

**The Self versus Institutions in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and
*Franny and Zooey***



Inspiring Excellence

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**The Self versus Institutions in J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and
*Franny and Zooey***

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to observe textual comparison and analysis of the adolescent protagonists of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Franny and Zooey* which indicate the social change of America during the twentieth century. There is a battle between the self and institutions where adolescents have their own view of society and the institutions want them to follow the traditional norms. Jerome David Salinger talks about the American society and its changes in the early 1900s. After the Great War, society was going through a paradigm shift, which put an impact on social, cultural and literary aspects and the American adolescents as well. Due to industrialisation and modernisation, there was a sudden boom in the American economy and many people became materialistic which made the adolescents alienated from their family and society. Salinger portrayed those dilemmas and struggles, and captured the vein of American teenagers at that time which attracted the young people who were able to relate with the protagonists; and, they continue to have appeal among youngsters even today. The same situation and crisis can be detected among today's young generation in Bangladesh as well which influenced me more to analyse this subject.

Keywords: Salinger, Adolescents, Materialistic, Struggle, Alienation, Self, Institutions

Introduction

Jerome David Salinger was born on January 1, 1919 in New York City who is known as J. D. Salinger. He gained his fame for his widely-read novel *The Catcher in the Rye* and became one of the prominent novelists of America literature. Salinger have difficulty to deal with private and public schools in his childhood as he was shifted from a private school and enrolled in Valley Forge Military Academy in Pennsylvania from where he was graduated. This school is the model of fictional Pencey Prep which is presented in his novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. Salinger started his writing from the time when his family moved from Manhattan to Park Avenue. He engaged himself on literary works like writing drama, lyrics, short stories; editing, acting and much more which helped him to be more skilled as a writer. Salinger became an entertainer on a cruise after graduating from Valley Forge and dropping out from New York University (“J. D. Salinger”). While this is happening, the world is also going through a bad phase as well. The world is on the verge of another war which started to put an impact on Salinger’s life as well.

Salinger went to Europe to learn their family cheese business with his father but soon returned as the war threatened their lives. After returning from Europe, Salinger briefly attended two colleges, first in Pennsylvania and then Columbia University where he met Whit Burnett, the editor of *Story* magazine. Burnett became Salinger’s instructor at Columbia University and in 1939 published Salinger’s first of many short stories, “The Young Folks”. He published many more in the following years (“J. D. Salinger”). In 1939, Salinger became a part of World War II where he served in U.S. Army and was sent to Europe to participate in the liberation of France. All these death and destruction in the war made Salinger upset and it also started to appear in his writings. While serving in Europe, Salinger continued to write short stories which were

published in various magazines at that time. After the war ended, Salinger returned to New York and at that time Whit Burnett agreed to help him to establish himself as a short story writer. In the time period between the 1940s and 1950s, Salinger published many short stories as well his most prominent novel *The Catcher in the Rye* which gave him the fame of a writer and eventually made him a noticeable figure of American literature (“J. D. Salinger”). Gradually, he started to write on “The Glass Family” and the individual members of that fictional family started to gain popularity. The fictional Glass family portrayed perspectives, thoughts, dilemmas, relations, spiritual and emotional struggles of Americans like Salinger who suffered from questions of life and death, war and peace, science and religion. In between writing short stories, Salinger became a follower of Zen Buddhism which comes across in his writing (“J. D. Salinger”). Salinger’s thought on religion and his way of understanding the society of America at that time started to display in his writing as well, which resulted in his popularity. Along with popularity, Salinger had to face criticism for which he moved to New Hampshire and started to live aside from the materialistic society. He announced not to publish any story further and started to avoid public appearance. Salinger’s last published story was “Hapworth 16, 1924” published in *The New Yorker* magazine in 1965. After that, Salinger had some interviews and some legal issues for which he had to appear in public but there was no new creation of Salinger (“J. D. Salinger”). On January 27, 2010, by some natural causes, Salinger died at his home in New Hampshire.

American Modernism

At the time of Salinger, the American renaissance influenced modernism to flourish the writing style of America and infuse aspects that made those writings part of American modernist literary tradition. The early modernists were able to go beyond the conventional structure as a

Wohl stated in his article “Heart of Darkness: Modernism and Its Historians”, “This innate conservatism, which only arrives at a technical breakthrough after an exploration of the past, is one of the extraordinary strengths of early Modernism” (Wohl 577). The technological advancement in the society and the industrialization helped to break through all the traditional aspect and it put an impact on literature as well. Along with that, the lifestyle also started to develop where blues and jazz music became popular music genre of American society and new opportunities were infused with the emerging culture. Economic developments also influenced their class structure where middle-class people emerged in the society and took charge as the labour of industries to improve the economic structure of America. Laissez-faire was introduced in the society which encouraged people to earn money by any means and motivated any kind of earning. The art and the fashion started to approach its new peak where women of the society begin to develop their life as well as flapper culture was coined at that time by which the fashion statement of the ladies of American society started to change after the 1920s. At that time, the architectures and designs also started to have modern aspects, family and work life changed with upraise of the economic improvement and along with that, the job market opened up for women. People started to invest and earn money more rapidly and that changed the life of American society radically. All these helped American literature to develop but there was also change in their narrative technique. Now, it contained the war effects, sadness, depression and the decline of Victorian values which created disillusion towards God, faith, family, love, life, and humanity. This made their writing more experimental and fragmented but at the same they dealt with an acute consciousness of what it meant to be American. This question of self-identity probed by external factors of the society gave rise to writers such as Salinger and “stimulated a

splendid new generation of critical studies which have shaped all our thinking” about American Modernism (Bradbury 28).

