

女孩跳楼围观者起哄，鲁迅笔下的“看客”升级了？

**The Girl Jumped off the Building as Onlookers Jeered — Has Lu
Xun's 'Spectator' Evolved to a New Level?**

Translated by Snigdha Konar

Research Associate and Assistant Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

Email: snigdha.ics.in@gmail.com

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(Nǚhái tiàolóu wéiguān zhě qǐhòng, lǔxùn bǐxià de “kànkè” shēngjíle?)

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This translation is the first part of a series where articles on Lu Xun and Chinese society today shall be translated from Chinese to English. This limited series on Lu Xun today will be translated by Dr. Snigdha Konkar.



Li Yiyi died after throwing herself from 8th floor of a department store in Qingyang.
(Representational)

Translator's Notes

Lu Xun (25 September 1881 – 19 October 1936) was a “distinguished writer at the forefront of national emancipation”. In his short writing career of just thirty years (1907-1936), he composed three collections of short stories, one collection of prose poems, and sixteen collections of essays. His works contributed much to Chinese society and culture. Like a “warrior in spirit”, Lu Xun used his humorous pen to consistently and incessantly fight against the feudal, imperialist, and dark forces of society. Through his writings, he voiced his opinions and sought to address the ills of the Chinese society. One of the recurring themes in Lu Xun's works is the portrayal of onlookers (spectators). Xu Yan (许燕), a renowned scholar provides an insightful analysis of the psychological traits of these onlookers. One such characteristic exhibited by onlookers is the “morbid

pleasure” (*xie'e kuaigan* 邪恶快感), which is a feeling of happiness that comes from witnessing adversities or misfortunes of others. Lu Xun lived in an era without the Internet, but his observations are strikingly relevant today. Today, China is no longer a semi-feudal or semi-colonial society but a “moderately prosperous society” (小康社会), steadily but surely progressing towards building a modern socialist country (社会主义现代化国家) by 2049. However, a Chinese “spectator” has recently observed that it is sad for the Chinese nation that the characters and themes portrayed by Lu Xun are still relevant today!

Translation:

On 20 June, a girl named Li Mouyi from Qingyang, Gansu, jumped from the 8th floor of a building. The video showed that many onlookers were jeering downstairs, “jump, jump quickly”. Screenshots of WeChat Moments collected by the media proved that the onlookers not only jeered at the scene, but also posted on WeChat Moments, “finally someone really jumped from the building. If you want to jump, just jump. Be decisive and don't cause trouble for the police”.

What is particularly heart-breaking is that the 19-year old girl, Li Mouyi, was not

suffering from typical depression but rather a condition stemming from the trauma of being molested by her class teacher, Wu Mouhou, two years ago. Over the past two years, the girl has endured the full range of evil that a person can encounter: molestation by her teacher, passive handling by her school, secondary injuries caused by the unprofessionalism of her psychological counsellor, and in the end, when she was ready to end her own life, the ridicule and attacks of onlookers.

Many people compared the Qingyang incident with the experience described by Lu Xun in the Preface to *Call to Arms*. Everyone lamented that more than 100 years have passed, and some Chinese people are still so numb. The core concept of the “spectators” described by Lu Xun is “indifference”. They neither know the meaning of revolution, nor the value of life. When someone is killed, they only want to eat *man tou* (Chinese steamed bun, pronounced ‘maan thau’ – Translator) dipped in human blood.

However, the Qingyang suicide incident is different. The most important thing is that the psychology of “spectators” here is no longer indifference or numbness, but happiness and revelry. They know what suicide means, but someone else

committing suicide does not awaken the feeling of compassion in these onlookers. Witnesses to such suicides have moved from being indifferent observers to complacent “consumers”. Therefore, we see that they will ask for “suicide” to be faster and cleaner, just as they do in a shopping mall.

The “spectator” described by Lu Xun is passive and is in a state of complete powerlessness. However, the spectators in the Internet age exhibit active engagement, and they have an illusion of wielding power. It seems that they have a unique psychological mechanism that prevents them from being disturbed by the sufferings of others. Their inner state is a mystery that may perhaps become a research topic for psychologists: how can a person be so at ease seeing the sufferings of others?

The behaviour of these few Qingyang people represents a landmark event. But fundamentally, the people of Qingyang are no worse or more indifferent than anywhere else. What happened in Qingyang could have happened in any county or city in China. I don't think it is the “universal human nature” of the Chinese, but it does reflect a black hole in the psyche of the society to the extent that

the fundamental moral baseline line of “being born as a human being” has eroded significantly for a small group of people.

In fact, incidents like these are too common on the Internet. For instance, Fei Tuotuo, a young woman from Beijing attempted suicide after being harassed by loan sharks but was fortunately rescued — only to face questioning and judgment from countless strangers online. In another case, three individuals born in the 1990s agreed to commit suicide in a QQ group. After the parents of one of the deceased girls logged into her account, they discovered netizens callously asking, “why didn’t you succeed in committing suicide?”.

In yet another instance, after someone was filmed throwing a dog to its death, netizens retaliated by doxing, harassing, and threatening him. Driven to despair, he attempted to end his own life by cutting his wrists, claiming it was to “pay for his actions”. One is left wondering — do those netizens who revel in such outcomes feel even a trace of compassion in their hearts?

If the Internet has not spawned a new human nature, it has at least concentrated some of the evils of human nature. Confronted with a vast concentration of

malice and public discourse driven by unrestrained venting without regard for consequences, how can those weak at heart survive? Although we have no evidence to prove that those spectators in Qingyang are also perpetrators of cyber violence, the content on WeChat Moments that has come to light suggests that they are at least similar people.

Qingyang police have taken action and detained several spectators. Whether they accelerated the suicide or had an effect on the firefighters’ rescue efforts needs further investigation. What kind of legal responsibility they need to bear should be determined by law. The broader societal mindset reflected in this incident must also be taken seriously.



Lu Xun (1881-1936)
Source: Thatsmags.com

Series Editor: **Hemant Adlakha**

Hemant Adlakha teaches Chinese at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and is Vice-Chairperson, and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Email: haidemeng@gmail.com

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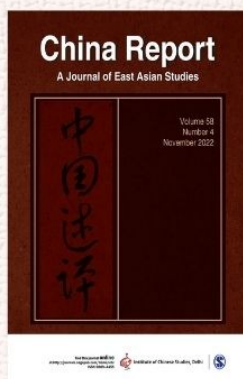


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INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES
B-371 (3rd Floor), Chittaranjan Park,
Kalkaji, New Delhi 110019
Landline: +91-11-40564823



info@icsin.org



<https://www.icsin.org>



@icsin_delhi



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