
Influences of European Existentialism on Syed Waliullah's *Chander Amabassya*

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ABSTRACT: *Some theorists and authors, after the WWII, attempted to focus on the concept of meaning and meaninglessness of life and its inevitability in society. Though the concept dates back to the ancient period, as a literary issue, it has been popularized following two World Wars. Existentialism, as a concept, was coined in the late nineteenth century by Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard in his Either/Or (1843). Later on, Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, and Jean-Paul Sartre became well-known for their vivid use of the notion in their writings that emphasized and promoted ultimate freedom. As a result, they have garnered a sizable following worldwide. However, Syed Waliullah was the first novelist among his contemporaries who applied this concept to his works. Chander Amabassya (Night of No Moon) is one of them, with his search for the meaning of life and truth-bearing a strong continental philosophical impact. This article discusses how Waliulla's novel gets influenced by Camus, Kafka, and Sartre's concepts while retaining its uniqueness. Furthermore, it elucidates how the narrative of Chander Amabassya sheds light upon the vital issues of Existentialism.*

KEYWORDS: Existentialism; the idea of meaninglessness, the concept of ultimate freedom; Eastern implication of existentialism; the meaning of life and truth

INTRODUCTION

Chander Amabassya (Night of No Moon) is a novel by Syed Waliullah where the reader finds an expression of the author's political wisdom, a reflection of a different symbolic truth. It is to be recalled that not long after the political partition of India in 1947, the developing affluent community of East Bengal and their sheltered and blessed middle class felt the crisis. However, the nation's aware of community's intellect, conscience, and common sense have not been obliterated by fear of speaking the truth, personal segregation, or subversive attitude. On the contrary, infinite self-loathing and insatiable guilt consciousness have spawned responsibility and the inescapable motivation to speak the truth. They have grown conscious, existent, fearful of the repercussions, and capable of overcoming human marginalization through misery.

Chander Amabassya was published in 1964. A young lodging master in the village, Aref Ali embodies East Bengal's educated middle class. After conquering his courageous and gloomy

marginal position, Aref Ali finally told the truth and accepted volunteerism. However, his imprisonment also has a counter-value. It compels us to fight and unify for greater liberty against the arbitrariness of those in power, against Dadasaheb-separatist Kader's ideology.

This multi-layered tale expresses both inner and exterior realities concurrently. According to the authoritarian novel, the strong-willed, affluent hero in every nook is not expected in the postwar contemporary novel. The novel's protagonist is now the vocation of a particular era, the guarantee of existence in a distinct corner; they frequently emerge before the reader in the face of recurrent failures and tragedies, submerging us in inexplicable, indivisible sorrow. As a result, he has adapted the nineteenth-century novel's formula for character development to this novel from an external point of view. Although Aref Ali, a contemporary hero and adventure researcher, has been a recurring character in contemporary European fiction, in the same way, as previously, he has made his novelistic life a credible and everyday reality. Syed Waliullah established the country's and time's intermediate and prospective character, most notably in the rural society's structure, through Kader-Dadasaheb and his family members and school teachers. The deteriorating social position of the Zamindar class and retired government officials, the rural schooling system, and the identity of the village's powerlessness owing to financial constraints have all contributed to making *Chander Amabassya's* reality come alive and believable. In that sense, Syed Waliullah's story has become the literary incarnation of human existentialist philosophical philosophy. In addition, however, it has become part of the territory's history next to Bangladesh's geographical boundaries.

In *Chander Amabassya*, the author uses his creativity and life-questioning experience to arrange the Moon's context, the new Moon's symbol, the unimaginable state of the human intellect, and gained experience in a row of leaf plates on the table. He possessed a cosmopolitan temperament, as evidenced by his presence in Modern European literature. For example, Jean-Paul Sartre, Franz Kafka, and Albert Camus can be cited. These three writers have been cited numerous times as influences on Syed's writing. They have been compared to Existentialism, nothingness, the meaning of existence, questioning, and the middle class' aloofness. By depicting the anxiety and self-deception of a young teacher in the *Chander Amabassya*, Syed has raised the issues of human existence-crisis and the individual's obligations and liabilities - maybe in light of his own experience. This article connects Kafka's *The Trial*, Camus' *The Stranger*, and Sartre's *Nausea* to Syed's *Chander Amabassya* in order to demonstrate how Syed's work embodies the European Philosophical essence of Existentialism.

