

**AMALGAMATION OF IDEALISTIC AND REALISTIC IDEAS IN  
AYN RAND'S FICTION  
THROUGH POST-MODERNISTIC APPROACH**

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**Abstract**

Change is inevitable in our society. There are few people who changed the society with their iconoclastic and catalytic views even after their death. Ayn Rand is one among them who has changed the lives of youngsters from no-confidence to new-confidence. This paper attempts to explain her strong views about selfishness, Marxism, objectivism etc., through various post-modernistic theories. This paper deals with her major novels *Fountainhead* and *We the Living*.

The economic, political, gender and colonizing hegemony inherent in Western “objectivity” and “universality” is visible in post modernistic novels. The person who has given great importance to deconstruction in his theories is Friedrich Nietzsche. Influenced by his pioneering role in deconstruction, Ayn Rand has introduced her new theory ‘objectivism’ in her novel *Fountainhead*.

Rand’s “*Fountainhead*” is a blend of Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy of the Superman and the typical American capitalist hero. Gail Wynand, Rand’s most Nietzschean character is her true hero and Dominique her true villain. While Rand’s fiction was very much in the Russian tradition of Dostoyevsky, who constructed characters as embodiments of ideas and while many of her ideal characters are presented in the American fruition. In the “*We the Living*”, the readers are given a picture how the “air tight” social conditions of dictatorship destroy any attempt by human beings to live rationally, honestly or cooperatively.

Rand was engaged in a vast deconstruction of conventional morality, probing its inner essence, making transparent the appearance of its high words as a monstrous lie. The essence of textual deconstruction is the attempt to reveal confliction or incommensurable elements in the language that the text requires for its existence, to reveal the ways in which the terms and concepts that create its intellectual structure simultaneously undermine that structure.

Nietzsche sought to destabilize religious and altruist values by disclosing the context within which they were embedded. He inverted their meaning by penetrating into their core. Rand alters the “positive connotations associated with such terms as “altruism”, “selflessness” and “equality”. Her appropriated terms, like “selfishness”, and “egoism” related these to an entirely different context so as to redefine them and by so doing, create neologisms. Like Nietzsche, she viewed “altruism as a weapon of exploitation”. She keeps hold on even the form of his distinction between “master” and “slave” morality.

Her novels are a blend of two distinct genres which are very close to post modernism. She fits squarely into the tradition of the Russian philosophical novelist like Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. She is also a plot-rich Romantic in the tradition of Victor Hugo. Mixing of literary genres exemplifies the characteristics of post modernism. Another important tenet is “stream of consciousness” which has been adopted to describe a narrative method in modern fiction. Long passages of introspection or interior monologue are found in “*Fountainhead*”, “*We the Living*” and also in “*Atlas shrugged*”. The long elaborated speeches of Howard Roark and John Galt disclose the philosophy of Ayn Rand and their outcome on the people. If she had written only *We the Living*, Rand would probably now be extolled as one of the lesser 20<sup>th</sup> century descendents of Dostoyevsky. Its characters exemplify idealistic communism through the characters of Andrei Taganov and Timoshenko, cynical communism through Pavel Syerov, Morozov and Victor, defiant individualism through Kira and Irina, and despairing individualism through Vava, Vasili and Maria. Then with greater intensity, she wrote *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas shrugged* which are, by the standards of the Russian philosophical tradition, far better.

Another post modernistic thought in *We the Living* and *The Fountainhead* is the emphasis on the art of representation than the subject of representation. The novels hoist issues concerning their own nature, status and role and create a culture of “hyper reality”. Both the novels encourage capitalistic free trade, deregulation, dispersal and dislocation of securities of traditions and community. The characters also portray the capitalist and communist views. Victor, a fervent aristocrat is forced to transform his mind to lead his life peacefully without any wrench. Though he has aristocratic views in his mind, he smothers his mind-set surreptitiously and ostensibly behaves like a communist for his own benefits. He doesn’t have the guts to face the impediments and angst created by the Russian government. Galina Petrovna, mother of Kira, is also a fervid

aristocrat at first, but later commutes her mind and becomes a proletariat. She enjoys herself working as a teacher. A moral idealist, Andrei Taganov turns heroically against the communist cause that he served during the revolution, and even prevents the execution of the worthless Kovanlensky. Timoshenko also averts against communist principles at the end and commits suicide to get rid of peonage. He has given his sublime service to the party and participated in the revolution but after sometime he is vexed with the behavior of communist leaders.

