

Revised and Enlarged edition 2016

Albert Camus

And

Indian Thought

Sharad Chandra

To my Mother

And

To the memory of my father

*. . . ce monde est sans importance et qui le*

*reconnait conquirt sa liberte.*

Caligula

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***Preface***

*Albert Camus and Indian Thought*, my first book on Camus, was published in 1989. I have discussed in it the proximity of the philosophy of Albert Camus to Indian thought. The subject immediately caught attention of scholars, critics, and general readers. The readership has been steadily increasing since then. I found the cost of the book as quoted online rather high and decided to upload it on Kindle. This necessitated going through the text carefully. Normally I don’t read my books once they are published but I am happy to have got an opportunity to go through the pages again after twenty-five years of its publication, thus getting a chance to correct several errors that had crept in the print edition and have also edited at places, made some minor additions, taken out redundant material—even though only a few words here and there.

It was in early 80s that while reading *L’ Etranger* for pleasure I was struck by striking echoes of Indian philosophy in Camus’ voice. Completely taken by his thoughts, language and style, I next picked up *Caligula.* By then the vague impression within me had taken a solid, tangible form. In quick succession I read more works by him and soon became sure that he was familiar with works connected with the Indian philosophy.

Before long I decided to establish the source and the extent of this influence despite the fact that all data for my research was available only outside India—in France, or in Algeria. Undaunted I carried on, travelled to France met with both his children, Catherine Camus and Jean Camus, Camus’ friends and associates at the Gallimard office, spoke to Mme. Jean Grenier on phone, and wrote letters to those whom it was not possible to visit to re-confirm or cross check a certain finding. Back in India I put all the facts together in the present book. It took me almost a year to write it.

The main facts, of course, lie in his own published works, especially, the Notebooks from where I have quoted references and passages, which to me seem to bear the impact of Camus’ reading of ‘the sacred works of India’.\* A list of Books which, I feel, Camus might have read is provided in Annexure 1.

Except an essay “Camus’ Desire for Unity” which I wrote later and which has been added as annexure 2, the book, more or less, is the same as it appeared in 1989.

New Delhi, Sharad Chandra

March 2016

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\* Paul Viallaneix in his introductory essay to Youthful Writings by Albert Camus.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Mme. Catherine Camus and M. Jean Camus for graciously extending me whatever help I asked for in the preparation of my book. I am equally grateful to Mme. Jean Grenier for the long telephonic talks I had with her, and for answering my letters. I also acknowledge kindness of M. H. Lottman and Professor Philip Thody for answering my queries. I am indebted to Prof. Ramji Nagar, and to Prof. C.P. Goyal for their valuable suggestions, to Mme. Kitty Savariau for arranging my visit to various libraries in France and to Camus’ house in Lourmarin, to Mr. Surinder Malik for his keen interest to publish my book, and above all, to Mme. Marie-Claudette Kirpalani to whose perception and initial guidance I owe this work. I must also acknowledge, however poorly but sincerely, the invaluable contribution made by my children and husband by cooperating happily with all my demands which were never few.

I take this opportunity to express my most grateful thanks to Dr. Adele King for her generous help in reading my book in the manuscript and offering her experienced counsel at several places.

My thanks are also due to Mr. J. S. Baweja for his exemplary care in preparing the typescript, to Mr. L. N. Malik for the pains he took in preparing the bibliography, to Mr. M. L. Chitkara, Mrs. Krishna Sen and the staff of the JNU library for their contant helpfulness without which I would never have enjoyed the comparative leisure and peace I so much needed to complete my work.

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1

Introduction

Albert Camus himself described his writings as the outcome of an effort to understand the age into which he was born. It was an age of bleak despair, of extreme human suffering, of torture, brain washing, scientifically controlled destruction, racial hatred, and the summary judgments of ‘people’s courts’. It was an age of moral and intellectual confusion. The sense of stability had completely shattered with the outbreak of the first World War in July, 1914. The German historian, Oswald Spengler, in his famous book, *The Decline of the West* (1918) gave expression to a fear morbidity which was then haunting people’s mind that, perhaps, the end had come and the world was hurtling towards its doom. Men could well repeat what John Donne wrote about two hundred years back:

The Sun is lost, and th’ earth,

and no man’s wit

can well direct him where

to look for it

‘tis all in pieces, all

coherence gone.

Surrounded by such baffling incoherence Camus produced with ‘clear-sighted earnestness’ the brilliant masterpieces, ‘illuminating the problems of the human conscience in our times’1 , read all over the world with ever increasing fervor.

Camus was born to the drumbeats of the first World War, and grew up at a time when humanity was facing its worst crisis of faith. In the West, there is the tendency to overlook the spiritual, and exalt the intellectual. The intellect by its very being dispels all mystery, puts an end to dreams, strips life of its many illusions, and thus reduces the great comedy of human life to a dull show almost, always tragic. Confronted with such a spectacle Camus felt humility and inadequacy. But he was not prepared to close his eyes to it. He was a man of conscience and integrity, an intellectual whose mind could be subtle, ironic, incisive, yet grounded in commonsense. He was a profound thinker, a sensitive artist, a mystic, spiritually too conscious to remain a silent spectator to the sight of unmerited misery. It was intolerable for him, to see life, ‘being drained of meaning, to be told there is no reason for existing.’ ‘A man’, he observed, ‘can’t live without some reason for living.’2

He was baffled by seeming meaninglessness of life, by its inexplicability, by the feeling of unreality and strangeness it transmitted all about itself. He pronounced the prevailing human condition as absurd, and the world, as a world without God, a world adrift and without any guiding principle at all. Impassionately he argued, that man faces a world which is simply there and into which, a man is hurled by a blind and senseless fate. And to top it all is the final outrage of the ‘cruel mathematics that commands our condition, ’ referring thereby to the certainty that, (i) the life of every man must finally be snuffed out in death; and that, (ii) all his striving, hoping, and loving should be swallowed into the silence of earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Such is the bitter destiny appointed for man. Why? What’s the meaning of this condemnation? The theme of essential futility, absurdity, and utter incomprehensibility of life and death is ubiquitously stressed in all his work—not with the tragic resignation of T. S. Eliot, but with the resounding challenge of *un homme revolte*, and with the meaning of humanistic transcendence into a state beyond it. He found solace in studying the mystics, particularly Theresa of Avila. He meditated on Pascal, Saint Augustine and, on the advice of Jean Grenier read the *Bhagavadgita.*3 He admired Claudel for having ‘understood’ that ‘man is nothing by himself alone and that he must give himself to something higher’4 , Camus did not believe in God, but he was not an atheist. He was deeply religious at heart and had a sense of the sacred in him. He was more than aware of ‘that strange joy that comes from a tranquil conscience.’

Inspired by an authentic moral engagement, Camus devoted himself with all his being to the great fundamental questions of life. His nearly religious responses, and persevering concern with those aspects of life which were contemplated by ancient Indian sages reveal an unmistakable metaphysical proximity with the thoughts contained in the Upanishads. His expressions are so completely soaked in their exalted spirit, which it’s is not possible to overpass this resemblance merely as a fortuitous conclusion. It is a profound influence produced on a sensitive mind by a conscientious reading of the sacred writings of the Indian philosophy. In his thesis on the *Christian Metaphysics and Neoplatonism* (1936) Camus mentions ‘Brahman des Upanishads’.5 In his “Philosophy of Expression” he talks about the Hindu master word, ‘Aum’, ‘la syllable sacree des Hindous,6  a master word which can illuminate everything. He often paused on the ineffable and ‘inexprimable’ aspect of the Brahman who could only be defined by ‘non, non’7 . In May 1936, he made a note for himself to write an essay on “death and philosophy,” perhaps with some reference to Malraux and India.8  His constant reference to the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, Vedanta, Brahman, Indra, Buddha, Bodhisattva, Maya; long years of ascetic meditation of ‘Cakia-Mouni’, spontaneous reproduction of shlokas from the *Upanishads* and the *Manu Smriti*, sometimes even quoting the source correctly convinces me of his direct exposure to the books which contain these names and concepts. Retention in the memory is normally indicative of the impression an idea makes on it. In the present context it confirms the seminal influence, the Indian philosophy exerted on the thinking of Albert Camus. His approach to life, his entire outlook, his reflections and response to the phenomena around him have a distinct Indianness about them. For all his exuberant love of life, his unrestricted indulgence in sensual pleasures, he was a severe ascetic9 , and practiced rigorous self-discipline in order to attain perfect self-control leading to inner harmony, real happiness, the Upanishadic ‘anandam’. He was a yogi often discovered lost in the rapturous ecstasy of total union with the infinite.

Herbert Lottman has the following passage in his most detailed biography of Camus:

With Max-Pol Fouchet and Camus taking the lead, there would be interminable discussions, often in the heart of the Kasbah, at a crossroads café called the Fromentin . . . .Here they would sip mint tea while a muezzin summoned the faithful to prayer from atop the minaret of the small mosque just opposite. Fouchet noted that Camus was particularly moved by the prayer call, for he was then reading the mystics, John Ruysbroeck (the Dutch Augustinian), St. Theresa of Avila, and, under Grenier’s influence, the Bhagavad-Gita.10

That Camus had read the *Bhagavad-Gita* has been confirmed by more than one source.11 It was Jean Grenier who initiated Camus into philosophy, and most probably, it was from him that he received this book and returned it back to him after reading. Or, perhaps, it was a copy belonging to Simone Weil or her brother, Andre Weil, left casually in the *Sud* office at Marselles.12  Andre Weil was a well- versed indologist and had spent some time in India working with Mahatma Gandhi. It was from him that Simone acquired a taste for Sanskrit and the Indian Shastras. She had written comments on the Upanishads and had read the *Bhagavad-Gita* more than once.

Unfortunately, nothing yet can be said with certainty about Camus’ actual exposure to the Indian scriptures, except that, he had at some stage of his life had read the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Nevertheless, even if his reading of the ‘Indian sacred writings’ was confined to the *Gita*—although, I doubt it very much, since his writings reveal familiarity with the *Upanishads*, *Manu-Smriti*, and the Buddhism—keeping in mind the receptibility that he possessed, this one book was sufficient to impart to his thinking the characteristic Indian tinge so apparent in most of his works. The *Bhagavad-Gita* is the very kernel of the Indian thought. It contains the essence of the *Vedas*, and of the *Upanishads*. It is impossible to have read it and have remained unaffected by its philosophy. As is well-known, philosophy and religion in India are a way of life and not remote disciplines to be mastered theoretically. The Vedic hymns read, not like so many commandments enjoined by priests or prophets, but as a poetic testament of a people’s collective reaction, at the dawn of civilization, to the wonder and awe of the existence. Their brooding on the meaning of the objective universe distinguishes them chiefly from the spirit of the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* retain their sense of wonder and poetry, but in a form deepened and widened by the calm of meditation. A keener spiritual longing shifts the emphasis from the fascination for the outside universe to the significance of the self within. The quest for Reality rebukes the emotional exuberance of the early poet, and compels him inwards to explore the infinite depths of the Soul in which the central principle of creation is reflected.

The *Upanishads* measure the highest reaches of the philosophic imagination of the Indian people, yet they remain vaguely incomplete in their answer to the complex striving of the common human soul. Their emphasis is too intellectual to explore sufficiently the approach Reality through love and devotion. This shortcoming is duly fulfilled by the *Bhagavad-Gita* which expounds the harmony between man’s diverse approaches to Reality which is one—through knowledge, through love, through righteous and detached living, and develops the thesis that all means which help the individual to rise above the demands of the ego to his identity with the Supreme Self which is manifest in all being, are the truly legitimate means of that individual’s spiritual fulfillment. Camus imbibed this spirit to the utmost.

The Indian philosophy is fundamentally mystic, spiritual, dissatisfied with the existing suffering, but apocalyptic of the attainment of *moksa* or release. The *Moksa* can be defined as a state of unalloyed and infinite bliss, the higher state of consciousness where the false ego dies and one enters the path of illumination. ‘When the ego dies, all troubles cease, ’ preached Sri Ramakrishna.13 Such a condition of being doesn’t imply the loss of one’s individuality, but rather attaining of a greater, larger spirituality embracing the whole world while disowning one’s own self. All Indian scriptures emphasize pursuit of this purer state as the purpose of human life. In the *Spiritual Heritage of India* Swami Prabhavananda says:

The Ultimate moral idea of the *Upanishad* is complete self-abnegation, the utter renunciation of all selfish and personal desires. To one in such a state of inner purity there is no longer thought of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ , the individual self to which such words pertain being wholly absorbed and extinguished in the infinite oneness of God.

Once a man has achieved ‘turiya’, his ultimate goal, he has no further concern with moral laws. ‘When the seer beholds the Effulgent One . . . transcending both, good and evil, and freed from impurities, he unites himself with Him.’ (*Mundaka* Up. III.i.3).14

I find the same thought, minus the God, expressed by Camus in the following passage from the “Essay on Music” , where having defined Music ‘as the expression of an unknowable reality, ’ he enumerates its values thus:

First of all, it will be a means of reaching a state of ecstasy permitting us to forget the world in which we live. Music will allow us vertiginous evasion, a rapture- temporary, perhaps, but real. With the possibility of living in a purer world, free of pettiness- made for him, created by him- man will forget his vulgar wants and his ignoble appetites. He will live intensely that life of the spirit which must be the goal of all existence.15

Camus was an idealist and a visionary from the very beginning. I have quoted the above passage from an essay he wrote in 1932 when he was barely nineteen. It is a beautiful piece of writing expressing the innermost desire of an idealist. For him Music is the translation of reality, ‘the most beautiful and the noblest of all’ allowing human beings a glimpse of reality, telling them that it is within their reach to attain it, if only they wish to:

. . . Music allows us to form, with the feeble elements at our disposition and by the route of our imperfect minds, an ideal world, which is particular to each one of us, which differs from one person to another. There is something of this in the Hindu theory that makes the world the product of our desires.16

Always eager to break the shackles of constraint, Camus was perhaps, attracted towards Hindu thought by its spirit of freedom, tolerance, and liberty. Desire indeed, is the root of the motivating power of all activity in Indian philosophy, just as the control of it is the path to realization. Evidently, this concept had gone deep in Camus’ mind. He refers to it again in his *Notebooks*, ‘Vedas: What a man thinks, that does he become’17 – a misquote either from the *Taittriya* Upanishad (I.x.) or from the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad (IV.iv.5).

As a matter of fact, Indian psychology is an integral part of the Indian philosophy. To the Hindu mind psychology has its inception in the thinking self, and not in the objects of thought. It doesn’t merely observe the worki8ngs of the mind on the normal planes of consciousness, but points out how the mind ranges beyond the conscious plane of psychic activity, and how the resulting experience is even more real than the experience of the objective world. It accepts the idea of the subconscious mind but differs from the psychoanalysis of Freud in holding that a man is as much capable of controlling the impressions of this deeper state as those of his conscious mind, and of attaining to the still higher plane of super consciousness. In teaching the normal mind the methods of restraining its own vagaries, with the aim of gaining mastery over itself, and of ultimately rising above itself, the Indian philosophy distinguishes its beliefs from those of philosophy or psychology. The Yoga system of Patanjali deals specifically with the process of mind control.

Ethics is another important constituent of the Indian philosophy. If I may repeat, philosophy in India is not merely a way of thinking, it is a way of life. And ethics is its very foundation. Through ethics, philosophy seeks to transcend the life of normal conduct. Camus routinely practiced the ideals held high in Indian ethics. He was adulated even during his lifetime not only as a great artist but as a ‘custodian of a doctrine of life on the plane of ethics.’18 His work established itself among his contemporaries ‘with the weight and authority of a revelation.’19 On his death, John Cruickshank paid his tribute in the words, “We must mourn him because he was a gifted and outstanding writer, but we also mourn him because of the kind of man he had proved himself to be—one who, in his life and in his work, embodied the French moral conscience at its most pure and most persuasive.”20

Albert Camus considered himself foremost an artist. But his role in the cultural life of his time illustrates how thin were the lines of demarcation during that period – and the present for that matter – between literature and philosophy. The major writers of this century immediately preceding Camus – Kafka, Mann, Auden, Yeats, even Orwell – all had in some deep sense been ‘directeurs de conscience’ , and it is the gravity and the brilliance with which Camus carried this tradition forward, which in large measure, accounts for the unparalleled prestige that his name continues to have in the world today. The literature that he produced is a literature drenched in ideas. His essays, novels, plays, prefaces make a deep impression because their rhetoric is vibrant with the central themes of modern consciousness.

Camus’ work was inspired by the characteristically modern feeling that the world around him has no meaning, and the only anchorage for the human enterprise lies somewhere within himself. He found the world valueless, and the nature of man’s fate tragic, 21 but unlike many of his contemporaries he did not admit that lucidity should inevitably lead to despair. He always strove to assert the dignity and respect due to man in spite of the indignities inflicted upon him in the name of abstract concepts. The world may be cruel, but cruelty can be alleviated by the quality of mercy. The world is absurd, but man is not:

I continue to believe that this world has no ultimate meaning. But I know that something in it has meaning, and that is man, because he is the only creature to insist on having one.22

For Camus it were the values of human life which give it meaning, and he took upon himself the task of safeguarding them:

My role, I recognize, is not to transform the world, or the man; I don’t have enough virtue, nor understanding for that. But, it is perhaps, to contribute my own part in serving those values without which, a world, even when transformed, is not worth living in, without which, a man, even new, will not deserve to be respected.23

Camus was concerned with life, and death; with people who live and die, and not with abstract tenets of any particular philosophy. The illuminating texts he created are the expressions of truth which he felt passionately and intuitively. Hence, when he talks about the absurd, he is not proposing a school of thought but is articulating an emotion felt commonly by all. He vehemently denied that he was a philosopher, “Je ne suis pas un philosophe,’ he wrote in *Actuelles* I, ‘et je ne sais parler que de ce que j’ai vecu.24 He considered himself an artist in the most complete sense of the word –a writer who aimed at creating in his works , a coherent and harmonious whole, in which the form and the substance remained inseparable presenting a philosophic perspective. He explains in *Betwixt and Between*, ‘ . . . I have artistic scruples as other men have moral and religious ones.’25 Whatever Camus wrote belongs to this self-defined elevated category of literature, and his thoughts, beyond all dispute constitute a veritable philosophy of life, a concrete body of beliefs, convictions reached empirically in his intense search for truth.

Viewing the bleakness around him, Andre Malraux had reflected in *La Tentation* *de l’ Occident* (1926), that ‘at the centre of European man, dominating the great moments of his life, there lies an essential absurdity.’ Camus picked up this particular predicament of man in the universe as his main concern. In his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) he diagnoses the malaise of humanity as purposelessness in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings:

A world that can be explained even with bad reasoning is a familiar world. But, on the other hand, in a universe suddenly deprived of illusions, and of lights, man feels a stranger. His exile is without remedy because he is deprived of the memory of a lost home as of the hope 0f a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, this actually, constitutes the feeling of absurdity.26

The concept of absurdity as treated by Camus is less a doctrine than an experience. It is in fact, a recognition of incompatibilities: between the intensities of physical life and the certainty of death; between man’s insistent reasoning and the non-rational world he inhabits. These permanent contradictions can be intensified by particular circumstances: the decline of spontaneous life into mechanical routines; the awareness of isolation from others and even from ourselves. By whatever channel the recognition may come, the result will possibly be an intense despair—a loss of meaning and value in one’s world, one’s society, one’s own immediate life. This metaphysical anguish is the central theme of all his writings. But Camus does not despair. It is precisely at this point that he most notably affirms his humanism. In the *Myth of Sisyphus* he rejects suicide, both as a physical act, and in the more common form of retreat into an irrational philosophy. It is no solution to collapse the tension between life and death by merely choosing death, or by choosing irrationalism between our insistent reasoning and our non-rational world. The essential problem is to live in full recognition of the contradictions, and within the tensions they produce with an even mind. Had he not read in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, ‘steadfast in inner composure do thy work . . . with an even mind in success and failure, for evenness of mind is called yoga.’27 The distinguishing qualities of stable-minded person are most explicitly described in shlokas fifty-five to fifty-eight of chapter two in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

Camus’ thoughts have a transparent sincerity, genuine humility, a characteristic grandeur about them. He adores life which is as much admirable as enviable. His work is a hymn to life written by one who knew how easily it could slip away. In *Summer* (*L’ Ete*) he writes, ‘thus, there is a will to live while refusing nothing of what life offers which is the virtue that I honour most in all this world.’28 In *The Happy Death*, one of the two protagonists, Zagreus, who is a cripple proclaims his exultant love for life in spite of his physical debility:

I shall never make a move to cut short a life I believe in so much. . . . I would accept even worse – blind, dumb, anything, as long as I feel in my belly that dark and ardent flame that is me, me alive.29

This exuberant love for life in face of extreme misery, affiliates Camus to the Indian philosophical attitude. His very first comments on the absurd reveal an acute sense of contrast between the richness of physical existence and the inevitability of death. This dualism underlies his first collection of essays, *Betwixt and Between* or *The Wrong Side And The Right Side* (1937) as the subsequent translation by Ellen Conroy Kennedy was titled by Philip Thody (*Lyrical And Critical Essays* ed. Philip Thody, Vintage, 1970). These five essays written in an elegant style intensely praise the profusion of the physical world against the background of human transience: the two aspects of existence summed up in Camus’ conclusion that ‘there is no love of life without despair about life.’ The theme of tragic ambivalence of human existence is an old and familiar subject in literature. What is striking in Camus is the individual directness with which he expresses it, refusing to suppress either of them in order to attain what would have been for him, in John Cruickshank’s words, ‘a dishonest peace of mind.’ Awareness of this essential ambiguity of life made Camus spiritually more conscious, as was also noted in the Nobel Prize citation: ‘Even in his first writings, Camus reveals a spiritual attitude that was born of the sharp contradictions within him between the awareness of earthly life and the gripping consciousness of the reality of death.’30

The essential intellectual consciousness of the human mind perpetually pushes him to explore the mystery of existence: the nature of cosmos, the destiny of the human individual, and the distinction between the real and the unreal. Each age has produced thinkers with a variety of ideas and methods. As a result different systems of philosophy corresponding to different parts of the world have come to stay such as the Greek, the Indian, the Chinese, and the Western. However, no single philosophy has anything exclusive to any one tradition. The differences are only in the manner of emphasis. Philosophy knows no frontiers. Whether born in the East or the West all human beings share a common human tradition. All thinking, therefore, has a common base. There is no reason to believe that there are fundamental differences between the philosophies of the East and of the West.

The Indian approach to the problem of reality, and of man’s existence can be indicated by a reference to the first four aphorisms of the *Brahm Sutra*, which is said to summarize the main purport of the Upanishads, which are a part of the *Vedas*. The four sutras deal with (1) the need for knowledge of the ultimate reality, (2) a rational approach to it, (3) the experience of reality, and (4) the reconciliation of seemingly conflicting formulations of the nature of ultimate reality. The aim and the approach of Camus’ thinking is more or less the same.

*Athato Brahm-jijnasa*, that is, ‘now, therefore, the desire to know Brhama, oor the ultimate reality.’ There is dissatisfaction with the world. Man inhabits a world which doesn’t seem to have any guiding purpose at all. We discern no principle in the whole chain of being which demands man’s meaningful participation in the adventure of time. The world appears to be meaningless, vain, futile, and without any significance. It is *anitya* (transitory), and *asukh* (painful). The Buddha bases his way of life on the fact of suffering. St. Augustine speaks of ‘the ceaseless unrest which marks the temporal life of the individual.’ The consciousness of death and suffering, distress and decay is the cause of anxiety. Caligula cries out in agony, ‘Men die and they are not happy.’ But man is a thinking being. When he reflects on the finite and the limited character of his existence, he is overcome by fear. Camus’ man, however, revolts. This aspect I shall take up later. Fear, on becoming conscious of itself, turns into anguish. The consciousness of the finiteness and mortality of all of one’s achievements makes one ask whether there is anything beyond and behind the world process. An uneasy soul keeps his search on until he discovers the truth. Once he succeeds in finding it, he finds his kingdom, happiness, liberation, *moksha*.

The problem of meaninglessness is solved through reasoning. The mystery behind the cosmic process can be understood only through the metaphysical thinking which bases itself on experience. The Indian thought is firm in its conviction that all religious propositions should be grounded in reason and experience and thus precedes the existentialists in their belief. Indeed, Dr. Radhakrishnan has said, “Existentialism is a new name for an ancient method.”31

A strict adherence to reason, however, doesn’t commit a philosopher to the proposition that the nature of ultimate reality can be apprehended only as an object of reason. A good number of philosophers, both in the East and in the West have reached the conclusion that the reality is supra-rational, that in its ultimate nature it is not accessible to conceptual understanding. One can feel it. It is not a glimpse into reality but a complete communion with it. This spiritual experience is a liberation of the limited ego into the cosmic and transcendent consciousness, the kind Janine experiences in the short story, “The Adulterous Woman”. She experiences an identity with nature similar to the one Camus had himself known and had earlier described in “Nuptials”: moments when man feels part of a larger and enduring beauty, when the concerns of material existence seem trivial, when even death ceases to mean anything. These moments of deliverance are always very brief.

