قانونية مثل: السرقة، والاعتصاب، والخوف، وهي أدنى النقاط في الانحلال الأخلاقي. وعلى الرغم من مساوئ المجتمع فإنه يوفر الأمل من خلال توضيح الإحساس الإيجابي المتمثل بزوجة الطبيب من وجهة نظر ساراماكو المتفائلة بأن الرجال ربما ينحدرون من نساء جيدات. وبناءً على ذلك، يهدف البحث إلى دراسة تأثير السلطة الحاكمة في حياة الناس الذين أصبحوا مكفوفين – فيما بعد- في المجتمع البائس، فضلا عن دراسة دور الناس تجاه بعضهم البعض وتوضيح الحس الايجابي متمثلا بزوجة الطبيب. لتحقيق



هذا الهدف، سيتبنى الباحث مفهوم توم مويلان (٢٠٠٠) عن ديستوبيا عند تحليل رواية خوسيه ساراماغو، العمى. حيث كشفت هذه الدراسة في استنتاجاتها عن تآكل الثقة في الآخرين وأوضحت المظالم البشعة التي ارتكبتها كل من شخصيات السلطة والناس العاديين. كما أن معاملة القوات القاسية للمكفوفين أدى إلى أصابتهم بالعمى المفاجئ. يعبر ساراماغو عن اعتقاده المتفائل بأن الرجال يمكن أن يتغيروا بقدر ما يستمدون من صفات إيجابية من النساء الجيدات كما هي الحال عند زوجة الطبيب. كما وكشفت نتيجة هذه الدراسة عن الطريقة التي تسبب بها الحكومة إلى الأفراد المكفوفين عن طريق عزلهم في المواقع النائية وحرمانهم من الحصول على الغذاء والدواء، وكيف تسبب هذا السلوك العنيف للحكومة والشعب تجاه بعضهما البعض في حدوث ارتباك وتدهور في البشرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أدب المدينة الفاسدة، تدهور الإنسانية، العمى، الوحشية

1. Introduction

José Saramago (1922-2010) is a novelist and a man of letters. He has a unique writing style represented by the rare uses of full stops, commas, or capital letters. Such a peculiar usage serves the purpose of enhancing the continuous conversational style and assures the *similarity of all men*. In this regard, Saramago stated that “men are all the same, they think that because they came out of the belly of a woman, they know all there is to know about women” (as cited in Quotes and Thoughts, 2023). His peculiar style affected his weird and aggravated sense of the dystopian society. He further mentioned, all men in dystopian society victimize and degrade the other convicts through unlawful acts like stealing, rape, and fear which represent the lowest points in a moral decay. The generic reference “all” was aggravated, as it emphasizes the fact that when the government is swamped with the dystopian features, the negative consequences will be doubled. This is because the government has a leading and powerful role that forces people to emulate and follow. However, the brutal behavior of the government was not reflected in the behavior of the doctor’s wife, and to some extent to her husband, who adopted her qualities as he lived with her (Williams, 2013).

Accordingly, this study is to examine the cause and effect regarding the role of the government in the lives of blind people in a dystopian society. It further aims to investigate the use of depicting a slight positive sense in a negative environment. Based on these two objectives, the researcher is to answer the following research questions: What is the cause and effect of the government’s role in the people’s lives? And, what is the use of depicting a positive character in a negative and deteriorated environment?

This study is a qualitative descriptive study, as it gives, as Neergaard, Olesen, Andersen, and Sondergaard (2009) maintained, a full and simple explanation of the events and experiences while preserving all the specifics of the event under consideration. The study is said to be of benefit to specialists in literature, specifically those concerned with the dystopian theories.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Dystopia as a Concept

Etymologically speaking, dystopia comes from the Greek word *dus*, which means bad, diseased, and abnormal, and *caco*, -Greek *kako*-, which refers to something unpleasant or incorrect (Kollar, 2008).