Salinger was considered as a modernist writer who infused experimental techniques in his novella and novelette. J. D. Salinger used distinct writing style in his novel and novelettes where he described the protagonists in detail. He used interior monologues and techniques that portrayed his characters intently and present their flow of thinking and understanding a situation. The presentation of a character’s perspective made his writing different from others. Salinger used many metaphors, irony, foreshadowing, and symbolism that help reader to know and understand the situations. He used the stream of consciousness technique as well to show the flow of thinking of his characters. By using this technique he was able to connect his reader with his characters, dilemmas, spiritual and emotional flows and grasp the whole state of a character’s mind which made readers become a part of his writing as well. Along with these techniques, Salinger’s used a different kind of content for his novel, novelette and short stories that made him a modernist writer as well. Salinger mostly talked about the young Americans in his writing which grabbed the attention of the teenage group, not only at that time period but also in current situation. Adolescents were the main protagonists of his stories and novelettes which appeal to the young readers. He tried to present young American people who were unable to fit in the new era that the society accepted after the World War II. The paradigm shift that happened after the war made many changes in the American society. Salinger tried to present their disturbed and different perspective towards society in his writing and tried to show their consciousness on family, religion, art, and culture. To be relatable with the adolescent, he used their light dialogue and the energetic approach to the society along with that, he presented their judgments on the world. Salinger’s writing also connects with the idea of innocence and disconnection with the

society that became pretentious. All these themes and techniques gave Salinger a distinct identity in the American literature and made his writing a part of modern American literature.

The Chosen Texts

Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* was published in 1951 and considered as a controversial novel at that time for its different theme and content, but gained much popularity among the adolescents. The protagonist Holden Caulfield became a sensational hero for teenagers and considered like one of them as they were able to relate with Holden and his struggle. The main theme of this novel is Holden's life in New York during the previous Christmas which he constructed through his memory and narrated from a psychiatric care. In this novel, Holden described two days after being expelled from his fourth school Pencey Preparatory Academy. The story initiates from Pencey Prep on Saturday afternoon, where Holden is expelled and willing not to return to his family till Wednesday. Salinger describes Holden's perspectives on his companions, people and society. Holden narrates about his teachers Mr Spencer and Mr Antolini who give him advice and have great influence on Holden's life. Holden mentions his brothers Allie and D.B. who have had strong effect on Holden's life as his younger brother Allie's sudden death distress him and elder brother D.B's works make him think about how his brother has become part of this pretentious society.

On the other hand, in the novelette *Franny and Zooey*, Salinger described two siblings from the Glass Family. "Franny" is a short story published in 1955 and *Zooey* is a novella published in 1957 in *The New Yorker* magazine individually, then again both short stories were republished as a novelette in 1961. The story "Franny" starts with a college boy Lane Coutell waiting for his girlfriend Franny Glass, an undergraduate student of Liberal Arts College. Franny

comes in the weekend to visit her boyfriend and head to have a lunch with Lane. While in the restaurant, it starts to become clear that Lane and Franny has problems in their relation however, to avoid it Fanny told him that she missed him then instantly realises she does not mean it. Franny started to break down because she is not able to cope with this deceptive society and the phoniness starts to make her sick on the egoistic teachers of her college. She opens up to her boyfriend Lane, about how she stopped all the activities that she uses to do in the college and quit to do stage dramas as well. All those activities make her feel pretentious and now Franny is interested in religious prayers because they make her feel alive in this hollow society. Lane does not take those words of Franny seriously until she faints while going towards the restroom. Lane grabs her and makes her believe that she is fine and went to call a cab. At this point the story “Franny” ends, while Franny starts to stare at the ceiling and continually forms soundless words which are considered as Jesus prayer.

Where the story “Franny” ended, the novella *Zooey* picks up to be narrated by the first person narration of the character Zooey. The story of Zooey Glass starts with the introduction of the narrator, named as Buddy Glass, one of the elder brothers of Franny and Zooey. The story resumes in the third person narration where the narrator Buddy talks about his family, the Glass family and about the siblings who are intelligent and once has fame in their life because of a radio programme. Buddy introduces the protagonist Zooey as a 25 year old good looking successful television actor, sitting in the bathtub and reading an old letter given by Buddy. The letter is given to Zooey when he started to dive into the acting career. Buddy narrates how he has written the letter on the insistence of their mother Bessie Glass who wants Zooey to complete PhD in Mathematics first. As the letter goes on, there are mentions of their eldest brother Seymour who killed himself several years previously and how his suicide put an impression on

their family. The letter makes readers realise that not only Franny but other Glass siblings Seymour, Buddy, Zooey are pre-occupied with religion and studied philosophy extensively. While Zooey continues reading the letter, his mother enters the washroom and inform him about Franny who comes back home after her breakdown in the restaurant and her worries for Franny as well. Bessie wants Zooey to talk with Franny and console her. After this, Franny and Zooey have a long conversation on spiritual aspects, personal and religious views. At this point, readers realise how all the Glass siblings are raised with the blend of different religious views and their perspective on theology and religion which is different from others. Franny describes all the phoniness she felt in her college to Zooey and her breakdown as well. After the long discussion, arguments and criticism, Zooey is able to understand Franny and help her to sort out her crisis on emotional, personal and spiritual issues effectively.

