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CANDIDE OR, THE OPTIMIST BY VOLTAIRE: REVIEW BY EXCERPTS OF THE BOOK

Kumar Aditya¹

Candide is one of the well-produced works of a political commentator, French Enlightenment writer, historian, and philosopher, François-Marie Arouet known by nom de plume Voltaire. The book became, and shall be a source of laughter for past as well as future generations. The relevant question should be how Voltaire must have written this masterpiece 263 years later than 1759. Politically, the book shall be censored & even might be cancelled due to public sentiments. The objective of this review aligns even the principle of preceptor Pangloss, for whom there is no effect without a cause and thus, the effect in the nature of the review is due to the everlasting literature of candide.

The book illustrates a fine exhibition of the idea of liberty when candide had to choose in between being whipped six-and-thirty times through all the regiment or receiving at once twelve balls of lead in his brain. To this, candide replied, "*human will be free, & he chooses neither the one or the other*". The book is a critique of war and does a scathing attack on the laws of war which included the burning of opposition villages & raping of women who are considered as the bounty for the armies' heroes of both sides in a war. There is a subtle manifestation of Voltaire, anti-Catholic stance depicted through candide when he has an epiphany that "*I should beg my heard until I learn to earn it*". To which an orator asks, "*do you believe the pope to be anti-christ*" & Candide replying, "*I want bread*" which deliberately focuses on the major question of mankind i.e., hunger and not deliberations on whether the pope is anti-christ or not.

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The understanding of candide was delve in innocence, and love for Cunégonde, who was the daughter of baron for whose grace the candide was kicked out of the palace and had to witness humiliation, war & hunger. This can be understood with the conversation between candide and pangloss which was after finding pangloss in miserable conditions and asking the reasons for his misery, to which pangloss said, *"It was love; love, the comfort of the human species, the preserver of the universe, the soul of all sensible beings, love, tender love"* on which Candide replied, *"I know this love, that sovereign of hearts, that soul of souls; yet it never costs me more than a kiss and twenty kicks on the backside"*. The book has a critique of the state of affairs in the capitalist society with capital dominating the relations between the working-class. The author painted the criticism with the learned words of pangloss, who says *"All over the globe there is no letting of blood or taking a glister without paying, or somebody paying for you"* to the suggestion of candide of being cured on an immediate basis.

The author painted a humorous picture of superstition wherein University of Coimbra proposed that burning of few people alive by a slow fire, and with great ceremony, is an infallible secret to hinder the earth from quaking which has destroyed the three-fourth of Lisbon. The seized a Biscayner, Two Portuguese, and Dr. Pangloss with his Disciple. The reasoning was as Biscayner married his godmother, The Portuguese men rejected the bacon which larded a chicken they were eating & Dr. Pangloss for speaking his mind and his disciple for listening. When the Biscayner & Two-Portuguese were burnt, with Dr. Pangloss being hanged. The epiphany of candide was on the teachings of Dr. Pangloss of if this the best of possible words, what then are the others? While remembering the hanging of Dr. Pangloss, Drowning of Good Anabaptist, & Ripping of Cunégonde by the Bulgarians. The rationale for concurrence of philosophical questions on a social, economic, and religious conundrum is what makes the writing of this book more

resonating, the idea of writing is not linear and scalar, as the questions are layered & factors included are multi-fold in nature.

The reasoning of Candide for slaying a Jew & Inquisitor in two-minutes as expressed by candide himself was "*when one is a lover, jealous and whipped by the Inquisition, one stops at nothing*". This rationale is an understanding love of candide for Cunégonde. Voltaire can be called Marx before the Marx himself when he made Dr. Pangloss express, "*The goods of this world are common to all men, and that each has an equal right to them*" or, the exclamation of Candide when the Colonel-Priest brother of Cunégonde insulted candide when he presented his intention to marry her, saying that "*All men are equal, and certainly I will marry her*". This was an idea when feudalism was triumphing over society, and idea of capitalism was in an infant state. This remarkable presence of the idea of liberty & equality, even before the bastille was stormed depicts a libertarian approach practised while writing. The book mentions laws of nations as well as laws of nature from time immemorial which depicts a picture of the state of affairs practiced by the kings, and oreillons to kill their neighbour.

The book is an utmost berating of religious teachings not in consonance with social behavior. The illustration was from the tale of the old women who was ravished in Africa, witnessing war and murder of hundreds, not over the jewels and gold, but because of the women however, never missing the prayers five-times in a day ordained by the Mahomet. The misery inflicted on the old women, with thought of ending her misery by extinguishing her life was denounced because of her love towards life. This depiction presented a positive & optimistic means of facing of the adversaries in the life.

The book makes a reference to the mogul empire of the direct comparison between the least of gold, emerald & ruby of El Dorado would have been the greatest of the Mogul's throne. The idea presented

by Voltaire for the state of affairs in El Dorado would be a socialist economy as the hostilities established for the convenience of commerce were paid by the government. The notion of El Dorado was perfectly put a scathing attack on European colonialism when the book mentioned European nations as “*who have an inconceivable passion for the pebbles and dirt of our land, for the sake of which they would murder us to the last man*”. The free speech & idea of expressing free will can be found in several reference, the satire was when Candide asks the old-man, who burn people that are not of their opinion? The book was a critical opprobrium of slavery, with the miseries, torture & exploitations were the price at which sugar was being consumed in Europe being said in the direct-manner and condemning the colonialism of the Europe.

Martin, the Philosopher was the anti-thesis of Dr. Pangloss. The former was completely pessimistic in approach while later was optimistic. My reasonable sense makes me believe that, Voltaire did this to give a hundred & eighty degree of question on the character development & understanding of Candide. My understanding of the notion for the character Pocourante, a senator is to express the opinion of Voltaire for certain authors like Horace, Cicero, Milton, & many other reference authors.

In Conclusion, this book review is not a critique of the masterpiece but an endorsement of the structure, reasoning, evaluation and understanding of the prevailing conditions. In the words of Voltaire himself, I will consider myself a fool as Voltaire has written in Candide that, Fools admire everything in an author of reputation. The book expresses miseries, hostile situations, death & grief with the humour of the greater good i.e., revealing a broader understanding of sociology & philosophy with an expression of satire. However, the only critique would be that the story-line ended on a philosophical note on the purpose of life, comparison of miseries of happenings to Candide,

Cunégonde, Cacambo, Martin, Pangloss & Old-Women with the misery of doing nothing? With the answer for the same being too literal too “*let us cultivate our garden*”.