

## HUMANISM IN THE SHORT STORY “YELLOW ROSE” FROM THE SHORT STORY COLLECTION OF ANJUM HASAN’S *A DAY IN THE LIFE*

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### **Abstract**

Anjum Hasan is a reputed novelist from Shillong in India. Anjum Hasan’s collection of poems called Street on the Hill, published by Sahitya Akademi in 2006. She has authored three novels – Lunatic in My Head (2007), shortlisted for Crossword Book Award in 2007. Her second novel Neti, Neti (2009), long listed for the 2008 Man Asian Literary prize and short listed for The Hindu Best Fiction Award in 2010. and the Cosmopolitans (2015) and two collection of short story namely A Day in the Life (2008) and Difficult Pleasures (2012), which was short listed for The Hindu Literary Prize and the Crossword Book Award. She has contributed so many poems and articles for publications. She is currently working as the Books Editor for The Caravan in Bangalore.

Gulfam is a twenty three year old software developer living in Bangalore. Her native city is Bangalore. She has great passion for electronic gadgets. She likes to spend her time in isolation. Her dreams are like fictionalised fantasies, For example: she desires to go to the moon and she also wants to explore the possibilities of staying in Mars. She hates to interact with human beings. She likes her mother but she hates her visits to her apartment. Nusrat is the mother of Gulfam who likes to socialize with other human beings. She likes to talk with others. She would get others phone numbers so that she can help them if they are in need. Nusrat is a good-hearted woman filled with humanism whereas Gulfam loves only the digital world. Her only close friend is Mathew from Kerala. He too works with her in the same company. The only reason she likes him is his ability to develop software applications. Mathew is a very talented man in the Technical field and this single quality attracts Gulfam. This novel explicates the condition of modern human beings who are addicted to electronic gadgets and alienate themselves from fellow human beings.

**Key Words:** Digital world, Wireless Fidelity, Humanism, Gadgets, Life

Gulfam is a twenty three year old young woman who has quitted her job and she is now a self-employed person. Gulfam’s native place is Bangalore. For the past two months she is working in the creation of software applications (app development) in the technical field. Gulfam is a woman who never cared about the surroundings of the world. She never enjoyed the beauty of the

garden or the nature of the world. Gulfam lives in this chaotic modern world and the problems of digital world is shown in this short story. In this modern world human beings cannot survive without any electronic devices. Digital devices and human beings share this same world and humans cannot avoid digital devices as it helps in his daily life. Digital Humanism means,

Digital Humanism as defined by Gartner, is the notion that people are the central focus in the manifestation of digital business and digital work places. People who embrace digital humanism use technology to redefine the way people achieve their goals and enable people to achieve things not previously possible (web source)

Digital world is a prominent source in today's world because of the growth and development of scientific world which takes an important role in human beings. It gives job opportunities for younger generations. Gulfam in this short story also earns her living by working as a software developer. Gulfam has a fetish for gadgets. Gulfam loved science fiction movies. The following are lines from the book *A Day in the Life*:

She loved futuristic movies awash with jargon and sleek gadgetry in which neither human nor physical nature intruded- no erratic clouds moving across the sky, no sudden moods altering the state of one's existence...Her favourite new technology was the flying car. (DL 76)

Gulfam loves futuristic movies and flying cars. She always dreams of the fictionalized world coming to reality. She had a particular liking for new technologies and inventions in scientific and technical world.

Gulfam usually alienated herself from the external world and closed herself in her bare apartment room. She believes herself to be allergic to sunlight. She has special liking for gadgets and she loves to watch futuristic movies in which neither human nor human nature intruded. Her one of the most favourite, to watch in Youtube video is about the wedding ceremony between a man and a robot. She is personally attached to the digital world and neglected the interactions with humans. When the people around her start to ask questions about the unknown visitor in her house she starts to avoid them by vacating the flat and then she settles in new flat. If she faced similar interactions in the new flat also then she will move out of that flat too.

Gulfam found happiness in isolation. She does not welcome any visitors in her house except her close friend Mathew. She never likes her mother Nusrat's visits to her house. Her laptop will be hot because of its overuse. The indoor life of Gulfam surrounded by all sorts of gadgets which reduced the human interruption in her day to day life. These kinds of willingness towards the digital world show Gulfam as a person who is more inclined towards the digital world than interacting with human beings.

Gulfam hated the activity of socializing with people. She even wished to have a string of numbers instead of name. She desired of having a chip in her wrist so that she can just wave to pay the money rather than having conversation with other person. She is a modern woman who dreamed of having 'Wi-Fi- enabled brain plug-ins' to talk to others. By using this device we can speak to others just by thinking about them and through the signals one will reach the person one wishes to speak and the task of speaking to the particular person will be completed.

All kinds of shopping are done online. This virtual mode of life enabled her to sit indoors and to relax in her cozy home. She prefers talking through phone and avoids face to face interaction. She prefers messages to phone calls. She even desires to manage her company through Skype. She makes her virtual consultations with accountants when she needs them.

Mathew becomes surprised by her nature and calls out that Gulfam has the soul of a Cyborg. The term cyborg means - a being with both organic and bio mechatronic body parts. The liking of Gulfam about gadgets shocks Mathew and he thinks of Gulfam as a cyborg. Cyborg can be defined as follows,

“By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs.