Narrative Technique and Resemblances

Both *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Franny and Zooey* presented adolescents' struggles, dilemmas and the similarities in narrative make me analyse these two texts. One of the key features of modernist literature is fragmentation and we find it prominently in Salinger's narrative style. That is why, there is a linear plot in either *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Franny and Zooey*. There are no plots or storylines in these two short stories but there are some thoughts, feelings of the protagonists which are presented in colloquial language. Holden relates his summer experience from his memory and on the other hand, Franny and Zooey's experiences are given by third person. Most of the events and situations are shown through conversations. Here Salinger uses stream of consciousness technique to present protagonist's emotions, and thoughts which help readers to understand their circumstances. Stream of consciousness can simply be defined as a continuous flow of narrator's thoughts. According to William James' *The Principles*

of Psychology (1890), “Our conscious mental life flows continuously like a stream in which the transition between the thought of one object and the thought of another is no more a break in the thought than a joint in a bamboo is a break in the wood” (233-234). In *The Catcher in the Rye*, the narrator is Holden Caulfield himself, on the other side, in the story “Franny”, the narrator is third person who represents the thoughts and situations of Franny and in “Zooney” the narrative is given in third person in the beginning and first person later. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger presents continuous flow of sensitivities, thoughts, feelings and emotions. However, the narration of this novel is delivered through the utilization of memory and therefore, the deterioration of the human mind. J. D. Salinger communicates heavily on constructing his novel through the memory and recollection of a fifteen-year-old adolescent who is going through a crisis. Besides in *Franny and Zooney*, “...Salinger to render an experience he has not yet mastered, pieces in the Glass jigsaw which the author has not yet managed to assemble” which depicts fragmentation in the narration (Hassan 5). In fragmented narration, the sequence of the plot and story used disorderly where the feelings, emotions are expressed in a jumble method to make it look like a flow of sentiments. It all together challenges a reader to understand protagonists’ situation and their fragment emotions by sensing and connecting different components. The dilemmas of protagonists’ are portrayed by this kind of narration, thus Salinger used fragmentation in the narration to show the circumstances and emotions of Holden, Franny and Zooney.

Along with the narrative technique, there are many similarities which make these two texts similar in terms of theme, situation and circumstances of protagonists’. Both stories present teenagers’ emotional, psychological struggles in the hollow world. The protagonist’s relations with their parents are rigid which shows how they are detached from their parents’ thoughts and

affections. Along with that, all three protagonists' are emotionally involved with their siblings. Holden have emotional breakdown after his younger brother Allie's death for which he imagines Allie around him. Along with Allie, Holden has an elder brother who becomes a scriptwriter and thinks him as a 'prostitute' who is selling out his talent to earn money and become a part of the materialistic society. Holden's young sister Phoebe has an important influence in his life as she is the one with whom he can share all his problems and thoughts, she can makes Holden happy with her innocence and she is the one who reminds of Allie as well. Unlike Holden's family, Glass family's siblings are more connected emotionally as they stood beside each other and help themselves in dilemmas and struggles. Alike Holden, Franny is broken with the realization of the society. She is not able to cope up with this emerging shallow world where there is no place for inner peace and feeling. At that time, it is Zooey who helped Franny and make her strong enough to survive in this materialistic world. On the other hand, Zooey is struggling in this pretentious society to have his own identity among hollowness for which, he avoids working on bad scripts which can make him a spineless person like others. In that affected society, Holden, Franny and Zooey felt alienated as their thoughts, perspectives on society and burden of becoming an adult made them disconnected from the society. They are unable to cope up with fake people and inflated social norms which connects Holden, Franny and Zooey with each other and that is why I chose these two short stories for my thesis.

Chapter 1: Family and Relationships

Salinger uses many emotional dilemmas and struggles in his novels-novelettes and to portray those emotions he uses protagonist's relationship with his family, parents, and siblings. The protagonists' of these two novels consider the society and their surroundings as a 'phony' world where they are unable to adjust and understand; which makes them struggle to fit in the new emerging society. The 'phony' world for them is the world, which is full of pretention and materialistic attitude. According to the protagonists', with the development of American society, people became more self-obsessed and self-oriented that is why they wanted to gain a popular status and financial stability. They start to follow other and do things unwillingly to be a part of that new developing America. There are no emotional attachments or feelings for each other and everyone wants to achieve prosperity in which they are drawn into an acquisitive world. The word 'phony' itself originated at nineteenth century, after the War and revolutions, when people are engaged in upgrading themselves as modern people. They became selfish and started to think about individual prosperity.

The protagonists Holden and Franny were from American society where people dominated each other thoughts and were bound to follow the mainstream culture and it had little to do with spiritual and emotional depth. Their inner feelings and dilemmas were never understood by the society that consisted of their parents, friends, peers and siblings. Holden and Franny are the adolescents who are lost in that society and not able to develop their identity in that 'phony' world. Adolescent period is the most crucial period where the thoughts, believes, ideologies and spiritual aspects develop and teenagers create their identity. Besides, in this period people choose their path and start to think what they want to do in life. Holden and Franny are in that phase where they are developing from a young person to an adult. In that

development stage, they have to deal with the pretending society which put obstacles in their growth. Holden and Franny are hindered with the expectations of their parents and tussled to become a mature adult. Therefore, young Americans from late nineteenth to early twentieth century have different point of views and perspectives in the process of becoming matured; and in that identity expansion, their parents, family, and peers become a significant influencing factor.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield has a disturbing relationship with his parents. Holden thinks that his parents do not understand him and as a result, he does not want to bother them. For Holden, his parents want to make him a part of this materialistic society by educating him in a well-known school. Their expectations make Holden drain out as well, scare him not to share his problems with his parents. When he gets expelled from his school, he does not want to let his parents know about it and arranges to stay in a hotel in the city. Holden figures out his parents will not be able to know about his expulsion and that gives him a chance to stay in the city by himself. As Holden says, "I didn't want to go home or anything till they got it and thoroughly digested it and all. I didn't want to be around when they first got it. My mother gets very hysterical. She's not too bad after she gets something thoroughly digested, though" (Salinger 51). It shows that he knows exactly how his parents will react on this news. Holden says in the beginning of the novel, "... my parents would have about two haemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They are quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father" (1). They are concerned about their children but the concern make Holden uncomfortable as he considers it as an act of obligation and pretension rather than genuine care. After his younger brother, Allie's death, Holden's mother has become really weak and depressed, and Holder says, "I felt sorry as hell for my mother and father, especially my mother,