The fourth sutra deals with the reconciliation of the different reports of the seers about the nature of reality. The Buddha insists on intuitive insight to achieve enlightenment. The mystics confirm a personal experience of the reality. Words convey it but feebly. One is aware of having been in communication with the infinitude. Others declare that the nature of the Absolute is manifested by the comment of the silence. It is generally agreed that one attains an insight into reality by hearing, reflecting, and meditating. Camus possessed all these qualifications and by virtue of them was regarded an important moral seeker of the century. He belongs to that class of world authors who are not exclusively preoccupied with the problems of their own national background: they come from a definite place but their work is not defined or confined by it. His work has a universal import. Its appeal doesn’t lie in the fact of its belonging to a particular nation or language but in its treatment of those universal themes which concern the humanity as a whole.

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Basic Indian Thought

I

The term, ‘Indian Thought’ covers a comprehensive group of philosophical systems which originated on the soil of ancient India some three thousand years ago, and have developed from the primary and plenary spiritual experiences of India’s sages and seers. These great sages elaborated particular viewpoints out of their personal spiritual insight, and the recorded outcome of their intellectual endeavour has come down to us in the form of the Indian philosophical systems, or the ‘darsanas’ as they are called in Hindi. These can be broadly divided into three groups: the orthodox, the heterodox, and the Indian materialist. The orthodox systems accept the authority of the Vedas. They are six in number: the *Nyaya*, the *Vaiseshikha*, the *Sankhya*, the *Yoga*, the *Mimansa*, and the *Vedanta*. The heterodox systems are, the Buddhism and the Jainism, so called because they do not believe in the authority of the Vedas but are based on the authoritative spiritual experiences of their respective prophets, Gautam Buddha, and Mahavir. The Indian materialist, Carvaka, on the other hand, is an atheist.

Indisputably, the world’s oldest wisdom, the Indian philosophy, ensconced in nine well-defined systems presents a rich variety of philosophical thought. Despite constant foreign invasions, political revolutions, social upheavals and the development of new scientific ideas there is a strand of continuity running through all the various systems, through all the ages of India’s long history. In general, the Indian philosophy exhibits a sanguine instinct for life, a strong vitality and staying power. The values outlined in Indian philosophy are neither old nor new, but eternal. The following two features are common to all of them excepting only the materialists:

**Belief in the Karma Doctrine**

This belief in the moral retribution has for long had a profound influence on the life of the Indian people. The Indians believe that whatever one does consciously will, sooner or later, bring upon him the result he merits, and that there is no escape from it. What we sow we must reap. The Karma doctrine signifies not merely that the events of our life are determined by their antecedent causes, but also that there is an absolute justice in the rewards and punishments that fall to our lot. The law of Karma, therefore, is not a blind, mechanical edict but a concept essentially ethical in nature. It commits man to the obligations of a truly moral life. It points to the truth that there is an ideal of life which a man, as a thinking and self-conscious being, must sedulously pursue as his first duty. The doctrine, apparently, presupposes the possibility of moral growth. And the rewards and punishments which it signifies are not, therefore, ends in themselves but the means to bring about the merited development.

**The Ideal of *Moksa***

The other important point of agreement among the various Indian schools is the recognition of liberation or release (*moksha*) from the cycle of rebirths as the highest of human ends or values. The Indians generally, speak or four values, ‘artha’, ‘kama’, ‘dharma’, and ‘moksha’. Of these, the first two, respectively meaning ‘wealth’, and ‘pleasure’ or ‘desire’ are secular or purely worldly values. The other two, may, in contrast be described as spiritual. Our philosophy is concerned only with the latter but it doesn’t discard the other two. It acknowledges them but only insofar as they assist or are instrumental to *dharma* or to *moksha*. The nature of *moksha* differs widely as conceived in each system. In general, it may be said to represent the attaining of self-perfection equally achievable in this life or hereafter. Whatever be the case, the ideal of *moksha* is assumed to be actually attainable by all systems. It may, however, be added that a goal like self-perfection is never completely attainable but its significance lies in the persistent pursuit of the ideal. The ultimate values do not belong to the realm of fact but are ideals meant to regulate our conduct. The ideal of *moksha*, a state of existence where there is a perfect bliss and no taint of sorrow or any imperfection is central to all the doctrines. Once the state of *moksha* is realized the individual doesn’t return to the world of births and rebirths (that is, *samsara*). All the systems with the lone exception of the Carvaka, seek *moksha* as the supreme spiritual ideal. It is the manifest destiny of man, the highest value of life. And its attainment is the goal of all human existence.

Among all the Indian philosophical systems, the Vedanta is the most vital and a living doctrine today. It is the crowning edifice of all the systems and has developed from the interpretations of, and the total unitary import of, (i) the Upanishads, (ii) the Bhagavad-Gita, and (iii) the Vedanta Sutras. This particular school has deeply influenced the Western thinkers also. A few notable names among them are Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Albert Schweitzer, Paul Deussen, Johan Frederik (Frits) Staal, Max Mueller, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and G.W. Russell in U.K. and Germany. In France a special mention can be made of Victor Hugo, Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Olivier Lacombe and more recently, as I feel, of Albert Camus. The influence of Vedanta on the American thought is best illustrated in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Aldous Huxley, and Christopher Isherwood. Another Indian System with world-wide following is that of the Buddhism. The Vedanta and the Buddhism are seemingly different but in actual fact, are closely related to each other. Both have originated in the same environment and under identical conditions. As a matter of fact, the Buddhism is said to be the latter phase of the general movement of thought of which the Upanishads were the earlier.1 In the words of Professor Hiriyanna, “All the different shades of philosophic theory— realistic and idealistic – are found within Buddhism itself; we have, so to speak, philosophy repeated twice over in India –once in the several Hindu systems and again in the different schools of Buddhism.”2

The Upanishads contain the basic springs of Indian thought and culture. They are believed to be the terminal portions of the Vedas. As such their philosophy is known as the Vedanta (*Veda* + *anta* meaning, the end) philosophy. The views expressed in the Upanishads constitute the essence of the Vedas, but unlike the Vedas they do not enjoin the performance of any *vedic* rites or rituals on the part of their followers. They reveal the ultimate truth to the worthy and striving mind. The Upanishads are the culmination of the intellectual achievement of a great epoch. It is believed that they were composed between the period of the completion of the Vedic hymns and the rise of the Buddhism (6th century B.C.), that is to say, somewhere between 1000 B. C. and 300 B. C.3 The two oldest of them, the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad and the *Chhandogya* Upanishad are written in prose but have a rich poetical quality about them. Their language is pithy, dense, and deeply penetrating. Those composed later have used poetry for their medium. Of the existing one hundred and eight Upanishads, about eighteen are considered principal,4 of which the first ten have gained even more importance as they have been commented upon by Samkara (an 8th century CE Indian philosopher, better known as Adi Samkara).

The course of the Indian spiritual insight is two-fold: objective and subjective. The Vedas particularly emphasize the vast nature around us, giving scant attention to the profound depths of the human soul within. But with the advent of the Upanishads the concentration shifts from the outward physical phenomenon to the spiritual, inner self. The Upanishadic seers believed that man bears within himself the spark of the divine being and the realization of this fact leads the way to *moksha*.

The Upanishads are not a systematic treatise but a repository of diverse currents of thought; collection of a variety of concepts and interpretations of one and the same subject. The central idea in all of them is the search for truth: Brahman, the Ultimate Reality and atman, the individual self. Even though there is not much variation in the subject-matter the treatment in each one of them is singularly fascinating. The feeling of novelty and freshness is always present, and they are all opposed to any ritualistic practice. Sacrifices are either explicitly criticized, ignored, or ascribed an allegorical meaning, if absolutely unavoidable.

If religion means dogmas, creeds, priest craft, authority, rewards, and punishment, the Upanishads are not religious. They have a character of their own – intensely humanistic in tone, and deeply involved with the intransigent intricacies of everyday life. The Upanishadic preceptor manifests a touch of intimacy, a personal concern for his disciple notwithstanding the abstract subject he has to deal with. The unrelenting discipline of the mind co-exists with the informal friendliness of the heart. He is not an indifferent or an uninterested monk, remote and callously removed from the human world. Rather, he readily responds to the slightest of queries posed by his eager student with an easy and open mind. Herein lies the secret of the proximity towards the Upanishads we continue to feel even today.

The Upanishads contain the restless striving of the human mind to grasp the mystery of life and death, to unravel the true nature of reality, to find simple answers to the questions which have forever teased human comprehension. Thousands of years back Yajnavalkya implored his guru to explain to him “Whence are we born? Where do we go? [ . . .] at whose command we abide here whether in pain or in pleasure? Should time or nature, or necessity, or chance, or the five elements be considered to be the cause, or he who is called the *Purusha*, the man that is the Supreme spirit?”5 In the sixteenth century Blaise Pascal had exclaimed, “Who put me there? By whose command and under whose direction was this time and this place destined for me?”6 Impassioned inquiries into the meaning of human life have always been the main concern of all thinkers over the centuries. Albert Camus’ writings primarily record his response to the same imperspicuous question. For him it is the event of death which deprives life of its meaning. He tries to rationalize how should one escape it- through hope or through suicide?7

We are still not sure if the experience of the senses can be accepted as final, or if the mental faculties are self-existent? Despite the interval and progress of hundreds of years, the extent of our knowledge has not much expanded. The same implacable limits which obstructed the perception of our erudite ancients continue to obstruct our vision. They had reached the conclusion that mind, knowledge, the senses and their objects were all finite and conditioned. The pleasures of the world were transient, liable to be interrupted by disease, old age, and death. They realized that only the infinite could give them lasting happiness. Thus began the search for a timeless being, a spiritual reality, the goal of a philosophical guest, and the ultimate aim of a human life. At the end of his long search each seer answered the probe in his own way. Yet, in spite of a variety of authors and the long period of composition these philosophical treatises retain in them a unity of purpose.

The fundamental idea which runs through all the early Upanishads is. That underlying the exterior world of change there is an unchangeable reality (or *Brahman*) which is identical with that which underlies the essence of man (i.e. *atman*). This tendency to glorify the inexpressible entity as ‘the reality’ or ‘the essence’ is evident in the Greek philosophy of Parmenides, of Plato, as also in the modern philosophy of Kant. The *Brhman* and the *Atman* are the two pillars on which nearly the entire edifice of the Indian philosophy rests. The initial import of the word, ‘brahman’ was prayer or speech after the root ‘brh’ meaning ‘to burst forth’, or ‘to grow’. Gradually it came to signify the ground of the universe or the source of all existence. Similarly, ‘atman’ initially meant ‘breath’ , later on it became an expression for the soul or self of a living being, especially of a man. The Upanishadic philosophers discovered that the two are one and the same, that the ‘atman’ is ‘Brahman’.8 The two—the essence in man and the essence of the universe—are one and the same *Brahman*.9 They are often used in apposition. The *Chhandogya* Upanishad frames the central question thus, “What is *atman*, what is *Brahman*?”10

The concept of Brahman is variously developed in each of the different Upanishads. Overlooking the diverse shades , the strongest current of thought found in the majority of texts is, that the ‘atman’ or the ‘brahman’ is the only reality and that everything else is false and unreal; the supreme spirit permeates the entire universe and is timeless, changeless, eternal; it cannot be seen or heard but it can be experienced; it is independent of all limitations of space, time, and causality; it controls all that is objectively present in the empirical universe. The universe has originated from Brahman, and will also return to it.11 The only way to indicate this supreme reality is by “neti”, “neti” (that is, it is not this, it is not this). This negative description doesn’t denote a blank, a vacuum, or a non-being. It only emphasizes the fact that this supreme being cannot be delimited by the categories known to human thought. It is inconceivable, indescribable by any positive content which is always limited by conceptual thought. It is beyond human reach except through mystical experience or by way of *moksha*. The essence of *Brahman* is described as *sat* (reality), *cit* (intelligence), and *ananda* (bliss). These three attributes together represent the highest concept the human mind has ever been able to evolve to indicate the subtle nature of *Brahman*, the ultimate reality. The *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad describes Brahman, as ‘the Real of the real.’12 Several texts avow that the self is the consciousness. Another expression put forward is that it is ‘the light of all lights, that is self-luminous, and by its luster the whole world is illumined.”13 The *Brhaman* is not only unconditioned existence, and self-luminous intelligence, but also unexcellable bliss, the magnitude of which can be imagined by the calculus of bliss given in the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad,14 and the *Taittriya* Upanishad,15 taking the highest human bliss as the unit measure. The *Chhandogya* Upanishad describes *Brahman* as the Infinite.16 The most comprehensive description is given in the *Taittriya* Upanishad as “ brhaman is reality, consciousness, and the infinitude.”17 When the finite self attains the supreme, the godhead from which it has descended, the end or the objective life is reached.

Man is the meeting point of the various stages of reality. His gross body corresponds to the physical elements in nature and the divine particle in him is described as that beatific consciousness, the *ananda* state by which, at rare moments, he enters into immediate communion with the Absolute. The goal of life, as conceived in the Upanishads, is to overcome man’s congenital ignorance by attaining full enlightenment or *jnana*, or *moksha*, when he is released from the fetters of human condition. Those parts, in the Upanishads, which concern man’s progression and his destiny are the most profound. Two views are advanced regarding the nature of man’s final liberation. One, that the *moksha* is attainable only after the physical cessation of life; and the other, that it is achievable during one’s life on earth. The former theory serves only to confirm the eschatological doctrine of the soul merging with *Brahman* (or the Over-soul) with which it is identical in essence. The latter view brings out the fact that the *moksha* is not a state to be newly attained, because it is the nature of the self itself. The soul realizes its non-difference from Brhman when the cause of the bondage, namely, ignorance or *avidya* is dispelled by wisdom. This difference is described as the transcending ecstasy of a mystic. *Moksha* is not a negative state of the absence of sorrow. It is a condition of absolute bliss, undisturbed peace, of placid serenity of the Buddhistic *nirvana*.

In order to attain freedom or *Moksha*, the course of life a man must adopt is outlined in several Upanishads. They generally agree that a high degree of ethical culture is obligatory for an aspirant. A pure, moral life is assumed to be a condition precedent for undertaking an enquiry into the mystery of the *Brahman*- *Atman* oneness. Almost all the Indian philosophical systems,18  including the Buddhism believe in the law of Karma. That is to say that whatever action is performed by an individual leaves behind a kind of potency which has the power to ordain for him, joy or sorrow in future corresponding to the nature of the job performed.19 Man, no longer subject to the chance or the will of a capricious God, is the architect of his own spiritual fortune. His character becomes his destiny. The moral law being wrought into his own nature and operating in this world, as in the other world, making him go up and down on the scale of creation through a series of lives, from the lowest form of life to the highest according to his own thoughts and deeds. Freedom from this cycle of birth and death comes to him only when his individual consciousness elevates into the divine consciousness. The *Brhadaranyaka* Upanishad says, “According as a man conducts himself, so does he become.”20 The thinkers of the Upanishads do not support the materialistic view that the soul is annihilated at death. Strongly convinced of the continuity of life, they maintain, that the soul survives the end of the physical body. Therefore, belief in the theory of re-birth follows as a logical consequence, the nature of the next birth, nevertheless, depending upon his conduct in this life.21

The Upanishadic teaching of the transcendent *Brahman* is presented in simpler terms in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It is a poem of 18 cantos appearing as an inset in the great Indian epic, *The* *Mahabharata.* More a religious classic than a philosophical treatise, it is not an esoteric work designed for and understood only by the specially initiated, but a popular poem which helps even those who wander in the region of the many and variable. “The *Bhagavad-Gita* doesn’t call upon us to solve the meaning of life but to find out the Deed demanded of us and to work, and so by action, to master the riddle of life.”22 It has a long history of spiritual power and serves even today as a light to all those who are keen to receive illumination from its rich and profound wisdom. The teaching in the *Gita* is not presented in the form of a metaphysical theory expounded by a school of thinkers. On the contrary, it is set forth as a tradition having emerged from the religious life of mankind. It doesn’t merely represent a sect of the Hinduism but the Hinduism as a whole; perhaps, more, “it symbolizes the religion in its universality without limit of time or space, embracing within its synthesis the whole gamut of the human spirit . . .”23

The *Gita* derives its main inspiration from the Upanishads. There are numerous ideas common to both.24 Assigned to the 5th century BC, its authorship is attributed to Vyasa, the legendary compiler of the Mahabharata. The eighteen chapters which comprise the *Gita* are taken from the *Bhishma parvan* of the epic *Mahabharata*.25 It is the most influential and most authoritative work in the history of the Indian thought. Its message of delivery exquisitely combines the lessons of philosophy, religion, and ethics. In a sublime flight of imagination the poet has scribed the role of the teacher to the God Himself addressing Arjun, the representative man caught in a grave crisis. The latter comes to the battlefield convinced of the righteousness of his cause and is prepared to fight his enemy. At the very last moment his will collapses. Seized with doubt he recoils from his duty. With a tortured conscience and sorrowful heart, an utterly broken man he typifies a conscientious individual struggling through the burden and the mystery of life. The despondency of Arjun is not an incidental phase in the mentality of a disappointed man but the consciousness of an absolute void, a total numbness of spirit causing a pervasive cause of distrust, and painful feeling of unreality around him. He is confronted with a tremendous dilemma: would it be moral to strike his brethren? With no faith in himself he solicits divine guidance. The mood of total despair that Arjun goes through is what the mystics call the dark night of the soul, utter confusion immediately preceding the spiritual illumination. From the second chapter onward we have a philosophical analysis of the goal of human life. The path of progress is through suffering and self-abnegation. Arjun is warned that dejection of spirit is unbecoming of a warrior. He is directed to resist temptations, to control his passions and perform his duty with an unwavering attention. What is essential in life is not the body nor the senses but the changeless spirit within the soul. And nothing should be allowd to impede its progress.

The *Gita* emphasizes the importance of social duties which advance not only the common welfare of the society but also of the individual agent. But these duties should be performed without any thought of rewards, *niskama-karma* (II.47). Another important principle enunciated in the *Gita* is, that one’s own duty, *sva-dharma i*s always superior to another’s (II.31; III.35; XVIII. 47-48). Such a detached carrying out of one’s duties is called ‘Karma-yoga’ and the results or consequences, according to this teaching , are not altogether excluded. Both the sets, namely, those that accrue to society, and those that bear upon the agent himself, are retained. But they are transmuted in that one becomes implicit, and the other spiritualized. The fact that the *Gita* insists on the performance of one’s own duty or the duty of one’s station in life, clearly shows that the maintenance of social order is not lost sight of. Only it ceases to be the motive for which the action is performed. Similarly, for the individual it is his spiritual betterment, ‘sattva-suddhi’ (V.11; VI.12). Thus there is an end here as much as in all volitional activity, only it is of a higher nature because it completely shuts out the desire for inferior or utilitarian values, and aims solely at subjective purification. This subjective purification, one must remember, is only the proximate end of duty meant to sub-serve through ‘*jnana*’, the higher and final aim of liberation.

The individual self is a fragment of the *Brahman*, a real not an imaginary form of the Supreme, a limited manifestation of God.26 It is not so much an emanation as a part of the Supreme. It draws its ideal from this superior principle which is like a father who has given it its existence. The soul’s substantial existence springs from the Divine intellect, its expression in life is effected by virtue of its vision of the Divine. Its distinctiveness is determined by the divine pattern and the context of the senses and the mind which it draws to itself. No individual is quite like another, yet a single pattern runs through them all. The essence of the ego, the distinguishing characteristic of the human personality is an inner purposiveness, a plan which has gradually shaped itself into an organic unity. As our purpose is, so is our life.27 Any form which the individual assumes is bound to be superseded, for he always tries to transcend himself. This process continues till becoming reaches its end in the being. In a nutshell, the message of the *Gita* is, that the Reality or the *Brahman* is one without a second. The world of manifestation and multiplicity is not real in itself, but appears real to those who live in ignorance (*avidya*), hence in bondage. The lost condition cannot be removed by our efforts. Only the wisdom that the universal reality and the individual self are identical can bring us redemption. When this wisdom dawns on the individual self, the ego is dissolved, the wandering ceases and one can experience perfect joy and blessedness.

Life on earth is perpetual becoming. It is the temporal process of changes from one state into the next. Action or *karma* keeps the world going, and action is caused by desire or ‘kama’. The root of desire lies in the ignorant belief in individual’s self-sufficiency; in attributing reality and permanence to it. The only means of liberation is attaining wisdom. Wisdom, here doesn’t mean theoretical learning, or having correct beliefs, just as ignorance, in this context, doesn’t refer to any intellectual imperfection. It means spiritual blindness. The only way to remove this shroud is by cleansing the soul of its impurities and kindling spiritual vision. The fire of passion and the tumult of desire should be suppressed.28 The inconstant and unstable mind should be steadied so as to reflect the wisdom from above.29 The realization of wisdom is not something to be acquired. It is to be revealed, realized. According to the Vedanta philosophy it is always present. It is a direct experience which occurs as soon as obstructions to its realization are removed. The effort of the seeker, therefore, is directed to the elimination of the hindrances. This illumination cannot be attained by wishing for it. Utter silence of the mind and of the will, emptying of the ego produces this wisdom, the light by which we grow into our true being.30

If we are to get back into our fully conscious being, the Gita suggests three different ways, namely, the *jnana marg* or the way of the knowledge, that is, by acquiring knowledge of the Reality; *bhakti marg* or the way of devotion, that is, through adoration and love of the Supreme Person; and the *karma-marg*, or the way of action performed out of a sense of duty detached from all desire for its fruit.31 These three methods are classified according to the degree of emphasis placed on any of the theoretical, emotional, or practical aspects of the human mind. Cognition, feelings, and will, though logically distinct, are not really separable in concrete life, nor in the integral character of the mind. Each human personality is guided by its own modes of nature. In the *Gita* these are described as ‘*gunas*’, that is, the intrinsic qualities already present in the character. These *gunas,*  or modes of nature bind the soul and keep it back from spiritual freedom. The theory of gunas is explained in Chapter fourteen of the *Gita.* The entire system of animate nature, it says, is woven out of the strands of three *gunas* : *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. Together they constitute, *prakriti*, that is, the Nature. Not a single entity is free from these natural qualities. The powerful force of nature or *prakriti* impels all men to action. It is always at work and it is neither possible nor desirable to abstain from its influence. We can, nevertheless, sublimate the effect of the lower attribute to higher by strict self-discipline. Only then we can rise above these modes of nature and get back into our fully conscious being. The connecting medium between the spirit and the matter is the human psyche or soul power. The primary action, therefore, has to be psychological and qualitative, not physical and quantitative. The *Gita* prescribes the path of detachment and faith in God. In its opening chapter the *Gita* poses a problem, “What is better, action or its renunciation?” It concludes that action is the path to adopt. The need for action is emphasized throughout the book.32

The development of the spiritual life depends on the cultivation of the *Sattvic* element in us; *Rajas* is the source of all activity, and *Tamas* is that quality of nature which draws us away from the spiritual thereby causing inertia and hindrance in the way to transcendence. The *gunas* are present in all living things in varying measures and are distinguishable on the basis of their effect. We, in our turn, respond to them according to our own discipline, our capacity for self-control and single-mindedness.33 Self-controlor ‘atma-samyama’ is the first step towards the integration of the human personality. The *Gita* has given some memorable images of the integrated yogi, ‘As a lamp in a windless place flickereth not’ so stays calm and composed the Yogi absorbed in the Atman.34 Man’s perfect detachment and freedom from effect is likened to the contact of the lotus leaf with the water on which it spreads.35 The beauty of the exquisite smile on the face of a completely detached man is compared to an ocean, ‘He unto whom all desires enter as waters into the sea, which though ever being filled is ever motionless, attains to peace and not he who hugs his desires.’ 36

The spiritual aspirant of the *Gita* is a humanist. He takes life as a challenge, and seeks answers to it. One must stand up and fight for the right cause, in the right manner and, in the spirit of true righteousness. The man should have the ability to fight the crises in his life; he must possess moral strength to counter evil with a calm and clear understanding. The *Gita* unequivocally stresses the need to follow his own duty, ‘*sva-dharma*’, and emphatically denounces the tendency to go against one’s own nature to adopt another’s duty, that is, ‘*para-dharma’.* The first imperative of Krishna is aimed at providing inner strength to Arjun (representative of man). He is offered vigour, clarity of vision, and understanding. Lord Krishna warns him that to become victim to his weaknesses, doubts, indecision, and cowardice is unbecoming. It should be noted that throughout the poem Krishna counsels, persuades, and exhorts Arjun to act in an ideal manner. At no juncture is any hope held out to help him externally. In what, Dr. Radhakrishnan calls a perfect interview between the God and man,37 God extols the grandeur of human nature, tries to awaken him to his own potentialities. He must know and recognize them, “and therefore, arise and gain glory.”38

The *Bhagavad-Gita* is not only a revered Indian scripture. It is a book of Indian wisdom. It was first introduced to Europe in 1785 when Charles Wilkins translated it into English and was received with overwhelming enthusiasm. The German critic, William von Humboldt (1767-1835) exclaimed, “*The Gita* is the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known language.”39  He went to the extent of saying that he felt grateful to God for having let him live to get acquainted with this sublime work. Admiring the tolerant, universal, humanistic, and spiritual aspect of the Gita, Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) acclaimed, “*The Gita* is one of the most comprehensive and clearest summaries of perennial philosophy ever to have been made, hence its enduring value is not only for India but for all mankind.”40

II

The Upanishads inspired not only the orthodox systems of the Indian philosophy, but also some of the so-called heterodox schools like the one of Buddhism. Buddhism was mainly a reform movement in India’s spiritual life. It started without any scriptures, reflecting independently upon life. Therefore, it allowed more freedom of thought to its followers, with the result that a large number of Buddhist sects, with new ideas developed new philosophies out of the few basic doctrines taught by Buddha. Lord Buddha, also known as ‘the Enlightened’, or the ‘Sakhya mouni’41 was born as Prince Siddhartha in a feudal family near Kapilavasthu, one hundred miles north of Benares, in the year 563 B.C. It was an age of great spiritual unrest and astonishing intellectual ferment. Thus this period witnessed a galaxy of spiritual leaders helping the mankind out of its misery in different parts of the world: Pythagoras (580-500 B.C.) in Greece, Zoroaster (628-581 B.C.) in Persia, Confucius (579-461 B.C.), and Lao-tzu (6th century B.C.) in China, and Gautam Buddha (583-463 B.C.) in India. Buddhism is based on the spiritual experiences of Buddha. He wrote no book or thesis, but preached orally. His followers understood him, each in his own way, and taught Buddha’s doctrine as each of them interpreted them. Later on differences of opinion came to be noticed and three councils were held by the Buddhists of the entire country to codify their master’s teachings. The first of these, was held one hundred years after his death, and the subsequent two each after an interval of a hundred years in between. The teachings thus collected were contained in three baskets (*tri-pitakas*). The first one is called the *Vinaya-pitaka*, or the basket of the rules of conduct. The second is known as the *sutta-pitaka*, or the basket of sermons. The third one is named, *abhiddhamma-pitaka*, that is the basket of philosophical disquisitions. Documents, commentaries, and expositions continued to be written on these three *pitakas* until a vast body of literature grew up.

