

A Seminar  
On  
“Existence Precedes Essence: Existentialism”  
and  
“Modern Perspectives in Metaphysical Poetry”

Presented by:

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## Report

An extramural seminar was organized by Department of English, Pattamundai College, Pattamundai on dated **22/11/2019** on the topic "Existence Precedes Essence: Existentialism" and "Modern Perspectives in Metaphysical Poetry". The resource persons of the seminar were **Dr. Manoj Mishra**, and **Mr. Rajendra Kumar Mohanty**, Reader in English, Former Principal Salipur Autonomous College, Salipur. **Mr. Adhikar Laxmi Narayan Dash**, Principal of this college chaired the session. **Dr. Sarat Chandra Das**, Head of the Department, introduced and welcomed the guest on the dais and to the participants. **Dr. Manas Kumar Nayak**, Lecturer in English, gave a key note talk on the topic. The meeting was anchored by **Ms. Lakshmi Rekha Das**, +3 III Year honours student of the Department of English. Most of the students of the +3 English honours were present in the seminar. The meeting was ended with vote of thanks by **Mr Rakesh Chandra Dash**, +3 II year honours student of the Department of English.

# Existence Precedes Essence: Existentialism

Existentialism is a movement in philosophy and literature that emphasises upon existence, freedom and choice. It began in the mid-to-late 19th century, but reached its peak in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Existentialism in its currently recognisable form was developed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish Philosopher Soren Kierkegard and the German Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, although neither of them used the term in their work, Kierkegard has been labelled by many as the "Father of Existentialism". One of the Kierkegard's recurrent themes is the importance of subjectivity. He states "subjectivity is truth and truth is subjectivity". He denied an acceptable basis for making moral decisions which made him go inward, making individual choices subjective.

One of the choices Kierkegard thought that people could make, and one that he chose for himself, was a life fully aligned with faith. In his work 'Fear and Trembling' (1843) he puts complete faith in himself and in God.

In contrast to this Nietzsche, proclaimed that "God is dead" and went on to endorse an heroic, pagan ideal. His work "Beyond Good and Evil", he

describes the superman attains superiority and transcendence without the help of faith or God. It was called Nihilism.

In the ancient Greece, Plato and Aristotle, the two great philosophers said, "everything has an essence". By 'essence', they meant a certain set of core prophetic that are necessary or essential for a thing what it is! They firmly believed that our essence was therewith us before we born, it was called existentialism.

Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a French philosopher, essayist, novelist and play-wright. He was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1964. He was the primary exponent of existentialism giving the philosophical concept a concrete shape. He declared "existence precedes essence". Our birth happens first and then we determine what we are. It is we, who are to figure out our essence; no predetermined path, and no set goals. He went to refute the concept of God creating the universe with a purpose in mind.

We are born into a world, where we lack any inherent essence or in the other word, we are born in an absurd world. For existentialist absurd is a technical term. It is searching for an answer in an answerless world. We cry in the wilderness without any response in a meaningless world, but we

shall have to keep on crying. It is a chaotic world where there is no cosmic justice, no fairness, no rules, and no absolutes to abide by. Albert Camus in his famous essay "The Myth of Sisyphus", presents it as an allegory attempting to justify that life is meaningless and absurd, but nonetheless should be taken as a challenge. Surely a life such as this is horrifying. But Camus goes on to add, "One must imagine Sisyphus to be happy". It means Sisyphus or human being should accept, understands and experience momentary happiness in his fruitless, meaningless work.

Then came World War II, with mass killings and meaning of life became much harder to find. Jean Paul Sartre says that we are confronted with "Terrifying advance of freedom". We can't go by a set moral standard. We will have to design our own lives "we are our own choices".

In order to deny a life of absurdity, Sartre said that we have to live authentically. We have our own freedom, sometimes terrifying own choices and we should be held responsible for our choices. That is what is meant by Existentialism.