because she still isn't over my brother Allie yet" (155). Along with, Holden has some concern and affection for his parents which results in not to worry about him. Holden's mentions "My father wants me to go to Yale, or maybe Princeton, but I swear, I wouldn't go to one of those Ivy League colleges, if I was dying, for God's sake" (85). Holden's father is quite wealthy as he is a corporate lawyer and for that reason he wants Holden to become a successful man like him and his elder brother D.B. However, these expectations make Holden think that their affections towards him are tainted with their materialistic ambitions and desires.

While Salinger portrays how his protagonist Holden has a difficult relationship with his parents, this novel also shows how siblings are vital in Holden's life and survival. Holden has two brothers and one sister, from which his younger brother Allie has died of leukaemia on July 18, 1946. This death has a prominent impact on Holden as Salinger displays *The Catcher in the Rye* being narrated by Holden from an asylum which shows his mental collapse after the incidents. He loves his younger brother a lot and as a result, when he dies, Holden starts to have a conversation with him whenever he gets sad or depressed. As he mentions, "I felt miserable. I felt so depressed, you can't imagine. What I did, I started talking, sort of out loud, to Allie. I do that sometimes when I get very depressed" (Salinger 98). Holden, most of the time, hallucinates Allie and this demonstrates his psychological breakdown in the novel. According to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), there are two parts of our mind, conscious and unconscious. Freud has linked the unconscious with "... *repression* which is the 'forgetting' or ignoring of unresolved conflicts, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events so that they are forced out of conscious awareness and into the realm of the unconscious" (Barry 92-93). Referring to the theory of Freud, it can be observed that, Holden's unconscious mind overpowers his conscious mind, which makes him hallucinated Allie. Whenever Holden has hindrances in his life, he feels Allie beside him, which

expresses his distress on losing his closest support and younger brother. Though Allie is dead but then again “Every time I’d get to the end of a block I’d make believe I was talking to my brother Allie. I’d say to him, ‘Allie, don’t let me disappear. Allie, don’t let me disappear. Allie, don’t let me disappear. Please, Allie.’ And then when I’d reach the other side of the street without disappearing, I’d thank him” (Salinger 198). This shows how he talks with him and sees him all the time and feels a connection with Allie. The death of Allie has made Holden’s parents especially his mother concerned about other children as well and it makes Holden to hide his problems from them. Allie has always been a talented student and Holden used to admire Allie as an elder brother. After Allie’s death, Holden becomes really low and lonely as Allie is the person with whom he shares all his problems and discusses all his doubts. As Bryan stated in an article, “The Psychological Structure of *The Catcher in the Rye*” that in the novel “Allie’s death takes place outside the province of the narrative, but a valuable psychological study might still be made of the progression of Holden’s breakdown, how he provokes fights in which he will be beaten, makes sexual advances he cannot carry through, and unconsciously alienates himself from many of the people he encounters” (Bryan 1066). All these actions of Holden portrayed his psychological distress and his inner hostility which comes out from his unconscious mind and makes him do such things. Along with that, Holden does not like to see Allie in tombstones surrounded by dead people as it makes him feel awful. People who visit in the cemetery make him feel pretentious and it is another reason he does not like showing off. Other than Allie, Holden’s elder brother D.B also has an impression on him. D.B is a writer and initially Holden considers him an exceptional and talented writer. But after a while D.B becomes a scriptwriter and for Holden, “Now he’s out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute. If there’s one thing I hate,

it's the movies" (Salinger 1). D.B starts to sell his talent to gain status and prosperity and it makes Holden feel unpleasant as he thinks his talent is getting wasted in Hollywood.

Holden's younger sister Phoebe also has an important influence in his life. After Allie dies and D.B becomes a product of the deceptive world, it is Phoebe with whom Holden can talk about everything. She is the first person with whom he shares his dilemmas as he considers Phoebe as sensible person in his family. Though Phoebe is young to understand all his problems and inner struggles, she is a supportive sister who tries to help Holden by any means. To describe Phoebe, Holden says, "You should see her. You never saw a little kid so pretty and smart in your whole life. She's really smart. I mean she's had all A's ever since she started school" (Salinger 67). Phoebe reminds Holden about Allie and innocence that has vanished from that society which rotates around hypocrisy. She has similar features like Allie and it makes him closer to Phoebe than other family members. It is Phoebe for whom he wants to go on living because he is concerned about how she will react if he dies. Phoebe makes Holden feel happy as he states at the end, "I felt so damn happy all of sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy if you want to know the truth. I don't know why" (213). By seeing Phoebe content Holden becomes happy. In "The Personal Narrative and Salinger's "Catcher in the Rye", Roemer stated, "Phoebe is the most common sensical and emotionally honest appraisers of the past and the present Holden has access to. She is the one who most effectively reveals the artifice, helping Holden sense how he over signifies his acts of story" (Roemer 9). Phoebe's reasonable attitude and sensibility towards certain situation helps Holden to keep sane in that society where he goes through psychological instability. Throughout the novel, Holden talks about Allie and Phoebe and refer to them as intelligent, smart and sensible people. They have the innocence and purity which is absent from the society and thus

these qualities make him appreciate his siblings all over the novel. He admires all his siblings and as he says, “My brother D.B.’s a writer and all, and my brother Allie, the one that died, that I told you about, was a wizard. I’m the only really dumb one” (Salinger 67). Such thoughts make Holden lonely and insecure about himself and as a result, he starts to feel uncomfortable with his parents as he thinks he is not good enough for his family and society. He does not want to bother his parents and make his problems to become burden for them. In an article named “Logical Action in “The Catcher in the Rye””, Zapf talks about how Holden is exaggerated to cling with the state of past innocents, has desires to return to childhood and experience of being grown up, rejecting the world of adults and in contrast get rejected by the world of adults’ makes him restrained in the world which is full of expectations and pretensions (Zapf 269). Even the old romantic relation with Jane and the one with Sally made Holden feel gruesome, thus he does not initiate and approach in those relation further. Holden’s perspective makes him feel that he is not suitable to adjust with the society and he scuffles to understand his surroundings which alienate him in the rapidly changing society of America.