Conceptually, dystopia was studied by many critics, shedding light accordingly on its varied senses. Kateb (1963), for instance, highlighted the sense of decline in human traits. In this vein, he stated that man is depicted as a “mysterious being”—“mysterious to himself and surely to others, not fully explicable by his milieu . . . and capable of some spontaneous behavior” (p. 146). It is these assumptions about the nature of human beings that have led to the decline of the utopian dream. According to Ruppert (1986), “the failure of socialism in the Soviet Union, once thought to be a model of utopian experiment, . . . [it] is sufficient evidence that utopianism is not only ineffective but untenable” (p.100). Human beings hope by default to create a utopian society. However, such a hope was vanished when the October



Revolution in 1917 transformed the Soviet society into a dystopian society.

Claeys (2010) mentioned, "Dystopia is sometimes used mutually with terms like 'anti-utopia' or 'negative dystopia', by contrast to 'utopia' or 'eutopia' to describe a "fictional portrayal of a society in which evil, or negative social and political developments have the upper hand" (p.107).

Sargent (2010) maintained that dystopia implies having "a worse social" structure .. than the present social system" (p.136). For him, terms as "dystopia, anti-utopia, utopian satire and critical utopia" (p.136) all refer to "a non-existent society [that is] described in [a] considerable detail and [is] normally located in time and space" (p.137). The aim behind an author's depiction is to allow the contemporaneous reader to view his/her society in a way that is considerably worse than the society in which the reader of the current world lives.

Finally, Moylan (2000) stated that a dystopian narrative:

is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, depression, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of the everyday life provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination.(p.xi)

It is important also to examine the relationship between dystopia and anti-utopia to see whether these two terms are synonyms or not. In fact, critics have different views about dystopia and anti-utopia. For example, Moylan, Huntington, and Sargent saw these two terms as two separate descriptive categories. They supported their view by adopting Suvin's views as a critic. The latter defined dystopia as "a community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and relationships between its individuals are organized in a significantly less perfect" (as cited in Moylan, 2000, p.76). Moylan refused to use the term anti-utopia as "a synonym of

dystopia" (p.76) and treated anti-utopia as an "uneconomical use" (p.77) of it. He also viewed the anti-utopian text as a text that "designates a pretended utopia, a community whose hegemonic principles pretend to its being more perfectly organized than any thinkable alternative" (Moylan, 2000, p.77).

2.2 Characteristics of the Dystopian Society

The dystopian society illustrates an imaginary society that is set in places and times which are different from the author's real world. Booker (2013) described the dystopian society as "the real- world dystopias [like those of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia], with their millions of real human victims, also lend poignancy and an urgency to the warnings of dystopian fiction". (p.20)

Another characteristic of the dystopian literature was the role of women. Women were privileged for their capacity and being allowed more room and responsibility, but they nevertheless cannot vote or work in occupations that are historically seen as being the realm of men. Their aspirations are limited to their own realm (Vukadinovic, 2009).

Religion in a dystopian society is absent and if there is any, it will be described as stated by Gottlieb (2010) as "a primitive state religion that practices the ritual of human sacrifice" (p.10). The people in a dystopian society are usually under the control of the dictator's authority as stated by Baccolini (2003).

In a dystopian society, the emphasis is not on the individual. People in a dystopian society are neglected and without any privacy and living under the control of their oppressive government. Thinking about changing is rejected, and may lead those who try to change to be exiled or killed. The people in such societies should accept their life without any complaint. They had no identity, and they were means for an aim (Jacobs, 2003). In a dystopian society, people often live in a state of survival because of the oppressive and violent societies.

In the dystopian society, the people lived under the oppressive social control. They were



controlled by a totalitarian or authoritarian form of government. In fact, this government used different ways to oppress people by. Gottlieb in her book “*Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*” criticized the government by stating:

We are faced here with societies in the throes of a *collective nightmare*. As in a nightmare, the individual has become a victim, experiencing loss of control over his or her destiny in the face of a monstrous, superhuman force that can no longer be overcome or, in many cases, even comprehended by reason. (Gottlieb, 2010, p. 11)

The writers of the dystopian works criticized the totalitarian and dictatorship governments and their societies. They further depicted the struggles and dangers that people may face under such governments as Booker says:

It should be emphasized, however, that the mere fact that a novel or film feature does not make the work dystopian. To be dystopian, a work needs to foreground the oppressive society in which it is set, using that setting as an opportunity to comment in a critical way on some other society, typically that of the author or the audience. In other words, the bleak dystopian world should encourage the reader or viewer to think critically about it, and then transfer this critical thinking to his or her own world.

