**Mid Term Book Analysis**

**‘Inferno’ by Dan Brown**

**Question2: How successful was the book “Inferno” in making you ponder over the problem of overpopulation? What role can eco-fiction stories and books play in helping to raise awareness on crucial environmental challenges of our time?**

Fiction is an interesting and impactful medium of communicating with the public, an easy way to attract the attention of large number of people towards a certain topic. The common people, constituting the greatest part of the population, are usually unable to understand dense academic writings, statistical results and research reports. But this should not make them an easy prey, which can be manipulated by the well-informed ones. The public holds every right to know the past and current situations of the world around them, their problems and benefits. And this is where fiction plays its part.

One of the many interesting branches of fictional literature is Eco-fiction, which plays the impressive role of public awareness on topics related to nature and environment. Eco-fictions provide common people the deep knowledge on these topics in way that they can understand easily and completely, without losing interest, so that they are aware of the challenges that they are facing. The most sincerely concerned with public-interest and benefits is the public themselves, and once they are aware, they are able to make fruitful decisions for themselves. The public also have influence on authorities, thereby increasing the chances of beneficial steps taken by the authorities as well.

Take the example of this very famous poem children all around the world learn along with other nursery rhymes,

*“Ring around the rosie. A pocketful of posies. Ashes, ashes. We all fall down.”*

The main idea of this poem is to remind people of the drastic impact of overpopulation resulting into a painful tragedy, the Great London Plague of 1665. (Brown, 2013, p. 131)

Dan Brown’s Inferno is also an eco-fiction, revolving around the problem of overpopulation based on Dante[[1]](#footnote-1) Alighieri’s *Inferno* (the Hell), the first part of Dante’s famous poem *La Divina Comedia* (the Divine Comedy).

Overpopulation is one of the biggest problems faced by mankind over the past couple of centuries. The Earth’s population is growing exponentially, causing great danger to the sustainability of the human beings as well as the world. According to the graph Bertrand Zobrist showed to Dr. Elizabeth Sinskey, it took the population of the world thousands of years, from the beginning of the world to early nineteenth century, to reach almost a billion people, which doubled in a hundred years, and took just another fifty years to reach four billion people. (Brown, 2013, pp. 88-89)

Overpopulation is not just one problem, as it carries along many other issues as well. The other living species and natural resources do not increase as rapidly as the human population, hence resulting into the extinction of many species and scarcity of a lot of resources. The demand of the resources, on the other hand is increasing, tempting humans to adopt immoral ways to survive in the world. The seven deadly sins in Dante’s Inferno were also a result of overpopulation. (Brown, 2013, p. 54) However, this survival is not promising enough to last for a long period of time. When overpopulation exceeds the limit, the nature takes action. As Dante expresses,

*“Culling is God’s Natural Order… Inferno smolders beneath the waters. Soon it will burst into flames”* (Brown, 2013, p. 47)

The world wipes out excess population in its own way. Famines, droughts, people dying of malnutrition, lack of access to clean drinking water and basic hygiene facilities, all leading the massive deaths and destruction, is the nature’s way to solve the problem created by human beings.

We humans already know the problems around us, but we are ignorant of the scale and drastic impacts of these problems. The fictional writings are a great way to communicate these environmental problems with common people like us, in order to make us realize what actually we are going through. Inferno is an interesting work of Dan Brown, which did a great job in making me think deeply into the problem of overpopulation and imagine the destruction it may lead to in future.

**Question3: What can be the social, ethical, economic and environmental repercussions of Zobrist’s method (if hypothetically employed)? What are the alternatives**

The villain of Dan Brown’s Inferno, the genius Swiss Biochemist Bertrand Zobrist, was obsessed with Dante’s idea of Inferno, the divine hell, the Black Death[[2]](#footnote-2) which ate up all the existing humanity for Renaissance, the rebirth. (Brown, 2013, p. 47)

Zobrist knew the problem of overpopulation and its impacts really well. He was well-aware of the statistics as he talked to Dr. Elizabeth Sinskey, director of W.H.O.[[3]](#footnote-3) about the direct relation of almost all the current health problems of the world, like lack of clean water, global surface temperatures, ozone depletion, consumption of ocean resources, species extinction, carbon dioxide concentration, deforestation, and global sea levels. with exponential growth of population, declaring overpopulation as the sole global health issue. (Brown, 2013, p. 119)

Zobrist’s solution of randomly killing half the population of earth, in order to have a sustainable count of population, as he calls it, was quite inhumane. (Brown, 2013, p. 90) Although the drastic impacts of overpopulation are very clear, there is no way this mass man-slaughter can be accepted morally and ethically. Zobrist, in his extreme fanatic obsession for Dante’s Divine Comedy, neglected the fact that the Black Death was nature’s call, the actual Divine decision, not something a human can decide for other human beings.

Zobrist’s idea to control overpopulation and solve all problems of the world had so many flaws. He imagined a new prosperous world after killing half of the population. He actually contradicted his own words from when he made fun of W.H.O’s attempt to control overpopulation in Africa, and lectured Dr. Sinskey on how the attempt to solve the issue resulted into pollution and waste of money. (Brown, 2013, p. 90)

But Zobrist neglected all this for his own solution. Many of the systems of the world are associated with those huge number of people he wanted to kill, and hence the economic downfall of the world, and above all, what about those almost four billion dead bodies? He did not consider the pollution it will increase, hence making life difficult and problematic for the remaining half population as well.

Zobrist’s idea to me was quite absurd and unethical. The problems are there but there can be better solutions. Birth control is less of an evil than killing human beings already living. What the world actually needs is awareness, not someone deciding on lives and deaths of human beings. China’s stabilized population after birth control policy[[4]](#footnote-4) for some period of time is a good example which shows that there are alternative non-destructive solutions possible.

# References

Brown, D. (2013). *Inferno.* Bantam Press. Retrieved from https://gageloniadotherphotos.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/inferno-a-novel-dan-brown-pdf-nikz.pdf

1. Dante Alighieri was a famous Italian poet of the Middle Ages (fourteenth century). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Referring to the Great Plague, the Black Plague, or simply the Plague which killed a population of around 50 million (around 60 percent of Europe’s entire population) in the 14th century. (https://www.historytoday.com/archive/black-death-greatest-catastrophe-ever) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. World Health Organization [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The policy that allowed one child per family [↑](#footnote-ref-4)