In *Franny and Zooey*, Salinger more intensely represents the relation between siblings. Like in *The Catcher in the Rye*, there are strong bonds between the siblings of the Glass family which make both the stories relatable. In the second part of the novelette, the narrator Buddy Glass talks about his siblings and their parents. At the beginning, there is an introduction of Zooey Glass; he is in a bathtub reading out a letter from his elder brother Buddy Glass. In the letter, Buddy mentions how their mother Bessie Glass who is worried about Zooey’s career. Bessie wants Zooey to complete his studies first and then concentrate on other career opportunities. Zooey is emotionally detached from his mother and in the letter, Buddy tries to make Zooey be little kinder towards their mother. In the letter, Buddy says, “Be kinder to Bessie,

Zooey, when you can. I don't think I mean because she's our mother, but because she's weary" (Salinger 39). Bessie concerns about her children and wants them to become successful but her over caring nature makes Zooey feel irritated, annoyed and it results in him to be rude to his mother. In "Almost the Voice of Silence: The Later Novelettes of JD Salinger", Hassan stated, "Zooey treats his mother, who wants him to help Franny in her spiritual crisis, with doting brutality" (Hassan 11). It presents how the interference of Bessie makes Zooey infuriate and as a result he gives her scornful replies which gradually strain their relationship. There are many similarities between *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Franny and Zooey* as in both stories the siblings lose their brothers which put a strong impact on them and their parents. In *Franny and Zooey*, the narrator of the letter Buddy mentions their elder brother who attempts suicide and how the incident has hampered their life. In the beginning, the narrator lets the readers know that there are five brothers and two sisters in the Glass family; Seymour is the eldest brother and has committed suicide in Florida while having a vacation with his wife. This incident put a scratch on them as he is a sensible and intelligent child among all of the seven siblings and Buddy and their mother Bessie wants to see Zooey become like Seymour. In the letter, Buddy mentions from time to time how Seymour has achieved prosperity and thus through Seymour he tries to motivate Zooey. "The letter, though, is the main thing here; its expresses Buddy's concern for Franny and Zooey now that Seymour is dead. The real cause of Buddy's concern is Seymour's influence, which led the children in bookish and ethereal ways" (Hassan 10). Throughout the letter, Buddy tries to remind Zooey how Seymour has had talents and has been the wisest of them and the influence of their elder brother can help them to learn and solve their inner tussles as well.

As a sibling, Buddy tries to encourage Zooey to follow his heart and this support makes him achieve success. Zooey tries to remember his journey and how Buddy supports him in every phase. While in the letter the bonding of two brothers is shown in the later part of the novel, Salinger presents the relation and understanding of Zooey and Franny. Franny being the youngest sister of all the siblings becomes vulnerable and breaks down emotionally. She is not able to understand how to cope with different ideologies surrounding them in different institutions such as education, religion, etc. As Buddy motivates and tries to understand Zooey, Zooey also starts to motivate and understand Franny. Their mother Bessie Glass wishes Zooey to help out his sister as their bond is stronger than their relation with the parents. Franny's beliefs and faiths on the traditional norms are shaken with the realization of the society which only revolves around exhibition; it makes Franny feel lonely as her perspective on the society has changed with the realization and made her feel outsider among all the materialistic people. Franny suffers with an identity crisis where she is not able to establish her place in the society. Zooey tries to help her out with spiritual knowledge and put efforts to understand her perspective which shaken her with such strong intensity that she breaks down when her lover Lane Coutell is unable to relate with her thoughts. Franny thinks that, being her lover, Lane Coutell will understand her but he offends and ignores Franny by questioning her, "You've got a goddam bug today—you know that? What the hell's the matter with you anyway? (Salinger 11). While the world starts to revolve around materialism, Franny tries to understand the depth and inner meaning of life and in this process she doesn't get help from her surroundings and is doubted to be mentally unwell. Franny's perspective is different from others and according to her everyone works and pretends unwillingly to gain benefits without having any inner wisdom. Zooey himself is going through such situation and as a result, he is able to understand Franny's conflicts

gradually. In the world which has little connection with a person's emotions and focuses on self-improvement, the siblings become more available to help each other and it helps them to survive in the world.

So for all protagonists, it is their inner strength and the support of the siblings that help them to understand the new emerging world. While everyone starts to follow their surrounding world Holden, Zooey, Franny try to follow their heart. They have difficulty in understanding their parents as their concern makes them feel 'phony', on the other side the bond and support of their siblings help them to follow their heart and motivate them to maintain balance with the newly emerging American society. Salinger presents their inner dilemmas and struggles with their relations where they are not able to understand their own parents but able to survive with the help of their brothers and sisters and by this, it can be said that family becomes an important aspect to help the young adolescent trying to survive and succeed in the modern American society.