In *The Fountainhead* Roark's character is an exemplification of a person who always hankers for perfection and prototype. He is an epitome of excellence and quintessence and never allows imitation or alteration in his plans. On the other side Peter Keating, who is always a dependant, copies Roark's plans. Throughout the novel, the divergence in the minds of Roark and Keating is clearly depicted. Another conflict is between altruism and egoism. Ellsworth Toohey is the altruist and Gail Wynand is the egoist and their mentalities are unmistakably rendered in the novel. This portrayal of characters gives her ambivalent attitude towards Friedrich Nietzsche because she is also an admirer of Aristotle. Though she started her career as a follower of Nietzsche, but by looking at her work chronologically we can trace a fascinating intellectual Odyssey. Her ethical, political, and esthetic values, woven together in a complex manner, are developed by a process of rejection and revision of the Nietzschean vision.

In Marxist critics view, Ayn Rand's novels have so many Marxist, non-marxist and capitalist elements. When we take "*We the Living*", it represents so many Marxist thoughts. The core character which represents Marxist principles is Andrei Taganov. He is a staunch believer of communism. But the main aim of Rand is to interpret the unavoidable intricacies of aristocrat people in Russia at the time of Russian Revolution. Her novels, particularly '*We the Living*' caused much controversy. This novel is not the story of a hero or a heroine or any political leader, but the story of people who were censored and kicked by some revolutionary people. "The main tenet of Marxist criticism – that the nature of literature is influenced by the social and political circumstances in which it is produced – might well be immediately accepted as self-evidently true" (Beginning Theory P.166)

Rand majored in history and minored in philosophy at the University of Leningrad. She went to U.S. in 1926 at the age of 21 years and settled there because she was enamored of America and Hollywood, aspiring to become a screen writer. She loved the United States and considered it the most moral country in history. Her great fear was that Americans were losing sight of the American way and succumbing to decadent European philosophies. She became one of the proponents of capitalism. But later the fiercely anticommunist Rand began to develop a philosophy of ethical and political individualism, and to make the acquaintance of such leaders of the libertarian 'Old Right' as John Flym, Henry Hazlitt, Leonard Rea and a fellow refugee from European totalitarianism, Austrian economist Ludwig Von Mises. She developed her won dialect of the mutual implication of mind and matter, thought and action, reason and feeling.

She argued that 'Intellectual Freedom' cannot exist without political freedom; political freedom cannot exist without economic freedom; a free mind and a free market are corollaries (Playboy Interview, 1964). Mankind can make quantum leaps forward by brilliant and free individual minds. Capitalism is a system of individualism, thus inherently capable of making quantum leaps forward in science, innovation etc. She also opined that no one's rights are violated by a private individual's or organization's refusal to deal with him, even if the reason is irrational.

Though she liked and was living in the U.S.A. her writings have the characteristics of Russian literature. Russian writers, unlike their European colleagues, do not just describe their

philosophy, but they propose their whole ideology. Rand also tried to tell her whole ideology and she influenced the people with her philosophy. Her favorite writer is Victor Hugo. But we observe the influence of Aristotle and Friedrich Nietzsche on her. When she finished writing her first novel "*We the Living*", no one accepted to publish her novel. She faced the same problem when she has completed her second novel "*The Fountainhead*" (1943) But after its publishing, it was a grand success. Her third novel "*Atlas Shrugged*" (1957) is a magnum opus of her novels.

