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या संस्थेचे त्रैमासिक

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Identification of Advanced Technologies Depicted in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*

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Abstract:

Human beings have tremendous curiosity and inquisitiveness leading to various experiments to be initiated for the development of society. There is inevitable relationship between science and technology for exploring untrodden spheres of knowledge and acumen. Science Fiction has played crucial role in systematic exploration of scientific theories and technologies for the progress of the human beings. Technology has always been an indispensable aspect of the genre and helped to contemplate the alternate habitat, society, history and future of mankind either in a recognized setting or an unidentified world. There have been numerous scientific and technological references across various works of Science Fiction. The prominent illustrations are genetic hybridity (Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*), space travel (Verne's *From Earth to the Moon*), robots (Capek's *R.U.R.*), mobile phones (American Television Series, *Star Trek Original Series*), and submarines (Wells' *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*). Science Fiction has created tremendous sense of curiosity and desire for accomplishing impossible destinations. These are some crucial inventions of mankind that had their origin in science fiction. Ray Bradbury, the most celebrated American Science Fiction novelist, has pictured a society with a totalitarian government that prohibits the population from reading and

stocking up books. The State has appointed a fire department and ironically, it doesn't douse the fire; its only job is to track and burn books. Guy Montag, the protagonist, experiences some life-altering events, which form the crux of the novel. While dealing with various themes of dystopian society in the novel, Ray Bradbury effectively introduces some advanced technologies that might be plausible in the future, like earbuds, big-screen televisions and finger print readers among others. This research article is an attempt to explore the advanced technologies depicted in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*.

Key Words: Science Fiction, Curiosity, Technology, Advanced, Dystopian, Exploration.

Introduction :

Science Fiction originated in Victorian England with the publication of Mary Shelley's groundbreaking Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818). This epistolary novel sets the stage for the advent of science fiction in English literature. It dealt with the story of Victor Frankenstein, who, in order to create a human, created a monster known as Frankenstein's Monster. Since its origin, science fiction has tried to leap ahead into the realm of unknown places in order to reveal the secrets of the universe with the aid of advanced technologies. The history of science fiction is filled with the wonders of fascinating scientific inventions and the



unprecedented development of technologies. Jules Verne, the famous French author, in his popular novel *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1871), takes his readers deep into the crust of the earth with the aid of futuristic technologies for the safe journey of the travelers. In his novel *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1872), Verne describes the voyages of Captain Nemo in his submerged underwater ship, the Nautilus. The submerged ship mentioned in the above-mentioned novel later served as an inspiration for modern-day submarines. H.G. Wells, the admired writer of science fiction, comes up with the legendary 'Time Machine, which is capable of transferring individuals either into the past or into a distant future, in his highly influential novel, *The Time Machine* (1895). In *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), H.G. Wells plots a narrative around the experiments of a scientist who is obsessed with producing hybrid humans through vivisection on a secluded island. Aldous Huxley, in his classic dystopian science fiction novel *Brave New World* (1932), unveils the world of incubation chambers, which perform artificial fertilization of human embryos. Thus, futuristic technologies have always been an effective tool in creating gripping effects on the narrative of science fiction.

Ray Douglas Bradbury, an American novelist, poet, short story writer, playwright, and screenwriter, was born in Illinois on August 22, 1920. He has always been an ardent reader. Between 1938 and 1942, Bradbury spent his days and nights at a typewriter and his evenings in the public library. The years of voracious reading aided in his development as a writer, and by the year 1943, he was already a published author who contributed a lot of short stories to magazines before compiling them into a book called *Dark Carnival* in 1947.

Ray Bradbury, one of the most noteworthy American novelists, is credited with some of the most critically acclaimed as well as popular science fiction like *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), *The*

Illustrated Man (1951), and *Dandelion Wine* (1957). He also contributed to various other genres like horror, mystery, fantasy, and realistic fiction. Bradbury has been credited with the television adaptations of *Moby Dick* and *It Came from Outer Space*.

Bradbury has written countless poems, essays, plays, about 600 short stories, and more than thirty volumes. More than 1,000 "recommended reading" anthologies for academic curricula have included his literary works.

Ray Bradbury's science fiction novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) was the afterlife of his previously written short stories, namely "Bright" and Ray Bradbury's science fiction novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) was the afterlife of his previously written short stories, namely "Bright Phoenix" (1947), "The Pedestrian" (1948), and "Bonfire" (1950). Bradbury came up with a 1951 novella named *The Fireman*, combining elements of "Bright Phoenix" and "The Pedestrian". In 1953, the final version of the novel *Fahrenheit 451* was published for the public.

Ray Bradbury has received numerous honors throughout the years, including the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America, the O. Henry Memorial Award, the Benjamin Franklin Award, and the World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement. At the 2000 National Book Awards Ceremony in New York City, Mr. Bradbury received the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Ray Bradbury's most discussed science fiction novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, was honored with the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature and the Commonwealth Club of California Gold Medal in 1954. Later on, it received the Prometheus "Hall of Fame" Award in 1984 for "Retro" and the Hugo Award in 2004.

