

**THE CONGLOMERATION OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS LATITUDES
AND SOLIPSISTIC TRAITS :
A STUDY OF CHRISTOPHER NOLAN'S 'INCEPTION'**

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Abstract : *Released in 2010, Christopher Nolan's "Inception" gyrates as one of the most obscure and ambiguous movies till date. As Movies can bestow us with food for thought, they can even push us to the realms of mysterious disconnected spokes where they get linked in the conscious strata of the audience in jumbled latitudes. The binary juxtaposition of subconscious infiltration in a frame of solipsistic ideology take roots in the movie thereby relating to the torpid platitudes of elucidation. The paper focusses on the multiple layers of dream techniques incorporated in the movie for corporate espionage and the features of solipsism embedded in the protagonist through which he triumphs as well as disastrously fails in infiltrating as well as incepting the subconscious of the others. Nevertheless, Christopher Nolan's Inception swathes itself in the pillars of ambiguity and it is this equivocacy that masters the brilliant art of Nolan thereby triggering us to see what it is and what it offers beyond that.*

"No idea is simple when you have to plant it in someone else's mind".

Since time immemorial, the only solitary adventure that a human being can relish on, is his /her dream state - the state of ravishing through the pleasure and pain in one's own backdrop of solitariness. What if these states of solitude can be invaded by an exterior agency where they either infiltrate and steal our ideas or incept a few new concepts into our subconscious strata? Nolan's knockout punch in its sci-fi extravaganza indeed unsettles us through a baffling repertoire of dreams and the intricate layers of the subconscious dream state. The juxtaposition of the dream layers as well as the mechanism of solipsism through which the psyche of the protagonist works within these layers, form the crux of the outline of Nolan's story.

Stemming from the concepts of Freud's Topographic Theory scaling from Conscious and Preconscious to Unconscious in "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1900), Nolan draws the contours of dreams and psyche within his masterpiece movie. Dominick Cobb played by Leonardo DiCaprio is an authorised extractor performing corporate espionage with the aid of experimental military technology to infiltrate the subconscious of their targets through a shared dream technique in which they are talented enough in extracting the valuable information from the respective target. As the Japanese businessman Saito (Ken Watanabe) arranges the same team to test the proficiency of their dream technique, Cobb's methods go unwarranted to a futile attempt proving the mission to be a total failure. Nevertheless Saito entrusts Cobb with his impossible mission of planting an idea into the subconscious of the target - an unfathomable task which has never been ventured by any in history. Saito wants Cobb to incept a particular idea in the psyche of Robert Fischer who is the multi-billionaire-heir to an energy empire - an idea for Fischer to devastate his father's empire which can be instrumental for the success of Saito's energy business in future days.

The substructure of a basic dream is established in the three-tier parameter consisting of the Dreamer, the Subject and the Architect. The dreamer is the one who dreams and the Subject becomes the person's consciousness that might fill the dream. The architect is the one designing the multifarious levels of dreams along with its landscapes.

The shattered pieces of embittered dreams nonplus the audience in its vast grasp until it gets revealed in the penultimate segment unfolding the chain of events meandering through dreams. The psychological curves and the defence mechanisms theorised by Freud in psychoanalysis are overtly reflected in the sequences of the movie. The initial plan of Cobb in extracting Saito's secrets fails miserably because of the defence mechanism used by the subconscious level of Saito.

The concept of the shared dream strategy works purely on a team work where Cobb assembles a crew of technically efficient members to ignite the incomprehensible task of inception. Along with his co-worker Arthur (Joseph), Cobb hires Eames - a forger gifted with his art of impersonating characters through a dream. Cobb ropes in Yusuf played by Dileep Rao who is a prolific chemist in amalgamating the right kind of sedative to keep the dreamers stable in their state of dreams. To complete his circle of labyrinth, Cobb hires a skilled architect named Ariadne (Allen Page) with her remarkable finesse, in generating the terrains and paradoxes required for the settings of the dreams.

The theme of the convergence of dream landscapes collide with Cobb's solipsism where he creates a world of his own which turns instrumental in ruining his future professional excellence. The complex relationship that Cobb retains with his late wife Mal produces chasms in his plan of action and in each layer of dream that Cobb settles down with, Mal - his late wife appears as an uninvited guest, spoiling the true rhythms of his dream target.