Manoj Mishra

# Modern Perspectives in Metaphysical Poetry

The term metaphysical is applied to a distinct group of the seventeenth century English poets in the Jacobean period. This group includes John Donne, George Hebert, Andrew Marvell, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughn and Abraham Cowley. The most versatile and passionate intellectual of this group is Donne, who is the champion of this school of poetry. The work of these poets is notable for its subtlety of thought, surprising blend of passion and intellect, unnatural conceits, strange paradoxes, farfetched imagery, psychological insight, profundity of knowledge, complexity of human motives, irony, realism, introspection and sometimes for obscurity. The metaphysical poetry is basically divided into two parts: amorous and religious. Donne writes both sacred and secular, while Marvell and Cowley write only love poetry. Religious poetry is written by Crashaw, Herbert and Vaughan. Thus the main themes of this poetry are an awareness of death, the fragility of beauty and love, the significance of religion, and the existence of God.

The term is first suggested by Dryden in his *Discourse of the Original and Progress of Satire* (1662), as he writes about Donne.

*He affects the metaphysics not only at his  
Satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature  
Only should reign, and perplexes the minds of  
the fair sex with nice speculation of philosophy.*

Later Dr. Johnson borrows the term metaphysical from Dryden's 'metaphysics' and establishes it permanently in English literary criticism. This phrase is coined not in commendation but in condemnation, because the metaphysical poets always indulge in hair-splitting, affectations, novelty, and ingenuity. Dr Johnson mentions that these poets "were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour. . . . Their thoughts are often new but seldom natural they are not obvious, but neither they are just." The term metaphysical is not suitable for the work of these writers, because it usually refers to any poetry that deals with metaphysics—the spiritual and philosophical matters. But such traits lack in this poetry. Broadly speaking the term is designated to this school of poetry because of its fantastic imagery, abstract reasoning, approach, treatment, form and style.

The metaphysical poetry is a revolt against the tradition of the Elizabethan poetry. As the golden age comes towards its close, the romantic fervour, sincerity of emotions, freshness, the spontaneity and

innocence of the earlier decadence, and artificiality permeates through the poetry. There is neither any vitality nor any originality at this age. Thus a sharp reaction rose against the 'golden' lyrics steeped in optimism in the form of the metaphysical movement. These poets expressed distaste for the Spenserian smooth versification and vivid sparkling imagery, sweetness of tone and regularity of rhythm. It was John Donne who was most censorious of the poetic canons of his age, and censured pastoral poetry, mythological imagery, Platonism and copious description which were in vogue. He despised convention, the morals of chivalry and the monotonous and harmonious cadence. He had nothing to do with the easy and familiar and drove away the company of the gods and goddess and rejected the spoils of Greek and Latin poetry. He opposed to the sense of human dignity and the idealised view of sexual love in the writings of Spenser and the Petrarchian sonneteers. In other words, Donne criticized the whole gamut of the preceding literary tradition including subject matters, style, meter and melody. The main object of the metaphysical poetry was to rescue poetry from the hands of the Elizabethan pretenders and restore to its high seriousness.

John Donne represents the metaphysical school of poetry. Before we enumerate the characteristics of this poetry, we should keep in view

that all the aspects of this poetry are not found in the followers of Donne. Some of them selected one or two aspects which appealed to them. Hence the general discussion of its nature is either based on the poetry of Donne alone or on some aspects of the poems of his followers.

The metaphysical poets believed in the novelty and originality of thought and expression and tried their level best to keep themselves aloof from the passé Spenserian traditions. They made a rigorous attempt, Dr Johnson remarks, "to say what they hoped had never been said before." Sometimes their deliberate deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange lapsed into frantic absurdities.

The aim of these poets was to shock, amaze and rather daze the reader by their ingenious tactics and various novel devices such as wit, conceit, pun, far-fetched imagery, unconventional stanzas and unnatural rhythm. Wit was one of the powerful traits of the metaphysical poetry. Leishman called Donne "the Monarch of wit". Legouis remarks: "Passion, feeling, sexuality: all are subjected to wit." To the metaphysical, wit means 'fancy' including the quickness of thought and originality in figures of speech. Wit may be described as a kind of '*discordia concors*' which shows the poet's capability to discover similarities in an apparently

dissimilar object. In this sense Dryden regards that Donne was "the greatest wit though not the greatest poet of our nation."

The metaphysical poetry abounds with an excessive use of conceit. Conceit is an unusually far-fetched or elaborated metaphors and similes presenting surprisingly apt parallel between two apparently dissimilar things or feelings. The figure of speech is worked out to the farthest limit. These poets are men of erudition and leave no stone unturned to display it in their poetry. That is their work is charged with pedantry. John Donne and his followers draw their imagery from varied, obtruse, and unfamiliar sources like medieval theology, scholastic philosophy, the Ptolemaic astronomy of the Middle Ages and the theories of contemporary science.