Philosophy of Existentialism: An Understanding

Before evaluating how much Kafka, Camus, and Sartre left an influence on Syed Waliullah's story, we must first comprehend Existentialism. Even the authors mentioned above have distinct concepts and approaches to existential philosophy. One has been in complete denial with God, while another questions society and seeks the meaning of existence. Therefore, it is vital to define Existentialism generally.

Existentialism is a philosophical method as well as a set of separate concepts. A physical human person and his or her existence is a central notion in existentialist philosophy. Acknowledging the planet's existence requires understanding its relationships with the world and man. But, unlike classical philosophy, it lacks the discipline-reasoning-bond. In this way of living, emotions and actions trump rationality. This is the philosophy of the subject, not the problem. This ideology recognizes the unique significance of the individual and his or her ability to handle his or her circumstances. In terms of Existentialism, humans face a vast universe (Frank 1984).

Philosophers always take particular interest in theories, and they believe that there is a fundamental theory of the world in which they live in. They also speak of a self in the case of human beings, the nature of which, if understood, alleviates all human suffering - the existentialists; on the other hand, reject any such paradigm as being valid. Rationalist philosophers such as Plato, Descartes, and Hegel believe that man has an essence that determines his existence. When they doubt their rational theory, they fail to consider the problems of existence. However, because the importance of 'existentialism' precedes the importance of 'existentialism,' it can be considered the polar opposite of prophetic philosophy. Existentialists think that man is self-sufficient, regardless of how many divine or natural laws exist, or how many inanimate objects exist. He develops his essence as a result of his actions. The idealist believes that man is a part of an ultimate or impersonal universal intelligence that exists outside of himself. In naturalistic theory, man has always been regarded as a function of mechanical rules and as a component of the inert environment. In reaction to these two factors, the philosophical concept of Existentialism is introduced into the understanding of human existence and life. Existentialism is a passionate and emotional rebellion against the forces of reason, intellect, and abstract meditation (Cooper 1990).

Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian and disciple of German fantasists, developed existentialist philosophy in 1843 with his book *Either-Or*. In opposition to Hegelian philosophy, Kierkegaard maintained that the purpose of philosophy is to perceive life and that existence is not an independent entity. The pursuit of ideas and information is not the most important aspect of life; instead, it is the recognition of life's actual existence. The individual is never complete; he is continuously changing. This activation is accomplished through ceaseless efforts. This attempt is motivated by his intrinsic longing for liberty. Any superior being does not transmit this desire. Anyone is not merely an intellectual knower; he is a fully formed 'non-existent person,' complete with heart, desire, and determination (Flynn 2006).

Influences of Franz Kafka on Syed Waliullah

Franz Kafka was the first Western author to appear in Waliullah's writings. One reason for comparison is their personal lives. As with Franz Kafka, Waliullah experienced an identity crisis, a fight over his preferred mode of communication. When Kafka was born, the Jews lacked a homeland they would accept. Waliullah, on the other hand, acquired a territory called 'Pakistan' during his lifetime but was unable to combine it with it. He, too, spent a large portion of his youth in societal discontent. He has witnessed the century's most significant changes, including religious

split and communal violence. Both of them enjoyed travelling both domestically and internationally. Both authors possessed great learning in a variety of disciplines. In this sense, Waliullah resembled Franz Kafka in a variety of ways.

However, the similarities between Franz Kafka and Waliullah's writings are frequently the same as those between Kafka's *The Trial* and *Chander Amabassya*. *The Trial* is not merely Kafka's novel; it is one of the greatest works of literature ever written. It was written between 1914 and 1915 but not published until 1925, following his death. It is supposed to have been influenced by another prominent novelist's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky (Bridgwater 2003).

At the novel's outset, we learn that Joseph K, the bank's chief manager, was abruptly arrested on his thirtieth birthday by two police officers. In his name, someone has made a false claim. Everything went awry from the start of the day. His landlady's mistress, who used to bring him breakfast every morning at 8:00 a.m., did not appear. Such an error has never occurred before, but it does so today. He waited with his head on the pillow, looking out the house's window next door in the hope that breakfast would arrive. Then he saw that the older woman next door was staring at him strangely. Then he rang the bell, indicating that he was hungry.