Buddha was no myth. He was a historical personage, a saint, and a prophet of compassion. He was sublimely human and charmed the masses away with his appealing discourses. His personality and philosophy had a tremendous influence on the intellectuals of the world. Today his doctrine is embraced by one-fifth of the humanity including the agnostics. Anatole France disclosed in his autobiography how he was moved by the radiance of the antique sage and “felt tempted to pray to him as to a God and to demand the secret of the proper conduct of life for which governments and pupils search in vain. It seemed as though, the kindly ascetic, eternally young, seated cross-legged on the lotus of purity, with his right hand raised in admonition answered in these two words : wisdom and compassion.”42 Arthur Schopenhauer is known to have kept an icon of the Golden Buddha in his modest bedroom.

The emphasis of Buddhism is on wisdom and compassion. From this angle it offers hope and an easiness of approach to the suffering humanity. It was his spirit of reason, his ethics and love and his abundant humanism which earned Buddha the lasting loyalty of the millions of human hearts. In spite of his high analytical acumen, Buddha did not indulge in unreal, metaphysical speculations. He refused to answer questions like, ‘does God exist’ or ‘does *atman* exist’, because nobody had ever seen either God or the *atman*. His refusal to discuss these issues was mistaken by his followers to be a negative answer.

Buddha was profoundly moved by the sight of human misery. He sacrifices his entire life to ascertain its cause and to see if there was a way to overcome it. On the basis of his own spiritual experience he enunciated four basic truths about life which formed the subject matter of his first sermon which he delivered at Benares. They are given in the form of statements on human condition known as the noble truths : (i) there is suffering; (ii) it has a cause; (iii) it can be overcome; and that, (iv) there is a way to attain your goal.43 The first noble truth defines life as suffering. Birth, decay, disease, death, as well as the unfulfilled cravings are all painful. In the entire history of human thought no one has painted the misery of human existence in darker hues or with more feeling than Buddha. In the *Dhammapada* he is quoted as having said, ‘ Not in the sky, nor in depths of the ocean, nor having entered the caverns of the mountain, nay such a place is not to be found in the world where a man might dwell without being overpowered by death.’44 Everything must decay and die. None can resist the universal supremacy of death. Death is the law of life.

However, insistence on suffering is not peculiar to Buddhism. From the very beginning of humanity to the present day, thinkers in all parts of the world have eternally enquired into the meaning of this weary round of existence terminating abruptly, unceremoniously, ubiquitously, in the deep abyss of death. The Upanishads probe the question how to transcend this world of death. Buddha repeats it with renewed force. In the *Katha* Upanishad, Naciketas, the inquisitorial Brahmin boy assails *Yama*, the lord of death in the words, “keep thou thy houses, keep dance and song for thyself, shall we be happy with these things seeing thee?”45 The Buddhist asks, “How is there laughter, how is there joy as the world is always burning? Why do ye not seek a light, ye who are surrounded by darkness? This body is wasted, full of sickness and frail; this heap of corruption breaks to pieces, life indeed ends in death.”46 What needs to be noted is that these are not mournful cries of despair or dejection, rather resentful queries to find a way out, either by transcending or defeating death. Following Dr. Radhakrishnan I too feel that in the Buddhistic view of life, predominance of pain over pleasure is an assumption.47 After all, the value of life seems to rise with its evanescence. If the beauty of youth and the dignity of age are transient so are the travail of birth and the agony of death. Buddhism is not pessimistic.48 A system of thought is called pessimistic if it stifles all hope and avows no bliss beyond. Buddhism does consider life to be an unending succession of torments but it also affirms faith in the liberating power of ethical discipline and perfectibility of human nature. Buddhism is not a doctrine of despair. Buddha asks us to revolt against evil and attain a life of finer quality, an *arhata* state (enlightened, having attained *nirvana*).

The second noble truth, called the truth of the cause, enunciates that everything arises out of something else; that every event has a cause. Therefore, misery too must have a cause. According to Buddha, the causation of misery is a chain process with twelve links: (1) the first factor in this series is, *avidya*, that is ignorance. Ignorance conceals the true nature of life which is sorrow and assumes as real that which is not actually so; (2) the false impression of life as enjoyment produces a craving for it causing further misery--hankering after pleasures being the underlying cause of all human suffering; (3) this unconscious inner drive leads to consciousness in body and mind; (4) followed by an unquenchable desire for the gratification of senses;(5) resultant indulgence in sensual pleasure; (6) consequent longing;(7) clinging to the object;(8) culminating into a perpetual state of becoming;(9) gives birth anew to the wish to be re-born;(10) repetition of the cycle of birth, disease, old age, and death;(11) unrestrained desire for re-birth; and (12) more suffering.49

The third truth is called the truth of the cessation of suffering. Since everything has a cause and is therefore, the effect of the cause, the effect can be destroyed if its cause is prevented from acting. Therefore, if in place of ignorance we have knowledge of truth, there will be no suffering.

The fourth truth is known as *margasatya*, that is, the truth of the way. In the Buddhist philosophy breaking the causation of misery is not physical, but an ethical process. This practice, in its turn consists of eight parts: right knowledge, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right selection of livelihood, right effort to overcome evil tendencies, right mindfulness, that is, developing an ability to be constantly vigilant against neglecting the proclaimed goal, and finally, right kind of concentration. The capacity to concentrate increases as the mind gets purified with the preceding seven steps. Concentration leads to *nirvana*, the absolute placidity of being.50 Once the state of *nirvana* is attained there is no movement toward birth, decay, old age and, death.

*Nirvana* or liberation is the natural result of destruction of desires, ‘the final extinction of sorrow.’51 Although described as ‘cessation of all sorrow’52 it is not the same as *moksha*,53 because it is not the state of dying of a soul. It cannot be. For, Buddhism denies the existence of a soul at any time, before or after, death. It is the state of salvation, the dying out of the flames of lust, hate, glamour, and desire to live. This condition so completely delivered of all evil indicates a perfect ethical purification, yet, as interpreted by Ananda Coomaraswamy, it is not the final goal. He goes a step ahead. For him, *nirvana* is synonymous with ‘cessation of becoming’, “the great desideratum of which the ethical extinction is merely the means and the outward sign.”54

Buddha’s teachings were very simple, and addressed to the ordinary folk. He did not leave any written record of his teachings, but his discourses were etched on the memory of his disciples. In the course of time they worked out the implications of the four noble truths and formulated philosophical doctrines out of them. Quite naturally, there were controversies, disagreements among the adherent schools of thought but some doctrines were accepted by all, namely:

1. **The Doctrine of Karma:** Buddhism, in keeping with the general Indian thought55 conceives man as a creature of the past and an agent of future. The invisible thread that joins the embodiment of the past, the present, and the future is his moral will working in concert with the intellectual factor which, if imperfect, causes rebirth but if pure and perfect, leads to salvation. The force of causability is inherently related to the concept of inner motivation where our will determines our act.56 Schopenhauer calls it ‘the Will’. Buddha understands it as ‘Karma’.
2. **Non-existence of soul**: Buddhism denies the existence of a soul, self, *atman*, or God. According to its beliefs, nothing on earth is self. Everything is not-self, *anatta*; an appearance devoid of any substance or reality. 57
3. **The Doctrine of Momentariness**: Impressed by the transitoriness of objects, the ceaseless mutation and transformation of things Buddha formulated a philosophy of change. He reduced substances, souls, monads to forces, movements, sequences and processes and adopted a dynamic conception of reality. He explained that life is nothing but a series of manifestations of becomings and extinctions. In other words, that is a stream of becomings. This ceaseless flux of becomings was illustrated by Buddha with the help of his discourse on fire. Though the flame maintains itself unchanged in appearance, every moment it is another and not the same flame. Similarly, the stream is sustained in its flow by ever new waters. The becoming of all is the central fact of Buddhism. Absolute reality is impossible on earth. All that is subject to origination is also subject to destruction.
4. **The Doctrine of Causation** : The Doctrine of Causation or Dependent Origination is one of the most important teachings of the Buddha. Stated in simple words it means that all physical and mental manifestations which constitute individual appearances are interdependent and condition or affect one another, in a constant process of arising and ceasing. The basis of dependent origination is that life or the world is built on a set of relations, in which the arising and cessation of factors depend on some other factors which condition them. On this principle of interdependence and relativity rests the arising, continuity and cessation of existence. This principle is known as the Law of Dependent Origination (in Pali, *Paticca-samuppada*). This law emphasizes an important principle that all phenomena in this universe are relative, conditioned states and do not arise independently of supportive conditions. A phenomenon arises because of a combination of conditions which are present to support its arising. And the phenomenon will cease when the conditions and components supporting its arising change and no longer sustain it. The presence of these supportive conditions, in turn, depends on other factors for their arising, sustenance and disappearance.

Although there is no specific reference to Upanishads in Buddhism it is generally accepted that the teaching of Buddha was considerably influenced by the thought of the Upanishads.58 Both repudiate the authority of the Vedas so far as their philosophy is concerned. Both protest against the mechanical theory of sacrifices and ritual extravaganza. Both emphasize that there is no release from rebirth (it should be borne in mind that rebirth in Buddhism is not the same as re-incarnation because Buddha did not believe in the reality of the soul or the self) either by performance of sacrifice or the practice of severe penance. It is the perception of truth, the knowledge of reality which is the basis of all existence, and which has the power to liberate us. The tendency to deny substantial reality of the individual is common to both. Both the systems see life on earth as one great pilgrimage providing equal opportunity to fall down or climb upwards. Both avow that the absolute reality is incomprehensible by the intellect. Whereas the Upanishads freely discuss the question of the absolute, *atman*, or self Buddha does not affirm their reality. These subjects, for him, were reserved issues on which he did not allow any speculation on the ground that they were not helpful to the seeker of salvation.

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Novels:

A Meditation on the Meaning of Life

Camus wrote in 1938 that, “A novel is never anything but a philosophy put into images.”1 And gifted with the most lucid mind of the century he has left to the posterity, four remarkable novels— each an impassioned hymn to life and a profound meditation on its mysteries. In each of these works the whole of his philosophy passes into images without ever overflowing the characters or the action. They made a deep impact on the mind of the readers immediately on publication who are continuously increasing ever since because they are so rich in profound ideas. It is, in fact, this secret fusion between experiences and ideas, between life and reflection on the meaning of life that makes Camus a great philosophical novelist.

However, Camus was not a professional philosopher and does not indulge in metaphysical speculation. He was a conscientious, creative artist, an ordinary man with a philosophical bent of mind and deep, moral convictions combined with a talent for vivid and persuasive expression. His philosophy, therefore, is the emotional response of a deeply sensitive mind to the conditions of life surrounding him. Like Buddha2  he was concerned with life and death, with people who live and die, and not with philosophical doctrines. Therefore, the opinions he offers are expressions of truth realized by him passionately and intuitively. Born of his painful experience and sympathetic observation of the common existence of man, his everyday life, the dogged struggle against his own degradation and that of others, they instantly touch the heart of the reader. When he talks about the absurd, he is articulating an emotion felt by all, and is not proposing a school of thought. “Je ne suis pas un philosophe,” he writes, “et je ne sais parler que de ce que j’ai vecu.”3

As a man Camus preferred happiness. He was always inclined towards what was joyful, positive, and constructive. In an interview in May 1951 he told Gabriel d’ Aubardede, “when I do happen to look what is most fundamental in me what I find is a taste for happiness. I have a very keen liking for people. I have no contempt for the human race. . . . At the center of my work there is an invincible sun. Surely, all this doesn’t make up a very sad philosophy.”4 As an artist he was sensitive to the tyranny of his time. He grew up to the drumbeats of the first World War. lost his father when he was less than a year old. His father had been recalled to military service and, on October 11, 1914, died of shrapnel wounds suffered at the first battle of the Marne.  He felt the loss of this absurd death as much as the injustice of it, and the additional suffering it entailed upon his mother. Throughout his life, he experienced misery personally and vicariously. Nevertheless, his eloquent counsel to his fellow human beings was to learn the way to draw from within themselves, images powerful enough to deny their condition.

Camus’ first attempt at sustained writing was, *The Happy Death*, written during 1936-38, but published only in 1971, after his death. The theme of this novel is exultation of life, and examination of the problem, how to live happily so that one may die happily; in other words, how to attain liberation, *moksha*, or the Buddhist *nirvana*. The Indian philosophy suggests two methods to pursue this goal: *pravritti*, that is, the path of right action, and *nirvritti* or *tapas*, that is, the path of renunciation. Camus’ theory stands midway between the two and curiously, somewhat tilted towards the latter. He believed in the purity of will, righteousness of action, and the use of self-concentration as a means to achieve inner harmony. The practice of *samadhi* or concentration to acquire control over the senses, in order to experience peace, heavenly bliss, *yoga*, or the *Brahmanic anandam*, or in a characteristic Camusian sense ‘communion’ with nature has been common practice in India from the very ancient times.

The earliest reference to sense control is found in the Rgveda,5 the older Upanishads like the *Chhandogya*6, the *Brhadarnyaka*7, the *Taittriya*8, and the *Jabala*.9 The senses were referred to as uncontrollable horses like, ‘the senses are called horses and sense objects are those which they run after, ’ and again, ‘the active senses are its horses.’10 The *Kathopnishad* defines y*oga* as, ‘this, the firm holding back of the senses is, what is called yoga.’11 Yoga ideas can also be traced in the *Svetasvatara* Upanishad. The Buddhist texts speak at length of *sile*, that is, character concentration, superior intuition (*panna12*), and meditation (dhyana) as ideal states of philosophic elevation. During the time of Buddha, practices of ‘dhyana’ and ‘samadhi’ became firmly established although it is assumed that self-concentration as a technical method of mystic absorption was prevalent even before Buddha.13 The word, ‘yogin’ is found in the *Bhagavad-Gita* – which is pre-Buddhistic—for a person lost in meditation and because of which accorded high reverence.14 The two conditions of bondage and of liberation upon achieving complete control of the senses, as well as, the gradual, imperceptible elevation of the self is graphically described in the *Maitriyaniya* Upanishad as, “carried along by the waves of the qualities darkened in his imagination- unstable, fickle, crippled, full of desires, vacillating . . . he binds his self by his self as a bird with a net. Therefore, a man being possessed of will, imagination , and belief is a slave but he who is opposite is free. . . . This is the sign of liberty, this is the path that leads to Brahman . . . all desires are there fulfilled.”15 To illustrate this they quote a verse: ‘when the five instruments of knowledge stand still together with the mind, and when the intellect doesn’t move, that is called the highest state.’ I have quoted this long passage to show, what to me, appears a striking resemblance between this description and the state of mind portrayed by Camus towards the end of his novel, A *Happy Death*.

The philosophical setting of the novel becomes clear against the background I have indicated above. The story takes place mainly in Algiers. It is about Patrice Mersault, his travels and experiences with different women. The story is divided into two parts—Natural Death and Conscious Death. Natural Death begins with Patrice killing a quadriplegic man, Zagreus to steal his money. The story then back tracks to Patrice meeting his friend, Emmanuel, at a café they frequently visit. Patrice then divulges into his relationship with Marthe and how he enjoys the envious glances men give him when they’re together. Accidentally, Marthe runs into an old lover at the theatre. Seeing that Patrice insists that she tell him the names of all the men she has slept with. He realizes that he knew all except Zagreus, whom he wants to meet. Initially not very fond of him, in time they become good friends. After some time, Zagreus hints that he wants Patrice to kill him because the life that he lives is not fulfilling. A Conscious Death begins after word of Zagreus’ death gets out and Patrice gets ill and flees from Algiers. A Conscious Death follows Patrice around as he searches to find meaning within his life by traveling extensively to central Europe as far as Prague, regains Algiers by way of Genoa, lives in a communal house with three women students, in the end moves with his wife, Lucienne and dies from an attack of pleurisy. Patrice makes large discoveries about what it means to be happy and what the true goal of life is during the second half of the novel. He tries to find happiness in friendship, in girls, but he ultimately realizes that true happiness is thinking of life in a conscious manner. In the end he comes to terms with death and dies a contented man, as implied by the author.

The central question of this astonishing early novel, published posthumously and greeted as a major literary event is, ‘Is it possible to die a happy death?’ Patrice Mersault defies society's rules by committing a murder and escaping punishment, then experimenting with different ways of life and finally dying a happy man. In many ways  A Happy Death is a fascinating first sketch for The Outsider, but it can also be seen as a candid self-portrait, drawing on Camus's memories of his youth, travels and early relationships. It is infused with lyrical descriptions of the sun-drenched Algiers of his childhood - the place where, eventually, Mersault is able to find peace and die 'without anger, without hatred, without regret'.

In all its disjointedness, at first *A Happy Death* appears like Camus’ imaginative museum place with its familiar names, landscapes, the different mileux that he frequented (the office, Maison devant le monde, the village of Tipasa with its local life and pretentious colonials), all his obsessions —the ever-present and ubiquitous death, in the first as well as in the last chapter, in Prague itself the death at which Zagreus looks directly “without turning away his eyes”, it is the murderer who closes them –the death that Mersault listens to rising within himself, with an interior smile that answers the “earth’s smile . . .. And stone among the stones, he returned in the joy of his heart to the truth of the motionless worlds.”16 Thus, his spirit becomes one with the Cosmos, with the Brahman. He achieves his destiny, the Truth, the final liberation, nirvana. The latter part of the book is full of the ecstatic contemplation of the beauty of the earth, against which the hero’s disgusting illness protrudes as an unjustifiable obscenity.

In this novel Camus has tried to use and synthesize the entire range of his experience: his present and past; the world around him and the world within him; the world he loved, and the people he observed; his early illness and confrontation with death; the inner progress of his thought, his spiritual ascent, and his relation to the complex universe. The reverberating influence of his reading is fresh in his mind with the image of the glowing Bodhisattva still haunting it.17 He appears to be experiencing one of his own mystical unions with the cosmos.18 His mortal soul is restless to merge with the immortal Absolute, while he perseveres on the path of ascetic detachment. On another (lower) level, Camus is working hard to strike a balance between his passion for life, his love for happiness, and a kind of natural indifference. The book’s title enlightens us against the background of death: it is a kind of slow conquest of happiness which cannot be obtained without asceticism and detachment. It traces a cyclic experience—a given everyday world, a departure and journey, a return to the same world seen in a new light, and finally an exalting, total re-integration with this world at a different level of awareness. Camus’ purpose here is the same as originally proclaimed by Patrice Mersault, that is, to bear witness to “the joy of life, even in its cruelty.”

In the first part of this novel, ‘Natural Death’, Mersault is enslaved by outer routines imposed upon him by ‘the need to earn a living’. The routines which, hour by hour, lead men to their ‘natural’ death. But Mersault revolts against this servitude to time by attempting to achieve the ‘impersonality’ of natural objects. He shoots Zagreus, steals his money, thus gaining liberation from monetary preoccupations and from limitations of time. He quits his job, leaves Algeria to live anywhere else in perfect freedom. He sets out for central Europe. Sitting in the dingy solitude of a third class hotel in Prague he is confronted by the inner void of his own consciousness. Time now stretches around him, vague and amorphous. ‘The old, wicked, and suffering world” of Europe, heavy with the weight of history and its awesome Christian God fills him with anguish, fear, and nausea. In the dark streets of Prague, he comes upon the body of a man ignominiously lying on the pavement. His anguish gives way to revolt prompting him back to Algeria and to self-realization. Shorn of his illusion he disembarks in Algiers.

The second part of the book, ‘Conscious Death’, relates the story of his return to the fullness of human happiness in the light of the sun, and of the sea in the ‘House facing the World.’ The consciousness of his mortality leads Mersault to measure fully the values present at every moment in the act of living. “Innocent, overwhelmed by joy, he understood finally that he was made for happiness. . . .It was with time that he had to bring his being into accord.” Catherine and her friends give an example of that accord with time and the world. Amiability, humour, absence of prejudice, each has her innocence and her own bag of tricks. “On good days,” says Rose, “confide in life that forces it to respond in kind.” But Mersault soon discovers that this type of happiness lacks a tragic background, or any spiritual depth. He ‘abandons’ the ‘Maison devant le monde’ out of a desire for detachment. To Catherine, who questions him about the reasons for his departure, he replies, “There I would risk being loved my dear Catherine and that would keep me from being happy.” And then he adds, “Do not even expect life from a man. That is how so many women deceive themselves. But expect it from yourself.”19

That real happiness is within us and the way to achieve it is self-concentration, Camus had probably learnt from the Buddhist texts and from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. He had often tried to realize it. Mersault’s love for detachment, his taste for silence, and his self-retirement into a retreat are a reflection of Camus own desires and practices. Camus often used to make retreats , and went several times to the trappist monastery of La Medea, as well as to the monastery of Saint-Maximin as recorded by Roger Quilliot and Max-Pol Fouchet. His evocation of the monastery at Fiesole in summer, and the entire chapter four in the second part of *A Happy Death* are a testimony to Camus’ predilection for these secluded houses, *ashrams*, for the solitude they provide and the asceticism they impose, which he always considered essential to attain true harmony. Camus’ love for monastic search after truth, and an intense desire in him to become one with the Cosmos—or the Brahman -- I would say, nudges me nearer my conviction that he was familiar with the Indian scriptures, had read them, found some concepts akin to his own, and consciously or unconsciously followed them, the idea of ascetic self-control as the only way to true happiness, in particular. In *A Happy Death* the ‘Maison devant le monde’ represents a house of happiness which failed to satisfy Mersault because he needed an ascesis. And he found it in that house in Tipasa, where after having taken shelter in friendship, confidence, and a seeming security he would, at last, be able “to begin his game.”

His is a lucid game which sets aside all lyricism. Between him and Lucienne there is no love, nothing more than a physical presence. “If you insist on it, I can promise to marry you”, he tells her. “But that doesn’t seem to me to be of any use.” “That’s true, and that’s why.” This liason doesn’t prevent solitude. On the contrary, it makes solitude all the more conscious, “face to face with himself, and for a long time, until the consummation.” Thus when he meets her again for the final walk along the Chenoa, he is able to tell Catherine, “What alone counts, you see, is the will for happiness, a kind of enormous, ever-present awareness.”20 ‘Yes’, says Catherine, her eyes filled with sunlight, and Mersault continues in a kind of explanation, “I cannot taste happiness except in the tenacious and violent confrontation that it maintains with its opposite . . . I needed to leave and find that solitude in which I have been able to confront in myself what was to be confronted, what was sunlight and what was tears.”

In the end, Mersault attains peace composed of detachment. He approaches death with a completely tragic serenity, “At this hour in which his life appeared so remote to him, he felt so alone and indifferent to everything, and to himself, that it seemed to him that he had at last, attained what he was seeking, that the peace which filled him now was born of that patient self-abandonment he had pursued and achieved with the help of this warm world so willing to deny him without anger.”20, a.