Apart from the psycho-analytical contours, Inception presents the conceptual flickers of the protagonist's confused emotions too through which the elements of self or rather the most powerful part of the self is revealed in fragmented and disoriented pieces. The creative manipulation with which the hero rises up to the extraordinary, in the given predicament, is what follows. In a world where social connections and interactive possibilities are let open wide, Nolan traces us to the mysteries of the self or the psyche of the hero Dominick

Cobb. His dream layers in turn slither through the revelations coupled with realisations, ultimately paving way to the more realistic, more powerful inner self.

The term Solipsism was first recorded by the Pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Gorgias of Leontini. He illustrated it as “Nothing exists and even if something exists, nothing can be known about it and even if something could be known about it, knowledge about it cant be communicated to others”. Descartes ornated the same term by calling it as an abstraction from inner experience. The theories revolving solipsism were later defined and redefined by many theorists and psychologists including Freud. Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud stated that solipsism identifies that other minds are not known, but only inferred to exist. He stated "consciousness makes each of us aware only of his own states of mind, that other people, too, possess a consciousness is an inference which we draw by analogy from their observable utterances and actions, in order to make this behavior of theirs intelligible to us.”

To simplify the term, Solipsism is existence which one may experience and one may believe it to be the ultimate experience without recognising the experiences of others around him/her. A solipsistic individual can never attach meaning to anything outside his/her own experience. As such, Cobb’s solipsistic world ties knot with the layers of his dreams, where he wins and fails simultaneously in various predicaments unwittingly.

Cobb’s self-confidence in taking up the impossible mission of inception lies in his successful implantation of an idea in his wife’s psyche long back. An era of togetherness of fifty long years in dream-sharing status had been erected once by Cobb and Mal. This extensive period of dream sharing turns out to be what is called as Limbo - a state where the dreamers continue dreaming to an amorphous period which may appear as ages in dream but might take only a few hours in the zone of reality. Only a Kick or a fatal death in a dream could possibly push them back to reality. In a scenario where Mal basks in the dream state with Cobb and their children James and Philippa, it turns a necessity for Cobb to bring her back to reality whereby he engrafts this idea into her through her totem. A totem is considered as a spinning top which helps the dreamer to distinguish between a dream and reality and thereby serves as a technique to preserve the idea within the subconscious of the person. To shove his wife to ultimate reality, Cobb along with Mal commits suicide, run over by a train during their dream status. As the characters wake up to reality, Cobb recognises that the idea embedded in Mal into her subconscious during the dream stage remains in tact sturdy in her that she believes she should die to bring herself to reality. In a flush of miasma, she jumps off the window convinced that she is in a dream where she dies in reality in the real world of Cobb.

Cobb chooses to stay back in the tracks of solipsism where he is not sure of anything beyond his created dream world with his late wife Mal. Even after Mal’s death, Cobb’s dreams contain the memories of Mal where she appears as his subconscious projections and enter the dream world wrecking havoc to the calculated plan for the mission. Planted in a solipsistic world Cobb’s message transformations mostly happen through analogy rather than intellectual precision.

A solipsistic world is a world of self deception. At times it turns out to be a deliberate self deception too. Solipsism is opposed to all forms of realism and many forms of idealism. Realism in a minimal sense, that *there is an external universe* is most likely not

observationally distinct from solipsism. The objections to solipsism therefore have a theoretical rather than an empirical thrust. Solipsists may view their own pro-social behaviors as having a more solid foundation than the incoherent pro-sociality of other philosophies. Indeed, they may be more pro-social because they view other individuals as actually being a part of themselves. Furthermore, the joy and suffering arising from empathy is just as real as the joy and suffering arising from physical sensation. They view their own existence as human beings to be just as speculative as the existence of anyone else as a human being.

The narrative of Inception baffles the audience with turns toppled down by both dreams and real instances. It makes it hard to recognise whether we are in a possible harsh reality or a potentially magnificent dream. Cobb's solipsistic web of self, weaves within itself a pattern so varied, travelling to and fro through layers of dreams thereby juxtaposing the self as well as his targeted mission simultaneously.

As the inception mission begins, the team of Cobb joins Fischer during his flight journey from Sydney to US consuming a span of ten hours - a journey which unfolds the multi level dream-statistics. A synchronised scheme follows where Dream Level I merges to the Dream level II and where Dream level II converges straight with Dream level III and it is in Level III that the mission turns successful in incepting the idea to the target where Fischer finally decides to leave his father's empire and to do something different with his own whims and fancies.