(Booker, 2013, p.3)

Finally, in such a society, the totalitarian governments enslave and punish people. Crimes and violence are applied by the government that is justified by law.

2.3 Previously Conducted Studies

Many scholars examined the novel of *Blindness*. For instance, Camp in “*Literary Treatments of Blindness from Sophocles to Saramago*” (2014) focused on issues, such as the conflicting identities of the blind and the oversimplification of identities. He elaborated on

the way blindness was established in literary texts, such as *Oedipus*, *the King*, *King Lear*, *Madame Bovary*, and *Paradise Lost* to see how blindness was glorified. Shakespeare, in *King Lear*, created the same metaphor; however, he referred to the physical and social consequences of actual blindness.

Joseph and Edward (2019) in “*Expression of Multidimensional Identities in the Post-truth World: Innate Identities in Saramago’s Blindness*” presented a perspective of wife’s character who gives the reader an additional viewpoint on the grim circumstances. She thus possesses a true individuality that influences the development of other characters as well. In addition, the other characters meet one another through the doctor’s wife. They depicted her as a genuine identity that helps in the formation of other characters.

Aryan and Helali (2012) in “*Animal Imagery in Jose Saramago’s Blindness*” presented the gap which created and linked between the strong animal imagery in Jose Saramago’s “*Blindness*” and the idea of the spiritual blindness of human beings as symbolized in the physical blindness of the characters. Such a linkage helped to assert that the meaning is indeterminate and shaped by the reader’s realization of it. They assured that the deterioration of morality was illustrated by the strong animal imagery throughout the text. Moreover, the issue of spiritual blindness of human beings was depicted in the physical blindness of the characters.

Ibrahim (2016) in “*Blindness and Sight in Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man*” presented the concepts of blindness and sight. She explained the physical and psychological journey of the invisible man from a blind ignorance to enlightened awareness. She also clarified the struggle of an educated black man who survived and succeeded in a racially divided society that refused to see him as a human being.

Kadhim (2022) in “*A Dystopian Future: Social Oppression and Religious Extremism in Margaret Atwood’s The Handmaid’s Tale*”



illustrated the way religion was used to brutally exploit people especially women. Through her study, she showed that Atwood has provided readers with a new perspective in which human beings became more aware of the dangers that surround them whether in society, politics or in the field of human rights. She also depicted how Atwood warned her readers to notice the oppression and try to leave it. She assured that evil is inherent in all humans, but Atwood's novel presented a treatment which sought to awaken readers' minds in the hope of making a change.

As far as the present study is concerned, it discusses the new shading added to the idea of a dystopian society as reflected by the wife's positive character vs. the government's passive role and its reciprocal and integrated impact on the society's inhabitants. Demonstrating such a positive sense offers hope, as those men might be descended from good women. The study further examines the passive and effective role of the government toward and on the people, and the humanity as a consequence. The study depends on Tom Moylan's (2000) concept of Dystopia in analyzing the novel of *Blindness*.

2.4 The Adopted Concept

This study focuses on Moylan's (2000) aspect of dystopia, which entails "a community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and relationships between its individuals are organized in a significantly less perfect" (p.76) According to Moylan, dystopian literature addresses "the causes and consequences of social and ecological evil as systemic" (2000, p. xii). He further stated that dystopias and antiutopias: Contrary to antiutopias, are characterized as confined environments that highlight humanity's flaws and frequently result in despair. Dystopia seeks out alternatives and solutions, no matter how flimsy they may be. Additionally, he developed the idea of critical dystopia, which maintains a utopian viewpoint that tries to make up for the worst dystopian eventualities (Moylan 2000, p. 190). The dark indicators of anxiety, pain, and suffering that may be seen in the actual

world as depicted in Moylan's dystopian society fictions refer to agony, which has grown in popularity among young people in the recent years. Moylan highlighted how dystopian fictions have a capacity to introduce readers to a dystopian social "elsewhere" that serves a dual purpose: first, it gives readers a chance to reflect on their current situation, and second, it weighs the parallels and differences between the real world and the fictional world.