In "*Atlas Shrugged*", she introduced her philosophy 'Objectivism', which is described as 'a philosophy for living on earth'. Her theory holds that man gains knowledge only through reason. From the men of the mind of "*Atlas shrugged*", we can comprehend Rand's epistemology. The men of the mind, the creators, who like Atlas, carry the world on their shoulders gradually get vexed up with exploitation. They want to teach a lesson to the world of incapable and dependents. The main person who gets the idea 'to strike on the world' is John Galt. Fed up with the hypocrisy in the society, the creators join John Galt. As a result of the mysterious disappearance of leading innovators and industrialists, U.S.A.'s economy is collapsing.

All the main characters are creators who have great minds. Dagny Taggart is an exquisite business woman who runs a transcontinental rail road superbly. Hank Rearden is a productive genius of the industry and an extraordinary metallurgist to steel. Francis d'Anconia is a prodigy who masters every task as quickly as it's presented to him independently develops a crude version of differential equations at age 12 and invents a new kind of copper smelter. Ellis Wyatt is an innovator of the oil industry who creates an advanced method of extracting oil from the shale rock. Though John Galt is a philosopher, scientist, inventor and a man of superlative genius and accomplishment, but in real life, can be compared only to the greatest minds of human history.

Every advance that makes a human life on earth possible is a product of the reasoning mind. We find this scrutiny in *Atlas Shrugged*. Rationality is the acceptance of reason as one's only source of knowledge and fundamental guide to action. A rational person is guided exclusively by the evidence of his senses and by logical inferences from that evidence. The need for independence is implicit in the need for nationality. Reason is human being's basic means of survival and the exercise of reason is inherently a do it yourself exercise.

Galt's speech carefully reasons out Rand's philosophy, beginning with the question of existence. Human exist conditionally, dependent upon choice and valid choice requires exercise of reason. He decries self-sacrifice, for either spirits in heaven, or for incompetents on earth. Reason is a personal individual thing. We must judge what is true based on your own senses and experience. We shall not be infallible buy you should not let other people's opinion override our judgments.

Though she inspired thousands of people with her gripping novels, Russians treated her as non-native of Russian. But she didn't bother about their censure criticism. Her novel "*We the Living*" was pictured and was released in Italy and Germany. At first Mussolini and Hitler didn't notice the theme of the novel. But when they have understood the theme and views of the movie, they banned that movie in their countries. From this we notice that she was against those views who tried to suppress or oppress the people and their intentions.

In her novels, Ayn Rand presents a psychological and epistemological theme which is deeper and complex to understand. She gives different meanings to her thoughts and uses her novels as a vehicle for incarnating her ideas bringing abstract philosophy of life through plot and character. Her characters tell the importance of rationality and reasoning mind. A rational person

is guided exclusively by the evidence of his senses and by logical inferences from that evidence. The need for independence is implicit in the need for rationality. Reason is human beings' basic means of survival and the exercise of reason is inherently a do-it-yourself exercise.

Through out her novels Rand champions individualism over collectivism. In "*Atlas Shrugged*" the Anti-Dog-Eat-Dog Rule adopted by the railroad association to soften what is viewed destructive competition debilitates them. This rule is the logical result of a mixed economy, one in the process of rejecting capitalism. When the government has the power to control and regulate private business, it is in a position to dispense economic favors.

According to Rand, altruists always feel that 'self-sacrifice is the moral ideal' and altruism declares that any action taken for one's own benefit is evil. Thus the beneficiary of an action is the only criterion of moral value, and so long as that beneficiary is anybody other than one self, anything goes. The basic principle of altruism is that man has no right to exist for his own sake. Service to others is the only justification of his existence, and that self-sacrifice is his highest moral duty, virtue and value. But Rand says, "Do not confuse altruism with kindness, good will or respect for the rights of others. The main principle of altruism is self-sacrifice – which means self-immolation, self-abnegation, self-denial, self-destruction, which means the 'self' as a standard of evil, the selfless as a standard of the good"(Virtue of Selfishness. New American Library, 1964).

