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## THE MESSAGE OF EXISTENTIALISM IN TAGORE'S "THE POST OFFICE"

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### ABSTRACT

The Existential message found in Rabindranath Tagore's Plays is the Topic to be highlighted in this Paper. To deal with this topic his Play, The Post Office is taken for study. It is an attempt to reinterpret and reconstruct the Play in the light of scientific knowledge and techniques of Modern time.

**Keywords:** Existentialism, Existence, Angst

**Existentialism** is an attitude and outlook that emphasis human existence. For Rabindranath Tagore a human being is not an object but is essentially a subject. This is what the Existentialism asserts that human is not an object to be known, but a subject to be studied. Tagore acknowledges the reality of suffering and misery of worldly existence. He is concerned with liberation as a state of freedom. Freedom is the central concept around which the existential enquiry revolves.

### The explanation of the concept, Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical movement which emphasizes on individual existence, freedom and choice. There are several philosophical positions all related to Existential Philosophy but the main identifiable common proposition is that existence precedes essence. By this, Existentialism states that man exists and in that existence man defines himself and the world in his own subjectivity and wanders between choice, freedom and existential angst.

The first Philosopher to use the term was Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) who reacted against systematic rational philosophy, specially Hegel and grasped the notion of a truth inside of the evolving Self. Existentialists opine that Human existence is a Project in which Past and Present are subordinates to Future, is the main residence of our existence.

M.Heidegger states, "Human existence cannot have a relationship with being unless it remains in the midst of nothingness."

### Choice

Existentialism is based on as the one that determines our individual facts (existence). Choice is where we choose and in choosing we define ourselves.

### Angst

The choice leads to the main characteristic of existence. This is through which fear becomes possible. It is the immediate consequence of facing the possibility of nothingness.

### The message of Existentialism in Tagore's Play "The Post Office"

A gentle and moving play, "The Post Office" tells us the story of a young boy, Amal. The play is set in the early 20th century rural Bengal. It is the poignant story of a childless man who has adopted Amal, who has been claimed by an incurable illness. The boy, innocent of what the loss of life means, is caught in the flurry of life outside the window of his room where he is confined. He touches the lives of people passing outside the window. With the world at his doorstep, Amal is happy in the fertile world of

imagination, and is willing, when the time comes, to journey from this world to the next. A bedridden child, Amal yearns for the outside world. His doctor would shut out the world for him if he could. Consequently, he is elated at the news of a post office coming up in the neighborhood. Would the King send a letter to him, he wonders, or, could he not become the King's postman and carry messages to the end of the world? The adults that he comes into contact with whet his appetite for the world at large and trigger his imagination. At the end of the play, we find Amal falling asleep, and Shudha--the little girl who promised to bring flowers for him--comes back to him and says to the Royal Physician, "Tell him, 'Sudha has not forgotten you' " Tagore himself explains the intended meaning of the play to his friend C.F. Andrews in this way : Amal represents the man whose soul has received the call of the open road. But there is the post office in front of his little window, and Amal waits for the King's letter to come to him direct from the King's own physician and that which is death to the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds brings him awakening in the world of spiritual freedom. The only thing that accompanies him in his awakening is the flower of love given to him by Shudha.

The existential concept of the essence of existence is found in one of this finest Play "The Post-Office". This influenced many great people right from Mahatma Gandhi who said that this Play had a soothing effect to W.B.Yeats who wrote the first version of it. A new perspective, Existentialism is hired here. Here man is treated as a Subject and not an Object.

The essence of existence is the struggle of the survival of hope in the storm of despair is found in Amal in "The Post-Office". He fights for his existence with an element of hope wherein he loops through the darkness and opens the windows to light. He fights with time though he knows that time waits for none; but hopes that a time which proves his existence would come.

The dreams of a letter addressed to him by the King becomes to be on a verge of reality, when he sees a newly built Post Office by the King in the visible reach of his horizon. The existential-angst is

experienced by Amal's adoptive father, Madhav. The negative feelings creep here in Madhav on the verge of losing him but another face of angst which gives the experience of one's own freedom in Amal makes all the odds ice-berged. The essence of angst is proved with the emergence of hope in Amal with the messenger from the King who gave the message of the letter from King to Amal was on its way. The waiting again continues as the light of hope is kept alive.

The opening of the window in Amal's room is the opening to the true self. The Self is to be seen in others. The joy is the fulfillment of the remorseful thing and making it to hold and organize an atmosphere of seeking satisfaction in the other. Amal sitting by the window and talking to people passing by. The curd seller though is upset with Amal initially but later is pleased with him and gives him a pot of curd. The reason here was initially he thought practically and so he says that it was waste of time that Amal had called him to enquire and not to purchase but later becomes an emotional attachment when the Curd seller becomes aware of the reality with Amal and is surprised with the positive approach to life by the small boy.

The children are called by Amal sitting by the window asking them to play near window and also he parts with his toys .This shows the retaining of innocence in life is the most important task to be goaled. For this any cost can be afforded. This innocence leads to happiness of eternity.

The power of love is also seen here with the tough and stone hearted Village Headman turning soft spoken and concerned with the innocence of Amal. Even Guffur disguised tries to bring happiness and soothes the atmosphere.

The opening of "The Post Office" is the final destination of the soul and the King is the all powerful Oversoul .

Amal wants to become a messenger of God where he expresses his genuine desire to become a postman and deliver the letters from door to door. The arrival of the Royal physician giving the message about the King's letter on its way and Amal going away from this world gives the message of eternity

of the soul. Amal got the command from the Oversoul and thus his journey from this world began. Sudha telling the last line delivers the concept that the essence of existence continues to exist in the form of object here though the subject ceases to exist. Amal went on a journey to another world but his presence always is felt by Sudha in her flowers.

The innocence is tried to be retained in all ways and moves of life and ultimately Death is also taken as casual process. Death also is taken as part of this innocence. The calmness which was seen in Amal's face proves the inevitable circumstances and the message of the eternity of soul is hence proved.

The message of Existentialism is given through the view of Satre where he puts it in Existentialism is Humanism."Man exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines his self later". The Present time is no exception of the Past. Life throughout the ages exist the same and only the perception of it take different labeling but eternity of soul is the ultimate truth of life. Literature is eventual mirror of life which through generations has very ardently represented this aspect. This article thus signifies the simplified version of the ethic "The existence precedes essence".

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