*A Happy Death* retraces a sort of spiritual itinerary that Camus might have followed in order to surmount his own vicissitudes, if he had not also been the sportsman, the actor, and the journalist that we know. Mersault conquers a kind of individual salvation by way of cynicism, pushing to the extreme the logic of his solitude and transcending the naïve and sensual ‘game’ of his final moments: “Nothing, no love nor any décor, but an infinite desert of solitude and happiness in which mersault played his last cards.” The reconquest of self through financial independence; the reconquest of time; the reconquest of that peace of soul which was to remain Camus’ obsession, A Happy Death takes on the character of a progression: the will to succeed and profound indifference to success, and obsession with truth.

In direct succession to Patrice Mersault, in more ways than one, comes Meursault of *The Outsider* (1942), the peculiar protagonist of a book which Sartre hailed as, “a classical work, an orderly work, composed about the absurd, and against the absurd.”21 It was barely off the press when it began to arouse the widest interest. People told each other that it was “the best book since the end of the war.”21  Camus found himself famous overnight, reigned supreme over the popular taste for about twenty years. Even today, it is held as the most widely read book of the year.22

This novel belongs to that class of exclusive literary works which stand firm over the years on their own merits and not because of any underlying political or philosophical meaning attached to them. But along with this gratuitousness also goes a certain ambiguity about its nature, and about its principal personage which Sartre has very precisely stated in his explanation of the book:

How are we to classify this dry and neat work, so well composed beneath its apparent disorder, so ‘human’, so lucid once we acquire the key? It cannot be called a ‘recit’, for a ‘recit’ explains and coordinates while narrating. It substitutes causal order in place of chronological sequence. Mr. Camus calls it a ‘novel’. The ‘novel’ however, requires a continuous duration, development and the manifest presence of the irreversibility of time. . . . Or, if it is a novel, it is so in the sense that *Zadig* and *Candide* are novels.23

How to interpret a character who, the day after his mother’s death, goes swimming, starts a liaison with a girl, goes to see a comic film with her, but doesn’t wish to marry her because it has no importance; kills an Arab ‘because of the sun’; claims on the eve of his execution, that he “had been happy and still was,”24 and hoped “there would be a lot of spectators at the scaffold to greet him with cries of hate.”25 He is a poor fool, an ‘idiot’ some people said. Others with deeper insight thought, he was innocent. What attracts analysis is, if he is a hopeless case of all dried up sensations, devoid of any human feeling, a ‘monster’ as per the persecutor, ‘Mr. Anti-Christ’ of the magistrate, or he is that superior philosophical being who intuitively knows that human life is absurd, and therefore, attaches maximum importance to the here and now since, “when one lives, nothing happens, the settings change, people enter and leave, that’s all. There are never any beginnings. Days are added to days, without rhyme or reason; it is an interminable and monotonous addition.”26

Judging from Camus’ convictions about life, I consider Meursault rather a worthy representative of a serious attitude to life. Indeed, the kind of detachment he impersonates can only be achieved after a long and persistent ascesis. He has become (he was not always so) indifferent to things which are thought to be important, but are not so in reality—in his thinking, that is. Secondly, he concedes that there are certain values but, it is immaterial whether one pursues or neglects them. Behind this confident affirmation there is a belief in certain positive values which remain unaffected by the inevitability of death. Once or twice in the course of the story we catch a glimpse of an earlier Meursault, for example, the student who had once been to Paris. Presumably, he had not always lived in the passive, autonomous state in which we find him. His precursor, Patrice Mersault provides a clue to this spiritual evolution in his nature. At one stage, in his own spiritual development Patrice had aspired to become similar to an object, to live timelessly, and to be one with the world.27 Meursault has achieved this enlightened state at the very beginning of his story.28 “Meursault for me,” writes Camus “is a poor and naked man in love with the sun which leaves no shadows. He is far from being completely deprived of sensitivity for he is animated by a passion, profound because it is tacit, the passion for the absolute and for truth. It is still a negative truth, the truth of being and feeling, but a truth without which no conquest of the self or the world is possible.”29 That is why, until the very end, Meursault is the man who answers but never asks a question, and all his answers alarm a society which cannot bear to look at the truth.

Camus chose to define Meursault in negative terms. He made him less articulate about what he stood for than about what he regarded as unimportant: “je n’ etais peut-etre pas sur de ce qui m’ interessait reellement, mais j’ etais tout a fait sur de ce qui ne m’ interessait pas.”30 For example, he has no illusions about romantic love: “ . . . elle m’ a demandee si je l’ amais. Je lui ai repondu que cela ne voulait rien dire . . .”31 , or about marriage, : “Elle a observe alors que le marriage etait une chose grave. J’ ai repondu, ‘Non.’”32 He is indifferent about travelling and living in Paris, even killing, “j’ ai pense a ce moment qu’ on pouvait tirer ou ne pas tirer et que tout cela se valait.”33 Consequently, the extra bullets he had fired into the corpse do not, in his, eyes require explanation, “ce dernier point n’ avait pas tellement d’ importance.” The murder inspires “un certain ennui” rather than regret. “Je n’avait jamais pu regretter vraiment quelque chose. J’ etais toutjous pris par ce qui allait arriver, par aujourd’hui ou par demain.” It was quite normal for him to forget people once they were dead. “Morte, elle (Marie) ne m’ interessait plus. Je trouvait cela normal comme je comprenais tres bien que les gens m’ oublieraient après ma mort.” Another ‘question sans importance’ is religious belief. He doesn’r know what sin is. The desire for an afterlife “n’avait pas plus importance que de souhaiter d’ etre riche, de nager tres vite ou d’ avoir une bouche mieux faite. C’ etait du meme ordre.”

The revolver shot at the Arab jolts Meursaut out of his purely negative state. He is aware that he has committed an irreparable act., :I understood that I had destroyed the equilibrium of the day, the unusual silence of a beach where I had been happy.” As in the case of Dimitri Karamazov, the real crime is not the one for which Meursault is being tried, but another which he will understand fully at the end when he accedes to a new level of awareness, conquering the world and himself as he grasps the nature of that happiness of which he had had a vague premonition on the beach.

Alone in the prison, Meursault, like Patrice in Prague after the murder of Zagreus, plunges into a new timeless world—the never ending monotonous prison day. There he passes his days in three inexhaustible, completely closed subjective worlds of memory, of sleep, and of human solitude suggested by the newspaper item he scans over and over again. Then he is visited by the prison chaplain who has come to offer him the comfort of the Christian faith. He tries to talk to him about forgiveness, and of an afterlife in which all may be redeemed. It is at this moment that Meursault gains a new lucidity which propels him out of his habitual apathy, and in an access of rage he violently rejects the thin ethereality of the Chaplain’s piety:

I started yelling at the top of my voice. I hurled insults at him. I told him not to waste his rotten prayers on me. . . .He seemed so cocksure, you see. And yet, none of his certainties was worth one strand of a woman’s hair. Living as he did, like a corpse he couldn’t even be sure of being alive . . . . Actually, I was sure of myself, sure about everything, far surer than he; sure of my present life and of the death that was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into—just as it had got its teeth into me.34

There is no after-life. There is only one life as he knew it –the swimming and the beaches, the intense, glorious life that needed no redeeming, no regrets, no tears. In the light of this new clarity, he observes that nothing in this world has real importance:

Nothing, nothing mattered and I knew very well why. He also knew why. From the depths of my future, throughout the whole of this absurd life I’ d been leading, I’ d felt a vague breath drifting towards me across all the years that were still t come, and on its way this breath had evened out everything that was then being proposed to me in the equally unreal year I was living through. What did other people’s death or a mother’s love matter t me, what did his God or the lives of people chose, or the destinies they selected matter to me, when one and the same destiny was to select me and thousands of millions of other privileged people who, like him, called themselves my brothers.35

In this final moment, once Meursault consciously perceives the utter futility of any kind of ultimate hope, it is as if a cloud had lifted, as he abandons himself to ‘the benign indifference of the universe’, he suddenly realizes that his has indeed been a happy life and that he is happy still. The anguished hours of self-torture in the prison were over. It was :

As if this great outburst of anger had purged all my ills, klled all my hopes, I looked up at the mass of signs and stars in the night sky and laid myself open for the first time to the benign indifference of the world. And finding it so much like myself, in fact, so fraternal, I realized that I ’d been happy, and that I was still happy. For the final consummation and for me to feel less lonely, my last wish was that there should be a crowd of spectators at my execution and that they should greet me with cries of hatred.36

There is, to be sure, nothing other than this earthly existence, but the joys of this life, he now realizes, he has savoured even more deeply than he had known. He recalls the eternal Algerian summer, the sound of the rippling water touching his feet at the beach, the smooth feel of water on his body as he struck out, the ‘sun-gold’ of Marie’s face—and he knows then that the glory of the world is its own justification. So like Sisyphus, he is sustained by ‘the wine of the absurd and the bread of indifference’, and he faces his last hour with the serenity of one who has moved forward, towards a calm acceptance of the present dispensation. And his final mood is very nearly the ecstasy of a pantheistic mysticism. The thought of death brings him comfort. He thinks of his mother; how the closeness to death must have made her feel ‘liberated’ and “ready to live her life again. No one, no one at all had any right to cry over her. And I too felt ready to live my life again.”37

Meursault here becomes a sacrificial victim, his end is an apotheosis, the equivalent of Patrice’s ‘happy’ death, a descent into the sea and sun, a reintegration into the cosmos. The outsider, in his prison cell, on the brink of death, has found his kingdom: every moment, the irreplaceable life of an ordinary man who, by an inexplicable decree of fate is destined to death. Meursault, as Camus conceived him must disappear with this revelation. It is clear that Mersault’s initial mental attitude proves inadequate to cope with even the simplest of lives. The very essence of ‘the absurd’, in his case, is that out of indifference, he links forces with violence and death, and not with love and life.

We live in a mute, uncertain, and abandoned universe, shorn of any meaning or significance. Meursault’s reaction to the outside world as depicted by Camus brings to my mind the Upanishadic legend of *Naciketas.* The same incomprehensibility, with which we find Meursault grappling urged *Naciketas*38 to pronounce all human aspirations and experience as having no real significance, because the pleasure or satisfaction these acquirements bring is transient, evanescent, only a semblance of real happiness. While the death is real, and rules supreme, its fear and uncertainty kill the zest for life. Everything is nullified by its existence.39 Therefore, the resolute, unwavering young hero of the *Katha* Upanishad, *Naciketas* insists that the only knowledge worth seeking is the knowledge of death; in other words, the *Brham jnana*, or the *atma jnana*, both the terms being synonymous.

All great thinkers have reached the same conclusion, that the true knowledge is self knowledge. Mencius declared, “who knows his own nature, knows heaven.”40 St. Augustine confessed, “I, Lord went wandering like a strayed sheep seeking thee with anxious reasoning without, whilst thou was within me . . .”41 Naciketas is determined to settle for nothing less than a penetration into the baffling mystery of death, the knowledge of the great beyond, the only real knowledge, the knowledge of the self. Thus he persists:

*na vittana tarpaniyo manusyah, lapsimahe*

*vittam adrakshma cet tva.*

*Jivisyamo yavad isiyasi tvam varastu me*

*Varaniyah sa eva*.42

and earlier,

*svo-bhava martyasya yad antakaitat*

*sarvendriyanam jarayanti tejah*

*api sarvam jiviytam alpam eve tavaiva*

*vahas tava nrtya-gite*.43

Yama, the god of death, ultimately gives in to the unyielding wish oof his mortal visitor. In the Hinduistic system of thought every creature has the potentiality of becoming a Buddha provided he achieves the required level of moral goodness. The way is through self-contemplation44 , tapas45 (meaning austerity). *Tapas* is training in spiritual life. Negatively, it means cleansing our soul of all that is base and imperfect. In its positive import it is building up of all that is good and holy in our nature. Anybody who has read Camus with a little depth, knows something of his life-style, has seen the vows he took (mentioned by him in his notebooks), would know how often, and how ascetically Camus practiced upon himself this kind of assiduous self-discipline.46

The image of death repeatedly portrayed by Camus as a state of liberation47, bliss48, complete merging of the soul with the cosmos,49 with the forces of Nature,50 as a serene, soothing, awaited happening,51 reveals an unmistakable impression made on him by his reading of St. Augustine, Plotinus, and the Indian scriptures.

The third novel by Camus in the chronological order of his writing is, *The Plague*. It is essentially a philosophical novel forwarding Camus’ philosophy of absurdism through its plot and characterization. Told with complete puritanical simplicity and classical objectivity the basic, literal summary of the book is, that the city of Oran is caught in the clutches of a plague epidemic which appears, develops, reaches its apogee and disappears. This provides the reader with a medical chronicle, a medical study. The narrator follows the events as they unfold: in the stairways and in the gutters rats die “with a little blossom of blood on their pointed muzzles.” Then men are attacked. Ganglions appear in the armpit, or in the groin and they also begin to die. When the number of deaths rises steeply the government admits the fact of the pestilence of plague and the city is placed under quarantine. Various measures are taken, serums tried to control the deadly disease. For months the plague rages unabated and no effective answer is found. Eventually, one person recovers despite having had the dreaded symptoms, and others gradually follow. In time the illness becomes much less common, the death-rate falls sharply, and finally the plague disappears, apparently, in as arbitrary a manner as it had first arrived. The reactions of the inhabitants during the period of the plague—fear, indifference or escapism—are described with an almost scientific precision and detachment. The fight against the plague, collective and individual, the different attempts to overcome it—by medicine, heroism, or prayer – are carefully studied. The name of the narrator is kept undisclosed till the very end. The besieged town becomes a microcosm of the universe, yet the metaphysical references are never allowed to interfere with the immediate story.

On the social level the plague symbolizes the oppression suffered by the French people during the German occupation. In December 1942 Camus noted:

I want to express by means of the plague, the suffocation from which we have all suffered, and the atmosphere of threat and exile in which we have lived. I want at the same time to extend this interpretation to the notion of existence in general.52

Shortage of food, petrol, clothing; victims and families isolated in special camps, curfew, communication with the outside world completely suspended are suggestive of a wartime France.

At a still higher plane the plague represents the presence of evil, the inevitability of suffering. To this Camus adds the moral dimension in the person of Tarrou. With him the theme of moral evil, the evil that men inflict upon each other reaches its greatest intensity. The people of Oran as Dr. Rieux describes them, have little sense of reality, of either good or evil, and this allowed the plague to make an unhindered, rapid progress among them. It organized all that was evil in human life into a coherent and independent system: pain, death, separation, fear, and solitude. And it destroyed all that was good: freedom, hope, and love. The people of Oran are easily led to accept the plague as the very form of reality. It doesn’t develop as a living organism. It spreads monotonously, rigidly, inhumanly, seizing a city, which is —because of its lack of awareness—already conquered. Treated by Camus the meaning of the event extends from particular to the universal. We receive a general picture of man’s position in the universe governed by irrationality.

Although, much to his aversion, Camus was often considered an existentialist, the philosophy he actually developed was the absurd. At its most basic it holds that the universe is absurd and meaningless, and that there is no God or cosmic order, and that men are doomed to suffer and die. In *the Plague* the besieged town of Oran becomes a microcosm of the universe, and different characters illustrate the different ways in which human beings deal with the Absurd – that is, the plague. Cottard first tries to commit suicide (because of his guilt, another kind of plague) and then works *with* the epidemic, profiting off others’ suffering. Father Paneloux tries to assign order to the plague (as a punishment from God), but when he is faced with the true nature of the Absurd upon watching a child die, he loses his faith and succumbs to the disease himself. The protagonists of the novel, Rieux, Rambert, and Tarrou, live and struggle in the way that Camus advocates. They recognize the Absurd (i.e. the power of the plague and their own inevitable doom) but still work ceaselessly against it, seeking meaning in healing others.

The townspeople react to their sudden isolation with feelings of exile and longing for their absent loved ones, with each individual assuming that their suffering is unique. Father Paneloux, a Jesuit priest, delivers a sermon declaring that the plague is a divine punishment for Oran’s sins. Raymond Rambert, a foreign journalist, tries to escape Oran and rejoin his wife in Paris, but he is held up by the bureaucracy and the unreliability of the criminal underground. He is aided in his attempts by Cottard, a man who committed an unknown crime in the past and has since then lived in constant paranoia. Tarrou organizes an anti-plague sanitation league, and many volunteers join to help. Rambert finalizes his escape plan, but when he learns that Dr. Rieux is also separated from his wife (who is ill in a sanatorium) he decides to stay and fight the plague. After several months the public loses the selfishness in their suffering and recognizes the plague as a collective disaster. Everyone grows weary and depressed, and the death toll is so high that the authorities have to cremate the bodies.

Through this book, the author seeks to convey that stifling atmosphere of threat and exile- physical and metaphysical, that feeling of suffocation which one feels when cut off from the breath of life. Once again, it is his comment on the absurd human condition, albeit with a slight tilt towards humanism, and once again it confirms his distance from the Christian doctrine. Broadly speaking, *the Plague* restates the presence on earth of evil, of suffering, and of death- not only the one caused by disease but also that which exists in the mind, namely, the distances in mental attitudes and the feeling of isolation without any exemption to children, or to the innocent, as part of human destiny. The cycle goes on. The plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good. It lies dormant for years. Camus’ message to the mankind is to fight it with determination and fortitude, “without lifting our eyes towards Heavens where God stays silent.”

The Christian concept of the plague as an evil is presented through the erudite sermon of Father Paneloux, a Jesuit priest in Oran. “ My brethren,” he conjures, “you are in the midst of misfortune; my brethren you have deserved it.” For Paneloux there is no mystery about the epidemic. It conforms to the order arranged by God. Man is inherently guilty and natural catastrophes visit with a punitive purpose. The ideal course, therefore, is not resistence but complete submission to the wishes of the Almighty. Then follows the poignant scene in which Camus describes the death agony of the child, the city magistrate Othon’s son:

In the small face, rigid as a mask of grayish clay, slowly the lips parted and from them rose a long, incessant scream . . . Tarrou looked away, Rambert went and stood beside Castel . . . Paneloux gazed down at the small mouth, fouled with the sordes of the plague and pouring out the death cry that has sounded through the ages of mankind. He bent to his knees and all present found it natural to hear him say in a voice hoarse but clearly audible across that nameless, never-ending wail:

‘My God, spare this child . . .! 53

The sweating, groaning child eventually falls silent and dies. Paneloux has encountered death in the helpless eyes of the child. He is as much shaken as Rieux. He is now a chastened man but still a Christian priest. In the face of such unbearable suffering he only feeling Rieux is aware of is one of ‘mad revolt’. Paneloux replies in low voice,

I understand. . . . that sort of thing is revolting because it passes our human understanding. But perhaps, we should love, what we cannot understand.54

The priest must retain at all times, and at all costs his idea of a good and just God. He realizes the horror of the plague torturing that innocent child, but as a Christian, he knows that either he maintains his faith in full or takes his place with Dr, Rieux and Tarrou, and acknowledges that the God is an unjust God. Paneloux recoils from his choice. He has lost his certainty yet clings on to his faith. We understand he has no alternative. “The love of God is a hard love. It demands total surrender, disdain of our human personality.”55

The religions of the world can be divided into, (i) those which emphasize the object, and (ii) those which insist on experience. For the category one which includes modern Christianity, religion signifies an attitude of faith and conduct directed to a power without. For the category two, religion is an experience to which the individual attaches supreme value. The Hindu and the Buddhist religions belong to this class.56 For them religion is salvation. It is more a transforming experience than a notion of God. Real religion can exist without the definite conception of the deity but not without the distinction between the spiritual and the profane, the good and the evil, the just and the unjust. In all theistic systems, I emphasize the Greek and he Hindu, the essential thing is not the existence of the deity, but its power to transform man. Enlightenment or ‘Bodhi’ which the Buddha attained and his followers aim at is an experience. Perfect insight, ‘sambuddhi’ is the end and aim of the Buddhist eight-fold path. Again to quote from the Indian thought, there are systems like the Samkhya, and the Jaina which do not admit God but affirm the reality of spiritual consciousness. Camus’ skepticism is wholly directed toward the ambiguous nature of the universe, so far as the man is concerned, he believes that, “there are more things in men to admire than to despise.”57 The salvation lies within him. Whatever goodness there be in life it is in men, and this goodness is created only in the struggle of men to preserve and enlarge the area of goodness which they alone know and which they alone can guarantee. Value and truth lie within men. The Christian orthodoxy depicts man’s life as a ‘trial’.58  Camus has repeatedly avowed faith in the ancient systems of religion, the Greek and the Christian alike. Faith for him was not so much a state of passive peace, as a “tragic experience.”59

Indulgently created by Camus, Tarrou represents in *the Plague* the presence of this awakened spiritual consciousness. Camus’ ideas of commitment, dedication to the plight of others, courageous and honest stand against violence are also made clear through him. He is the non-violent atheist, the saint who doesn’t believe in God. He has a lucid mind and a compassionate heart. He walks through the streets observing all, making note of the meaningless details in a journal maintaining his awareness in the face of fiercest protest. His search is, for an ‘inner peace’ or in its absence, at least, “a decent death’.60 This epidemic has not caught him anything new. He has always known the plague, the real nature of the evil. It is always present within each one of us. No one on earth is free from it. 61 The plague-stricken need is peace of mind which only a true healer can give. The only thing is, there are very few of them and even those are difficult to find. Empathic response to suffering, compassion is the sole means of attaining peace: After a silence, the doctor asked if Tarrou had any idea of the way which must be followed to find peace. “yes” said Tarrou, “Compassion”.62 The way of the saint is the way of Love. Tarrou, as nuch as, Camus show us this way.

It is not difficult to sense Camus’ disgust at the Christian priest who finds the inexplicable suffering of the innocent child ‘revolting’ because “it passes our human understanding.” “But perhaps, we should love what we cannot understand.” However, one should not blame these votaries of God. “They can have no friends. They have given their all to God.”63 Even the worst pestilence for them is only an opportunity to uplift ourselves. Rieux rightly remarks that Paneloux can only think in abstractions. Where Tarrou and Rieux speak with reality about life, he speaks with rhetoric about an idea of life. Where Paneloux talks of God, and man, and punishment, Tarrou and Rieux can only see people dying in agony. Camus always found the Christian religion illusory. As per his reasoning, “whether or not there be goodness or God is not a primary evidence of human existence, suffering and death are.”64 It is only after the reality of human evil is given, does the question of God and man’s ultimate submission or revolt arise. This fundamental aspect of Camus thought is obvious in the conversation between Paneloux and Rieux immediately after the child’s death. Outraged at the injustice of the child’s suffering Rieux turns at the priest remarking fiercely, “Ah, that child, anyhow, was innocent—and you know it as well as I do!” Saying so Rieux strode on brushing past Paneloux, walked across the school playground, sat down on a wooden bench to get his breath back and fight down his fatigue. He was wiping the sweat off his forehead when he heard Paneloux’s voice behind him:

‘Why was there that anger in your voice just now? What we’d been seeing was as unbearable to me as it was to you.’

Rieux turned towards Paneloux.

‘I know. I ’m sorry. But weariness is a kind of madness. And there are times when the only feeling that I have is one of the mad revolt.’

‘I understand,’ Paneloux said in a low voice. ‘That sort of thing is revolting because it passes our human understanding. But perhaps we should love what we cannot understand.’ 65

Rieux had a very different idea of love. He slowly stood up, shook his head and said, ‘until my dying day I shall refuse to love a scheme of things in which children are put to torture.’ Through this dialogue Camus is impressing upon us how two men who have seen and recognized human evil respond to it in two different ways. While the priest accepts it as finally good even though it is beyond his understanding , Rieux revolts –as would Camus himself --against what he has seen.