The popular usage of the word, 'selfish' is different from the meaning she ascribes to it. Many people use the adjective 'selfish' to describe regard for one's own welfare to the 'disregard of the well being of others. Many people come to a strong assumption that selfish people are violent and bestial with negative thoughts, do harm to their friends and relatives to get their own benefit and abuse the patience, trust and good will of all corners to satisfy their pretty whims. For Ayn Rand, the truly selfish person is a self-respecting, self-supporting human being who neither sacrifices others to himself nor sacrifices himself to others. She reveals her opinion in the introduction to her collection of essays on ethical philosophy "The Virtue of Selfishness" that the 'exact meaning of selfishness is concern with one's own interests

Ayn Rand, a supreme systems-builder, understands that all aspects of the universe are interconnected. Metaphysically there is one universe in which every entity is related in some way to all the others. Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of the universe as a totality. Epistemology is concerned with the relationship between a man's mind and reality. How important this epistemological approach to character interpretation really is indicated by the fact that many of the characters themselves apply Ayn Rand's epistemology in order to understand other and themselves. Roark, for example, as part of his quest to find 'the principle behind the dean' is shown on several occasions groping for some essential quality that he feels distinguishes others from himself. There are so many examples suffice to show the complexity of response required by Ayn Rand's characters, how her presentation, contrary to her own claim of holding a black and white view of character involves fine and careful distinctions that challenge our powers of moral judgment and discrimination.

Ayn Rand's works have inspired passionate responses that echo the uncompromising nature of her moral vision.

**The unlikeness between the working class and the bourgeoisie is apparent in 'The Fountainhead' and typical in 'We the Living'. In 'We the Living' the government employees and communist party leaders symbolize proletariats. We find anguished looks of aristocrats and bonny faces of party members everywhere. Party members like Syerov and children of proletariats like Marisha occupy the rooms of aristocrat people forcibly with**

**their inadvertent behavior. So here they are the symbols of bourgeoisie who are indulged in repressive measures and subversive activities.**

Kira and Leo, the children of dominant families, who acquired great wealth through hard-work and ardor imperial rule, are struggling to emancipate themselves of the repressive regime. Though Andrei Taganov works as a party member, he also represents bourgeois because he immediately has Kira got a job and gives money to her to feed her family members. In one incident he kicks a lady with his foot while she is praying for her husband's life. While other communist leaders are enjoying their exhilarated life through their jobs and party funds, aristocrats lost their properties and business, are leading egregious life. Kira's speech and Irina's agony represent the suffering of proletariats.

While coming to *The Fountainhead*, we can easily find out the discrepancies between the working class and the masters. All the main characters like Francon, Keating, Dominique, Holcombe, Wynand etc. represent masters and Mike, Mallory, Catherine, Roark represent working class. Though Roark sometimes designates the master class, most of the time he typifies as proletariat. He faces formidable obstacles, grudging replies and fatal circumstances as proletariats do. Francon and Peter Keating are the perfect icons of bourgeoisies with their overweening pride and rampageous conduct. We cannot estimate the cadre of Ellsworth Toohey by his intangible mental ideas. Though he oppresses originality and genius of human beings, he supports forlorn children, the people with meager income and orphans to get his unclouded fame. He supports the workers who are on strike in Wynand's papers and gives fabulous and stirring speeches like communist party leaders.

*The Fountainhead* is a unique novel with different ideology which creates 'its own world' and distinct from 'everyday reality'. The theme is very near to George Luka's ideology, resembles his principles in some characters like Henry Cameron, Mallory, Wynand and Roark. The fictional world accords with the Marxist conception of the real world as constituted by class conflict, economic and social contradictions, and the alienation of the individual under capitalism. In *The Fountainhead* capitalism is conferred in a different way and shows its peculiar features through some characters.