3. The Practical Part of the Study

3.1 Methodology of the Study

The current work is descriptive in nature; such a type of research, as Kumar (2001) stated, aims to explain a situation, problem, occurrence, service, or program in a systematic manner. It may also provide details on, for instance, the living conditions of a community or characterize attitudes toward a problem. Accordingly, only two main aspects will be addressed to maintain depth in the analysis. In this regard,

To meet the first objective, which reads: **"examining the cause and effect of the role of the government in the lives of blind people in a dystopian society"**, the researcher is to do the following steps:

- a. Identifying the extracts that reflect the role of the government in the lives of the blind people in a dystopian society as per situation,
- b. Determining the effect of such a behavior on people's lives, and
- c. Stating the cause behind the passive role of the government in relation to the kind of society, shedding light on the epidemic of blindness.

To achieve the second objective, which reads: **investigating the use of depicting a slight positive sense in a negative environment**, the researcher is to do the following:

- a. Identifying the character that represents the positive sense in the novel,
- b. Stating and identifying the extracts, which proved her being a positive character,
- c. Pinpointing the reason behind depicting such a character of doctor's wife.



3.2 Synopsis about the Novel

The dystopian work often illustrates an imaginary society which is different from the author's real world. However, this imaginary society directly reflects in one way or another real world of the author. In fact, Booker (1994) said: "the best dystopian fiction is always highly relevant more or less directly to specific "real world" societies or issues"(p.14).

The episode began with a man who was driving a car when suddenly he lost his sight. There was only one man at that time who offered his help to drive him to his house. The real intention of that man was to steal the blind's man car. This event shows the first descent feature into a moral decline and represents evidence that could be used to explain the dystopian society.

On offering to help the blind man, he did not, at that precise moment, have any evil intention. What he did was nothing more than to obey those feelings of generosity and altruism which, as everyone knows, are two best traits of human nature. However, the contradictory thing is seen when the same person who helped stole his car. Actually, there was not all that much difference between helping a blind man only to rob him afterwards and looking after some tottering and stammering old person with one eye on the inheritance (Saramago,1997).

Based on this event, Saramago declared that people have animal qualities in the absence of social structures. He wrote in the narrator's voice, "When we are in great distress and plagued by pain and anguish ... the animal side of our nature becomes most apparent" (Saramago, 1997, p. 94). Blindness exposed the animalistic qualities of humanity that already exist. As the blind man's wife arrived, she noticed that the blindness of her husband is different. Instead of seeing nothing, he saw whiteness everywhere. She insisted to take him to the eye clinic to heal him. The blind man's wife was unable to find the car. Then, she realized that the man who helped him had stolen him.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Analysis of the First Objective

a. Identifying the extracts that reflect the role of the government in the lives of the blind people in a dystopian society as per situation,

The novel offered facts on the cruelty of the government. It presented a rough way to the authorities' treatment to the blind people. Due to the illnesses, authority people did the following:

- **Asking the doctor to show his patients reports,** as seen in the extracts 1:

Extract 1

"The Ministry wanted to know the identity of the patients who had been at his surgery the previous day, the doctor replied that the clinical files contained all the relevant details, name, age, marital status, profession, home address" (Saramago, 1997, p. 15).

Here, the Ministry on behalf of the Government requested to know the identities of all the patients who had visited the doctor's office the day before. The doctor responded that the clinical files contained all the necessary information, including name, age, marital status, occupation, and home address. The authority people vacated the blind people to an old empty mental hospital.

- **Entering the blind in quarantine as the ministry of health decided;** consider extract 2:

Extract 2

The first to be taken to empty mental hospital were the doctor and his wife. There were soldiers on guard. The main gate was opened just enough to allow them to pass through, and then closed at once. Serving as a handrail, a thick rope stretched from the entrance to the main door of the building, Move a little to the right, there you will find a rope, grab it with your hand and go straight on, straight on until you come to some steps, there are six steps in all, the sergeant warned them. (Saramago, 1997, p.17)



Here, the doctor and his wife were the first people who arrived at a bonded place. Later on, the blind people joined them. Soldiers were standing at the gate to let blind people pass through the gate. The doctor with his wife guided the blind people to reach to their place.