The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics, the cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation”(Donna J. Harway)

As Donna J. Harway says this is 21<sup>st</sup> century and we live in this world filled with all sorts of electronic devices. The cyborg is a condensed image of both human and bio mechatronic body part. If we formulate this type of changes in human body then there could be a historical transformation in the world but this will never do any good to human beings because it will look powerful but it might ruin the God given natural abilities of man

Mathew and Gulfam work together in developing the software application called the ‘Green fingers’. Mathew is the only close friend of Gulfam. The only reason Gulfam has friendship with Mathew is because of his ability to create software applications and his deep interest in technologies. Mathew is a keralite who is frequently called as Mallu Mathew by his colleagues in order to differentiate him with other Mathews from the USA.

Mathew always dreams of going back to Kerala and he has the plan to own a rubber tree farm. After retirement Gulfam has other plans that is a complete contrast to Mathew’s ideas. She is interested in doing experimentations in cloning and artificial intelligence. Mathew is worried that Gulfam will become Schizoid. Mathew believes that Gulfam will not like the idea of himself falling in love with Gulfam.

Mathew always desires to travel but Gulfam usually has her own imaginative fantasies of travelling to moon. The mindset and the startling ideas of Gulfam will portray herself as not a woman who is ordinary but the woman whose mind is filled with out of the box ideas that are shared by Gulfam through her conversation with Mathew.

Gulfam’s lack of realism is commented by her father but she felt unaffected. She thought that her own father has failed in life as he is a divorcee. The present condition of Gulfam’s nature of having no faith in human relationship could be because of her past disturbed family life. Gulfam didn’t get the love of both of her parents. This affects her psychologically resulting in lack of faith in human beings and made her inclined towards digital aids such as robot, electronic gadgets and mobile phones. She has belief in gadgets because they obey the commands of human beings. The electricity or batteries are the only source that is needed for the working of any digital gadgets. This nature of machine which does not need emotional attachment is easy to manage and this is

the perception of Gulfam. She trusted the machine world and tried to have them around her, in order to protect herself from any kinds of emotional breakdown.

Nusrat is the mother of Gulfam who gets always worried about her daughters condition of leading a life without mingling with other human beings in society. She often buys things like book holders or vases to fill the bare shelves of her daughter's apartment in order to give her a homely environment. Today she has brought a yellow rose plant for her daughter. She believes that it will rejuvenate humanism in her daughter. She loves her daughter. At certain point in the short story, she compares her daughter to the rose plant. She expresses to Mathew that her daughter is similar to the rose plant which is beautiful but it still has thorns in it which might prick one if one dares to touch. Her daughter also sometimes used to prick her with her words. Nusrat never understood technology or technical work of Gulfam and Mathew. But Gulfam tries to make her mother understand that she runs her life by earning from technical work.

Gulfam is the perfect example of Digital Humanism and her mother Nuzrat indicates humanism. Gulfam's mother's each step to advice Gulfam and Mathew to embrace humanism increases the seriousness of the short story. According to Corllis Lamont, humanism believes that the individual attains the good life by harmoniously combining personal satisfactions and continuous self-development with significant work and other activities that contribute to the welfare of the community (web source).

As Lamont says Nusrat also wants her daughter Gulfam to live a harmonious life that will give her personal satisfaction and which will automatically help her to do some social service for the welfare of the society.

Mathew tells Nusrat that they too are working for the welfare of the society by developing a free application for an NGO which will connect the people with those who want to give things in charity. Nusrat says in *A Day in the Life*:

“Nusrat nodded. ‘But will it save you?’

‘Save from what?’ He frowned at her like she was slightly erroneous code.

‘From the fact that we don’t want to come out of our houses. We don’t want to breathe the same air as them’. (DL 92)

Nusrat points out that in today's world many people help others through online without meeting them face to face. In cities, one does not like the accidental meeting of their neighbours. They don't even consider smiling at each other. According to Nusrat the compassion of humanism lies in talking with each other and by knowing them so that the humanity will sustain in society

Nusrat after knowing the ambition of Mathew of becoming rich. She hates his idea. She thinks that he is not after happiness of life. He just keeps on searching for the ways of becoming rich. Nusrat's car gets towed. In order to rescue her car, Nusrat, Mathew and Gulfam go to the police station. There Nusrat meets Lakshmi who is a clerk working in the police station. She is happy though she gets fewer wages. By showing Lakshmi as an example Nusrat makes Mathew and Gulfam to realize their mistake of going after money.

Nusrat remembers her father who wished to take part in Quit India Movement and then her grandmother who raises her voice against the British soldiers of her time. She quotes her family

members who thought of the well being of human beings. She emphasizes her idea of doing something useful for the welfare of mankind to Gulfam and Mathew. According to Einstein, our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty. (Web Source)

Like Einstein said it would be good if Gulfam and Mathew show love and compassion to others. Instead of spending the whole day in closed doors by alienating themselves from others, it will be good if they come out of their smart screen and embrace all living creature and the whole of nature and its beauty.

Nusrat wants Gulfam and Mathew to shun the digital world which will drain the love and affection between human beings; one will not smile or think of talking to his fellow humans. This artificial world will ruin the humanity.

In the end of the short story we find Gulfam leaves the yellow rose plant outside the door so that the garbage collector will pick that up in the morning. But Mathew by taking back the yellow rose plant back to the house has shown the positive attitude by embracing humanism.

**Web source**

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