The characters reveal the humanistic approach of the author. '*We the Living*' has its own meaning within itself and socio-political context. In the beginning theory, it is said that the socio-political is the context of a particular social 'back ground' or 'political situation' (p7). It has complete political background which inherits social and political miasma of communism on people. Andrei Taganov, and Timoshenko are authentic communist leaders, strive for the benefit of the citizens of Soviet Union. They despise social gatherings, alluring functions and luxurious life which the common people cannot afford. Comrade Sonia is a impeccable example of obsession to communism. She cherishes to name her baby as Ninel, their great leader Lenin's name – reversed, or Vil, their great leader's initials – Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin or Octiabrina, a living monument to great October Revolution or Marxina for Karl Marx. We observe how strong the influence of communism on people and in the society is.

The second principle of liberal humanism is human nature is essentially unchanging. The same passions, emotions, and even situations are seen again and again throughout human history. In '*The Fountainhead*' Roark's nature is obstinate and rigid. He doesn't want to change his behaviour or principles even he suffers from severe starvation. He rather likes to work in the quarry as a daily worker than makes changes in his construction plans. The novelty and originality in presentation of such characters Ayn Rand is completely succeeded.

We identify another liberal humanistic approach in *'The Fountainhead'*, the conflict of values between 'art' and 'life'. The true value lies in the 'lived life' of the unique individual, and that it is disastrous for the artist to fail to recognize a necessary subservience of art to a communal reality. The main stress in *'The Fountainhead'* is on 'self'. First we give importance to ourselves; we can easily follow or recognize the values of others. According to Ezra Pound, the purpose of literature is essentially the enhancement of life and the propagation of human values; but not in a programmatic way: if literatures, and criticism, become overtly and directly political they necessarily tend towards propaganda. When Ayn Rand started her first novel *'We the Living'*, it didn't get much popularity or fanfare. But it was introduced in Italy and in Germany advertised that it had anticommunist principles, its impact is immense. Most of the characters in that novel embody both idealistic and cynical communism.

Keats said, "We distrust literature which has a palpable design upon us that is literature which too obviously wants to convert us or influence our views. Both the novels *'We the Living'* and *'The Fountainhead'* have tremendous influence on the people and they support Keats' opinion. One of the most important and most troublesome elements of Rand's theory of literature is her insistence on morally idealized characters. Though her novels didn't give immediate efficacy, but after some days they got incredible response and impact. Most of the Americans believe that *'The Fountainhead'* has changed the lives of not only Americans but the youth throughout the world.

According to liberal humanism Aristotle's *'Poetics'* is the best example in explaining the nature of literature. Liberal humanists said that it would be better to follow Aristotle's principles, while writing tragedies. 'Tragedy', Aristotle said, 'should stimulate the emotions of pity and fear, these being, roughly, sympathy for and empathy with the plight of the protagonist'. By the combination of these emotions came about the affect Aristotle called 'catharsis', whereby these emotions are exercised, rather than exorcised, as the audience identifies with the plight of the central character'. We categorize 'catharses in *'We the Living'* and we simply indulge ourselves into the characters and their emotions. The main three characters are all potentially tragic; Rand finds ways of softening the tragic focus. Her philosophical roots in the Aristotelian tradition are well-known. The ending of *'We the Living'* gives a sense of purgation as Aristotle told in his *'Poetics'* to every reader. In this way Ayn Rand tries to satisfy the passion of her readers.

When come to political scenario, contemporaries of Ayn Rand differ in their views with her. Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), in his book *'Children of the Sun'* describes contemporary events in an atypical way. He expresses his scorn for the complacency of the upper class and a concern for the restoration of ethical values which fluctuate with Rand's views. But after the Russian Revolution, he criticizes Lenin and communists for their bloody experiments on the Russian people. He told that Lenin and Trotsky were corrupted with the dirty poison of power. They were disrespectful of human rights, freedom of speech and all other civil liberties. He rejects Lenin's hard-line policy, defending the Petrograd intelligentsia. Dissatisfied with the communist regime and its treatment of intellectual, he set out for voluntary exile during the 1920's. In Rand's view, she has taken the decision not to come back to Russia because of these reasons. She expresses her anti communistic views through her novels by observing the turmoil of the people.