Camus’ preoccupation with the questions of the nature and meaning of men, their hopes, their possibilities, and their destiny reveal him to be a powerful religious-moral-philosopher. His philosophy is based on the principle of a positive humanism. He had realized that in a world ‘governed’ by absurdity saintliness is the only solution. It is a kind of moral perfection comprising solidarity in the face of extreme suffering, an affirmation of human dignity, and of his nobility at the moment of his most abject humiliation. Sainthood presupposes the existence of a specifically human nature, a perception of other people’s suffering, a feeling of love for them. The plague is a flail that strikes the body; but there is a corresponding scourge within that brings out on men’s souls the sores of hatred, falsehood , and pride: “I know, positively—yes Rieux, I can say I know the world inside out as you may see –that each of us has the plague within him; no one on earth is free from it.”66

The external medical battle against the plague is matched by the internal struggle against the pestilence of evil, carried on at the cost of a sustained effort: “What’s natural is the microbe. All the rest—health, integrity, purity (if you like) –is a product of the human will . . . from an unceasing use of will power. . . . Those who want to rid themselves of the plague experience an extreme weariness from which nothing will free them except death.” Purity, in short, is the best way of helping others. For, only the untainted will not infect others. This is a high ideal and Tarrou practises it, “I only know that one must do what one can to rid oneself of the plague. . . . That is a course that can bring men comfort; even if they are not saved by it at least it ensures that they’ ve done as little harm as possible and even, sometimes, a little good.”67

The true healer, therefore, is someone whose outward action, which is not restricted to medical care only, is based on an integrity of spirit that has triumphed over evil. Dr. Rieux comes quite close to this ideal—modest, transparent, lucid, clear in mind. His immediate concern is to alleviate the pain of his patients, Man’s salvation, he says, “is too high a word for me.”68 Yet we see Rieux Move amidst his patients and other people with a rarely found love for his fellow beings. Rieux’s love shows itself in unobtrusive, unremarkable ways. He visits Grand long before Grand falls ill because, he knows, the man is lonely and would welcome company. He doesn’t reproach the journalist, Rambert for trying to leave Oran to join the woman he loves, because, he says, “I too, would like to do my bit for happiness.”69 When Father Paneloux is dying, not withstanding his profound distaste for the priest’s views, he offers to sit by him until the end. He loves the man but not the idea he represents. Rieux’s capacity to love gives rise to a rich optimism for man. He is convinced that, “men are more good than bad.”70 It is his love for others which teaches him tolerance and understanding. His religion is to be a man.71 Though he denies that there is anything heroic in his persistent struggle against the plague, his efforts can only be described as ‘Sisyphian’. Each patient is a new rock to be pushed up to the summit. Unmindful of the reward, he believes in going on doing his job with extreme devotion. Having established that evil and death are part of the abiding condition of men, Camus points out that, “The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding.”72

From the above statement, I naturally draw the conclusion that this was probably, the influence of Camus’ conscientious reading of the Indian religious books, especially the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The Hindu and the Buddhist thinkers firmly hold that ‘avidya’ or ignorance is the source of all human anguish, and ‘vidya’ or wisdom, ‘bodhi’ or enlightenment is its salvation.73 There is a tendency in human beings to identify themselves with their apparent selves and become exiled from their spiritual consciousness. This proclivity is the expression of the working of, self-conscious reason. Intellectual activities are a derivation or a selection, and so long as they are cut off from the truth which is their secret source, naturally result in selfishness.74 Our anxieties are bound up with our intellectuality, whose emergence at the human level causes a fissure or cleavage in our life. The break in the normal and natural order of things in human life is directly traceable to man’s intellectuality—the way in which he knows himself and distinguishes himself from others. First, thinking about and imagining an uncertain future rouses his hopes and fears. While the rest of the Nature goes on in absolute tranquility, man becomes aware of the inevitability of death. The knowledge of death, in turn, produces fear of death. He tries to find ways and means by which he can overcome death and gain eternal life. Man is born of the cosmic process, but feels himself at enmity with it. This ‘divorce’75 between him and the universe is the source of the feeling of absurdity. Second, man has lost track of his essential innocence, naivete, and his sense of fellow-feeling. He places his individual preferences above social welfare. As a consequence he looks upon himself as final and absolute, and at every other human being as his potential enemy. Third, the knowledge of death and isolation cause mental fragmentation within him. His identity splits, his nucleus collapses, and he becomes a divided, riven being tormented by doubt, fear, and suffering. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, “the present nervousness of mankind, where fear is the pervasive element of consciousness . . . where man has lost his community with Nature and man, is another name for spiritual death. . . .The tragedy is that we are not conscious of our ignorance. The more sick, the less sensible.”76 Camus from the western world and Dr. Radhakrishnan (who survived Camus by fifteen years), an eminent philosopher from India, are saying one and the same thing.

As an auxiliary to an illustration of Camus’ philosophy we have to analyse the personality Father Paneloux, the repository of a faith vehemently opposed by Camus. Our knowledge of Father Paneloux is what is revealed through his two sermons, and his random reactions to some incidents which take place during the course of the story. He is a brilliant preacher holding up hope in a future life in a town already wailing under the scourge of a fast spreading pestilence. In his first sermon, Paneloux describes the plague as a punishment sent by God for moral shortcomings. Viewed thus, the evil has a perfect reason to exist—an integral part of the divine scheme with a logical meaning attached to it. This kind of servile submission was incomprehensible to Camus. To him it represented, at best, an abstraction, a conviction based on abstruse theories without any real experience.

Paneloux’s second sermon is marked with mellowness and humility. The tone is gentler, more thoughtful than on the previous occasion. He has seen the misery and the pain brought about by the plague. No longer does he thump the pulpit and pour out a torrent of self-confident rhetoric. His convictions now record an impact of reality. The ‘you’ of the earlier address has changed into ‘we’, and he is seen stumbling over his words several times. He now feels himself a part of the community. When he falls ill, true to his teaching he bravely refuses all medical aid; the plague being sent by God he must succumb to it, and dies clutching his crucifix.

Though Tarrou seems to express most unequivocally Camus’ vision, at times one suspects that Rieux’s modest optimism, and faith in determined human endeavour approximate most nearly the position to which Camus always wanted to be faithful. Like Cherea in *Caligula,* Rieux, although an atheist has no taste for atheistic dialectic. It is of no consequence whether he believes in God or not, what is essential is to go on doing your job faithfully.77 To me Rieux seems to be quoting a shloka from the *Bhagavada-Gita* which his creator had read many years back,78

*Karmany eva dhikaras t ma phalesu kadacana*

*ma karmaphalahetur bhur ma te sango ’stv akarmani*.79

that is,  ‘to action alone has thou a right and never at all to its fruits, let not the fruit of action be thy motive; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction’. And again,

*tasmad asaktah statam karyam karma samacara*

*asakto hy acaran karma param apnoti purusah*.80

that is, ‘therefore without attachment perform always the work that has to be done for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment’. The shloka immediately next to it further affirms the same. The idea of disinterested service is strewn throughout the dialogue of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. “There is no question of heroism in all this. It is a matter of common decency.”81 Heroism and sanctity don’t really appeal to him. “I imagine, what interests me is living and dying for what one loves”82 that is, being a man.

In Rieux, even more than in Tarrou Camus offers us an image of the kind of virtue, and religiousness that is attainable in a time when God is absent—for whatever reason. The fundamental ontological realities cannot be altered: the universe is not fully comprehensible and doesn’t answer the human demand for clarity and coherence. There is sickness and suffering, and ultimate death for every living creature. All that is required is that one must go on struggling patiently and persistently for man, and against whatever thwarts or humiliates his humanity. Brhat-santi strota exhorts,

Let there be peace in the world. Let everyone exert for the well being of the other. Let evil disappear. Let everybody be happy everywhere.83

*The Plague* concludes, that though man’s predicament is absurd but not man himself. For Dr. Rieux, “there are in men, more things to be admired than things to be scorned.” The happiness of mankind as a worthwhile cause, and the idea of human brotherhood looms large in the story. Camus is seen more sorrowful than angry about human failings, and tolerant of those with whom he disagrees. His recommendation is to act on behalf of the humanity. *The Plague* projects him primarily as interested in serving men, not saving them.

In *The Fall* (1956), the last novel written by him he stresses the values of penance and expiation. His short stories, published a year later, dwell upon the themes of transcendence and the creative value of suffering and human solidarity. He exhorts us with the fervor of a true moralist to count ourselves among those who battle against the accumulated guilt and ignorance of the world. Camus didn’t believe in God but he was not an atheist. His thinking was always profoundly religious. In an interview published in *Le Monde* in August 1956 he told Claude Sarraute, “I don’t believe in God, it’s true but this doesn’t make me an atheist. I would even agree with Benjamin Constant that irreligion is something rather vulgar and, yes, something rather worn out.” Camus had witnessed man caught in the most absurd situation of history, yet he didn’t lose his admiration for him. Rather, he set for himself the concrete task of creating a climate of values, a refuge from the meaninglessness of life, a kind of salvation. His pilgrimage progressed through absurdity to a high sense of purpose.

In *The Fall* Camus’ obsession is virtue: how far is it possible for a human being, or is it possible at all for a human being to be really concerned for others? Or, is man by nature so egocentric that the only love he feels is the love of the self? In this shattering study of human motivation Camus forces man to the mirror. Clamence’s confession of his moral failure can be taken as the symbol of the human condition. The quotation from Lermontov’s novel, *A Hero of Our Time*, which he adds as the epigraph in the English translation of his book emphasizes his objective position. It is, “Some were dreadfully insulted, and quite seriously thought the author to have held up as a model such an immoral character as *A Hero of Our Time*; others shrewdly noticed that the author had portrayed himself and his acquaintances. . . . *A Hero of Our Time,* gentlemen, is in fact a portrait but not of an individual; it is the aggregate of the vices of the whole generation in their fullest expression.”

Whether Clamence is all mankind or merely one human type, Camus has used him to draw a devastating picture of bad faith in our time. *The Fall* like *The Outsider* is a monologue and the shortest novel written by Camus. It describes in six parts the life and attitude of Jean-Baptiste Clamence. Before coming t live in Amsterdam he had been a lawyer of renown, the defender of all noble causes, the humanitarian advocate who rushed to the help of widows and orphans. He radiated generosity, friendliness , and charity, ‘spoke of justice, as if I slept with her every night,’ helped blind men across the street and rejoiced when a beggar approached his house. He was content with his life and felt in harmony with the world, till one evening standing alone on a bridge over the Seine, he suddenly thought he heard someone laugh. There was no one else around him. The laugh came from within himself, a projection of the judgment which he unconsciously realized could be passed upon him. One could call it the voice of his conscience. In the following days he heard this laugh more than once. It had the disturbing effect of making him remember things from his past which he had previously forgotten. He began to have doubts about his own radiant perfection. An incident with a motor-cyclist in which he was publicly humiliated showed him that when he was himself, threatened he became an ‘irascible master who wanted, regardless of all laws, to strike down the offender and bring him to his knees.’ After that discovery, he remarks, ‘it is very hard to continue seriously believing that one has a vocation for justice and is the predestined defender of the widow and the orphan.’ He begins to have illusion that people are laughing at him. But the truly devastating memory was of an incident which occurred on a midnight when he had to cross a bridge. He noticed a young woman leaning over the railing but paid little attention. A few minutes later he heard a thud and cries of fright. He stood still for a moment overcome by a strange weakness, and then continued on his way:

I wanted t run yet didn’t move an inch. I was trembling. I believe from cold and shock. I told myself that I had to be quick and I felt an irresistible weakness steal over me. I have forgotten what I thought then. ‘Too late, too far . . .’ or something of the sort. I was still listening as I stood motionless. Then slowly, in the rain I went away. I told no one.84

When no one is there to watch him he is a coward, and it is this incident which, on top of his growing realization that what he really wants is to dominate others, which leads him to exercise in the bars of Amsterdam, ‘the strange calling of the judge-penitent.’ His technique as he explains to his listener, is to confess all his crimes and weaknesses in the utmost detail and without the slightest reticence. ‘Then, imperceptibly, I pass from the ‘I’ to the ‘we’. When I get to ‘This is what we are’, the game is over and I can tell them off. I am like them, to be sure. We are in the soup together. However I have superiority in that I know it and this gives me the right to speak. . . . The more I accuse myself the more I have a right to judge you. Even better, I provoke you into judging yourself and this relieves me of that much of the burden. ”85

His motive is clear. He has always wanted to look down on people from the heights of his own perfection, and be able to despise them because of his own virtue. He has always been a monster of a pride and when he could no longer feel that he was superior to all other men, he was forced to make them feel their guilt so that he could still continue to despise them. ‘You see in me, tres cher’, he remarks to his listener, ‘an enlightened prophet of slavery.’86 It is in this respect that Clamence is “the ‘aggregate of the vices of the whole generation in their fullest expression,’ for, both his original good intentions and his present desire to convince others of their guilt express that desire to enslave others which Camus found so characteristic of his time.”87

*The Fall* is a distressing book. The mirror is held up to the reader, as well as to Clamence’s immediate victim. It is an incisive, merciless revelation of that part of hypocrisy present in all of us, which when acknowledged in times of introspection, causes us our most despairing moments. It takes us far away from that joy of living which characterizes all Camus’ work. Clamence is the very anti-thesis of Sisyphus, Dr. Rieux, or Rambert because he has given in to selfishness and despair. Rieux proclaimed that men were fundamentally more good than bad; Clamence says that they are uniformly despicable in their very essence. *The Fall* bears a relation with Camus’ other works in its continuation of the theme of (lost) innocence. Meursault had primal innocence. Tarroe and Kaliyayev, both strove to remain innocent in an evil world: Clamence shows that their endeavour is impossible, for evil is within us.

The evocation of mists, fogs, and rain of Amsterdam is a deliberate artistic contrast to the blazing sunlight of North Africa in *The Outsider* and *The Plague*. In these two novels the clear sunlight of Algeria formed an appropriate background for the discussion of definite questions – life and death, solitude and communion, good and evil, suffering and happiness. In the same way, rain and mist, determine the psychological atmosphere of *The Fall* casting a strange light in which guilt and innocence, pride and humility, irony and deadly seriousness are impossible to identify and distinguish one from the other. Although the theme taken in this novel is of a grve nature, there are some very humorous passages. For example, the description of how Clamence went about doing good is a delightful portrait of the daily pleasures of an affable man.

The most important contribution that *The Fall* makes is to highlight a crucial aspect of Camus’ thought. Camus did not like to be called a philosopher. But, he admitted, “What interests me is to know how we should behave.” He was essentially a moralist, and it is his awareness of the close relationship between ideas and action in the sphere of ethics that inspires much of his work. It was because it seemed to him that wrong attitudes contributed greatly towards increasing human suffering that he thought it so important to use his powers as an artist to point out the dangers implicit in certain ways of thinking. This concern is present in *The Fall* which, perhaps, more than any other of his books, “illuminates the problem of the human conscience in the present time.” Like Camus’ other books, it is a work with an essentially humanist theme. The hardest trial for any humanist is to admit that man is cruel, hypocritical, and self-centred and yet not to despair in him. Self-awareness, in fact, is the first step to true knowledge. *The Plague* suffers from Camus’ presentation of man largely as the innocent victim of events. *The Fall* corrects this point of view by emphasizing the very human origin of his misery. The source of man’s suffering is his ignorance. If he can find a way to dissipate this limitation he will be able to regain his happiness. The barriers of ignorance can only be broken through ‘jnana’ or wisdom. When we have discovered the secret seed of spirit concealed within layers of our nature, life becomes a pure flame of light and happiness. Once, knowing the bliss of Brahman he doesn’t fear anything.88 By knowing him alone one surpasses death.89 “What sorrow, what delusion is there for him who perceives this unity.”90 The only way to attain this elevated state is through truth and purity. The soul then is no more lonely or isolated. It enters a spiritual context in which its life finds a new and deeper significance and purpose.

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Short Stories:

The World as Exile and Kingdom

Camus’ work up to 1957 when his collection of short stories, *Exile and the* *Kingdom*1 was published had been a meditation on man, and on his relationship with the world and with his fellow beings. In these stories he describes the dual nature of the world which he had first expressed in his essays, *Betwixt and Between.* The world is the place of man’s exile, but it is also his only kingdom. They are a keyword for an appreciation of his thought and art. Throughout these pages there reigns a kind of restraint, a will not to go beyond the limits of man, to define his place in the transcendent universe as well as in relation to his earthly problems. This restraint makes Camus choose ordinary men: an ordinary housewife, a boss, workers who are neither vehement nor vicious, an artist with every imaginable weakness, a teacher who feels sorry for the captive, an engineer who performs a good deed without knowing why or how. There are neither heroes nor saints, and romantic love has been strictly kept out. In this respect Camus observes a discretion similar to that of the writers of ‘roman nouveau’. And although he paints certain extremes, as in “The Renegade”, he does so not for the effect itself, but in order to make the villain lamentable and the devil grotesque. This insistence on restricting his characters to average humanity is accompanied by such accuracy in portrayal that emotion is aroused by its truth and the reader’s sympathy is aroused on hearing the words attributed to people who, left to their own devices, would rather remain silent. The stature of men in these stories is not mythical or legendary. It is a sampling of common humanity.

The structure of the tales is classic, Time is treated in meticulous chronological sequence. There are no complicated interweavings where the present, past, and future intermingle as in Butor’s *A Change of Heart*, or where characters escape the writer’s grasp as in Robbes-Grillet’s *The Voyeur*. Here everything is calm and composed. Each story unfolds in a ‘duree’, and with an intensity which makes it dramatic. All are marked by the fact that they are novelettes without a beginning or an end. A casual remark here and there lets us guess the antecedents of the characters; the outcome remains mysterious. And even when the writer explains, as in “The Adulterous Woman”, scenes which light up the past, we know that what he has told us is not essential, and is insufficient to explain or motivate the basic action.3 The style is pure poetry, description is compact and precise. Every term is accurate.

Opposite these neatly arranged characters some scene is projected: nature, an apartment, a studio, or simply the presence of the sky or the night. It suddenly upsets this comforting balance, challenges the power of the author over his creations and introduces an element of shock whose repercussions are unforeseeable. Quietly and cautiously, Camus leads the reader to the borders of a complex universe. All the problems that preoccupy him, as a thinker, man of action, essayist arises in these tales like the flowers that grow between the stones in his native Algeria. They express his life-long dream of oneness. The ‘Exile’ and the ‘kingdom’ are two sides of a single question, a single human situation and present the philosophical and poetic symmetry which Camus had always favoured. A certain ambiguity arises from these very terms. Only at the end of the book does the reader perceive the relationship between the six stories and grasp the choice of the title which doesn’t belong to any one of them. They all share a central theme. All are studies in exile and the attempt of people to find a place where they belong, their kingdom, a place of perfect harmony. They are realistic tales of ordinary human beings but each one of them has a presence, a kind of material weightiness about them. The collection as a whole is animated by a significance which is scattered, flowing, and diffuse. Here Camus has dispersed his secrets. He has simply set them down and let them live, instead of giving them the too evident appearance of allegory. He has abandoned himself to the fluctuations of life. As a result we have the vibrations of actual inner experience in place of abstractions. Camus’ preceding books show us the right, then the wrong side of the cloth, this one places the fabric in our own hands.

The short stories published in *The Exile and the Kingdom* are important as the distinguished example of classical art and not so much for their philosophical import. Primarily they are sensitive studies of human nature, in distress and in possession of their kingdom enjoying the subsequent ecstasy of having attained it. They do not make or represent any specific philosophical statement but illustrate beautifully some of Camus’ permanent themes: ideas of oneness, ambiguity, exile, alienation, kingdom, moral goodness, the mystery and the miracle of the mystical union with the infinite. There are no specific undertones of the Indian philosophy in these stories. I have included them in my study because they are an important part of Camus’ creative work and bear a pronounced resemblance to Indian religious life in holding out the ideals of fraternity, compassion, and the search for the kingdom within. Very much in keeping with the Indian traditions Camus signals us not to separate the ordinary from the extraordinary, the absurd from the joy of living , revolt from love, inner nobility from the militant refutation of evil, state of exile from that of kingdom. Everything is part of the same life and together makes the life we live. *The Exile and the Kingdom* marks an advancement in Camus’ spiritual thinking. Each of his earlier books conform with the other because each brings forth one aspect of the human condition which corresponds with the one taken up in the other. Thus *The Fall* corresponds to *The Plague*, and *The Plague* corresponds to *The Outsider*. *The Exile and the Kingdom* does not add another abstract segment in the formation of a line, but, in contrast it poses an attempt at completeness. *The Fall* marks a progression in Camus’ thought. It fully explores one path and leaves us suspended on the verge of an answer which it does not give. *The Exile and the Kingdom* contains a definite movement. *The Fall* reveals to us only an exile without a kingdom. There is no answer to the discovery made by Clamence, that good itself is evil. In these stories the answer is always given with the question, the right with the wrong side, the kingdom within the exile.

This book is not based upon contradiction, and therein lies its success. The exile and the kingdom are not two continents separated by an ocean: they are two aspects of the same breath and heartbeat. The kingdom is in the exile and the exile is the path towards kingdom- in fact, exile could actually, be the kingdom. “Jonas, the Artist at Work”, with swift ironical verve, evokes the life of an artist separated from his work by his family and friends. He finally isolates himself in his workshop by constructing a kind of cage, in which he dies. One word, in very small characters, is written in the centre of the blank canvas he leaves behind him. We do not know whether the word is ‘solitary’ or ‘solidarity’. Without a doubt Jonas dwelt in exile among his own circle of family and friends. He found his true home in the solitude of his work, but his circle remained the same. The cage wherein he dies is a mock kingdom. Jonas faces the problem which, according to Camus all artists confront in the contemporary society. He tries to balance his family life and his need for creative solitude. As Camus says in Hid Nobel Prize speech:

The artist forges himself to the others, midway between the beauty he cannot do without and the community he cannot tear himself away from.1

The artist should not work in isolation from the problems of his time, nor should he be so much a part of his society that he cannot see beyond it. Jonas’ loft is a humorous symbol of the artist’s balance. For the workers who are on strike in “The Silent Men”, exile is the hostility of society, and kingdom is their silent revolt. They experience a feeling of fraternity which they could not have known without undergoing exile. In “The Adulterous Woman” the opposing elements seem particularly clear: exiled both, in her marital life and in her daily work, Janine has only to cast a glance upon the desert to discover, the free, untrammeled existence of the kingdom,

Since the beginning of time, on the dry earth of this limitless land scraped to the bone, a few men had been ceaselessly trudging, possessing nothing but serving no one, poverty-stricken but free lords of a strange kingdom. Janine didn’t know why this thought filled her with such a sweet, vast melancholy hat it closed her eyes. She knew that this kingdom had been eternally promised her, and yet that it would never be hers, never again except in this fleeting moment perhaps . . . 2

In this story Camus’ description of the rapturous exaltation felt upon the mystical contact with the nature is exotic, the ‘adulterous’ wife absolutely innocent of this crime flees her husband’s bed to discover in solitude and silence, the Saharan night. Above her head is the star filled sky and in front of her the vast desert stretching out to infinity. Gazing on this spectacle which ‘not a breath, not a sound’ came to disturb, she feels an instant of deliverance, a break with her own past, its ‘boredom’ and ‘routine’. And with a clarity characteristically Camusian she perceives that ‘from that moment on, no one would ever age any more or die. Everywhere, henceforth, life was suspended – except in her heart, where at the same moment, someone was weeping with affliction and wonder.”

This state of perfect ecstasy, this entry into the ‘kingdom’ is prepared by a precise sequence of perceptions and sensations. The woman didn’t attain to this revelation suddenly and inexplicably. She was at the culmination of an experience whose physical and spiritual aspects are inseparable: it was aroused by the sight of men ‘ceaselessly trudging, possessing nothing but serving no one, poverty-stricken but free lords of a strange kingdom’. Little by little,

. . . with unbearable gentleness, the water of night began to fill Janine, drowned the cold, rose gradually from the hidden core of her being and overflowed in wave after wave rising up even to her mouth full of moans.3

One sees the precision with which Camus establishes these correspondences between his heroin and living, ever-changing nature. Camus depicts Janine with a few light strokes - she doesn’t believe she is loved; she is bored, but in the night ‘clings to her husband’s shoulder’. Her husband is an ordinary man; he is annoyed and humiliated by the demeanour of a ‘General’ assumed by an Arab in burnoose and gloves. But while the characters’ psychological aspects are only suggested, they themselves are enveloped in a universe which is both, their place of exile and the possible site of the kingdom. Yet to reach it – and this is what Camus makes one realize – the gift of silence and a sense of elevation are necessary. There are always necessary preconditions and graded steps to attain complete communion. In the Indian system there are eight steps leading to complete yoga or communion.4 While Janine listens to the appeal of nature and feels a kind of prayer arise from the depths of her being, the man at her side, her husband, complains of the cold.

This kind of ecstatic rapture is a form of momentary spiritual union of man with the infinite being a celestial vision.5 It is a tremendously transcending experience leaving one completely lost at the end. When the ecstasy dies out the soul stands alone feeling desolate, dissatisfied with its incomplete union. Having struck by the dazzling light it now gropes in gloom striving for the purity of heart and the chastity of mind essential for that spiritual life which is the gradual penetration of the human consciousness by the divine.6 Exclusive experiences, however, are in no way exclusive to India.

The moment of total cosmic communion felt by Janine, the complete merging of her soul with the infinite space around her and the resultant bliss is the same ‘ananda’ which Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to experience frequently. Camus himself is said to have known this elevation of mind. One instance of it, as narrated by him, can be found in the *Nuptials*. It appears that it is his own experience which he has transported in Janine, the only difference is that while he knew what was happening to him (he recapitulates his experience for us), Janine’s rapture baffles description. It ia ineffable and takes complete possession of her. She feels it within her but cannot understand it. She is, as though in a trance, her ‘adultery’ consummated, weeping with relief she stammers to her husband, ‘It’s nothing dear, nothing at all’. This element of miracle reappears in the last story about the growing stone which has miraculous healing powers. These mystic descriptions constitute an essentially Camusian quality which accentuates his proximity to the Indian spirituality.

A second development in the same context is that, having caught the presence of ambiguity in human life, very much in the manner of Indian seers, Camus goes on to exhort us to accept it. The perpetual dilemma in the mind of the renegade is precisely this conflict between the desire for certainty and a vague nostalgia for youth, also for rain, for something which could soften the rigid harshness of the landscape around him where night changes into day ‘sans transition’. As the story develops this desire surges in the mind of the renegade more frequently. In another story, “The Silent Men” a similar situation is put forward, where a certain renouncement is called for in the face of a complex deadlock. In the previous instance the old missionary is at least, capable of refusing ‘a priori’ all ambiguity. Yvar reveals his speechlessness through his simple words, and simplistic judgments. He is incapable of understanding the situation in all its complexity.