Chapter 2: Education and Religion

In the era of late nineteenth to early twentieth century, world has started to develop after the chaos of World Wars and revolutions which began a new epoch. At that time, industrialisation became the main economic sector to gain prosperity and thus the education sector advanced in leaps and bounds. The new blooming society gave importance to education, arts, literature; and as a result people tried to give more preference in educational achievements. In America, educational sector gained significance and became a prominent feature of being a part of the emerging materialistic society. Higher education became an essential attribute to have higher status in the society for which most of the people tried to get higher degree. These characteristics of the society put impact on Holden, Franny and Zooey. They are forced to study unwillingly and get a degree to become a part of that 'phony' society which has no concern for the adolescents. Along with that, the education structure has faults as well; people are engaged to get degrees and do not give importance to become educated or gaining knowledge. The educational achievements revolve around grades which make Holden, Franny and Zooey distress. Along with the educational institution, the religious institution is shaken as well with new emerging society where spiritual beliefs and faiths are faded. People try to gain status and prosperity for which they become self-obsessed or self-oriented. It makes them distanced from Divinity and become money-minded objects that have no spiritual desire and wisdom in life. All these makes Holden, Franny and Zooey feel lonely as their perception of being an adolescent is in conflict with the society.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden is not able to understand the education system as he is expelled from four schools and he does not feel bad with these failures. He feels that the education system has become hollow and does not inspire him to learn more, but want a machine

that will follow the norms and provide grades. Holden feels that, the system started to negate importance of learning things which is good for our betterment and thus it makes him disinterested to study further. Holden is one unusual student who wants to understand his studies and learn to gain knowledge not to get grade unlike other students. The education system has become a system which is solely based on position and rank not on ability and performance. Thus, even having ability, Holden is unable to cope with this learning structure and does not find it inducing which results his expulsion from four schools. Along with the educational organizations, the teachers and authorities of educational institution has become a part of this hollowness and unable to encourage and motivate adolescents. In *The Catch in the Rye*, Holden mentions about his history teacher Mr Spencer who wants him to realise the importance of being in an acknowledged school. Holden wants to explain his points but “He wasn’t even listening. He hardly ever listened to you when you said something” and is not able to give reason to Spencer (Salinger 10). Throughout their conversation, Holden has to stay back and hear out Mr Spencer’s perception about Holden’s failure and that never involved Holden to understand the reason for such failure. Holden is demoralised by Mr Spencer as he says Holden knows nothing and this makes him more distant from education and from its authorities. Though Mr Spencer gives advice which can be useful for Holden and these advice show his concern for him, but Holden feels all these are pretensions and does not give importance to his advice.

Along with Mr Spencer, Holden mentions about his headmaster Mr Haas from his previous school Elkton Hills, which he quit for Mr Haas’s phoniness. Holden is unable to see how Mr Haas greets parents according to their class and neglect other presents of lower social class and this nature of Mr Haas made Holden feel nauseous, thus he quit that school. Holden feels that most of the schools and its authorities give importance on their look and status in the

society and accordingly they behave with the students and their parents. Holden senses that most of the time teachers do things to have a good image in the society like Holden said how "... old Thurmer probably figured everybody's mother would ask their darling boy what he had for dinner last night, and he'd say, 'Steak' and doing this will make him look good in the society and in the eyes of parents (Salinger 35). Among all these phoniness and materialistic approach, Holden found Mr Antolini as an intellectual, helpful and understanding teacher with whom he can talk and he is the one who understands Holden better than others. Mr Antolini is from Holden's previous English class and he has same perspective as Holden on D.B's work on Hollywood. It makes Holden feel that he can relate with his nature and with his wittiness. Mr Antolini gives Holden advice on some aspects that makes him think about his life, helps him to realize that Mr Antolini is capable to motivate him and have a different perspective on society. As Mr Antolini said to Holden, "You're in love with knowledge. And I think you'll find, once you get past all" (189). Mr Antolini is smart enough to make Holden admire him but then certain affections of Antolini embarrass Holden and make him uncomfortable. Holden's perspective on Antolini's affection created distrust on Antolini's sexuality and make him escape from his house. It presents how Holden has his own doubts and disbelieves others which hamper his relation with and others make him feel his surrounding as fake and phony. He is not able to trust and believe anyone even after being comfortable with a person.

As a consequence of going through these unpleasant and uncomfortable situations and having pretentious people around, Holden has no belief on religion as well. He mocks religion and makes fun of monastery and monk. He considers himself as an atheist even after liking Jesus and sometime wants to do prayers; he does not follow and believe the Bible but "Purity of heart and the necessity of becoming like little children in order to enter the Kingdom: these two New

Testament themes are essential to an understanding of *The Catcher in the Rye*” (Hamilton 245). According to Holden, the disciples of Bible and religion do not have genuine concern for Jesus but they are the people who made religion an element which everyone needs to maintain, follow without having actual belief, faith and spirituality. Besides, the purity and innocence in Holden makes him unusual from the deceitful world and can be considered as religious and spiritual aspect of Holden. Holden has disagreement with the reasons and the thoughts which the disciples consider as their Jesus’s action and how they use Jesus every now and then without having genuine faith. Holden has arguments and divergence with the convictions of the disciples which makes Holden disconnected from the religious features and belief of Christianity, on the contrary. “He has vague ideas about life from the monotony, cliché and ‘phoniness’ of society. But certain about shedding his egoistic self-one day and regressing silence. His dream of a future life resembles the kind of life that is demanded of a Hindu monk and Yogi” (Pattanaik 118). Holden is alone and has no connection with his family and social life, thus all this ups and downs make him feel vulnerable and become the cause of his mental imbalance.

