

Choice and Responsibility

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Abstract: This article focuses on aspects of Existentialism in Amitav Ghosh's, "The Circle of Reason". Ghosh sympathizes with his characters' efforts, because of his participation in the same enterprise as his characters, and therefore he's bound to be less remote from other master storytellers. His stories are experiences that come from his life stories and that deal with humanity. A person gains his essence through individual choices and actions. Identity or essence of any one person cannot be found by examining what other people are like, but only by what that particular person has done. As people are free to decide their own way they must accept the risk and responsibility to follow their commitments wherever they lead.

Keywords: predetermined consequence, Practical Phrenology, transcendent, phlegmatic.

1. Introduction

Amitav Ghosh's literary interest is with borders, histories, marginal population, and knowledge systems. His novels have made Indian Writings revered worldwide.

Ghosh sympathizes with his characters' efforts, because of his participation in the same enterprise as his characters, and therefore he's bound to be less remote from other master storytellers. His stories are experiences that come from his life stories and that deal with humanity. The characters are torn apart and located in entirely different areas; they deal with the world with two features of life the situation they face, and the constant desire to go beyond planning and shaping the future. For them whole human experience of thinking, acting and engaging with the world is the main concern.

The same is observed by Margaret Drabble in Oxford Companion to English as:

Existentialists emphasize the unique and particular in human experience; they place the individual person at the centre of their pictures of the world and are suspicious of philosophical or psychological doctrines that obscure this essential individuality by speaking as if there were some abstract humans, nature some set of general laws or principles to which human beings are determined or required, by their common humanity, conform. Each person is what he or she chose to be or to become and cannot escape responsibility for character or deeds by claiming that they are the predetermined consequence of factors beyond one's power or to control resist; nor can we justify what we do in terms of external or objective standards imposed upon us from without.

People in The Circle of Reason are aware of their own existence; Alu, Balaram, Bhudeb, Shombhu Debnath, make

their choices, actions, values and create essence for their own lives. Existentialists state that there is no innate identity or value, our actions should be created. Our manifested qualities depend on what we do and how we work in our lives.

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Reason, a transcendent and transparent working of human intelligence, views it as simply by sensory perceptions and logical cogitation, making sense of the world 'as it is'. Let us observe the Implication of reason through two choice made by Balaram, one in association with Phrenology and the other in association with the Life of Pasteur. Gopal his friend in a rationalists association, uses Atom as a metaphor for Brahma to highlight the idea that God is formless but Balaram differs in opinion, stating that atom is an archaic usage so it should be replaced with terms of currency like Cosmic Boson, Cosmic Fermions, Italian Particles etc and deviates subject of Atom to Metaphor of Atom which is illogical.

He is the teacher in the village school, He sees Phrenology as a way of combining the outside and inside, body and soul, of people. He performs phrenology on the basis of knowledge from the old book 'The Practical Phrenology'. He assesses the characters of his friend Gopal as phlegmatic, Dantu as a sadhu- (becomes a politician), new born child of Bhudeb as a homicide- (dies of pneumonia), and Alu as incapable of emotion (loves Maya) goes wrong, for him theory comes first and the truth after.

Balaram is also inspired by the work of Louis Pasteur, just by studying a Book the Life of Pasteur lent by Gopal during his college days. He comes under the strong spell of research of Pasteur that Carbolic acid alone can clean anything and launches a campaign towards germs and superstition in the village to win the inhabitants, over to his idiosyncratic vision of the purity of reason and sciences. His School of Reason is composed of Faculties of Pure and Practical reading, writing and arithmetic' – and disseminates the 'ideology of science' through 'lectures in the history of science and technology' (CR107).

As per existentialism man must be willing to accept full responsibility for all his actions. Man should have a tendency to take the mistake on himself rather than accusing it on others or on some situations beyond his control. When we are aware of this fact that we are fully accountable for our actions, our

lives and our mistakes, we will exercise our responsibility. No one else can make a decision for our life.

The choice made by Balam gains him the enmity of Bhudeb Roy who is a political bully in the village, through, hiring violent persons to intensify his policies. Both become enemies and try to influence the heart and minds of people. Bhudeb influences a plane crash and burns Roy school after having it insured secretly. In response, Balam starts the school of Reason. The new school runs good in first year, a new division is added in the next year which is taught to apply carbolic acid throughout the village, to disinfect everything, In the process of this "Purification" latest political gathering of Bhudeb is totally disturbed. The next day Roy burns several of Balam's possessions to the ground.

One of the most prominent themes in existentialist writing is that of choice. Gopal differs from Balam, already knows, that 'Reason discovers itself through events and people' (CR38). In other words, Reason is not transcendent at all but rather embodied in particular people and places at particular moments, that is, scientific reason is historically produced with given social milieus and not natural.

Human beings do not have a fixed nature or essence according to existentialists. Every human being takes the decisions that create his own nature. It is essential to the existence of man. Choice is unavoidable, even a decision itself is the refusal to choose. Therefore, nobody can claim that anybody else has caused his or her actions.

Shombu dednath a practical weaver warns Balam to stop the way he thinks as he could destroy the entire environment by

being a true sadhu and mortal human beings could not tolerate the immortal purity. But man cannot avoid making a choice. An alternative available to us may not make us satisfied.

Balam's choice is replaced with weaving as an alternative by Alu. Kulfi has to have a funeral, and for this reason. Situation Mrs Verma faces as Indian migrants living on the edge of the Algerian Sahara in Africa makes her and others have to abandon rules and purity during the funeral arrangements of Kulfi. Our actions and alternatives are our free choice made through free will at certain experienced situations.

2. Conclusion

Existential philosophy says that the mature and real person makes a deliberate and honest attempt to clearly identify alternatives and decides to take life in a new path. This freedom of choice implies responsibility and commitment. As people are free to decide their own way they must accept the risk and responsibility to follow their commitments wherever they lead.

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