Exploration of Advanced Technologies

This classic science fiction is divided into three chapters: "The Hearth and the Salamander", "The Sieve and the Sand" and "Burning Bright". The novel



explores the trials and tribulations of a society in the distant future through the lens of a fireman, whose job is not to douse fire but, ironically, to employ fire to destroy books. The title is derived from the temperature at which a paper catches fire, i.e., Fahrenheit 451. Guy Montag, the fireman, is the central character of the dystopian novel. He questions the system of book burning, and the narrative explores his journey from being a book burner to a person who saves books.

Bradbury employs various technologies throughout the novel. He introduces advanced medical machines, TV screens, seashell radios, finger print readers, mechanical hounds, invisible planes, fireproof housing, audio capsules, and extremely large billboards, among others.

In the first chapter, Guy Montag discovers his wife Mildred with audio capsules still playing music in her ear after passing out from a sleeping pill overdose. He remains calm and enlists medical help. However, no medical person arrives on the scene; instead, two machine technicians arrive and pump Mildred's stomach and proceed with standard medical procedures with the help of advanced technology. They smoked, and the machines performed their duties.

"The operator stood smoking a cigarette. The other machine was working too.

The other machine was operated by an equally impersonal fellow in non-stainable reddish-brown overalls. This machine pumped all of the blood from the body and replaced it with fresh blood and serum." (23, *Fahrenheit 451*)

Books are considered the hot bed of thoughts and ideas, which enable the mind to think and analyse, but the government has forbidden the writing, publication, and storage of books. Schoolchildren study with the aid of futuristic technologies, which are closely monitored by the government. Any kind of free thinking is forbidden in the society, which closely resembles the totalitarian government in George Orwell's dystopian classic

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949). In this Orwellian classic, the contents of books are monitored, edited, often destroyed, and sometimes replaced with counterfeit information suited for the smooth running of the government.

"It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words." (35, *Nineteen Eighty Four*)

In *Fahrenheit 451*, the common masses are provided with television and radio programmes that keep them busy and miles away from the genuine issues of the day. These technological advancements, like huge television screens (modern-day huge LED screens) on the parlour walls of Mildred, along with seashell radios and audio capsules (modern-day wireless earphones), keep them occupied with mindless commercial art that is devoid of any seriousness. It also hinders the growth of personal relationships. The addiction to the glamour of mass media, which is portrayed through Mildred's obsession with TV screens, led to marital discord between husband and wife. She termed the television screens her 'family', when she was asked by her husband to turn off the television.

'Will you turn the parlor off?' he asked.

"That's my family" (48-49, *Fahrenheit 451*).

Technologies drastically affect the thinking prowess of people. It became very quick and appealing, but it never provided the moment to think and develop the perspectives of its consumers. Captain Beatty, the antagonist of the novel, speaks in a similar vein.

"...we didn't get along well until photography came into its own. Then—motion pictures in the early twentieth century. Radio. Television. Things began to have mass. Once people became fascinated with quick, easy, fun entertainment, it wasn't hard to get them to stop thinking about reality and books." (70, *Fahrenheit 451*)

Guy Montag goes through stages of transformation. In the initial stages, he was a dedicated fireman who was committed to his work, but he becomes delusional and starts questioning



his work. His psyche is clearly impacted when he burns a house with an old lady in it, and then he starts reading books, stocks them up, and finally understands the importance of books. Captain Beatty, the boss of Montag, forces him to burn his own house, and in a fit of rage, he kills his boss with a flamethrower. He becomes a criminal on the run for the possession of books and the murder of his colleague. The state employs highly developed technologies like invisible planes and mechanical hounds in its pursuit of Guy Montag. The Mechanical Hound is a robotic dog capable of sniffing out people in possession of books. It injures Montag by injecting an anaesthetic in one of his legs, causing him to limp towards the end. It is a merciless object, a symbolic demonstration of the exploitation of science and technology by the government.

“....Mechanical Hound never fails. Never since its first use in tracking quarry has this incredible invention made a mistake. Tonight, this network is proud to have the opportunity to follow the Hound by camera helicopter as it starts on its way to the target....”(171, *Fahrenheit 451*)

Conclusion:

The advanced technologies depicted in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* act as a set of characters in themselves to carry forward the action in the novel. While doing so, it breaks free from the shackles of limitations in the development of science and technology. The technologies can be personified as the avatar of Tennyson's epic hero Ulysses, who valued the importance of knowledge in its highest possible form. Lord Tennyson wrote:

For some three suns to store and hoard
myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human
thought. (“Ulysses”)

However, Bradbury warns the readers about the exploitation of science and technologies by

absolute power. The various technologies, like earphones, metallic hounds, and other surveillance gadgets, are mostly used by the state authority to keep a tight vigil on its population. The various technological innovations are viewed as the primary cause of society's issues. The author portrays technology as fundamentally numbing and detrimental throughout the whole plotline of the novel. Technologies like seashell radios and televisions radically contributed to the societal decline of reading and evaluation in the period before the novel's creation.

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