Furthermore, two men he had never seen before he entered his residence. Joseph was not imprisoned first. He was somewhat under monitoring. The government constantly scrutinized his every step. Joseph K resumed his office visits. However, he perceives that his surroundings have changed. Everyone appears to be steering clear of him. At one point, he considered how much better off he would be if he were arrested. He was later arrested and executed for no apparent reason.

Finally, the young man had no idea what the charges against him were or who brought them. He has been in the dark regarding the state of law and order for a year, and he has gotten unseen, unknown court penalties. Two executioners brutally murdered him on the eve of his 31st birthday. By contrast, Syed Waliullah's novel *Chander Amabassya* begins in different settings. Aref Ali is not the subject of an alarming warning at the start of Joseph's day. His evening started in a serene atmosphere. On a clear winter night, an innocent young man named Aref Ali became entangled in a murder, for which Aref Ali is found guilty. This is the point of comparison between the two novels (Hasan 2017).

On the contrary, when both novels are thoroughly evaluated, the disparities become more apparent than the similarities. For instance, Aref Ali of Waliullah has voluntarily chosen to follow his destiny: He knew that if he said, 'Kader of Boro Bari (landlord) is the murderer of the young majhi's wife,' no one would believe him, as Kader is revered in the society as a Saint. He is the sole survivor of an impoverished mother. He can accomplish this with the assistance of this family. If he confesses the truth, he will lose his earnings. Even if everyone believes, the people of Borobari

will conceal the incident to preserve their honour. They will convict Aref Ali, who is innocent. He had weighed all of the possible repercussions of telling the truth in his mind.

There is no doubt in the young teacher's thinking that the young woman deserves justice for her death while attempting, and so no one will support him, no one will shower him with flowers. Nobody openly denies the importance of honesty. There is no arguing that lying when ordered to testify is reprehensible, even more so when discovered. However, no one summoned the young teacher. If someone reveals the truth voluntarily and is afterwards penalized, he will be labeled a fool. (My translation)

In his essay on *Chander Amabassya*, critic Zeenat Imtiaz Ali links Aref Ali's inner court to the court of Joseph K's mind in Kafka's novel *The Trial*. As a source, he argues, 'By using this inference and seeming concord, a consideration of Western influence can also be prepared in Syed Waliullah's story' (Ali 2001).

Despite his complete knowledge, the protagonist chooses to speak the truth. Because he could not simply accept death, he merely thinks of the punishment's reason and purpose. He desired to take it upon himself so that death could have a consequence. He knew that now it was not about the killer and the lady; it was about death.

Kazi identified parallels between *Chander Amabassya* and *The Trial* as the novel's starting point. The story *Chander Amabassya* begins on a lovely winter night. However, once the bright winter night fades away, it comes to the death of a young woman, which Aref Ali discovers half-naked in a bamboo bush. Naturally, it takes him some time to comprehend the situation. Because the subject is not as common as the others, on the other hand, Kafka's novel begins with greater precision. Joseph is arrested at the novel's outset based on a false charge, whereas *Chander Amabassya* concludes with Aref Ali's arrest. The protagonist is apprehended at the start of the tale, and on the eve of his 31st birthday, he is brutally murdered by two executioners. There is no parallel between Kafka's captivity and Syed Waliullah's Aref Ali's voluntary confinement. The confession at the novel's conclusion concerning Joseph is based on Kafka's own life. Defendant Joseph's thirtieth birthday began with being hauled out of bed without breakfast, where Aref Ali's morning and evening start against a serene-smooth backdrop (Billah 1976).

