

Negotiating of Existentialism in Raj Kamal Jha's novel The Blue Bedspread

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Abstract

Indian English Novels is emblemized the multifarious civilizations of India. It also focuses on the quest for the existence of the individual. Oriental panorama, and scattering, Apart from this, it also dealt with the postcolonial apple of discord, national ramification, the discourses around the geography of India.

The main concern of existentialism is to liberate, creative, and sovereignty of man. It also reflects the dogma of the human revolution for the existence of man in society. Existentialism disaffirms the complete unconditional idealism as well.

The present paper will unveil the negotiating of existentialism in Raj Kamal Jha's The Blue Bedspread (1999) this novel dealt with the various issues of India such as the quest for existentialism. The narrator of the novel supposes to rejoice in the disgruntled life in society due to his own misapprehension; His life is supposed absurd and humdrum as well. Thus, the circumstances disseminate the burning question of existentialism for the narrator. The present narrative will interrogate from the postcolonial theoretical prospect.

Keywords: Negotiate, Existentialism, Blue Bedspread, Post-colonialism, Individual, Absurd

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What is Post-colonialism?

Post-colonialism represents the discourse of the new study of marginal, elite, and the cultural amalgamation of the nation. It is a new measurement of prospects and dimensions. Post-colonialism study the two significant aspects that are colonial and the oriental metaphor. Thus, it stands for the discourse of the two worlds that is the first and third world countries. It explores that, "new discourses of resistance" (Huggan, 2013, p. 4). Post-colonialism dealt with the reconstruction, deconstruction, connotation, and denotation of the postcolonial world. It also depicted the hypothetical dispute on the new upheaval of the postcolonial world against

the authorial world (Huggan, 2013). Fanon dealt with the revolution from the perspectives of Post colonialism. He also remarks on history as:

The native intellectual can repudiate the authority of colonial history, he cannot abolish its 'give-ness' and the project of postcolonial revisionism becomes a confrontational encounter with that history which is not one's own (Huggan, 2013, p 7).

Moreover, the panorama of Post-colonialism is to free the colonial state, decolonization, and revolt against the dominating mentalities of Europeans

(Huggan, 2013). Moreover, In the light of Post-colonialism, the metaphor of the Western world has deconstructed simultaneously and the epitome denotes the imperialism neutralize as well. Furthermore, Post-colonialism focuses on psychological violence, the new scientific world, homosexuality, and it also focuses on the medicinal world. Overall, Post-colonialism is a new innovative prospect of the new world. However, Post-colonialism dealt with Political engagement in the measurement of the geographical panorama (Bush, 2014). Moreover, postcolonial new parameters expose “Politics of Difference” and “Identity Politics” (Venn, 2006, p 36).

The present paper focuses on the study of negotiating existentialism in Raj Kamal Jha’s *The Blue Bedspread*, The title of the novel the blue bedspread stands for valor, love, vigor, compassion, and existence. Henceforth, humanity takes rebirth in the form of the individual’s existence generosity (Shukla and Shukla, 2002). At the opening of the novel, the narrator is nameless who represents “twelve millions” people of Calcutta and the rest of the Indians who do not have a sort of value in the country. The narrator evokes the experience of tragic and comic life in Calcutta. The novel has described Calcutta city which strives to survive the brother and sister in the cloudy shadow of father’s anger. The novelist strives to explore the idea of existentialism and survival tactics by using the narrative technique in the eight stories of the novel. Moreover, the novel dealt with the individual as subject of the novel. The novel sounds metaphorical and unexpected changes in the individual’s life (Shukla and Shukla, 2002). The Narrator comes to know about the death of his sister. It was unexpected and shocking news he heard from the police. It sounds like the quest of an individual’s life and raises the measurement of existence is as all about the quest of human life:

I am sorry, sir, he says, your sister is dead. We found your name written on four pages of a book she brought with her to the hospital. There was no one with her when she came in. In her admission form, she didn’t write anything except her name. She was pregnant (Jha, 1999, p 7).

Here the women died in the hospital without family members. She was born a baby. It shows that human existence sometimes does not have value. It sounds meaningless and fabricated. The nameless narrator seems in puzzling facts while adopting a baby. The officer and the taxi driver bestow his moral support to handle their tough situation. The existence of any living person becomes important to each other during their struggling period (Bharathi, 2017). The narrator makes the baby feel sleepy in the blue bedspread. The quest of the existence of the little kid rises for the narrator. Even he doesn’t know how to deal with society. When the people would raise the question about the baby? (Bharathi, 2017). Jha focuses on the quest for existentialism by pointing out the alienated death of a woman in the hospital which reflects human existence as futile and nondescript. The postcolonial situation contemplates such a terrible scenario in Indian society.