Practically, all the stories end in an ambiguous manner as if to further emphasize the definitive character of ambiguity. In the end when Janine addresses her husband as ‘my dear’, contrary to the resolution she made a little while back, the reader doesn’t know for sure if she is doing so out of habit or she has taken another new decision. In a similar manner the conclusion of “The Renegade” doesn’t give any indication of the author’s attitude. Does the cruel gesture of the sorcerer indicate the judgment of Camus himself? If yes, then why is it pronounced precisely when the renegade appears closest to the Camusian morality in thinking of creating a city of brotherhood? The end of “The Guest” too is not very transparent. It appears to be a kind of a challenge flung at the reader who must find out for himself the motive behind the Arab’s choice.

The first years of Camus’ life were full of suffering, misery, loneliness. Possessing a very perceptive and philosophical mind he had, early in life, recognized the ambiguous nature of the human condition and had made it the subject of almost all his writings treating it variously. For instance, what he describes in *The Exile and the Kingdom* is essentially different from the extremely profound ambiguity that is presented behind a simple façade in *The Outsider*. While in *The Exile and the Kingdom* it is constantly shown as a part of the complexity, in *The Outsider* it is portrayed as a certain harmony between the concrete or the physical and the spiritual. In “The Growing Stone” the engineer, d’ Arrast accomplishes his symbolic task in the very middle of confusion. His friendship for ‘le coq’ pushes him on. He picks up the stone without a moment’s thought. And again at the end of the story he is unable to give expression to the feeling of his inner contentment, joy that he was experiencing. He is sure that his conscience is going to approve his action.

In the fiction of Albert Camus man is constantly shown as seeking a pattern in a chaotic universe. He is trapped in an indifferent world which is at times even hostile to human concerns. He attempts to create an order in which he will be in harmony with his surroundings. Janine, the heroine of “The Adulterous Woman” steals out from her room to climb up to the terrace from where she had seen the tents of the nomads in the distance. There, like Meursault on the eve of his execution, she is ‘opened to the tender indifference of the world’ , and attains almost sexual union with the sky and the stars, a union in which she escapes from the cold and the loneliness which have gripped her the whole day.

In “The Guest”, the most effective story in the collection, we clearly see that the conflict is not between solitude and fellowship, or between liberty and submission, it is between two kinds of solitudes. One, the solitude of incomprehension in which the gestures of fraternity turn against you (Balducci as well as the Arabs do not understand Daru’s action); two, the solitude at the realization of the loss of his kingdom, i) of living alone as lord of his environment; and ii) realization of his non-action. Daru wants to do good and seems to symbolize the generous and civilizing aspects of the French administration. He is horrified at the senseless crime that the Arab has committed but hesitates to hand him over to the police. The Arab is hardly conscious of what is happening. He is incapable of comprehending that he was actually being offered his freedom, and perhaps feels unable to live outside the narrow community which he has now, had to leave. Daru’s generosity is misinterpreted because the rebels judge only on appearances. The story seems to have an appeal for tolerance and understanding on all sides. Daru is tempted to hate men, ‘this man, all men, and their dirty wickedness, their untiring hatred, their mad thirst for blood’, but cannot bring himself to hand over a man for execution. His dilemma appears to be that of the many French residents in Algeria (like Camus) who were unable to bear violence, unable to ally themselves with either side, but were also equally unable to live elsewhere than in the country where they were born and had made their home. By not making a choice Daru has made a choice. To Balducci he is a traitor, to the Arabs, an enemy, and to himself in exile—having lost the kingdom of a life in solitude where he was the lord of his environment.

In comparison, the second story in the collection, “The Renegade” is far more pessimistic in tone than “The Guest” or any of the other five and, “very densely metaphorical in content,”7 to quote Stephen Ullmann. It is narrated in a series of flashbacks and the reader is obliged to piece the details together. The missionary is seated alone on a little rocky elevation in the desert. There, beneath the blazing sun, he awaits with poised rifle the arrival of his replacement, whom he is intending to kill. His tongue has been cut out by his recalcitrant parishioners but to his half-crazed mind it appears that another tongue is constantly talking, telling the story of his past, and commenting on his present torture. Although to the reader the tale is extremely horrifying, the missionary himself feels no self pity and doesn’t look upon his plight as a mere story of suffering. Rather, it is the account of his transformation from the disciple of Love to the apostle of Hate. As a boy in a gloomy protestant country in the North, he had heard from a catholic priest, the words, ‘Catholicism is the sun’. Taking the words both, literally and figuratively, he travels across Sahara to the most isolated part of the desert, to convert the savage natives, fierce salt miners, to Christianity. The barbarous inhabitants of the City of Salt immediately seize him, beat him, torture him, castrate him, cut his tongue out, imprison him in the dark dwelling of their Fetish, obtain from total subservience, and complete fidelity to the new ‘god’. At first he rejoices to suffer these humiliations for the god of love, but gradually his attitude changes. He begins to pray to the Fetish, then actually worship him and kiss the hands of his captors. One day he overhears French soldiers, outside the prison that a military garrison was to be set up outside the town and that another priest, a chaplain was to come to take care of the children. The news plunges him in despair. He manages to escape and steal a rifle, and kills the priest on arrival. Suddenly the first person narrative breaks in the middle of a sentence, and the authorial third person voice tells us that, “A handful of salt fills the mouth of the garrulous slave.” His masters have followed him, and killed him, probably, having deliberately allowed him to shoot dead the new priest first.

Camus has portrayed the missionary very carefully. Even at the end he is still the same man, not changed actually but reacting most appropriately to his altered circumstances. At all times he is a man who worships power,

Strong, yes, that was the word I constantly had on the tip of my tongue, I dreamt of absolute power, the kind that makes people kneel down, that forces the adversary to capitulate, converts him, in short, and the blinder, the crueler he is, the more he is sure of himself, mired in his own conviction, the more his consent establishes the royalty of whoever brought about his collapse.8

The entirety of “The Renegade” centres on the problem of domination. While still at the seminary he dreams of the way in which he will subjugate the savages like a mighty sun. He ‘dreamt of absolute power, the kind that makes people kneel down’ . However, after arriving at Taghaza , it is he who is converted to the religion of the Fetish, and it is he whose kneels fall to the ground in servitude and adoration of his new masters. The forced conversion of the once- believing, clear-thinking Roman Catholic into a confused but fanatic idolator involves destruction of logical distinctions and of all forms of spiritual subtlety. Towards the end of the story, while describing his refusal of Christianity and his turn toward the power of the fetish the renegade asserts,

Hail! He [the Fetish] was the master, the only lord, whose indisputable attribute was malice, there are no good masters. . . . I surrendered to him and approved his maleficent order, I adored in him the evil principle of the world. . . . . I repudiated the long history that had been taught me. I had been misled solely, the reign of malice was devoid of defects, I had been misled, truth is square, heavy, thick, it does not admit distinctions, good is an idle dream, an intention constantly postponed and pursued with exhausting effort, a limit never reached, its reign is impossible. Only evil can reach its limits and reign absolutely, it must be served to establish its visible kingdom . . . 9

The protagonist’s dreams of missionary work were pure thirst for power. His god of love having been proved weaker, he willingly shifts his allegiance to the stronger power, determined to serve this idol with the same absolute devotion which he had intended for Christ. In fact, he is possessed by the new god in a way that he had never been by the god of love. This is so because he realizes that only Evil can reign absolutely. In a regime based on good there is inevitably compromise.

When he has shot the new priest the missionary is tortured by doubt. Having taken the decisive step he needs the assurance of his new god that he has acted rightly. But Evil can give no comfort and no pardon. In parody of them Christian passion he cries out, “O, Fetish why have you forsaken me?” he dies in anguish remembering too late his sense of fraternity with men. With his last words he implores the fetish to change with him, to become good and join him in rebuilding ‘the city of mercy.’ “The Renegade” illustrates the theme of exile in more ways than one. The missionary is in a savage country, away from his homeland. But more important than this is the fact that he has always been a stranger to true Christianity. It is clearly stated that religion has only been a mask for his feelings of pride and power. At the end of the story, and of his incoherent monologue, he however, gets only a fleeting vision of his kingdom.

A complete harmony with nature, and a deep fraternal accord, love for mankind symbolize kingdom; and the absence of this feeling is naturally the state of exile. Two kinds of exiles can be discovered in these stories: first, that from which nobody is exempt; second, which a person creates himself because of his incomprehension, ignorance, or lack of understanding. However, it is never the ultimate fate of man. Life offers opportunity to escape this negative state of life, provided one knows how to seize it. This is Camus’ message. What is important is that one must make an effort because his failure could plunge him in an exile far more deep. The same, however, cannot be proclaimed for kingdom which remains unpredictable and inexplicable even for the most lucid of his characters. Moreover, the kingdom “is always a temporary construction within the exile.”10 Janine experiences a complete identity with nature. Her deliverance is momentary. She must ultimately return to her husband’s world of boredom and routine.

Camus did not claim to find the solution to the solitude of man, nor more generally, to the difficulty of being. He caught a glimpse of two broad avenues, two perspectives, in which the despair of the absurd man diminishes before the redeeming power of love and the mystery of nature. There, man becomes aware of his true stature, he knows that he is riveted to the earth, to the world of immanence, but that he can also draw near to the other man by an act of love, and perhaps, for a fleeting moment, commune with the unknown truth of the infinite universe.

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Two Philosophical Plays:

Search for Truth

. . . all around me are lies, and I wish to live in truth.1

To lose one’s life is insignificant, and I’ ll have the courage to lose mine when the time comes.

But to see the very sense of this life dissipated, our very reason to live disappear, that is what

is unbearable. One cannot live without reason.2

You must understand that there is neither homeland, nor peace for him or for us, either in life

or in death. One cannot regard as one’s homeland . . . this obscure world deprived of life . . .3

Pray to your God that he may make you like stone. This is his private form of happiness, the

only true happiness. Be like him, make yourself deaf to all cries, be like the stone while there is

still time.4

Did you call me?

Oh! . . . I don’t know! But please help me . . . . Have pity and say that you will help me.

No!5

One of the most striking features of the post-war French drama was its concern with the human condition, with man’s place and purpose in the universe. Playwrights like Anouilh (*Antigone*), Sartre (*Huis Clos*), and Camus used the theatre as a medium for serious statements about human life in its most general aspects.

Camus’ works, irrespective of their genre, form a whole in which each one is an essential part of the others, and is in its turn illuminated by them. He had himself said in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that all his writings should be viewed together. His dramatic work, therefore, cannot be examined as an isolated fragment. It is a constant dimension of his total artistic accomplishment, constantly expanding. It was for him one more medium, one more set of resources, with which to take hold of the shifting chaos reflected everywhere in the pages written by him. The actor for him was one more prototype of what he called the ‘absurd man’. His plays, just as his fiction reflect the moral dilemmas and the philosophical inquiries of the day. Camus was convinced that a living theatre can retain its vitality only by discussing serious themes and portraying fundamental human emotions. As he has succinctly expressed in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel* he felt that the tragedy of his day was ultimately metaphysical in nature. And that is the angle from which he has viewed the problems of life in his plays. He concentrates more on the difficult situations, on the philosophical implications of these situations, than on the psychology of the character who is experiencing them. His characters are either obsessed by the desire for truth or are feeling betrayed by the existence itself. The lucidity and tenacity inherent in their nature prompts them to react with an inhuman singleness of purpose, thus creating situations which reveal the desperateness of their condition. As a result, some of these characters appear to be eccentrics or monsters and the tragedy in which they are involved becomes a matter for intellectual apprehension, and not an emotional experience.

This intellectual presentation of tragedy immediately brings to mind the Greek tragic drama. The plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles are more studies of metaphysical dilemmas than of tragically flawed characters in the Shakespearean sense. But in Camus there is no instance of direct or detailed borrowing from the ancient drama. As an extremely independent minded thinker he wanted the modern tragedy to be independent and distinctive. Considering theatre as the greatest form of artistic expression, he was sure that the greatest type of theatre, namely, the tragedy, can be recreated in the modern form. Some other French dramatists, who hold similar view have unhesitatingly turned to the great Greek masters for subject matter and have made use of the myths of Antigone, Oedipus, Electra, and others. Camus’ theatre, on the other hand, is a search for modern myth made significant for contemporary audience, not by reviving the ancient heroes but by creating heroes who embody the dilemmas of ordinary men in the twentieth century.

Camus’ dramatic career can be divided into three distinct phases: 1935-39, the period of dramatic apprenticeship at Algeria when he wrote his first play, *Revolt dans les Asturies* (1935), a potentially theatrical play but containing little genuine dramatic

substance. The second phase, 1944-49 is the most significant period of his dramatic activity; and 1950-60, when he brought out only adaptations. His four original plays, *Caligula* (1945), *Le Malentendu* (1945), *L’ Etat de Siege* (1948), and *Les Justes* (1950) were all written and produced during the second period. Just like his other writings, Camus’ plays give expression mainly to the premise that life is absurd. The first two, *Caligula* and *Le Malentendu* dwell on the metaphysical and abstract nature of the absurd, and the latter two, *L’ Etat de Siege* and *Les Justes* concentrate more on its social and political consequences. Of the first two, it is in the somber, operatic brilliance of *Caligula* that we get the most concentrated resume of his early preoccupations with the Absurd.

The young Caligula, who became the emperor of Rome at the age of twenty-five, is overwhelmed with grief following the death of his sister Drussila, for whom he had conceived an incestuous love. His emotions are not simply those of grief, but also of rage and indignation. He has been affected not by the personal loss of Drussila but by his discovery of the absurd, “Men die . . . and are not happy.”6 This loss discloses to him how barren is the world of meaning, and how absolutely death nullifies all human values. And, perceiving how shallow the general understanding of this truth is, Caligula decides to become a kind of a missionary on behalf of the Absurd, to make people understand the metaphysical anarchy that dominates the existence. He reasons:

There is no understanding Fate; therefore, I choose to play the part of Fate. I wear the foolish, unintelligible face of a professional god. . . . Any man can play lead in the divine comedy and become a god. All he needs to do is to harden his heart.7

In order to reproduce the arbitrariness of fate he lets the reign of terror loose. He imperiously decrees famine and execution, rewards a slave who has been guilty of theft because he has remained silent under torture; he confiscates the property of both, the rich and the poor. He murders the children and the parents of his friends; humiliates and tortures distinguished patricians; flouts conjugal love; awards medal to the citizen making largest number of visits to the State brothels, until finally his malevolence reaches such insane proportions that no one feels safe.

On his side, Caligula is only trying to transcend misery by the creation of “a kingdom where the Impossible is the king.” His revolt aims at transforming the very nature of the world, at destroying everything, even the distinction between the good and the evil. The discovery of misery has urged in him an imperious need of the poetically impossible, “of the moon, or of immortality, of something which is perhaps mad, but which is not of this world.” He thinks that the destruction of certainties around him will enable him to achieve this impossible ambition. He hopes that,

When all is laid flat, the impossible finally realized on this earth, the moon between my two hands, then perhaps, I shall be transformed and the world with me, then perhaps, men will not die and will be happy.8

It is a mad dream and one which the eye of the commonsense, personified in the cowardly and selfish patricians, cannot either understand or appreciate, while Helicon, a slave freed by Caligula, and who has now become his most loyal servant, recognizes well the extraordinary mental capacities of his mentor. When Caesonia, like everyone else worried over his sudden disappearance approaches him to tell them if he confided in him his plans before leaving, Helicon replies in the manner of an unperplexed, experienced, cool statesman,

My dear Caesonia, Caius [that is, Caligula] is an idealist, the whole world knows it . . . he is capable, on the contrary, with his sweet little heart, of taking charge of everything.9

He advises it will be more sensible to leave Caligula alone, and watch him. He avows complete faith in the wisdom of his master. Young Scipio declares that he (still) loves Caligula for what he was before the recent crisis. He says,

I love him. He was good to me. He encouraged me, and I know some of his words by heart. He told me that life wasn’t easy, but that there were religion, art, love to support us. He said again and again that the only mistake was to cause suffering. He wanted to be a just man.10

The senior philosopher-statesman, Cherea understands and sympathizes with his superior but does not agree with his ideas. Ultimately, it falls to his lot to lead the group of conspirators who finally assassinate Caligula. Cherea likes the emperor too well to wish him dead, but he feels that Caligula must die for two crimes: firstly, because he has instilled despair into the heart of the young; and secondly, because he has stripped life of all meaning, without which men cannot live. It is not the first time, he reflects, that a despot enjoys ultimate powers but what is uncommon in their situation, was to see somebody use his prowess to deny the very existence of human life. This is what appalls him. He confers with his colleagues:

To lose life is no great matter, and I’ ll have the courage to lose mine when the time comes. But to see life drained of its meaning, our reason to live disappear, this is what is unbearable. We cannot live without a reason. 11

He persistently tries to impress upon others that human existence has some basic meaning which needs to be respected in all circumstances.

It was the depressing sight of an old man, broken and decrepit, a sick man, a dead man, and a wandering ascetic which inspired Buddha to abandon the comforts of the royal palace in search of the truth. Determined to discover the truth about human life, to know the reality, he renounced all, following with utmost faith the rigours of severe asceticism, wandered from place to place seeking the wise, talking to them, practicing meditation, until he finally attained ‘bodhi’ or illumination and became the Buddha, the enlightened one. Camus’ Caligula sets out in more or less similar fashion in search of the moon, “or of happiness, or of Immortality, of something which may be mad, but which is not of this world,”12  because he says, “his wish is to change the system.” “And when all will be leveled, the impossible at last on earth, the moon in hands, then perhaps, I myself will be transformed and the world with me, and then at last, men will not die and they will be happy.”13 Caligula, however, doesn’t achieve his aim. In spite, of his failure he embodies in his conduct, certain important attitudes which bear resemblance to the Indian philosophy. Camus recognizes these as legitimate reasoning and makes them a part of the positive dialectic of the philosophy of the absurd. First, that man frees himself only at that point at which he recognizes that the world has no importance, the truth of the world is, that it has no truth.14

The Upanishads, mainly the *Katha*, the *Chhandogya*, and the *Brhadarnyaka* have discussed in detail, the question of the truth, the ultimate reality, the Brahman. Chapter thirteenth of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is another most lucid commentary on the nature of the ultimate reality. The world of manifestation and multiplicity is not real in itself, and seems to be real only to those who live in ignorance or *avidya*. To be caught in it is the bondage in which we all are implicated. This condition of ‘the lost’ cannot be removed by routine efforts. The only redemption lies in attaining the wisdom that the universal reality and the individual self are identical. When this knowledge arrives the ego is dissolved, the wandering of the self ceases, and one experiences perfect joy and happiness. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* true knowledge is defined in detail as humility, uprightness, forbearance, purity of body and mind, steadfastness, self control, self-effacement, indifference to the objects of sense, ability to perceive misery and evil in the facts of birth, death, old age, and disease, and staying even-minded in all conditions.15 This proclaims the divine precept is knowledge and what is different from this is ignorance or non-knowledge.16  Indian shastras lay great stress on the distinction between the narrow, ignorant, selfish way giving to transitory satisfaction and the higher path leading to eternal life. This path is followed through ‘yajna’, that is, selfless service, karma yoga, work performed for the spiritual development of the soul. ‘Samkhyayana Brhamana’ of the Rg-Veda metaphorically states that the self is the sacrifice and human soul is the sacrificer. The observance of the Vedic ritual, if performed in the right spirit, prepares the mind for the final release.

Prayer and sacrifice are means to philosophy and spiritual life. While true sacrifice is the abandonment of one’s ego, prayer is the exploration of reality by entering the beyond that is within, by ascension of consciousness. It is not theoretical learning,17 it is realizing within the celestial, the eternal, the still. If it is unknowable and incomprehensible, it is yet realizable by self discipline and integral insight. According to the Vedanta philosophy, truth can be seized not by logical thinking but by the energy of our whole inner being. And the goal is not a heavenly state of bliss or rebirth in a better world but freedom from the objective, cosmic law of karma, identity with the Supreme Consciousness. It is a stage in the onward growth of an individual’s soul. Similarly in the Buddhism, the appearance of a Buddha is the consequence of a growth achieved after endless sacrifice and renunciation. It is not a miracle.

The observation made by Caligula that this (i.e. mortal ) world has no truth, is one of the basic convictions of his creator. The thought that life has no significance recurs in most of his writings. The observation made by Caligula that this (i.e. mortal ) world has no truth, is one of the basic convictions of his creator. To quote Camus, “Caligula, a relatively kind prince . . . realizes on the death of Drusilla, his sister and his mistress, that ‘men die and they are not happy.’ Therefore, obsessed by the quest for the Absolute  and poisoned by contempt and horror, he tries to exercise, through murder and systematic perversion of all values, a freedom which he discovers in the end is no good [ . . .] he levels all around him by force of his refusal and by the rage of destruction which drives his passion for life. But if his truth is to rebel against fate, his error is to deny men. One cannot destroy without destroying oneself. This is why Caligula depopulates the world around him and, true to his logic, makes arrangements to arm those who will eventually kill him. Caligula is the story of a superior suicide. It is the story of the most human and the most tragic of errors. Unfaithful to man, loyal to himself, Caligula consents to die for having understood that no one can save himself all alone and that one cannot be free in opposition to other men.”18 His goal is to demonstrate the meaninglessness or absurdity of life and therefore the impossibility of human happiness. The thought that life has no significance recurs in most of his writings. The protagonist in *The Outsider*, Meursault, reflects philosophically, “ . . . all this has no real importance.”

Camus arrived at this conclusion independently after a direct confrontation with life. His thinking, however, shows an unmistakable influence of his knowledge of, and faith in the Buddhistic and the Upanishadic thought. He insists, very much in the manner of an Upanishadic seer that in order to know reality , complete detachment from the world is an essential pre-condition.19 It is only after a seeker has wholly severed his ties with the petty human temptations and indulgences that he can transcend the level of ordinary attachments, and develop an ascetic distance which will enable him to comprehend the truth of life and the difference between the real and the false. Caligula, in his search for the truth is following the same path as taken by Buddha. It is this acquired indifference which kindles true insight in the mind of a man who has known and surpassed the world’s absurdity.

Furthermore, in the writings of Albert Camus, especially those belonging to the later period, there is a suggestion of revolt—political as well as personal –leading to self-realization. In the play under discussion Caligula is throughout trying to capture the moon, the impossible, because “things as they are , don’t seem to me as satisfactory.”20 He didn’t know this fact earlier. His sorrow has now revealed to him that the world as it exists is not a sufficiently happy place to live. It is not bearable. That is why , “ . . . I am in need of the moon, or of happiness, or of immortality, of something which can perhaps, be mad but which is not of this world.”21 Emotionally wrecked but wiser with the truth that his present anguish has taught him, he goes on ruminating, “ . . . this death is nothing, I swear; it is only a symbol of the truth which has rendered the moon necessary for me. It is a truth very simple and very clear, a bit stupid but difficult to discover and heavy to live with.”22 Caligula pursues the impossible for the very reason that it is impossible. We should not dismiss his pursuit as a mere whim of his madness. When Prince Siddhartha first confronted misery in the world he too reacted in the same way.

Despite his having discovered the true path and the true goal of life Caligula fails. But he is not an ignorant self. He has realized at the end that he will not get the moon and that all his efforts have merely served to refer him back to the knowledge of his failure. Yet he doesn’t give up. It is Camus’ fundamental principle that man’s grandeur and possible happiness lie in his refusal to give up his desire for the impossible. If man is to save himself he must never cease to reach above the limits of his condition at the same time that he refuses to pretend that they are not there. Here again one can see the impact of Indian thought on Camus’ mind. The Indian philosophy is optimistic because it holds up hope to the mankind in all situations. Man need not abandon his struggle in the most abject condition. If he has missed the right path once he is not doomed to an eternity of suffering. There are ways to reach to the Infinite Spirit. If he cares to follow the right path he is fully assured that he will ultimately arrive there. In fact, this concept constitutes one of the basic differences between the Christianity and the Hinduism. The Hindu believes in a succession of lives, but a Christian is taught that, “it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment.”23 Camus did not believe in the theory of the rebirth or reincarnation but vehemently denied adherence to the Christian dogmatic belief. He found the ancient systems of religious thought more amenable to his frame of mind. He was convinced that a man holds his destiny in his own hands. He is never alone. His deeds, ‘karmas’ are always with him. Camus often notes in his Carnets, ‘Vedas, ce que l’ homme pense, il le devient’. It is a reproduction, apparently from memory, of a thought repeatedly stressed in the Upanishads. ‘He becomes good by good work and evil by evil works’, so it is up to him to achieve a high level of moral goodness.24 Caligula counsels young Scipion, “ . . . you do not know that we are never alone! . . . . all around us the same weight of the future and the past accompanies us.”25 Judging from this statement one would have no doubt that Camus concurred with the Indian theory of karma. Our acts are always with us, and they determine our future.