The constant solitude that pervades Kafka's writings is absent from Syed Waliullah's. Additionally, Aref Ali's research in the novel *Chander Amabassya* is not reflected in Kafka's *The Trial* figure Joseph. Joseph was subjected to an unjust punishment against his will there. Kafka's omnipresence of solitude and aviation bears no relation to Waliullah's story. Additionally, all of the characteristics associated with Kafka-like compositions are present in *Chander Amabassya*. However, even this superficial connection to the plot, without stating the names of the novel's characters, refers to professional identities, such as 'young teacher without Aref Ali' and 'young woman without her wife's identity. It is not impossible to discern the effect of Kafka on Syed

Waliullah's writings by examining titles such as 'Maulvi's teacher', 'Headmaster', 'Questioner', 'Master', and 'Police-employee'. This likeness, however, is just superficial. Kafka's hero meets an untimely demise against his will. On the other side, Aref Ali has stepped forward to accuse the perpetrator of the death of a woman who perished in a bamboo grove accident, despite his knowledge of the judiciary's deficiencies and their implications. As a result, the comparisons drawn by critics between Aref Ali and Joseph K do not exist.

Syed Waliullah's Subscription to Sartre's Existentialist Ideas

The idea is that 'Personality is non-existent, everything is ethereal, nothingness except existence' - that I, the self, the unselfish, the affable, the restless, the self-possessed, the independent, the unreformed 'I,' did not require God, he once again considered himself an artisan. It considers itself plain objectivity, which gets individuality first via existence and then over time. Sartre added a new dimension to Existentialism by discussing this atheistic ideology. He placed the burden for his deeds squarely on man's shoulders, omitting God. Each choice and determination of causation is entirely his. In Sartre's ideas, a personality emerges abruptly and irrationally. This entity comprises two distinct components: en-soi, or being-in-itself, and pour-soi, or being-for-itself. En-soi is a self-contained entity. Pour-soi is the emergence of 'awareness' due to the emptiness being destroyed. The personality develops, and values are created through free choice (Sartre 1943).

As with the twentieth-independent century philosophers who moved philosophy from the abstract to the concrete, Sartre imagined that he would communicate his philosophical beliefs through responsible fiction. To this end, he authored the renowned novel *Nausea*, in which we are introduced to his existentialist philosophy. The novel reveals that the protagonist Antoine Roquentin is thirty-two years old, has no ties, is disconnected from reality, and possesses a keen knowledge of the outside world's presence. He wishes to do anything he pleases. As an example, six youngsters pick up bags or paper from the street, collect nuts, etc. However, when he returns to work, he realizes that he cannot do what he desires. His fiancée abandoned him amid all this work.

The protagonist believes he is gradually losing his freedom in this manner. In this sense, individuals are perpetually misleading themselves. Antoine is adamant about not deceiving himself. Paul Sartre chronicles the protagonist's journey from self-deception to enlightenment in his *Nausea*. However, the novel's immediate context demonstrates this transition. Although this is impossible, Sartre believes in how this conversion will occur. So that Antoine, at the novel's outset, the scholar, the biographer, takes on the role of the patient listener who finds the lyrical conclusion of the unrelated person's life; we see him silently watching the scene of the girl running towards the desert's old lake. He eventually discovers the purpose of life.

Similarly, in the case of Aref Ali, he has recognized at some time in his life that the path he is currently on would never be his own path. Even while he does not receive the same dignified and exact illumination as Antoine, he has his own. The tumultuous route of life had taught him many

lessons, and he was now able to express himself. A series of topics and sentiments have been presented to the reader: nature, night, Moon, darkness, light, fog, river, the flute, the sound of the wind; person's skepticism, simplicity, and self-absorption. From the different twists and turns of the social perspective, there is sometimes trepidation, sometimes exhilaration, occasionally brittleness, and emotional instability as students attempt to go forward in the lesson.

While examining the novel's plot structure, readers can see an embodiment of the hero's collective intelligence. Aref Ali lacks the education and wealth that Antoine possesses. She subsists on shelter provided by others and works in a school founded by them. He has neither the opportunity nor the desire to live a pointless and worthless life as Antoine does. He is without ambition and considers it a matter of great fortune.