Moreover, the narrator recalls the hard and fast existential past moment of his life. It was awkward to stay with family in harmony. Besides this, the narrator’s father reveals his malicious approach to keep control of his children under control. Thus, the narrator and his sister become neutral under the patriarchal precinct and they faced the quest of existence. The father makes their life completely hopeless and meaningless existence in the family as well as society (Bharathi, 2017). Thus, Father scolds to his daughter for one rupee. It shows up that existence is not easy for a better life:

Where is the one rupee? Father said and my sister said she didn’t know. Father got angry, angrier. First, he slapped my sister like he often does. A slap on her cheek, my sister is a very, very brave girl and she never cries when Father beats her. This makes father angrier and he beats her harder but she just stands there, like a statue, until he gives up and says that his hands hurt. But this time Father got very angry, he kept on shouting and sister went to the next room. He followed her and locked the door from the inside (Jha, 1999. p 44).

Here Jha remarks on the burning question of the existentialism of the individual’s life through the

issue of child abusing. It supposes torturing and exploiting a sense of the father. It makes bad effects on the life of the children. Thus, the question arises of existence and survival. Moreover, Jha depicted his own experiences about the existence of the Indian children and those children whose life sounds uncertain under the authority of the patriarchal circle. Thus, Jha raises the question of the existence of the individual in the emotionless society as well. Jha also raises the issue of maltreatment of children in families and society. It also explores the existential seeds of human life. Merleau-Ponty focuses on the existence of human in society as such:

The merit of this new philosophy is precisely that it tries, in the notion of existence, to find a way of thinking about our condition. In the modern sense of the word, 'existence' is that movement through which man is in the world and involves himself in a physical and social situation which then becomes his point of view on the world (Flynn, 2006, p 61).

Moreover, the narrator depicted the city as a part of inhuman existence as a ghost. The narrator mentioned the story of a stranger who strives to cross the middle of the road at night. It reminds the narrator to overshadow the colonial era. The narrator depicted the experience of the stranger person and the city life at midnight. The Calcutta city looks derelicts without human existence (Jha, 1999). Thus, the narrator depicted the scenario of the night city. It reminds the narrator to overshadow of the colonial era and the existence of common people under the realm of British rule:

This city likes lonely people, the city likes this man. There's no one to talk by his side, to wait for him at a street crossing, so the city moves in to help, it slows down the traffic, parts the crowds. There's no one to talk, so the city speaks through its banners, its hoardings. At night, he has nothing to do, so the streets tell him their stories, street lights trap insects in their Plexiglas covers, lull him to sleep (Jha, 1999, p 74).

Jha explores the issues of existentialism in contemporary India. The description of desolated Calcutta discovers the gap between human relations with each other. Furthermore, the alienation of man from society raises the issue of survival and existentialism. The city life of Calcutta makes the man solitary. It also makes it intricate to survive in a society that has a lack of communication between man to man. Furthermore, Jha talks about the future of Calcutta City. At present, people of the city left their homes and displace to another place. Thus, public bloodshed and political miscalculation happened in Calcutta. It sounds likely to be a nightmare. This was the main reason behind the departure of the people from Calcutta and the lack of internal adjustment. It elevates the question of existentialism. According to Pascal, existentialism denotes that:

let man, returning to himself, consider what he is in comparison with what exists; let him regard himself as lost, and from this little dungeon, in which he finds himself lodged, ... let him learn to take the earth, its realms, its cities, its houses and himself at their proper value... Anyone who considers himself in this way will be terrified of himself (Aho, Para 2).

In addition, the narrator sees his mother's existence as absurd by reasons of her husband's dominative act against her. As a human, she is completely banking on her husband to get cherish her life as liberate woman. Thus, she is not able to show off her power her oppressive belongings as well, her tortures and enslavement from her husband.

She looks out, across the roof of the shanties, over the tram wires, to the bus stop where a man stands, a tall man with glasses, and she waves to him, she lifts my hand and waves it too, the man waves back, he's smiling, she smiles back, she turns quickly, picks up the soap, the tap running so the water by now has formed a pool near my legs, she scoops some of it, pours it onto my shoulders. A bus stops across the street, screen the man, the bus is

gone, the man is gone and my mother is back to bathing me. Under her breath, I can hear her singing, I try to recall what happens next and all I see is her giant photograph, two dead cockroaches trapped in its glass frame. And all I remember is my resting on her head, my fingers on the vermilion in the parting of her hair. And that the man across the street wasn't my father (Sarkar, 2019, p 12-13).