The doctrine of karma is accepted by most Indian systems of thought. The Buddhism speaks of the Karma principle thus:

All beings have karma for their portion, they are the heirs of their karma, they are sprung from their karma, their karma is their kinsman, their karma is their refuge, karma allots beings to meanness and greatness.26

The Buddha continually inveighed against those who tried to deny the moral reality of life. He was convinced that the universe was governed by inescapable moral law, and he could account for the environmental and hereditary variations among men only by assuming that their past ‘kamma’ had conditioned their present life. Man cannot escape the consequences of his behavior. Every act, good or bad produces its inevitable effect. The main idea of the ‘kamma’ doctrine is that man is what he is because of his own past deeds. They condition the present just as certainly as his present acts will affect his future. The main concern of the doctrine, like that of the Existentialism, is to safeguard the freedom, and preserve the independence of man.27 It emphasizes the fact that man is the creator of his own destiny; and that he alone is the architect of his world. He may not be able to alter the consequences of his past deeds but he can definitely choose the course of his action in the present, and thus control future. “Work out your own salvation,” were the last words of the Buddha. You alone, he seems to say, are responsible for the present predicament, and only you can find the way out. Camus, however, takes the man’s side and holds blind Fate responsible for his plight, and advocates revolt asseverating man’s inherent capacity to rebuild a better present and future for himself.

A little less metaphysical than *Caligula* yet equally wrapt in Absurd thought is Camus’ second play, *Le Malentendu* (The Misunderstanding, sometimes published as *Cross Purpose*). In fact, the Absurd is the central theme of both these plays, the novel, *The Outsider* and his essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. In *Le Malentendu* Camus draws our attention to the absurdity of things as exemplified in gratuitous human suffering, in the existence of misunderstanding and hatred where ‘more naturally’ there might been love and mutual help. The characters of the play when confronted with the absurd seek, neither to comprehend nor to transcend it. They simply despair. The plot is a variation on the prodigal son story. Jan, the returning son, does not reveal his identity. Therefore, the only welcome prepared for him is the one extended to the victim of a murder plot. The scene is laid in a gloomy, rarely frequented inn located in an out-of-the-way spot in central Europe. During the years since he ran away, Jan has lived happily and prosperously in the South. Having heard recently that his father has long been dead, he has come to see whether he can help his mother and sister who are still maintaining the old inn. Yet, while he tells his wife that the journey is undertaken because they perhaps need him, and not because he has any need of them, it soon becomes clear that he feels compelled to return for more than altruistic reasons. At first, he tries to explain that man have a duty as well as a need for happiness. Then he says,

One can’t be happy in exile or in forgetfulness. One can’t always remain a stranger. A man has need of happiness, true. But he also needs to find his true place in the world. And I imagine that to find my country again and to bring happiness to those I love, will help me to do this.28

Fearing the effect of too sudden a revelation and hoping obscurely that he can make his mother and sister love him for himself, and gradually realize who he must be, Jan sends his wife to another hotel and prepares to register as a guest in his mother’s inn. Meanwhile, we have learnt from the conversation of the mother and daughter that they make their living by robbing and murdering unaccompanied wealthy guests. The motivating force behind this conduct is Martha’a passionate longing to escape to a southern land of sun and sea. Camus portrays this hope in such a convincing manner that t Martha it appears to be a rare promise of life and new birth.

Camus exploits remarkably the irony of the situation to the full. When Jan attempts to establish some sort of friendliness with Martha, she rebuffs him with the statement that he is t receive exactly the treatment accorded to other guests, neither more nor less. He finally succeeds in arousing some warmth and eagerness in her by talking of his home in the South, but it is precisely, this reminder of the beauty of her land of hope that stiffens Martha in her weakening resolve to carry on with the murder. When Jan is almost ready to give up and go away without revealing his identity, Martha offers the first unsolicited overture, the cup of tea containing a hypnotic drug. When the mother, who had secretly resolved to spare him, finds that he has already drunk the tea, assures him that it had been brought by mistake. Jan falls into a drugged sleep, and the mother follows the rest of the procedure mechanically. After the first time even murder has become a habit with her. She joins Martha in throwing the body in the river. Up to this point the tragic irony is present in the same form as in the novels of Thomas Hardy. And 0ne feels that but for the absurd trick of fate, all might have ended well. If the mother had arrived before Jan had tea, if Jan had revealed himself at the first sign of Martha’s wistful longing for another life, they might all have gone South to swim and sun-bathe together. But the discovery of Jan’s passport and of his true identity not only influence future developments but throw a new light on the past events. In the mother, the sudden knowledge affects a bitter awakening. Overwhelmed with grief she decides to join her son at the bottom of the river. To Martha this talk of crime and punishment makes no sense. She pleads with her mother not to sacrifice a living daughter to a dead son. Instead of feeling any remorse, she is jealous of her mother’s love for Jan and loathes him even after his death for having enjoyed twenty years of that love and happiness which she had been deprived of.

Maria, Jan’s wife comes in the morning to enquire after the whereabouts of her husband. Martha resents the happiness that Maria has had in the past, and tells her the brutal truth without any apology or pity. It is here that Camus reveals the full breadth of the Absurd. Maria believes that the calamity which has struck her is an exception in a universe where love, family ties, and meaningful happiness are possible. Martha deliberately tries to drive Maria to despair by showing her that there is no hope or meaning in the world, and “that no one is ever recognized.” She feels under obligation to tell her that,

. . . before I go to die, I must rid you of the illusion that you are right, that love isn’t futile, and that what has happened was an accident. On the contrary, it is now that we are in the normal order of things . . .

What do you mean by that?

That, in the normal order of things no one is ever recognized.29

Indifferent to Maria’s agony she savagely goes on,

. . . fix this in your mind; neither for him nor for us, neither in the life nor in death, is there any peace or homeland.30

In a thinly guised speech we are told again that,

We are cheated. . . . What good is this great craving for being, these yearning that rack our souls? Why cry out for the sea or for love? It’s ridiculous . . .

You should understand that no grief of yours can ever equal the injustice done to man.31

Maria must try to understand how death is the answer to all of man’s hopes and desires. Camus always saw death as an annihilating power, the worst injustice done to man. But a little earlier, just after the murder of Jan, when Martha tries to shake up her somewhat distracted mother, we hear her contemplate,

He is sleeping. He is not bothered about the burden of life, of the stress and strain, of the work to be done. . . . He is sleeping and doesn’t worry any more about the jobs, duties to do. . . . I too wish to sleep.32

This passage contradicts Camus’ generally taken stand on the concept of death but shows him nearer the Indian thinking. Hindus have always viewed death as a relief from the drudgery of life, an end to illusions, a mode of transcendence into reality, and not a reason for reproach.

Martha concludes by counseling Maria to struggle to attain the insensitivity of whatever force is responsible for man’s creation,

Pray to your God that he may make you like a stone. That is the happiness that he chooses for himself. . . . Be like him. Make yourself deaf to all cries. Become one with the stone while there is still time. . . . You have a choice between the mindless happiness of stones and the slimy bed in which we are awaiting you.33

Maria cannot accept the idea that life is totally meaningless; she follows Martha’a advice and prays, not to become a stone, but for help,

O God, I cannot live in the desert! . . . Have pity on me. Turn your face towards me! Hear me, Lord, and give me your hand! Have pity on those who love each other and are separated.34

The old servant of the inn appears, and responds with one single word, the last of the play, “No”.

*Le Malentendu* sketches out the general character of the Camusian Absurd—existence of suffering and injustice among men who will, in any case, find that death makes futile all their projects; the deaf personality of a world in which man constantly searches for a reason to explain and justify his struggle but can find none. So far as the search for meaning of life is concerned, it has been there from the time man started thinking. Camus is voicing the same restless desire to know the meaning of life, the reason behind human existence, and the reality behind the mystery of death which is found in most of the Upanishads. In order to underline the proximity I notice in the two I quote the opening two verses of the *Svetasvetara* Upnishad:

*Kim karnam Brahman, kutah sma jata, jivama kena, kava ca*

*Sampritishah,*

*Adhishitah kena sukhetaresu vartamahe brahma-vido*

*Vyavastham*.35

And,

*Kala svabhavo nyatir yadrachha bhutani yonih purusa iti*

*cintya*

*samyoga esam no tvatma-bhavad atmapy anisah*

*such-dukha-hito*.36

The Indian seers have emphatically warned against accepting certainty in metaphysical discussions. Certainty, they felt, is the source of inertia, while doubt leads to progress. That’s why all Indian shastras are full of queries, questions, arguments and counter-arguments. Thinkers, in the West or in the East are equally baffled by the seeming meaninglessness of human life, its inexplicability, the feeling of unreality and strangeness and have expressed their views in theistic as well as atheistic manner. The tone of Camus’ thinking affiliates him to a non-theistic trend if not an outright atheistic one. From the very beginning he had an acute awareness of his own existence, and of the human existence in general. And early in life he had set himself the task of exploring the purpose behind human life. He felt outraged at the eventuality of (untimely or unjust) death, ‘the cruel mathematics that commands our condition.” He put forward the argument that man faces a world which is simply there, into which he is hurled by a blind and indifferent fate. And then in the end, death levels down all his strivings into nothing. In his effort to resolve the phenomenon of unmerited human misery he indignantly rejected any appeal to god. But has offered an interpretation which affirms his love for human life and faith in it.

In the play, *Le Malentendu* Jan, Martha , and Maria all try to find a way out and fail, yet the play is not without the suggestion that there might be a solution. Jan speaks of the love which may flower if one possesses the slow patience to tend it. There are references to the happiness he and Maria have known in the South before coming to this place. It is, however, true that Jan had felt that it was not enough and had, therefore, sought something more. His journey to North had been, in part, to find assurance that he belonged somewhere and he wanted to share his good fortune with those whom he felt to be his own. In Jan’s return home one can perhaps, see the attempt of a man, who had achieved inner peace but could not enjoy it as long as the others were still suffering. The plot of the play, indeed, offers the key to Camus’ work: the irreparable misunderstanding between man and the world.

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Camus’ Philosophy:

Influences and Evolution

Albert Camus maintained that an examination of his life was not strictly relevant to an understanding of his work. He didn’t particularly care for the biographical approach to a critical analysis of his writings. Yet he described his writings as an outcome of an effort to understand the age into which he was born. He was a man of conscience and integrity, an intellectual whose mind could be subtle, ironic, incisive, while at the same time grounded in common sense.

The age which Camus witnessed and for which he wrote was one of tremendous moral and intellectual confusion, convulsion, and of terrible blows, dealt against most of the traditionalist humanist assumptions. A pronounced comprehensive cynicism, nihilism, meaninglessness of everything was, therefore, was a natural consequence. There was a sudden awareness of the passing of the time and of the feeling that it was carrying them away with it and will finally destroy their physical existence arbitrarily in the form of death. This fact sparked in Camus an ambivalent response: extreme love for life and a vehement revolt against death. This dualism, an acute sense of the consciousness of contrast between richness of physical existence and inevitability of death is, what he termed as the absurd.

This deep-seated ambivalence underlies the first collection of his essays, *L’* *Envers et l’ endroit* (1936, Eng tr. *Betwixt and Between*, 1937). These five essays written in the most elegant prose contain in them an intense, yet severe lyricism, in which the intensity praises the profusion of the physical world while the severity recalls human transience seen against this physical background. These two aspects of existence are summed up in Camus’ conclusion, that “there is no love of life without despair about life.”1

The theme of tragic reality of human existence is an old and familiar subject in literature and has been emphasized from ancient times. Indian philosophy is considered pessimistic, and it is so insofar as it works under an awareness of discomfort and disquiet with the existing order of things. In this sense all philosophy is pessimistic. The suffering of the world provokes the problems of philosophy and religion. But no Indian system stops portraying life as tragedy. They all hold out a message of hope. The essence of Buddha’s enlightenment and his four noble truths sum up and voice the essential viewpoint of major Indian schools of thought that, there is suffering; there is a cause of suffering; there is a cessation of suffering; and there is a way to attain it.2 Pessimism, evident in the Indian systems is initial, not final.3 Camus, as it appears to me, re-states about the same thought in all his writings. What is striking in him is, the individual directness with which he expresses it, and his personal need to maintain both aspects of dualism and his refusal to suppress either of them in order to attain, what would have been for him, a dishonest peace of mind. His collection of essays, *Nuptials* is built up entirely on the theme of dualism , bringing out distinctly how each of the two terms intensified his experience of the other. He writes, “My horror of dying derives from my anxious appetite for life.”4 And again, “I want to maintain clearnessof vision to the uttermost limit and face my end with all the wealth of my appetite for life and my horror of death.”5

To this realization of duality in the universe is added another aspect of the Camusian Absurd, that of uncertainty. Camus views human experience as beyond the reach of rational category. The true history of human thought, he says, is the story of its perpetual failure to achieve any certainty. His argument is,

I can feel this heart inside me and I conclude that it exists. All my knowledge ends at this point. The rest is hypothesis.6

He defines the Absurd as something which arises from a confrontation between the human desire for coherence and understanding and the existing irrationality and opacity of the world. His interpretation of the Absurd conforms to the ancient mythic patterns used to represent the human condition: Tantalus tormented by the illusions of water and of fruit-laden trees beyond his reach; Prometheus chained to a rock; and Sisyphus pushing his boulder toward the hilltop only to see it roll back. The main moral consequence drawn by Camus from his analysis was, that the absurd reduces all actions to ethical equality insofar as they cannot be referred to any absolute standard of right and wrong. But Camus’ thought mellowed with his advancing years. They evolved with time. His experience of the occupation of France took him beyond the moral indifference of nihilism. In those extreme circumstances, the making of moral choice, and acceptance of direct personal responsibility could mean the difference between life and death for others, including close friends. This situation served to bring out greatest virtues in Camus’ character; integrity and humanity. Although he was fforemost an intellectual, he was neither prepared nor capable of putting ideology above the actual everyday experience of his fellow beings. He could not sacrifice human justice to philosophic theory. He very often repeated, “ I am not a philosopher, and can only talk about the experiences I have lived through.”7 His views and interpretations of life obviously have their source in his real life experience. It then, becomes naturally necessary to study the circumstances which contributed to make Camus what he was.

Among the writers who became internationally known Camus falls in the category of those few who rose from the humblest of backgrounds. His father with no formal education, was an agricultural worker on a vineyard, was mobilized in the first battle of the Marne, during which was killed in 1914. Camus was barely a year old at that time, had hardly known him, yet his writings reveal how deeply he missed him all his life, how acutely he felt the injustice of his death, and the additional suffering it entailed on his mother. She too like his father was illiterate, suffering from hearing and speech impediment because of a neglected childhood illness. Yet she brought up her two sons by long hours of work as a charwoman. Although there was very little display of affection or communication between them Camus’ relationship with his mother remained a deep and lasting influence on his life. The silent presence, the patient brown eyes, the life of hard manual labour, the brief disjointed sentences of his mother who “thought with difficulty” haunt the pages of all his writing.8 His memoires which he started writing in May 1935, open thus:

What I mean is this: that one can, with no romanticism, feel nostalgic for lost poverty. A certain number of years lived without money are enough to create a whole sensibility. In this particular case, the strange feeling which the son has for his mother constitutes his whole sensibility.9

The other two members of his immediate family were an older brother Lucien, and a deeply catholic, domineering grandmother whom he has vividly portrayed in his essay, “Irony”.10

Camus used to escape the dismal surroundings of his home to play on the bright Mediterranean shores with children of his age. These family conditions constituted for him the ‘l’envers’, that is, the reverse of the page. The ‘endroit’ or the recto was formed by the luxuriant beauty of the African earth, with its flaming red sky, its golden beaches, and the fickle sea so magnificently evoked throughout his work.

Like other children of the locality Camus started going to the local elementary school. But he was different from them. Early in life he also became aware of a certain distance creeping in between him and his family. He knew that he was growing away from his own people. He started feeling a stranger in the family in spite of himself. Nevertheless, the intellectual and moral characteristics which at that time were formulating in his mind bear a unique stamp of his particular origin.

One of his school teachers, M. Louis Germain, an upright, honourable man, a free thinker, profoundly attached to his democratic and secular principles, who consciously taught his pupils to esteem values like devotion, sincerity, honesty, and detachment from material objects noticed in Camus an extraordinary sensitivity and intelligence. Foreseeing valuable potential he took pains to coach him for the scholarship qualification test for a seat in the highly rated Algiers Lycee. Camus won it. A frail, fatherless boy, he suddenly found himself in the company of the sons of wealthy colons, high officials, and other important people. Boys of this age generally suffer from the prejudices of the superiority of class, race, and money, all three of which Camus lacked. At this juncture of his life there occurred in him a crystallization of intellectual and emotional attitudes which remained a significant part of his thinking despite his well-known flexibility. For Camus this was the first revelation of social injustice. Perhaps at this time, probably, may be unconsciously, he decided his stand to remain on the side of the poor, the unfortunate, and the oppressed, who like his mother suffer but are unable to express their misery. He identified with them and remained with them throughout his life emotionally, with pride and dignity.

Notwithstanding the fact that he had now begun to feel more and more isolated in his own home where the others had started looking upon him ‘as a phenomenon that was getting education’, all his affection was directed to his own class. This pronounced affinity of his soul explains his passion for justice, truth, liberty, and love for humanity. It was during these years of adolescence that his social creed took shape. He abided by it to the end. He expresses his social beliefs very clearly in a speech he delivered at the St. Etienne on May 10, 1953:

For my part I have never admitted any aristocracies but those of work and intelligence, and now I know that together they form a single nobility, that they can find truth, and particularly, efficacy in union, that separated they can be vanquished one after the other by the forces of tyranny and barbarism, but that together, on the contrary, they will become the law of the world.11

At the Lycee very often he had to confront the indignity of class discrimination but his exceptionally brilliant and rational outlook saved him from sinking into sterile bitterness or adopting the piteous conformity of the poor wretch eager to win acceptance from those whom he looked upon as better than him. He remained bravely true to himself, and by the radiating charm of his personality succeeded in gaining admiration of his fellow pupils for the qualities of his character and intellect.

Camus was in the habit of studying with moderation, devoting considerable time to activities like dancing, swimming, and soccer. This was so in the year 1930 when he was seventeen and happy. Somewhere during this period he suffered his first virulent attack of tuberculosis. This incident proved a turning point in his life. His first lonely encounter with death- a public ward in the hospital, other patients around him- awakened him to a full consciousness of what it really meant to be living. His initial reaction appears to have been one of fear and revolt. He did not feel any romantic delectation in his state and no resignation. The next ten years were perhaps, the most active years of his life. He broke off completely from his past, left home because there he could not take adequate care of himself, and after a short stay with an uncle, started living independently, supporting himself as best as he could. At this point his intellectual life shows an unusual tempo of development. At the University of Algiers he made a lasting friend in the philosopher-writer Jean Grenier from whom he imbibed his taste for philosophical meditation.12 and under whose supervision he prepared his thesis on ‘Christian Metaphysics of St. Augustine and Neo-Platonism’ . While preparing his thesis Camus read thoroughly the life and beliefs of both, St, Augustine and of Plotinus which made a deep impact on his mind.

In the context of tracing philosophical inter-relationship of the Eastern and the Western thought, with special reference to Camus, St. Augustine occupies a unique place. He was born in Tagaste in Roman Africa in A.D. 354 and died at Hippo (modern day Annaba in Algeria) in A.D. 430, after being bishop of that city from A.D.395 to 430. He was thus an African belonging to the far flung Roman Empire and was brought up on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, facing Europe. The cultures and traditions of various races from different parts of the world moulded his character and shaped his thinking. Semitic influences were at work in his life, passed on to him through the society of Phoenicians with whose language and ideas he was well acquainted. Persia influenced him deeply through the doctrine of Manichaeism13 which he followed for a period of nine years. Latin and Greek classics played an important part in his intellectual growth. He was taught Latin from his childhood and his entire education was imparted almost exclusively in that language. As a boy he studied selected passages from the Latin poets with whom his own writings bear familiarity. His reading of *Hortensius* of Cicero13a stimulated in him an ardent love of philosophy. As a boy he also learnt Greek but did not make much progress in it as he was not inclined to master the subtleties of the language. His basic interest was philosophy. He was particularly indebted to the Greek philosophy of Neo-Platonism, which formed an integral part of his thinking to the end of his life, though considerably modified by later study and experience.

To a brilliant young man like St. Augustine, whose keen desire was to explain intelligibly whatever he believed, the doctrine of Manichaeism held a great attraction and proved to be a potent influence on him. While St. Augustine appreciated the effective solutions Manichaeism offered to various problems of life, he could not readily accept their mythology and subsequently passed through a period of skepticism before falling under the spell of Neo-Platonism. According to the teaching of Plotinus, the Absolute cannot be described, but can only be called Being or Unity. “The Absolute is none of the things of which it is the source. Its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of it – not existence, not essence, not life – since it is that which transcends all these.”14 Ultimate Reality is beyond good and evil. Moral qualities imply limitations and cannot exist in the Absolute. This indescribable Absolute was the goal of spiritual attainment for which Plotinus strove. This teaching of Plotinus was closely akin to the philosophy of the ‘Advaita Vedanta’.15 It had a considerable appeal for him but did not obtain his final and whole-hearted allegiance. His profoundly religious nature was not content to adore and worship the Absolute, of which nothing but existence could be predicted. Nevertheless, Neo-Platonism left a lasting impression on his mind and enabled him to understand the nature of God as Spirit.

St. Augustine has set forth the story of his conversion in inimitable words in the pages of his spiritual autobiography, *Confessions*, which Camus read many times over while working on his thesis. It left a deep impact on him. *Confessions* show St. Augustine to be a true mystic. Mysticism is a gift, a charisma, but there are ascetic methods of preparing oneself for it. St Augustine’s teachings discourse a lot on the nature of meditation. He advises that for prayers to be effective the clamour of the senses must cease, and the urges of the body must stop. Only then can we commune with God. The method of meditation as explained by St Augustine is similar to the one the Neo-Platonist and the Indian spiritual systems support. “Neo-Platonism believes in the Hindu technique of entering into spiritual consciousness. By meditation we can free the soul from its subjection to the body and attain union with the Supreme. Plotinus asks us to strip off everything extraneous till the vision is attained. We must abstract from the body, which doesn’t belong to the true nature of the self, from the self that shapes the body, from sense perceptions, appetites and emotions, and even the intellect with its duality. Then the soul touches and gazes on the supreme light.”16 The communion between the divine soul and the human soul is a blissful experience rousing within us the highest joy.

The influence of Neo-Platonism on the formation of Christian dogma held intense interest for Camus who, though devoid of faith, sought to understand the meaning of his own life.17 His philosophy teacher, Grenier was a Christian, something of a mystic and a passionate devotee of Greece. He transmitted to Camus his love of Greek literature, of great tragic poets, and of philosophers.18 It was thus through Plato, and Plotinus that Camus first speculated on the problems of essence and existence. His line of thought unlike that of Sartre can be traced through St. Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, , and Chestov with constant reference to Indian thinkers and scriptures such as the Upanishads, *the* *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Manusmriti*, and the gospels of Buddha. Camus’ objective was not an analysis or criticism of the systematic philosophies but an active involvement in the scrupulous application of the prescribes ethics and of learning the method of philosophical meditation. He was fascinated by the serenity of Buddha’s expression, by his teachings, by the bodhisattvas.19 he had read the book on Buddha by Guilloux.20 He is known to have gone on long meditation sessions.21 It is very likely that he attended some of the lectures delivered by Swami Siddheshwarananda who was the head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre at Gretz22 during the late thirties and early fourties, and is known to have regularly lectured at the Sorbonne,23 whom Jean Grenier knew and was in correspondence with. He mentioned it to Camus in a letter in 1942.24

Camus was a voracious and sensitive reader, noting down carefully his impressions and discussing them later with Grenier. The correspondence between them is ample evidence of the regular intellectual exchange they maintained until Camus sudden death in 1960.25 A record of Camus’ reading,26 his comments on the books are available in the notebooks he maintained from 1935 onwards.27 These are not diaries or memoir notes in the usual sense of the word but rather his impressions, reflections, and sketches intended for use in his future writing.

Besides his personal experience in real life, Camus’ reading had a seminal influence on his thoughts. He has attributed his awakening to a deeper sense of life to Grenier,

Personally, I had no lack of gods: the sun, the night, the sea. . . . But these are gods of enjoyment; they fill then they empty. . . . I had to be reminded of the mysterious and the sacred, of the finite nature of man, of a love which is impossible, so that I could one day return to my natural gods with less arrogance.28

Camus was also influenced by such pessimistic philosophers as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The articles that he wrote when he was still a Lyceen show these influences. Even at that young age he had already decided that there was no rationalist explanation of the world, and sought some salvation in a world that, to him, seemed meaningless. In these early articles and in his later writing Camus tends to use religious terminology, although he never accepted any religious system. When his friend, Jean-Claude Brisville, asked him to define more exactly what he meant by saying, ‘Secret of my universe: imagine God without the immortality of the soul’ He replied, “I have a sense of the sacred, and I don’t believe in a future life, that’s all.”29

Later in life, intending to make a career in teaching, Camus studied philosophy at the University of Algiers. In his post-graduate thesis for which he was awarded a ‘Diplome d’ Etudes Superieures’, he describes how the early Christian church appropriated the philosophical forms and methods of the Neo-Platonists, particularly those of Plotinus and of the Indian Upanishads. The thesis ends with a study of St. Augustine who successfully combined the Neo-Platonic metaphysics and Christian doctrine.