Similarly in *Franny and Zooey*, Franny the protagonist is drained with the education system which has nothing prominent to make her inspired. Besides, “Franny’s sickness is parallel to Holden’s, though more obviously the outcome of a conscious spiritual crisis” (Hamilton 247). She felt that, all the process and system is based on fulfilling their ambition in the society but not to make them educated; besides it has no spiritual engrossment. People who are around Franny make her feel alienated in her educational institution which results in her abandoning her college activities that she is engaged previously because, “The sane way for Franny is to withdraw from the play which is an ego-directed action resulting in success that whips up pride” (Pattanaik 120). Franny is troubled with this transformation of this new

American society and she feels unfit for this society. She is not able to tolerate this phony world and the pretentious education system which offer nothing but only grades. When Franny comes back to his lover Lane Coutell, she becomes distressed with the development in her life and wants Lane to understand her dilemmas. However, Lane is unable to understand Franny's sudden change and feels that she is unwell thus she is behaving like this. "She is in college, has just quit acting, and is having a spiritual crisis cum nervous breakdown born of disgust with nearly everyone she knows, including herself" and in this situation, she thinks that Lane will understand her dilemmas and struggle (Grant 8). However, Lane is a part of pretentious society as well who wants to have fame and higher grade in this educational institution. Franny is in her own dilemma about her teacher and institution that have egoistic and superior attitude that make her feel "awful" in that materialist world. While explaining her dilemma to Zooey her older brother, Franny mentioned about one of her teacher Mr Tupper, "He has no enthusiasm whatever for his subject. Ego, yes. Enthusiasm, no" (Salinger 83). Franny's teacher, whom she once considers charming, attractive and intellectual, becomes a person who has nothing but proud, which leaves a huge impact on her. The Glass children are gifted children who are involved in the educational institutes and have enthusiasm to gain knowledge. They have the ability to understand and learn new things with the help of their own knowledge. All the Glass children are talented and have capability to face the world with their knowledge. Franny is gifted as well and has great interest in education but the institution has become a sector that only gives priority to position and rank. Thus Franny feels unfit and comes back to her home where her older brother Zooey helps her to sort her dilemma on educational institution and religion, spiritual institution.

Being in creative studies, she feels that the poets are the person who pretences the most and destroying the literature genre with their words and thoughts. According to Franny, spiritual

features can give relief to a person's life. Her point of view on society and institution is that they have become self-centred and that make her think all these to be pretentious. In this situation, Zooey helps her as an elder brother and guide her to understand the actual meaning of life and religion. Zooey's advice make Franny think and realize about her flaws on the religious understanding and make her more knowledgeable. In "The Holy Refusal": A Vedantic Interpretation of JD Salinger's Silence", Pattanaik stated, "Franny withdraws from the play because she cannot tolerate the adulation. These are certainly the signs of austerity and voluntary denial of worldly pursuits-the kind of spiritual discipline expected of a sadhaka, the seeker in the quest for perfection" (Pattanaik 120). Franny wants to have the absolute peace and understanding that will lead her to a perfect life, according to Franny. Hamilton indicated, "For the Glasses, trained since early childhood on the lore of the East, the Jesus prayer is just one of the countless religious exercises practiced the world over by" (Hamilton 249). They have knowledge other religions as well as Eastern culture, but Franny makes it all the same and see all the religion in same light. In the novelette, "Franny is reading a Russian mystical work, *The Way of a Pilgrim*, and tries to learn to say the 'Jesus prayer' expounded there", that made her do the prayers in namesake and that gradually causes her to become self-centred as well (247). In that situation, Zooey tries to make Franny realize her mistake and flaws which are cause of Franny's spiritual crisis "He tells her that she is too personal in her contempt for sham. He questions her understanding of the prayer" and makes her realize how she has become judgmental, depending on her own perspective (Hassan 12). According to Zooey, it is Jesus who will decide on what can be considered as ego and what not and we are not the ones who can judge others in the light of our understanding. Along with religion, the ambition to become successful also creates crisis and conflict in Franny's life:

The insistence on social success, and therefore competition inside a social jungle has resulted in a deep seated confusion of the modern man. The confusion has made it mandatory to search for our true identity and authenticity. But since our vision of identity is largely social, we seek to get back our identity through social action motivated by greed and ambition, 'to become something' as Franny says. (Pattanaik 119)

Zoey tries to breakdown the ego that Franny unconsciously lands into and becomes self-absorbed in the process of having spirituality and "To criticize ego in the way they do, with feeling, shows lack of a certain attainment, a failure to transcend dualism" (Grant 10). Zoey questions her and provokes her to understand the flam that she is gaining unknowingly in the name of being 'choosy' to get enlightenment and peace. Franny is unaware of becoming egoistic in the progression of having spiritual pleasure, "Furthermore, Zoey succeeds in clarifying Franny's spiritual dilemma in the absence of both Buddy and Seymour. He succeeds in calling her back to things of this world, the profession of acting, just as Buddy, in his inchoate manner, had tried to advise Zoey in his own acting career" (Hassan 12). Zoey has the same spiritual crisis that is resolved with the growth of his career and from the advice of his elder brother's Seymour and Buddy, "Zoey teaches Franny that to recognize Christ everywhere is the precondition of spiritual health. He applies to this knowledge the same title that the New Testament applies to the revelation of God's purpose in the Incarnation" (Hamilton 247). Zoey helps Franny to know about the purpose and the righteous aspect of a religion which is not dependent on individual perspective or outlook but it based on a small gestures such as giving others happiness. At the end, "He enjoins her to become 'God's actress,' to do everything with detachment, aiming always at perfection. The religious life, he insists, begins by accepting Bessie's eternal cup of chicken soup, consecrated by love" (Hassan 13). Thus by the explanation

of Zooey, Franny is able to understand about spiritual pleasure and able to enlighten herself with new thoughts. Franny has the support of her brother Zooey, for which she overcomes the crisis and has new perspective on society. Franny's thought process of understanding the new emerging society gets a new way that helps her to get a developed identity, which is possible because of Zooey's intellectual provision.