- **Prohibiting the doctor from practicing his role as a physician**, as indicated in extract 3:

Extract 3

The sergeant as he approached, and, looking through the bars of the main gate, he asked, what's going on, A person who has injured his leg has an infected wound, we urgently need antibiotics and other medicines, My orders are crystal clear, no one is to be allowed to leave, and the only thing we can allow in is food. (Saramago, 1997, p.25)

This was obvious, as the doctor tried to convince the guards, telling them that a man with a wounded leg was in need of attention. The guard rejected his request and dismissed the doctor and said, "Look here, blind man, let me tell you something, either the two of you get back to where you came from, or you'll be shot" (Saramago, 1997, p. 25). Already, the doctor had a license and authority to make health decisions, but once he was deemed a blind man, he lost that authority. The doctor became a member of a blind regiment.

- **Alienating the blind people and ordered the soldiers who are supposed to protect the people but they let them die of hunger.**

The soldiers ignorantly and thoughtlessly accepted whatever the government told them, they did not realize their own brutality. They were acting like beasts, and that's why, they became blind too. They applied the instructions without thinking. This is clearly noticed when some of blind people tried to escape from the asylum; and the soldiers started shouting at them. For the blind people, there was "no difference. whether it was day or night, the first light of dawn or the evening twilight, the silent hours of early morning or the bustling din of noon, these blind people were forever surrounded by a resplendent whiteness" (Saramago, 1997, p. 35). Though the blind

people tried to escape from that ugly place; however, all their efforts went in vain. They were deprived by the authority of the government.

- **Isolating the blind people in a remote place with a less food and medicine**, as seen in extract 4:

Extract 4

"we're hungry, what you're sending us simply isn't enough, Supplying food is not the army's responsibility, Someone ought to be dealing with this problem, the Government undertook to feed us, Get back inside, I don't want to see anyone at this door". (Saramago, 1997, p.31)

Here, the doctor and his wife informed the soldiers the food is insufficient for the blind people, but the soldiers rejected the request and told them the Government should be taking care of this issue and warned them to get back inside. One of the most striking instances also was the need of blind man to seek medical assistance. He tried to reach the gate, but his fear from the soldiers had driven him to target his weapons towards the soldiers.

- **Sending the strict orders to the soldiers to use weapons against the blind people**, as explained in extract 5:

He must be, the shot struck him right in the face, replied the soldier, now pleased with obvious demonstration of the accuracy of his aim. At this moment another soldier shouted nervously, Sergeant, sergeant, look over there. Standing at the top of the tips, lit up by the white light coming from the searchlight, a number of blind internees could be seen, more than ten of them, stay where you are..... If you take another step, I'll blast the lot of you. (Saramago, 1997, p. 30)

Here, the soldiers applied the severe instructions given by the Government. The troops shouted the blind people nervously and noticed the pool of blood that was steadily growing in the spaces between the little cobblestones on the route. They misunderstood what it meant to be human and to care.



- **Using advanced technologies, propaganda, and many other means**

The mental asylum became as a prison to the blind people. The Government exercised its powers arbitrarily and cruelly over the blinds, which would come as a threat to the social order by suppressing the opposition to justify violence against them.

- **b. Determining the effect of such a behavior on people's lives,**

As far as this step is concerned, it has been noticed the following:

- Violence, chaos and moral depravity in the asylum reached new depths. Blind people were drowned in the terrifying world of violence, hate, and hopelessness. The asylum became a microcosm of social and moral exploitation.
- The soldiers who were responsible of guarding the asylum aroused with the freighting attitude towards the blinded people. They behaved in a tough way towards the blind people which went as far as shooting down some of them in a battle for food, until they become afflicted with blindness.
- The soldiers left the asylum and in the absence of laws, blind people reverted to barbarism, and consequently violence ensued. Blind people became totally oblivious to any civilized behaviour, Saramago (1997) stated: "[r]obberies, bullies, lies and cruelties rule and oppress this space with greater force. After a while, no one watches over or cares for the camp anymore, because everyone in the city has gone blind." (p.28)
- Inside this quarantine, the situation quickly turned bad as their supplies began to run low and the crime held everyone captive. They began to steal food rations, and assault women. The criminal people forced them to give up the essential things in exchange for food. Then, they started asking women to have an affair for food.