Two years ago, Aref Ali came to this village as a teacher and took shelter in a big house. Eating and drinking are also there. Instead, he teaches the boys of Barabari twice a day. His belief is that he does not give as much as he takes, but that is the arrangement of a merciful grandfather. That is why there is no end to his devotion and respect for Dadasaheb. His own village is about three miles to the south. Poor family, life cannot be sustained on a piece of land like the palm of the hand. He returned to the country after passing the Hitcher Eye. If he could read, he would pass, but college fees, money to buy books are no longer available. Moreover, in the district town, there is a cost even if you are in a dormitory. There is no point in pursuing higher education by selling vegetable land. There is no reason for Aref Ali to be dissatisfied with his current job. On the contrary, he believes that such a job would not have been easy if he had not been fortunate enough to have a job. Moreover, what is the current situation - or what is particularly bad. (My translation)

Aref Ali is partly to blame for this existence. He could not accept a man's death for lack of respect. He was powerless to evade his morals. When Kader orders him to cover up all the episodes, he sees his blackened face reflected in the morality mirror. As a result, he is compelled to make his ultimate choice. However, sarcastic Existentialism bears no relation to this morality. Sartre's Existentialism is predicated on atheism. Although Antoine is a murderous atheist, Aref Ali is not. He has traditionally been a devout follower of God. Aref Ali desired to be truthful to himself, but Antoine was without sin. He suffered as a result of his fleeing behaviour. Simultaneously, Aref Ali did not flee but confronted the skewed reality despite the dangers. Furthermore, the Satriya wall is the impediment that Antoine has surmounted to kneel in creation; there is no comparison between him and Aref Ali's hesitancy. While there are apparent parallels between Jean-Paul Sartre's attitude and thinking and those of Syed Waliullah, there is no ignoring of their differences. Moreover, there is no possibility of demonstrating the influence theorem.

The Stranger and Chander Amabassya: A Comparative Study

Connections between Albert Camus, a Noble Laureate and French author born in Algeria, is one of the few literary giants who can be attributed with inspired Syed Waliullah's work. His most

well-known works include *The Stranger*, *The Plague*, and *The Fall*. Camus may appear to be an unfulfilled novelist, but he was always primarily an essayist. At the age of twenty-five, he moved to France with semi-proletarian parents, early ties to intellectual circles with strong revolutionary leanings, and a passion for philosophy. Camus joined the resistance movement during the occupation and became a columnist for the publication *Combat* after liberation. After World War II, which left a devastating mark on his mind, he became the voice of his age and the mentor of the next, not only in France, Europe, and finally, the entire world. His writings, which primarily addressed man's isolation in an alien universe, the individual's estrangement from himself, the problem of evil, and the imminence of death, accurately reflected the alienation and disillusionment of the postwar intellectual. Camus also argued the importance of upholding truth, moderation, and justice.

Camus wrote *The Stranger* as he was experimenting with and articulating these philosophical ideas. The protagonist Meursault, a young man residing in Algiers, received the news of his mother's death from the nursing home and departed by bus immediately after that. When the warden requested Meursault to view his mother's casket, he declined. While his mother's housemates were awake and crying all night, he drank coffee and smoked cigarettes. The night following the funeral, Meursault returned to Algiers. The following day, he went for a swim on the beach and ran across an old coworker named Mary Cardona. In the afternoon, he goes to the movie theatre to watch comedies and engages in sins such as spending the night together. He mentioned Raymond and Salamano, two of his neighbours with distinctive qualities. Meursault appeared to be a patient and attentive listener. The story turns into a moment when Meursault kills an Arab who has a problem with Raymond, with no apparent reason from Meursault's side. When Meursault is arrested and taken to prison, he discovers a realm of justice where algorithms are prioritized over human logic. He was ultimately sentenced to death by beheading for refusing to participate in the society's game. When the Chaplain asks to meet him, he clearly admits he does not believe in God and surprises the Chaplain. Moreover, he feels that the existence of humans on earth serves no purpose. He no longer has any hope for the future. This is what brings him joy. He is awaiting his death by submitting himself to his fate (Favre 1992).

Chander Amabassya and *The Outsider* are two books frequently likened. As a result, a similar search for parallels between Syed Waliullah and Albert Camus is required. In the same vein as Syed Waliullah's *Chander Amabassya* and Albert Camus' *The Outsider*, the protagonists of Aref Ali's and Meursault's novels are compared. However, could two wholly unlike items ever be measured using the same standard? Or is perfection even possible? This error was committed with Aref Ali and Meursault. The two are polar opposites in terms of nature, personality, and thinking. Aref Ali's story is told regularly throughout the novel, from beginning to end. On the other side, while sitting in his jail, the hero of Camus' presents the story in his timeless consciousness. Only the memory is contained, in which the history of his intuitively lively existence has been narrated.

