

## POSTMODERN CONSUMERISM AND EFFECTS ON PEOPLE IN DON DELILLO'S WHITE NOISE

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### Abstract

*Don Delillo's 'White Noise' is about the American postmodern theories. It is examine the negative effect of consumerism on people in postmodern circumstance. The consumerism effects physically and mentally on Consumers and effects also on people. They cannot avoid environmental and toxic hazards. Even simple productions such as chewing gum can harm them. People were living in that consumerist society. In addition to the logic of consumerism can reason for folk serious mental problem and teaching people towards faulty perception. A consumerist type of schizophrenia as described by Fredric Jameson and Jacques Lacan. After being bombarded with advertise information, consumers relentless buy products and feel that the product they buy determine their identity. It is a world where people's mind and behaviour are change by the logic of consumerism. In 'White Noise' the writer Don Delillo presents a vivid picture of the postmodern toxic world .In this novel the toxicity conveys an additional meaning the logic of consumerism and its mesmerizing power.*

**Keywords:** Consumerism, Postmodern, White Noise, Don Delillo, Media, Society.

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### INTRODUCTION:

**D**on Delillo is an American novelist, playwright and essayist. He was born in America on November 20, 1936 and grown up in working class, Italian catholic American neighbourhood Bronx of the barony in New York city. This novel impacts on the people of consumerism in postmodern period. His novel, '*White Noise*' published in 1985. He got National book award (fiction) for white noise. His some novels are famous like *white Noise*, *Libra*, *Mao ii*, *Underworld falling man* and also plays are *The Day Room*, *love –lies-Bleeding*, and *Valparaiso*. In his novels, He portrays some issues like consumerism, postmodernism, media, terrorist attack, environmental toxic event.

The novel portrays as inescapable toxic environment and it refers to environmental threats derives from the postmodern consumerist situation. Consumerist condition may be defined in two ways. First is, depict the toxicity of the postmodern consumerist environment who no one can escape. Second is referring to logic consumerism. This is the exists all over and in everything behaviour of people. Novel specially explain the postmodern consumerist society as being full of toxic. In this novel Jack is main character. He is a college professor. Babette Gladney who is the wife of jack and mother of family. Shehas four children from previous marriage. The air born toxic event and Jack's discovery of Babette's participation in the trail of a new drug called Dylar. Dylar supposed to cure to end the fear of death.

Scott Rettberg said that in *American simulacra : Delillo's fiction in light of postmodernism* (1999) in that present the face life in a postmodern, televisual culture of the aspect of post modernity defined by Jean –Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. Michelle Rene argue in "Dissenters are never superheroes."(2005) Rene said that *White Noise* is not entirely postmodern but instead attempts to unravel issues of humanity. Such as love, danger, and death around the protagonists. *White Noise* responds to the unavoidable toxicity in consumerist society

and the logic consumerism. The theme of environment in white Noise and maintains that the novel illustrates our environment as being produced by advanced technology that determines human lives such as holographic scanner at the supermarket, computers, stereo sets, and radios .

This research paper focuses on the effects of consumerism on consumer health and the ways in which the consumers in *White Noise*. The paper examines the various cycle of consumerism.

### **EFFECTS OF CONSUMERISM:**

*White Noise* portrayed as a consumerism's effect on people's health and mental situation. Postmodern threat referred as a two way in this novel .First the toxicity of the postmodern consumerist environment and the logic of consumerism. This toxicity as being found in daily products in society and being unidentifiable so that people are unable to avoid the threat, physically and mental situation.

The logic of consumerism cause for serious mental problem of people. Faulty perceptions is a consumerist type of schizophrenia. The characteristic of schizophrenia is resembles one of Dylar's effects. Dylar cure to end the fear of death. Dylar is a unique prescription pill that Babette takes. The side effect of this drug is confusing "words with things they referred to."(309) Willie Mink the project manager to this drug. He is schizophrenic who continually sits in front of TV.

The way mink unknowingly acts response to what Jack says is indicative of the way consumers blindly believe what media tells them. Jack says "Hail of bullets" and fusillade, mink acts in a manner as if he were really being shot "He hit the floor, began crawling toward the bathroom Showing real terror. He tried to wriggle behind the bowl, both arms over his head, hits legs tight together. (311) Mink believes that what others say. The mindless consumers believe unquestioningly in the media .In society the real has disappeared .The media as a form of copy is upheld as the crucial perspective. The influence of media is so powerful therefore people ignore their own emotions and do not think the reality or real source. It is believe everything the media entrust to them.