- The chaos and lawlessness led to the collapse of the health system. Eventually, the quarantine burned down, and the blind diseases spread into the city, which ultimately turned the whole city into a blind one. The chaos and barbaric actions of blind people were brought by the stupid behavior of the soldiers towards them in the asylum. The blind people who are prisoned in an asylum were compared to "pigs" (Saramago, 1997, p. 37) in their acting. They seemed indifference towards each other, thinking of their own, and only their own benefits whilst being disinclined to others needs. This highlighted the ideas of deterioration and the downgrade of human nature and humanity. (Aryan & Helali, 2012)

- **c. Stating the cause behind the passive role of the government in relation to the kind of society, shedding light on the epidemic of blindness.**

Blindness is a medical epidemic which required people to stay at quarantine in order to contain it. This epidemic suddenly becomes as a disaster that spread among people. As bad as losing faith in humanity, blind people are presented with a harsh fact that government is incapable of dealing rapidly with an epidemic., Saramago depicted blindness as a "white evil", which exposed selfishness that infected all characters, except the doctor's wife. He linked what happened to this city with the evil tendencies hidden beneath the social structures of the city. In this vein, he elaborated, people who lost their sight were no longer able to act in a civilized manner, and so they became aggressive towards each other (Saramago, 1997).

The government's complacent behavior has a variety of causes; firstly, blindness is a relatively recent epidemic that has affected society. Secondary, the government's poor behavior and repressive approach to fighting the disease has only made it worse and hastened its horrifying and rapid spread among people. Finally, the blind people appeared to be indifferent to one another, focusing solely on their own interests and disregarding the needs of others. This brought home the idea of how



human nature and humanity had degraded and deteriorated.

3.3.2 Analysis of the Second Objective

a. Identifying the character that represents the positive sense in the novel

The doctor's wife was the only positive character in such a society. Due to her virtual traits, she was the only person who kept her sight throughout the novel.

b. Stating and identifying the extracts, which proved her being a positive character,

The doctor's wife has been shown to be different from the other people positively, as shown below:-

- **Assisting the blind people**, as seen in the extract 1:

Extract 1

"help each of them to reach the bed they had previously occupied" (Saramago, 1997, p.22).

Here, the doctor's wife is used to show her capability of helping blind people without hesitating.

- **Showing loyalty and kindness to blind people**; consider extract 2:

Extract 2

"[she] got up, how she would have liked to help the new arrivals, to say a kind word, to guide them to their beds, inform them, take note, this is bed seven on the left-hand side, this is number four on the right, you can't go wrong, yes, there are six of us here, we came yesterday, yes, we were the first, our names, what do names matter. (Saramago, 1997, p.24)

Here, the doctor's wife is used to help the newcomers, offering a kind word, guiding them to their beds, and telling them notes to alert them

- **rejecting to leave her husband alone when he became a blind man**, as seen in the extract 3:

Extract 3

Please, don't say such things, what has to be will be, come, let me get you some breakfast, leave me, leave me, No, I won't leave you, shouted his wife what do you want, to go stumbling around bumping into

the furniture, searching for the telephone without eyes to find the numbers you need in the telephone directory, while I calmly observe this spectacle, stuck inside a bell-jar to avoid contamination. She took him firmly by the arm and said, come along, love. (Saramago, 1997, p.13)

Though her husband advised her to leave the quarantine for being afraid of contagion; but she insisted to stay with him.

- **Sacrificing to stay with her husband in the asylum although she did not lose her sight.**

She told her husband that she intended to stay and help him and the others who might come here. She also informed him to never tell them that she could see.