No	Context	Dreamer	Target	Level	Kick	Limbo	Dream context
1	Flight	Yusuf	Fischer	L 1	The Van crash-landing to the river	—	Van on the Road
2	Van	Arthur	Fischer	L 2	The explosion of the Elevator	—	Suite in Hotel
3	Suite	Eames	Fischer (Inception happens)	L 3	Avalanche & the devastation of the buildings	—	Snowy Mountain
4	The Snow Field	Cobb		L 4	Saito dies in the snowfield	—	His created world with Mal
5	Created World with Mal	Cobb		L 5	Mal stabs Cobb	Limbo	With Saito
6	The Seashore	Cobb		L 6	wakes after incepting Saito with the idea that it is a dream world	Limbo	Back to reality

The first level of dream takes place from the flight through the dream of Yusuf. Yusuf drives his truck with his team members through the city of Los Angeles where from they kidnap

Fischer. In order to get into the profound mysteries of Fischer's mind, Eames impersonates Mr. Browning - the Godfather of Fischer thereby disembowelling the nest of secrets from Fischer's inner psyche. The first level of dream begins disintegrating as Fischer's psychological defence mechanism starts to work thereby battering the team of Cobb where Saito is badly wounded by a gun shot. In a scenario where they predict the failure of their mission, they decide to move straight to Dream Level II from the truck.

Level II of the shared dream is initiated within the van and the location of the dream within the dream moves to a hotel where the dream happens through Arthur. Cobb takes up the role of convincing Fischer that he is the protector of his subconscious - the defence mechanism and instils him the statement that his Godfather Browning had actually kidnapped him. To hold testimony to this, Browning impersonated by Eames appears where in all the members including Fischer initiates to move to the third level of the dream.

The third level of the dream initiated within the hotel room sets forth in a snowfield mountainous region and begins as Eames' dream. In spite of a few rigmaroles where Mal appears and destroys the plan, they succeed in implanting the idea in the mind of Fischer - the target. When the mission of the story takes a technical ending here, the protagonist Cobb along with Ariadne the Architect, deliberately moves into Level IV of dream sharing initiated from the snowfields taking Cobb and Ariadne to the world of Cobb and Mal - their created world. As Cobb gets stabbed and killed by Mal, he switches himself off into the state of Limbo - the extensive dream. Level 5 continues with Cobb in Limbo but identified by a troupe of soldiers where he finds out an old sickly Saito in a lengthy Limbo than that of Cobb. It is from level V that Cobb gets planted back to reality after Saito kills him and brings him back.

The main strategic three levels of dream sharing go parallel with the theory of psychoanalysis ranging from Super-ego, Ego and the Id. The Id is the seat of libido as per Freud and it is veritably from the Id level that the inception of the idea to Fischer's mind actually takes place. The other three intrinsic level experienced by Cobb is a profound sagacity to the created world of Cobb with his late wife Mal. His deep sense of guilt in having implanted an idea in Mal which ultimately triggers her death paves him to the track of an unconscious projection of multiple layers he had built in within his solipsistic vision.

The synchronised kicks followed in each levels ranging from the van smashing against the edges of the bridge in Level I to the Elevator explosion due to lack of gravity in Level II focusses a series of events. As the van-crash is unplanned where the members lose their grip on gravity and seems to float, the repercussions follow in Level II with floating bodies inside the suite under sedation. As a result Arthur has to improvise. The gravitational pull is re-synthesised where in Arthur makes the elevator explode and thereby provides the kick to the second layer of the dream sharing. The chain of events continue when an avalanche takes place in Dream level III waking up the same characters in the snowfield.

Frank Kermode, the great literary critic once opined that a successful art work will definitely induce multiple interpretations which may vary widely from the author's own interpretation during the process of his creation of the work. True to the core, Christopher Nolan's Inception released in 2010 swathes itself in the pillars of ambiguity. It is this ambiguity of an art piece which can trigger the confusing ends as well as perplexing contexts.

As the movie closes its curtain, Cobb's mission turns complete and fruitful and he returns to his homeland to meet his two children.

However, there is an exceptional way in which Nolan keeps the audience stranded with this mind-bending twist. As the final scene scales up, we find Cobb getting back home and spinning his totem to place himself. It's been already devised in the movie that if the totem continuously spins without stopping, it could possibly be a dream stage where as it stops and comes to a halt if the context is real. Nevertheless, Nolan abruptly cuts off the camera focus as the totem continues spinning and leaves the audience bereft without a clear cut answer. Presumably, we can either believe Cobb to be in his dream world or as he himself being placed in reality once again. As the movie closes, we still conjecture "is Cobb still dreaming?"

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