Steffie who has is schizophrenic symptoms" we have to boil our water "just because "its said on the radio."(34) Actually there is no need to boil water but Steffie likes to watch TV and listens to radio .So that radio is convinced and the follow the media instructs her to do .we can see Steffie has schizophrenics who develop the symptoms that conform by media .These

characters are like Willie wink who blindly believes that what jack says obsessed with smartness. According to Willie wink, the TV is dangerous media to several people .

The second characteristic of schizophrenia is consumerism causes a personality. The conditions of media are mandatory to the people and their identity is depending on which they buy the products. Therefore Jack has to shop for coveted images. Jack states that...

“I began to grow in value and self regard I filled myself out, pound new aspects of myself, located of person I forgotten existed. Our images appeared on mirrored columns, in class ware and chrome, on TV Monitors in security rooms.”(84)

Jack himself think has no real identity and he must buy products for the images. He wants to wear for the sake of finding the personality. In this novel the way is to acquire the identity in the postmodern consumerist society is to purchase and show the products as a representation of one's own image.

#### **SELF ILLUSION:**

Though the people in *White Noise* Jack Gladney seem to realize that they are surrounded by the death brought upon due to the products they buy. These are a causing suffering both physically and mentally. They try to neglect the fact and turn to the artificial comfort that consumerism provides. Consumer's believe that consumer products helps them in their despair situation. The clear example of this point is the drug Dylar. Dylar represent the last form consumer object as it is believe to eradicate the fear of death itself. Although it proves ineffective with Babbette Jack wants to take this to free from his fear and anxiety.

Even if the promise is bogus and impossible, desperate people are willing to take it as a last asylum they can tend to in the postmodern world .Jack tells Denise, Denise his daughter that “The power of suggestion could be more important than side effects.”(251) Though Denise thinks this is stupid, Jack states “I am eager to be humoured, to be fooled....This is what happens ....to desperate people.” (251) This dialogue indicate the people are so hopeless who are eager to be fooled.

The tabloids are another form of products and offers an artificial promise in the toxic society. The tabloids include that claim to relieve consumer of their physical and mental suffering. Jack think “The tabloids future, with its mechanism of a hopeful twist to apocalyptic events ,was perhaps not so every remote from our own immediate experience ...Out of sum persistent sense of large scale ruin, we kept inventing hope.”(146-147) The tabloids function as

a way of turning hazard events in to pleasurable. The tabloids can be diminish people's anxiety. This article is describing miracle drug to cure toxic –related diseases.

In one tabloids, it is stated that “Mouse cries have been measured at forty thousand cycle per second. Surgeons use high–frequency tapes of mouse cries to destroy tumours in the human body.”(236) People not only consume several products as Dylar and the tabloids but also resort the idea that wealth and things can resist them from facing environmental hazards. “I’m the head of a department I don’t see myself felling an air born toxic event”(117). He said himself that he has a strong house in good location and the power to buy products .Environmental hazards will not be affected for him .In addition to that consumerism distorts that the idea of death and life. The consumerist society is different way to death. “It is the end of attachment to thinks. This simple truth is hard to fathom ... We don’t have to cling to life artificial ,or to death for that matter.”(38) Any products of brand are not important aspect for human life. If we die, we can’t take anything with us. Murray is the character in this novel. Murray, said that “Here we don’t die, we shop.”(38) People try to run away from consumers products that means people can’t easily accept the death.

Jack says that, “There’s something artificial about my death .Its shallow, unfulfilling. I don’t belong to the earth or sky.”(283) Consumers society is fearful for death because it is a inevitably premature. It is clear that people can die any minute because of the toxic environment. The death in the consumerist society is not natural but happens to consumers through their own act of relentless buying.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Don DeLillo presents a clear picture of the postmodern toxic world .Its effects on people who lives in consumerists society. Consumerism supply consumer products that can be fatal threaten on people’s lives. Though some argues that no one can escape the poisoning postmodern consumerist environment but we can change the way of life. Every individual action can contribute to either severe environmental hazards or the development of the environment. People’s mind and behaviour logic of consumerism. If we awareness from the consumerist labyrinth. we can help to save the life .



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