This is precisely what would have happened next if he desired. He was not required to seek shelter or sustenance or to face punishment, even if he was innocent. Thus, one must comprehend why a disadvantaged teacher like Aref Ali made such a significant choice. To comprehend the novelist's creation, one must first comprehend the novelist's mentality, because in many instances, the writer's mentality is influenced directly or indirectly. To Waliullah, the duty for one's life was more essential than the responsibility for one's interests. He prospered in faraway Paris, yet he never forgot his countrymen, the Bengali Muslims of East Bengal, and left his work behind for them (Mokammel 2000).

Finally, both the protagonists tried to establish truth, not the ultimate, as the philosophy of Existentialism does not go with this. In the case of Meursault, he demands a group of spectators while he is decapitated so that people can see the result of being truthful and, at the same time, a threat to society. He discloses himself to everyone as a transparent man who says things as he sees them. In the end, both heroes pursued truth rather than the ultimate, which contradicts the concept of Existentialism. Meursault wants that his beheading is witnessed by a crowd of witnesses so that others may observe what occurs when someone is true and a threat to society. His encounters demonstrate that he is a straightforward man who states things as he sees them. He bows to the world's "benign apathy" and declines to continue arguing against the system. By telling the truth, he discovers the meaning of life and uses a common element to explain death.

And I felt ready to live it all again too. As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world. Finding it so much like myself-so like a brother, really-! felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate. (*The Stranger* 1997)

While being asked if he wants to surrender or file a lawsuit in *Chander Amabassya*, Aref Ali discovers the reason for his death and exposes the truth he knows to be true. In our films, Aref Ali has only been depicted as a man suffering from an existential crisis. Despite this, the very hint of dreaminess that lurks in the thoughts of this rootless young guy does not waver in our awareness of what is happening. Perhaps, in light of his youth or young impulses and his rage and irritation, the readers do not force him to stand on the human barrier! The young teacher wished to convey at least a portion of the blazes and excitement visible in his eyes and thinking. While walking through the darkness, the young instructor notices the half-naked body of a young woman, a glimpse of the Moon, the sari has become jumbled, and there is a glimpse of the Moon close to her feet. The secret biological desire in the young man's head can be explained because it is located in a hidden layer of the body. Ultimately, when Aref Ali realized that it was impossible to punish the actual killer or reveal the truth to the public, he opted to hold him responsible as a co-conspirator in the crime in order for the offence to have its proper retribution.

But who will be punished? Sitting in front of a police officer, the young teacher may have the idea that who will be punished is no longer the main issue. When the meaning of punishment does not come back to the dead young woman, then who will be punished? The punishment is not for him. If the young teacher mistakenly imposes the punishment on himself, if he is the one who is finally punished for the death of the young woman, then the punishment will not reach the intended purpose. Can't he find comfort in that one word? (My Translation)

CONCLUSION

Since the middle of the twentieth century, Syed Waliullah held the pen while working in many regions of the globe. In this position, he familiarized himself with several nations' literature, art, and culture. In the business of fooling people about religion, revealing the truth, or politically recognizing the ideology of a country's citizens struggling for survival, Syed Waliullah has provided the Bengali reader with a unique perspective on the existential dilemma. He is one of the pioneers in demonstrating social progress in the context of the development of Muslim society, existential philosophy, the eradication of rural illiteracy, the field of profound thought, and the international political context. In Waliullah's literary works, numerous prominent Western authors' direct or indirect influence can be observed. As existentialism results from the changing society following the World Wars, it is difficult to determine whether his writing is exemplary or affected by Kafka, Sartre, and Camus. However, in the case of Syed Waliullah, not only have we addressed the parallels and contrasts between the various Western writers and their writing styles, but also the similarities and imitations of those similarities. It should be noticed that the characters are of the age we refer to as 'Youth', which is the most worrying part and source of their worldview.

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