Ayn Rand was a backer of both egoism and rights. She was no academic but with her indomitable spirit. She created a new era in the history of American Literature. She became an icon with her iconoclastic ideas. After the success of her *Fountainhead*, many people went after her views and held her in high esteem. Among them were former American President Ronald Reagan, Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House, for Congressmen Richard Army, Tom

Delay o Texas, Senator Trent Loff of Mississippi, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and many more.

She was the only woman who faced much controversy about her ideas, her philosophy and her novels. The sense of vehemence emanating from the pens and mouths of her critics was matched only by the commitment she commanded from her admirers. When she told about her opinions on value of time and virtue of selfishness, many people censured her with their views. Many critics felt that her ideas were self-centered and what she advocating was not self-reliance, it was self-indulgence. She opined that the self-interested desires of a person lead to strive harder to fulfill their desires and they in turn would do benefit to others. When their selfish aspirations lead to a positive path, so many people would be benefitted. It's true. But what would happen when their self-centered wishes lead to a negative path? Her philosophy generated a primordial, polarized response: scathing hostility and contempt on the one extreme and radiant, enthusiastic praise on the other.

Wallace Matson, a famous architect, in his paper "Rand on Concepts" told that he studied *The Fountainhead* when he was an undergraduate in the school of architecture with friends, among whom the novel made a stir. One of his friends, who aspired to be a Howard Roark, gave him a copy. He also said that it had a great impact, all to the good: not a pretty picture of the world, but an antidote to juvenile relativism and cynicism, saying that creative integrity was not necessarily doomed to frustration.

In 1940a, Rand was an inspiration to those who struggled against the New Deal (*New Deal Policies and the Persistence of the great Depression: A General Equilibrium Analysis* by Harold L. Cole, UCLA, Lee E. Ohanian, UCLA and Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis) hoped to bring about a new-market friendly political order. Rand's ideas were assimilated and modified by key intellectuals on the right including William F. Buckley Jr., Whittaker chambers, and Gary Wills. Despite her outsider status, Rand's work both embodied and shaped fundamental themes of right-wing thought throughout the century. Throughout the world umpteen number of people adored Ayn Rand and her novels. Not only Ayn Rand Institute, so many institutions and countries celebrate annual functions, silver jubilees, golden jubilees for her books which were most exalted.

In India, on October 12, 2007 Liberty Institute and the Friedrich Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ayn Rand's most influential book, "Atlas Shrugged", in Delhi. In the U.S., it is considered to be the book, after the bible that had an impact on the readers. Her books saved many people from committing suicides. An Ayn Rand Stamp was released by The United States Postal service in 1999. Celebrations of the 'Atlas Shrugged' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary took place across the country including Mumbai, Calcutta and Delhi. Dr. B. Ramana, a laparoscopic surgeon at Wockhardt Hospital in Calcutta said, "it is a book that has changed innumerable lives. It taught me how to look at myself and at the world her works leave no space for religion or communism".

Barun Mitra, director of the Liberty Institute said, "the impact of Ayn Rand can be gauged from the fact that without any advertising, her books are selling by the millions so many after their first publication". He got hooked on Rand in the 1980s and found a new meaning in life after reading her books. Calcutta Socialite Rita Bhimani said, "I appreciate her thought that each man is for himself and reckon that her thoughts could be applied effectively in the corporate world". (The Telegraph, Calcutta, India, Sunday October 21, 2007)

Rand had no fear of crushing acclaimed, reputable ideas. Her boldness in portraying obdurate characters with awe for creative freedom and a wrecking ball's approach to one's



obstacles inspired many young innovators to achieve great careers through path-breaking work. We should admit her prediction the communism is no longer flourished in Russia and we observed the same situation after her death.

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