- **Enduring patiently the misery others could only imagine**, this is seen in extract 4:

Extract 4

"I am not a queen, no, I am simply the one who was born to see this horror, you can feel it; I both feel and see it". (Saramago, 1997, p.102)

She witnesses the ugliness and suffering in the quarantine simply no one can endure it.

- **Being courageous and strength**

She is only a woman who stood strongly; especially when insisting on burying the dead body of an old woman in the quarantine, and when going down into the basement storeroom of a supermarket only to help and find food for her comrades. Moreover, she tried to fetch water from the toilet in her home for the boy with the squint.

- **Her will and resolution**, as explained in extract 5:

Extract 5

She "looked at them, her eyes filled with tears, there they were, as dependent on her as little children on their mother. If I should let them down—she thought. It did not occur to her that all around her the people were blind yet managed to live". (Saramago, 1997, p.83)

Here, the doctor's wife insists to help her friends by offering her aid to take them to her home. She treats them as a mother to her children.



- **Her role as a leader,**

She used her sight to kill the ringleader of the hoodlums and end the misery by attacking the hoodlums. Although the attack was unsuccessful, as one of the raped women remembered her cigarette lighter and set fire in the entire asylum, but the residents fled out when they realized that the soldiers and the army were not there to contain them.

- **Her belief in God despite the common disbelief of the society,** as depicted in extract 6:

Only God sees us, said the wife of the first blind man, who, despite disappointments and setbacks, clings to the belief that God is not blind to which the doctor's wife replies, Not even he, the sky is clouded over, only I can see you. (Saramago, 1997, p. 103)

Here, the doctor's wife showed her love and respect to God who can see the misery, and save them. Despite this positive character, Saramago also depicted his ambiguous viewpoint by describing the almighty God as a blind man, who does not see human beings and feel their agony. The doctor's wife noticed that through her visit to the church, she saw "all the images in the church had their eyes covered. Statues with a white cloth tied around the head, paintings with a thick brushstroke of white paint" (Saramago, p. 117). She realized that the figures in the hanging paintings had their eyes covered.

- C. **Pinpointing the reason behind depicting such a character of doctor's wife,**

Because of her virtues and good qualities, the doctor's wife was considered a symbol of humanity and compassion, and was awarded to maintain her sight despite the spread of the infectious disease. The seven residents who were led by the doctor's wife became the hope to help others (blind people) the people return to their houses.

4. Conclusions

4.1 The First Research Question

As far as the first research question is concerned, **what is the effect of the role of the government in the people's lives?**, it is to be noticed the following:-

- The government's role in the dystopian society is brutal and inhumane throughout the entire novel. This feature reveals the real intention and nature of the society, and confirms what has already been highlighted by Booker, Gottlieb, and Sargent.
- This passive role has been represented by the negative behaviors towards the people. It has taken different forms, as in abusing the blind people using different ways and technologies, alienating them in a far place, and depriving them from food and medicine.
- The government's brutal behavior has shown to have a direct effect on the people's behavior in particular and on the humanity in general. The government's ignorant and indifferent treatment towards has been exemplified in the people's dealing with one another, and towards women in particular.
- The cruel injustices practiced by the authority and laymen revealed the loss of trust in others.
- The brutal behavior of the soldiers towards blind people has led them to have an abrupt blindness.
- The government usually represents the highest source of authority and a model to be emulated. Being a negative model to be followed, the whole society has been corrupted, creating as a result chaos and degradation in asylum and everywhere.
- Vice has spread quickly as the illness of blindness, reflecting as a result a symbolic symptom of spiritual, moral, and physical corruption in the society.

4.2 The Second Research Question

As for the second research question, **what is the use of depicting a positive thing in a negative and deteriorated environment?**, it has been concluding the following:



- The doctor's wife, the only positive character in the novel, represents the only glimpse of hope that Saramago offered.
- Her genuine personality has greatly helped in the formation of other characters, like the seven residents who followed the doctor's wife. She becomes as an example of the people's best hope for assisting others (blind people) in getting back to their homes. Through the doctor's wife, the other characters helped one another, and searched to have a renewed identity where hope and optimism move hand in hand.
- She symbolizes a new understanding, lifestyle, and journey from the harsh asylum to the world of humanity and empathy.

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