Chapter 3: The Self versus Institutions

Along with all the factors that mentioned above, make the protagonists have conflict with the traditional norms. There are some characteristics that become important part of Holden, Franny and Zooey's growth. The protagonists go through self-development which benefits them to form their identity. As adolescents, they have many ups and downs, conflicts and dilemmas which make them understand the circumstance and grow themselves from an adolescent to an adult. There are many factors like family, relationships, society which helps Holden, Franny and Zooey to act according to situation and make them mature enough to take decisions for them. In the 'phony' society of America, they try to have their own individuality and not to follow the society which is revolved around financial stability. That is how the protagonists have identifies their self and individual personality which support them in their crisis and loneliness. Along with having their own individuality, the protagonists have obstacles in their life for their different viewpoints and understanding which make them unfit for the society. Throughout the journey, Holden, Franny and Zooey have to suffer for their love ones and for their relations, but they have the ability to understand from their sufferings and, at the end, Holden and Franny has change their perspectives which add to their mature growth and healing process.

When people come together with the same believe and creates formal organization, that group of union named as institution. Each institution has their particular and specific functions and patterns. Family, education, religion all these have their own pattern and norms which we follow from our birth. Since our birth we have a family, religion, and nationality; later we are enrolled in school, college, job and so on to gain knowledge and to develop ourselves as humans. Each of these elements represents different institutions that have their own ideologies and try to shape an individual by giving his/her an identity, a place in the world and by giving a guideline

how to live well in that world. While originally, these institutions have grand and noble designs and purpose, but in the modern age, they started to damage. It especially has been corrupted with the forces of materialism and capitalism in the society. People starts to use those norms as a tradition which becomes a must to follow in the society but the ideologies behind those institutions and traditions where forgotten with the new emerging trends that have no values of their own. Instead of going deeply into the ideologies or teachings of these institutions, we simply keep following them blindly. It is more important to go to church or mosque than learning about religions. So the institutions have become new restrictive forces and sometimes shallow money-making authority. This is not something that happened only in America during Salinger's time but it is still happening worldwide including Bangladesh. Now-a-days, people are more into showing and following the trends off in Bangladesh and thus the institutions become hollow. They do not have depth idea on those beliefs and it made the teenagers shallow person, without having individual identity.

Salinger himself struggled in negotiating with these institutions and finding his own place in them and the same struggle is shown among his characters Holden, Franny and Zooey. Salinger have his own different approach on the society and institutions that has become a 'phony' place besides, the protagonists Holden and Franny have to face same struggle in their life. They are not like most teenagers or adolescents who follow the customs or traditions of these institutions blindly. They realize their faults, then they argue and question those faults and finally they try to define themselves within those deformed institutions that are unavoidable in any society. The writer and the protagonists are able to find their own space within that distorted society and institutions then are able to be individual self in that pretentious, materialistic institutions.

Conclusion

Being a student of literature in undergraduate program, I came across many writers and many genres from where I stumbled upon J. D. Salinger who talked about adolescents and their family and different relations. As an adolescent, I was curious about the young Americans and their inner dilemmas, curiosities, and struggle in the last century which gradually changed their lifestyle along with their perspectives on different issues. At that time, society has more focus on gaining status and prosperity by any means and that made the American society phony and materialistic. Not only in America but also in rest of the world, there was lack of spiritual depth and as a result people struggled with moral and emotional support in difficult situations. For that reason, great depression became a worldwide phenomenon where people had no time to think about life, family, and relation other than money. In that situation, young people of America found themselves isolated from the society. At that time, people mostly tried to follow trends and style which can increase their position in the society. Protagonists, whom I analysed in this thesis, are the part of that minor group who have their own individual identity and thoughts. Holden, Franny and Zooey are able to understand and differentiate between the materialism and spiritualism. All the protagonists are able to have their own perspectives and are able to follow their heart and mind; ignoring the phonic and pretentious society along with the shallow personalities who became puppets of that American society. This approach and the inner strength on their own life help them to identify about them and to grow up as a diligent, integrate and cultivated person.

Besides all this aspects, this topic of my thesis helps me to relate with the protagonists more as it is the present situation of both our country and our society. All these pretentious phenomena which were observed at that time in American society are the current scenario of our

country. In Bangladesh, adolescents are more into materialistic and pretentious traits. Most of the young people are chasing after money, trend and phoniness which make them part of the materialistic society where adolescents are happy being just popular on social media. This kind of attitude is making them into a shallow person who does not have his/her own perspective and identity. Along with the modern improvements, there are gadgets and social sites which are the main attraction of the adolescents by which they can communicate with each other. However, in reality there are no real friends or acquaintance whom adolescents can share their emotions. Adolescents are more into social media by which they can be a part of this phony and materialistic society and unable to have productive outputs, individual development and identity growth. Though Salinger has shown the catastrophes of American society of late nineties and early twenties, it can be considered as a beginning of materialistic lifestyle which is getting widespread along with time. All these issues and connection between American young adults of nineteenth century and present adolescents made me curious to work on this topic and analyse the causes that prepare an adolescent to face society. In between all these spineless people, Salinger is able to present Holden, Franny and Zooey to have their own identity, perception and their crisis with self and industrial customs, in a crucial time period. By analysing the circumstances, struggles and dilemmas of American adolescents, we might be able to find out a way by which we can help our current society that has started to revolve around pretention and phoniness. Besides, we can make the society have mature individuals who have their own identity and able to lead future generations.

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