Here Jha openly brings to light the quest of the existence of the narrator's mother's life. It is not merely connected to the narrator's mother but also all the Indians. The desires of the human being go under the pressures of other human dominance. Moreover, the narrator's mother didn't get the affinity from her husband and get more and more torture. Thus, she looks hopefully towards another person who is very stranger to her. According to Kierkegaard existentialism exposes that, "existence alone is admitted and essence is ignored that is, all the conditions and limitations inherent in men's nature are neglected" (Motiee and Sheikhzadeh, 2015, p 133).

In addition, in the city of Calcutta, the bloodshed and detriment raise the quest of existentialism of common people. Furthermore, the narrator describes the suicide incidents. The death of an old man raises the question of the existentialism. The old man was supposed to stay in the house alone. The alienation makes him frustrated, it turns into the quest of the existence of the old man and he hangs himself and died:

They found him in the morning, five-thirty or so, hanging from a book on the bedroom ceiling where his fan should have been. His walking stick was on the floor, the chair he had climbed on lay upturned, its legs marking a rectangle in which his body swung gently, like that of a lamb, upside down, at a butchers' shop (Jha, 1999, p 99).

Here Jha pointed out that the life of an individual becomes so sadistic at large. The old man suffers from a lack of support from his family. They left

him alone due to his growing age. The people around him were strange about his personal life. Here Jha noted the two important things that the aging and existence of old man. It also reflects the problem of the entire nation. Moreover, the city of Calcutta reflects the existential seek of the person as the old man suicide in his home:

It was one of the four suicides in the city that day; it would become, by the end of the month, one of a hundred and fifty. By the end of that year, one of over fifteen hundred. Multiply that by fifteen for fifteen years and what do you have left (Jha, 1999, p 100).

Here the narrator shares his life's experience of Calcutta City. The narrator counts the death of innocent people who died in the violence. Here Jha raises the question of the existence of the mass of Calcutta. The quest of existentialism represents through his panorama as well. According to Jean Paul Sartre existentialism sounds that man is free from the boundations, "Man first is only afterward is he this or that. Man must create for himself his own essence" (More, 2016, p 15). Here man should construct his own out of his knack to lead his life.

Moreover, the narrator expresses his experience of the existence of laborers in Calcutta city. The existence of working-class people suppose in distress through the subjugation of their life:

The workers waved red flags, shouted their protests, one even spat in his direction but it didn't matter because the owner kept walking as if he couldn't hear; with a smile on his face, he locked the gates, put the keys in his pocket, the workers heard the click and he began to walk back to his white Ambassador (Jha, 1999, p 102-103).

Here in the city of Calcutta, The working class society protests for their existence of their life. They fight against capitalist and their oppressive and dominating rules over the laborers. The capitalist separated the families, their children and make them feel nondescript life. They make them feel that the working class society does not have their own existence. The nameless narrator narrates the

incidents all through his expedition of life (Agarwal, 2001). Jha brought to light such a pathetic and merciless act of the elite class society and stands in favour of the working class society. He raises the quest of their existence. Furthermore, "The Serbs shelled a market place in Sarajevo forty-five minutes ago killing more than sixty, mainly women and children" (Jha, 1999, p 170). The conjugal hostility enormously interrogates the existence of people in the city of Calcutta. According to Sartre contemporary individual existence sounds that, "if it is not self-existence, then everything is permissible" (Mobini and Pour, 2016, p 85).

Apart from this, the novel reaches the height of the consequences which exposes to bring light of the existential quest of the individual life, "the baby's head rests against my chest, she isn't heavy but still my arms hurt as I hold her, dead, a cold wind blowing the smoke into my eyes" (Jha, 1999, p 212). Here the expedition of existentialism sounds like the burning question of an individual's life. Life reflects the better truth of human pain and suffering. It denotes the discourse of human existence. At the last of the novel, the narrator confesses that "I am the father of my sister's child" here the narrator accepted the reality of life. He understood the existence of every human as equal. Moreover, the narrator wants to bring up the baby. Hopefully, the quest of existentialism reflects the humanistic sense of the narrator. Sartre in his significant work *Existentialism is a Humanism* deals with existentialism as, "Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world-and defines himself afterward" (Malik and Akhter 2013, 88).

Conclusion:

In this novel, Jha represents the existential phenomenon that leads to the question of human persistence in the labyrinthine predestination. Jha recites the existence of man in society as a discourse of life. The narrator discovers life as a struggle for the existence of an Individual in society as well as the world. The seclusion and dreariness lead to anxiety in the life of an individual. What's more, the dream leg up to man to catch life's vision but the futile existence of man decimate the sense of life. Here in the novel, the narrator in depression lost the valuable things of life. Even his existence comes to sounds in distress. Calcutta city represents the

existence of man and woman in a complex situation. Moreover, the narrator explores the human tragedy due to the lack of meaningless human existence (Shukla and Shukla, 2002). Jha focuses on human existence is in danger due to lack of communication, distrust, and self-possessiveness.

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