The metaphysical poetry is often marked by obscurity, which is sometimes unbearable. The display of erudition, subtlety of thought, over-elaboration conceit, far-fetched imagery, and allusion to philosophical doctrines, scholastic philosophy and obscure terminology drawn from the contemporary – all contribute to difficulty in understanding the poetry. It also loaded with hyperbole, oxymoron and catachresis. Being fed up with the monotony of the commonplace, in quest of novelty, they lapse into

eccentricity. Donne's poetry is overweighed with the element of fantastic and extravagant.

The metaphysical poetry is full of diversity, richness, surprise, quaintness, and sly humour, created by an intermingling of the serious with frivolous, the jest with the earnest and the sublime with ridiculous. This makes the poem entertaining.

The metaphysical poets are intellectual gymnasts; their aim is not to transport to an ecstasy but plead and convince. In his poems, Donne gives argument after argument to prove his logic. For instance, in "The Flea" he forbids his mistress to kill the flea because it contains the blood of the two after sucking from their bodies.

Though these poets are charged with intellectual robustness and agility, yet they are also gifted with refined delicacy and deep feeling. As a love, Donne, in his amorous as well as religious poetry, undergoes an emotional agony and ecstasy, turbulence, and repose. In the same way, Andrew Marvell in "His Coy Mistress" is simultaneously passionate and fantastic.

The most characteristics of the metaphysical is the unification of thought and feeling- the fusion of intellect and emotion. Their mode of

response is highly refined and organised. They transmute ideas into sensations, and transform feelings into thought assimilating heterogeneous experience into a new unified whole. This very quality is brought through sensuous imagery. This very quality is brought into focus by T.S Eliot in his essay *the Metaphysical Poets*. Though the metaphysical are ignored almost for two centuries, Eliot revives and reviews them by discussing two very important terms: "Unification of sensibility" "Dissociation of Sensibility". According to him, 'sensibility' means a harmonising faculty which can fuse thought and emotion into a single whole. Eliot discovers this quality lacking in English poetry after the Elizabethans and the metaphysical. After Donne the unification sensibility wanes and a dissociation of sensibility begins. Eliot establishes the metaphysical poetry in the direct current of English poetry, and the modern poets link themselves with it. In other words, according to Eliot, the tradition of English poetry begins with the metaphysical and again it gets sequence in the modern poetry. Thus, the moderns learn from the metaphysical the correct nature of the working of a poet's mind, and their unification of sensibility serves as a model and a way to solve their problem of divided response.

Rajendra Mahanty

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Students' Attendance in the Seminar on "Existence Precedes Essence: Existentialism" and "Modern Perspectives in Metaphysical Poetry" on 22/11/2019

Sl No	Roll No	Signature of the Student
1	BA-19-086	Roshna Pradhan
2	BA-19-190	Debashree Patil
3	BA-19-131	Prityama Das
4	BA-19-212	Monalisa Rout
5	BA-19-259	Pragnya Ranil Das
6	BA-19-98	Chinmayee Neth
7	BA-19-067	Abhisha Rout
8	BA-19-189	Smriti Pragnya Nayak
9	BA-19-243	Suman Sriya Nayak
10	BA-19-087	Prasant Kumar Dash
11	BA-19-160	Rabindra Mandal.
12	BA-19-193	Manoj Malik
13	BA-19-102	Hrushree Pradhan.
14	BA-18-122	Rakesh Chandra Dash
15	BA-17-083	Sudipta Das
16	BA-17-221	Lakshmi Rekha Das
17	BA-17-232	Abinash Dash
18	BA-17-127	Anchana Nayak
19	BA-17-067	Ampita Biswal









# ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ କଲେଜ ଇଂରାଜୀ ବିଭାଗର ଆଲୋଚନାଚକ୍ର

ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ, ୨୧୨(ନି.ପ୍ର)- ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ କଲେଜ ଇଂରାଜୀ ବିଭାଗ ପକ୍ଷରୁ 'ଇଂରାଜୀ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଅସିଦ୍ଧତା ଓ ମେଟାପିକିକାଲ କବିତା' ଶୀର୍ଷକ ଏକ ଆଲୋଚନାଚକ୍ର ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । କଲେଜ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ପ୍ରଫେସର ଅଧିକାରୀ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀନାରାୟଣ ଦାଶଙ୍କ ପୌରୋହିତ୍ୟରେ ଆୟୋଜିତ ଆଲୋଚନାଚକ୍ରରେ ପ୍ରାକ୍ତନ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଡଃ ମନୋଜ ମିଶ୍ର ଓ ପ୍ରାକ୍ତନ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ପ୍ରଫେସର ରାଜେନ୍ଦ୍ର ପ୍ରସାଦ ମହାନ୍ତି ସମ୍ମାନିତ ବକ୍ତା ଭାବେ ଯୋଗଦେଇ ଶୀର୍ଷକ ଉପରେ ଆଲୋଚନା କରିଥିଲେ । ବିଭାଗ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଡଃ ଶରତ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଦାଶ ଅତିଥି ପରିଚୟ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିଥିବା ବେଳେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ଅମୀୟ ଦାସ, ଡଃ ମାନସ କୁମାର ନାୟକ, ସରୋଜକାନ୍ତ ନାୟକ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ଆଲୋଚନାରେ ଭାଗ ନେଇଥିଲେ । ଛାତ୍ରୀ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀରେଖା ଦାସ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ସଂଯୋଜନା କରିଥିବା ବେଳେ ଛାତ୍ର ରାଜେଶ କୁମାର ଦାସ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମକୁ ଅବିନୀଶ ଦାସ, ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀରେଖା ଦାସ, ସୁବିଷ୍ଣୁ ଦାସ, ସାଧନା ରାଉତ, ସୁମନ ନାୟକ, ଦ୍ଵିବିଲ ପରିଡ଼ା, ରବୀନ ମଣ୍ଡଳ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ପରିଚାଳନା କରିଥିଲେ ।

07.12.2019 Samaj

# ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ କଲେଜ ଇଂରାଜୀ ବିଭାଗ ଆଲୋଚନାଚକ୍ର

ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ, (ସବୁଧ) : ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ କଲେଜ ଇଂରାଜୀ ବିଭାଗ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ଇଂରାଜୀ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଅସିଦ୍ଧତା ଓ ମେଟାପିକିକାଲ କବିତା ଶୀର୍ଷକ ଏକ ଆଲୋଚନାଚକ୍ର ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । କଲେଜ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ପ୍ରଫେସର ଅଧିକାରୀ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀନାରାୟଣ ଦାଶଙ୍କ ପୌରୋହିତ୍ୟରେ ଆୟୋଜିତ ଆଲୋଚନାଚକ୍ରରେ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଓ ପ୍ରାକ୍ତନ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଡଃ ମନୋଜ ମିଶ୍ର ଓ ପ୍ରାକ୍ତନ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ପ୍ରଫେସର ରାଜେନ୍ଦ୍ର ପ୍ରସାଦ ମହାନ୍ତି ସମ୍ମାନିତ ବକ୍ତା ଭାବେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇ ଇଂରାଜୀ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଅସିଦ୍ଧତା ଓ ମେଟାପିକିକାଲ କବିତା ଉପରେ ବିଶଦ ଆଲୋଚନା କରିଥିଲେ । ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ କଲେଜ ଇଂରାଜୀ ବିଭାଗ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଡଃ ଶରତ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଦାଶ ଅତିଥି ପରିଚୟ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିଥିଲେ । ବିଷୟ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ଅମୀୟ ଦାସ, ଡଃ ମାନସ କୁମାର ନାୟକ, ସରୋଜକାନ୍ତ ନାୟକ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇ ଆଲୋଚନାରେ ଭାଗ ନେଇଥିଲେ । ଏହି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମକୁ ଅବିନୀଶ ଦାସ, ଦ୍ଵିବିଲ ପରିଡ଼ା, ରବୀନ ମଣ୍ଡଳ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ପରିଚାଳନା କରିଥିଲେ । ଏଥିରେ ପଢ଼ାମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ କଲେଜର ଗଣିତ ବିଭାଗର ସବୁ ଛାତ୍ରଛାତ୍ରୀ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ।

04.12.2019  
Samaya