Even in this thesis there are hints of the problems with which Camus was trying to come to terms. He contrasts the two sensibilities: the Christian preoccupation with sin and with eternal salvation, and the Greek belief in innocence and in the importance of the natural world. These two outlooks parallel Camus’ own sense of the dichotomy of the existence as seen in his first collection of essays, *Betwixt and Between* published in 1937, a year after he presented his thesis. The world he describes is one in which death, strangeness, and loneliness often predominate but in which man finds beauty and tries to give some meaning to his life. Camus would have agreed with the Greeks that, “our kingdom is of this world” and with the Christians that this world is a place of tragedy in which death is always imminent. The way of getting out of this tragic state is what the Indian philosophy taught him.

Apart from scholastic study Camus read a lot for pleasure. Modern authors like Malraux, Montherlant, Kafka, Faulkner, Gide, Dostoevsky, Herman Melville left a lasting impact on his mind.30 In addition he read specific mystic works by John Ruysbroeck, St. Theresa of Avila, *the Bhagavad-Gita*.31 The book which first moved him to write was *La Douleur* by Andre de Richaud lent to him by John Grenier.32 Its reading produced an overwhelming reaction in him so close was his identification with its plot. In it Richaud had depicted poor areas the like Camus had known and lived in Belcourt. It spoke about the nostalgia he had himself felt. While reading this book Camus felt that he too might have something personal to express. That notwithstanding, it was the reading of *Les Iles* by Jean Grenier which actually launched him on his vocation. *Les Iles* talks about the Mediterranean, its significance, and of the values one must uphold in life. It contains a personal approach to the quest for happiness of a man who, though a believer, was never inclined to be dogmatic. These two books directly touched the core of Camus’ sensitivity and made a profound impact on him.

Camus assigned the beginning of his career to his reading of *Les Iles*. Not only that, on his own testimony, we also know that it was Jean Grenier who called him away from the ‘happy barbarism’ of the life of swimming and sunbathing which he led on the beaches of Algeria and showed him ‘in an inimitable language that the light and splendour of bodies were beautiful, but that they would perish, and that we must, therefore, love them with the urgency of despair.’ ‘Perhaps’, he continues, ‘this was the only way of guiding a young man brought up outside the traditional religions towards a deeper way of thinking. Personally I had no shortage of gods of enjoyment. They fill, but they also empty. With them alone for company, I should have forgotten them in preference for enjoyment itself. I needed to be reminded of mysterious and sacred things, of the finite nature of man, of a love that was impossible, in order, that I might one day return to my natural gods with less arrogance. Thus I owe Grenier, not certainties which he neither wanted nor was able to give. On the contrary, I owe him a doubt that will never end, and which has prevented me , for example, from being a humanist in the sense which the world has today, that is to say, a man blinded by narrow certainties.’33

This whole-hearted attribution of the beginning of his literary career to the reading of a particular book is indeed a noble act on Camus’ part. However, the personal experiences he was going through at about the same time are also of equal significance. His first attack of tuberculosis must have been a an exhaustive emotional shock for him. Combined with his reflective nature it must have completely shaken him out from the fleeting and vulnerable pleasures of the body to find another, more lasting and satisfactory basis to his life. Most critics have unhesitatingly stated that Camus’ first attack of tuberculosis at the age of seventeen was both, the ‘first revelation of the absurd’ and that crucial experience which turned him from an unreflective enjoyment of life to the long and sometimes anguished meditation on existence which informs his entire work. However, on Camus’ own admission it can be concluded that the theme of death and the transitoriness of the world is as much literary as personal in origin. Even if, Grenier’s book acted merely as a catalyst, and an example, it does, nevertheless, seem to have determined not only the form but also the contents of his essays in the two collections, *Betwixt and Between* (first published in 1937 as *L’ Envers et l’ endroit*) and *Nuptials* (first published in 1939 as *Noces*). These two books are clearly most autobiographical of all his work. They show Camus in his early twenties as a young man who found great difficulty in entering into contact with people and in expressing the sympathy which he felt for their suffering and unhappiness. The first essay, for example, contains a description of three failures of communication which announce the theme of separation in his later, more mature work. The people described are all old, and are forced by their age into an awareness of the futility and meaninglessness of life from which the young man are protected by the variety of interests open to them. An old woman who is left alone while the young people go off to the cinema turns, in the absence of other interests, to religion and is ‘finally plunged with no hope to return, into the misery of man with God.’ An old man learns the supreme misfortune of old age - of no longer listened to - and realizes that he is alone , lost, and already dead as he stands in the growing silence of the evening looking at ‘the foolish and indifferent smile of the heavens.’ A grandmother who has brought up her daughter’s children most dogmatically, dies alone and unloved, and her death’ redeems nothing.’34

Man’s loneliness is particularly tragic in *Betwixt and Between* because all possibility of a religious solution is denied, and because man is shown unable to find any happiness in his own thoughts. This aspect is emphasized in the essay, “Iron in the Soul”, in which Camus describes his personal experiences when travelling in Czechoslovakia and spending a week alone in Prague. There is a city in which he knew no one and could not speak their language, he was as he says, ‘reduced to despair by this disappointing tete-a-tete with myself and with my own poverty stricken thoughts.’ Yet, this essentially Pascalian view of man is nowhere presented as leading to an acceptance of religion. Camus considered that, ‘it is sufficient for the hope of life to return again for God to be powerless against the interests of man.’ He believed that religion, like man’s other activities offers only fleeting and illusory benefits. In many ways, *Betwixt and Between* is the most depressing of Camus’ early works, for it holds out no possibility of escaping from loneliness and frustration. He seems to say that the world is beautiful, but contains no comfort or consolation for man. His rich response to beauty does not save man from the realization of his mortality or his weaknesses, but it gives him courage to seek happiness and to accept his destiny without flinching. Camus attempted to rise above his despair by understanding it. While travelling in Italy he found the world indifferent to man, the Sun shines on a landscape that offers nothing to man’s aspirations. But the world is also beautiful,

I needed some greatness. I found it in the confrontation of my profound despair with the secret indifference of one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. Here I drew the force to be courageous and conscious at the same time.35

A similar joy in the beauty of external world occurs in Palma, at the cloister of San Francisco. Camus is afraid of being detached from his usual patterns of thought, of losing the routine that shields from him the strangeness of every moment. But, because his consciousness is suddenly drawn to immediate surface impressions, he perceives a unique play of appearances. The moment, the appearance, must be savoured and is savoured more fully because one is conscious of impermanence,

There was all my love of life: a silent passion for what would perhaps, escape me, a bitterness beneath a flame. . . . There is no love of life without despair in life.36

The emotion that inspires each of the essays is similar. An experience, such as pity for his illiterate suffering mother, or despair at being unable to order a meal in Prague, cuts through Camus’ normal acceptance of life. He questions the meaning of a world in which exist side by side, death and beauty, suffering and joy, incomprehensibility and man’s desire for clarity. Behind the uncertainty and despair described in *Betwixt and Between* lies Camus’ early, near fatal encounter with tuberculosis.

All systems of the Indian thought recognize the presence of suffering in human life. They fully acknowledge that joy, happiness, and pleasure are all momentary experiences and hat death is inevitable. Hence, the spontaneous desire to attain unalloyed, permanent bliss. Only the Indian materialists, the Carvakas recommend pursuit of sensual pleasures. All other systems point to the attaining of the Infinite. The *Chhandogya* Upanishad avers, ‘There is no happiness in the finite. In the Infinite alone is happiness.’37 And the path to this infinite bliss is open to anyone who cares to take it. The ‘moksha’, the release, the state of unalloyed bliss or of spiritual perfection can be achieved while living. “Man’s aim,” clarifies Professor Hiriyanna , is “no longer represented as the attainment of perfection in a hypothetical hereafter, but as a continual progress towards it within the limits of the present life.”38 The attainment of Truth or freedom from the limitations and sufferings of physical life is the supreme aspiration of all Indian philosophy.

Truth or ultimate reality is of two kinds: One, that which is perceived by the five ordinary senses or inferred from the data they provide; and two, that which is perceived by the subtle, super-sensuous power of the yoga. The first kind of truth is called scientific or empirical knowledge; the second kind is transcendental opr yogic knowledge. All spiritual aspirants in India accept the discipline of Yoga. Camus follows both the paths, and was considered a moral seer of a high order. His system was different from the Yoga, only in the denial of God (the Yoga philosophy accepts God) thereby affiliating more with the *Samkhya*. The *Samkhya* system does not have any room for God, either in its system, or metaphysics, or in its scheme of salvation. But its aim is the same as that of the other systems of the Indian philosophy. “The supreme goal of life.” It asserts. “is to put an end completely to the three kinds of suffering.”39

In Camus’ preface to Les *Iles* one can distinctly see three stages in his early intellectual development. First, which goes up to the age of twenty and rather curiously includes, both his first attack of tuberculosis and his recovery from it, is one of instinctive, animal enjoyment of the life of the senses. He was perhaps, referring to it when he made Jean Tarrou say in *The Plague* that, ‘when I was young, I lived with the idea of my innocence, that is to say, with no ideas at all.’ Next comes the shock of discovery on reading Grenier’s Les Iles, his understanding of the reason for his sudden ‘melancholies’ and the subsequent end of living ‘in sensations, on the surface of the world, among colours, waves, and the fine scent of the earth’. This awakening produced *Betwixt and Between*, emphasizing its reaction in favour of an insistence upon the darker side of experience and on the value of intellectual awareness. Then comes the triumphant reaffirmation of life- of the body- in *Nuptials,* the song of the nuptials between man and the earth which contrasts so sharply with the detached irony of the mood of his first essays. The difference of atmosphere between *Betwixt and Between* and *Nuptials* foreshadows the movement from the revelation of the absurd to the discovery of joy in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. In 1943 Camus wrote in *The Myth of Sisyphus,* ‘One does not discover the absurd without being tempted to write a manual of happiness.’ *Noces* or *Nuptials* was such a manual, and the concept of the absurd which he was to make so popular in 1943 stems from his insistence on the position put forward in *Betwixt and Between*, that there is no ultimate consolation for human loneliness and the completeness of death. Yet, what was a pretext for somber meditation in *Betwixt and Between* leads to intense and satisfying happiness in *Nuptials*.

The idea of happiness is not absent from *Betwixt and Between*. It has in fact, inspired one of the best essays in the collection, namely, “Love of Life”, but it is linked , in the first essays, with the other two feelings which appear only intermittently in *Nuptials*- those of despair, and of an indefinable aspiration towards some unknown and unattainable ideal. “there is no love of living without despair of life,”40 he wrote in *Betwixt and Between* while describing his contemplation of the sun-drenched countryside of the Mediterranean countries, and added to this epigram a definition of ‘love of living ‘ as ‘a silent passion, which was perhaps going to escape me, a bitterness beneath the flame.’41 The Indian concept of existence acknowledges the presence of pleasure as well as of pain. It is up to the individual himself to minimize pain and to enjoy pleasure. Each system, however, has its own definition of true pleasure. Camus’ frequent obsession with sensual enjoyment is not a Carvaka pleasure but expression of an intense desire to become one with the beauty of the physical world in complete communion. It is not an end in itself but a means to attain ‘yoga’. The lyrical passages he has written describing these throbbing ecstasies are his songs in intense celebration of life.

It is because Camus feels so completely at home in the physical world that in *Nuptials*, he does not stress the world’s basic indifference which obsesses him in *Betwixt and Between.* The entire tone of the book with the picture which it gives of the young Camus, is unlike the one suggested by the first essays. Camus described by Emmanuel Robles as ‘essentially a creature of the sun, made for the simple and intense life of the Mediterranean shores’ was also the Camus, who wrote his profession of confidence in the world, in the first essay in the book, “Nuptials at Tipasa’ : I must be naked and then dive into the sea, the scents of the earth still about me wash off these scents in the sea and consummate on my own flesh the embrace for which, lips to lips, earth and sea, have for so long been sighing.”42 The whole of this essay is the description of consummating satisfaction he experiences on entering into communion with nature, and introduces a hymn to joy which he keeps taking up in different ways throughout the book. At Tipasa, the sea ’sucking at the rocks with the sound of kisses, ‘ ‘the mountains moving with confident and certain rhythm to crouch down in the sea’ ‘the melody of the world’ which comes through the gaps in the wall of the Christian basilica at Sainte-Sala, all strengthen Camus in his realization that here man is offered a happiness which is made for him and which is always within his reach. At the end of a day spent swimming and walking through the flower-strewn ruins of Tipasa, Camus sits on a park bench and meditates on the fullness of the happiness he has found:

I watched the shapes of the countryside merge in the growing twilight. My cup was brimming over. My cup was brimming over. Above my head hung the buds of a pomegranate tree, closed and ribbed like little fists which held all the promise of spring. There was rosemary behind me, and I could smell the alcoholic tang of its leaves. I could see hills through the gaps of the trees, and, further in the distance, a strip of sea above which the sky, like the sail of a boat motionless for lack of wind, rested with all its tenderness. I felt a strange joy in my heart, the very joy which is born of a clear conscience.There is a feeling which actors have when they know they have played their parts well. . . . This was exactly my feeling. I had played my part well. I had done the task which awaited me as a man . . .43

Even when as on a windy day at Djemila, Camus feels not the ‘inner quietness of love satisfied’ but rather a full awareness of his approaching death, this sense of communion with the world is not destroyed. Indeed, throughout *Nuptials* the idea that death is inevitable merely adds to Camus’ determination to enjoy fully and completely the pleasures vouchsafed to him. It is when the wind has almost destroyed the feeling of his own individuality, when he has been ‘polished by the wind, worn through to the very soul . . . mingling the beating of his heart with the great, sonorous heartbeats of the ever present heart of nature’ that he realizes the full extent of the satisfaction which his complete identification with the world and his refusal to seek out any other values can give him. He says in “The Wind at Djemila”,

Few people understand that there is a refusal which has nothing to do with renunciation. What meaning can words like ‘future’, ‘improvement’, ‘position’ have here? What can be meant by ‘the heart’s progress?’ If I obstinately refuse all the ‘later on’ of the world it is because I do not want to believe that death opens out on another life. For me it is a closed door.44

This communion with nature, this instinctive wisdom of the body, and this rejection of all attempts to clothe the thought of final annihilation in comforting myths are also the qualities which Camus found and appreciated in the essentially pagan civilization of North Africa. Men must accept that there is no other truth than that of the body. “If there is a sin against life,” writes Camus, “it is not so much to fall into despair as to hope for immortality and elude the implacable grandeur of the life we have.” The essential virtue is to recognize that there is no solution to the problem of human mortality, that no consolation of another life can be offered to man and that he must be satisfied with “stones, stars, and flesh, and those truths which the hand itself can touch.”45 Such statements may temporarily dupe one into believing that, in the Indian context, Camus’ ideology is perhaps, closest to Carvaka system. In reality nothing could be farther from truth. Camus was no hedonistic pursuer of pleasure, but rather an emotional, stubborn thinker with a set of his own theories of human conduct. He believed that the highest good of man is not pleasure but moral goodness.46 He had high respect for morals and a deep love for life. That’s why the fact of death always outraged him. His frequent indulgence in sensual pleasure was partly an expression of his resentment against a power he could not fight.

Camus accepted life in all its fullness, and loved it beyond all limits. His work is a hymn to life written by one who knew so well how easily it could slip away. In an essay in the collection, *Summer*, he says, “ . . . there is a will to live while refusing nothing of what life offers which is the virtue that I honour most in all this world.”47

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Conclusion

. . .even within the limits of nihilism it is possible to find the means to proceed beyond nihilism. In all the books I have written since, I have attempted to pursue this direction. Although The Myth of Sisyphus poses mortal problems, it sums itself up for me as a lucid invitation to live, and to create in the very midst of the desert.1

**athato brhma jijnasa**

‘Now, therefore, the desire to know Brahman’ (or the Ultimate Reality, the Self, or the Truth) was the insatiable urge of the most ancient thinkers on the soil of India. These religious seekers of truth sought mainly to know Brahman, and as a corollary meditated on the human condition. Their findings are contained in the Upanishads and have been a constant source of inspiration for thinkers anywhere in the world. Today, even after three thousand years the subject remains as fresh and the desire as consuming; only the focus of attention has shifted a little, from the former to the latter, that is, from the search for truth to human condition. It was this unquenchable thirst which, for ever, propelled Albert Camus to explore the mystery behind human condition, and to discover the meaning underlying the seeming absurdity. Known to have possessed the qualities like calmness, equanimity, and a desire for release he ideally fulfilled the requisite qualifications to undertake a spiritual quest of this nature. In order to understand his creative work it is imperative to acquire a grasp of his philosophic thought.

Although he was only forty-six at the time of his accidental death, his novels, plays, short stories, essays, prefaces, reviews, letters, notebooks, and the interviews he gave incarnate a moving and distinctive vision of the world and of the times through which he lived. It is apparent from the many eulogies written on his death, and the extreme popularity that he enjoys even today2, that Camus has been successful in striking a responsive chord in the hearts and minds of people all over the world. The reason behind such universal appeal of his writings is the soothing effect they have on the people suffering from the agony of extreme nihilism and utter despair of life. Camus does not escape into religion or the abstract atheistic existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, but endorses the view that life should be accepted in completeness, “To love life, after all, is not only to enjoy the face of its light, but also its face of darkness, to wish that it be, to bless the enemy, to look misfortune straight in the face.”3 He loved the fight, challenges. He knew and wanted man to admit that life has meaning only when he recognizes that it has no meaning.”4 Man’s fate, according to him, is best symbolized by Sisyphus, the Greek hero who was condemned by the gods to roll a great boulder to the top of a hill fated for ever to roll down until the very end of time. He urges us to imagine Sisyphus happy. His belief is that crushing truths perish by being acknowledged. His argument is that, “There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn.”5 Sisyphus has achieved a total absence of hope which has nothing to do with despair. Total absence of hope, in other words, would mean a complete control of desires and, therefore, in Buddhistic terminology, a condition suitable for happiness.6 To quote Dr. Radhakrishnan, “If we can detect and eliminate the cause of suffering, the suffering itself will disappear. The cause of it is ‘tanha’ (Sanskrit, ‘trsna’ meaning craving for existence). 7

Like so many twentieth century writers, although anguished at the fact, Camus accepted the image of a world without god or justifiable values, which was handed down by nineteenth century science. The absurdity of this world was heightened for him by the bounties of nature and the keen physical joys amidst which he grew up. To the youthful Camus, the sun and the sea were an insistent invitation to happiness, as he reveals in his first two books, *L’ Envers et l’ endroit* (*Betwixt and Between*) and *Noces* (*Nuptials*). The naked bodies on the beach, the uncomplicated sensuality of the young couples in the dance halls, in fact, everything around him celebrated the physical life as the sole reality and simultaneously proclaimed its brevity. “I learn.” He wrote in his early twenties, “ that there is no superhuman happiness. . . . The world is beautiful, and beyond it there is no salvation. . . . Not that one must be an animal, but I find no meaning in the happiness of angels.”8 Faithful to this experience Camus refused to seek meaning on any superhuman plane.

Albert Camus had an instinctive love for pleasure, a sanguine temperament and the capacity to see life evenly in all its aspects: accepting all, denting nothing. His whole-hearted celebration of a life of pleasure, as stated above would to the naïve, affiliate him to the Indian Carvakas9, who hold that perception is the only valid source of knowledge, and that the highest goal of life is pleasure. But a discerning reader would immediately know that Camus’ love for pleasure is not a ‘materialist, senseless, pursuit of ‘animalism’ for its own sake but a conscious, matter-of-fact reaction to the realization of pain and affliction present in human life. He believed in fighting it in real life and not in evading the issue behind some unreal religious pretext. In his denial of god and aiming at a complete end of suffering as the supreme goal of life, he appears akin to the Indian Samkhya system. But he abhorred entering into metaphysical discussions and felt at ease in solving problems on a simple, practical plane.10 He has summed up his quest in a single, telling sentence: “I want to know if I can live with what I know, and only with that.”11 What makes his conduct of this quest so original, is as Philip Thody notes in his study of Camus that, “Camus has the feelings of the common man and the mind of an intellectual. In his feelings there is a distinct penchant toward the normal, in his mind an abnormal rage for lucidity.”

When Camus came of age, the European Zeitgeist was steeped in despair, and in the years that followed he lived, nihilism, contradiction, violence, and dizzying destruction; he shared the prevailing sense that man is a spiritual exile in a hostile world. He, therefore, found it necessary to create from scratch, his own logical foundation for an ethic which was somewhere in his blood. His method as an artist, like that of Gide, was to take an idea (which held for him an element of nostalgia or of temptation) and carry it fictionally or theatrically to its logical conclusion and leave the reader to judge it by its consequences. Thus, the whole body of Camus’ literary creation has a well-defined pattern of exploration and evolution.

Camus’ analysis of the Absurd begins by noting that normally man finds it easy enough to accept his daily routine, but one day there arises a ‘why’— a questioning of whether life has any meaning. One finds oneself “in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights . . . an alien, a stranger.” Nature, even fellow beings appear hostile, and inhuman. And one is filled with a horrifying awareness of death as a mathematical certainty. The source of this malaise is that, in an irrational world reason cannot satisfy man’s “wild longing” for meaning, “and beyond reason there is nothing.” The Absurd, then, is the result of the thinking about the human condition. The impossibility of reconciling death and the desire for eternity, misery and the desire for happiness, separateness and the desire for union, the mystery of all existence and the desire for clarity – all this is Absurd.

Malraux, Sartre, and others had already developed this line of thought before Camus. His originality lies, firstly, in finding the world’s absurdity not a cause for despair, but on the contrary, a spur to happiness. In his view, mortality and suffering— his haunting preoccupations – actually enhance the value of life: they invite men to live more intensely.

Camus grew up in an atmosphere of utter uncertainty, fundamental agnosticism, a sense of uneasiness that man was hastening confusedly to unknown ends, toward an incalculable future. He found everything around him unsteady and contradictory. But his unrest was not of a negative nature. On the contrary, it inspired him to new perspectives and an overwhelming faith in his fellow men. “ The greatest saving one can make,” he wrote in his memoires, “in the order of thought is to accept the unintelligibility of the world- and to pay attention to man.”12 As an artist he affirmed life whole-heartedly defending the ultimate validity of the simple joys that it offers. He does not overlook the essential ‘extreme situations’ of the human existence, but rather shows the sad experiences of anguish, terror, guilt, and the absurd transcended in an impassioned affirmation of joy. This is the ‘invincible summer’ Camus discovered within himself, a peculiarly Mediterranean lucidity disdaining those who take refuge either in faith or in despair. *The Plague*, which deals most directly with an ‘extreme situation’ ends with the optimistic declaration that , “there are more things to admire in men than to despise.”13

This opulent sanguinity of belief, the unshakable faith in the intrinsic goodness of the human soul, his love for ‘Truth’, and an ascetic search for it, is what affiliates Camus so closely to the Indian way of thinking. His life-long efforts to transcend surface miseries through austere self-discipline and deep meditation identify him further to the Indian mind. The Indian thought does not condemn evil but admits its presence asserting that the evil exists, and that, man possesses the strength to overcome it, and achieve liberation, ‘ananda’, Brhman, the Supreme joy. The Upanishadic seer, ‘does not see death, nor disease, nor sorrow. He sees all, and seeing all, he attains all, in all ways.”14

Camus’ most celebrated novel, *The Plague* describes an epidemic that ravages Oran. It is an allegory of man’s fate- ‘plague . . . is just life’ and each character in it represents a way of responding to the problem of misery and evil. The physician Rieux devotes all his energies to fighting the epidemic, as does Tarrou. Other characters illustrate how bourgeois complacency , or cowardice, or greed aids and abets scourges. The Christian acceptance of suffering as the wages of sin is fiercely repudiated in a scene in which, after seeing an infant tortured to death by the plague, Rieux rails against Father Paneloux for preaching resignation to God’s will. Rieux acknowledges, however, that he and the priest are on the same side, the side of the ‘victims’. Camus has said that what concerns him most is, “How should one behave?” And *The Plague* gives what thereafter remains his answer, “We cannot be sure of doing good, but we can exercise the utmost vigilance not to do anything which increases suffering, and this involves tolerance for everything except suffering itself.

In the same mood *The Myth of Sisyphus* likens man’s fate to that of the myth’s hero, doomed forever to push a heavy stone up a hillside with the certainty that it will roll down again. “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem”, Camus states at the outset, “and that is suicide.” He finds the answer to it in the attitude of Sisyphus, who confronts his condition without illusions yet without despair. Sisyphus surmounts the Absurd through a rebellious defiance which brings with it passion and freedom. The essay ends with a solemn conjuration, “the struggle towards the height is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”

Camus, very often denounced the existentialist overemphasized concept of suffering of the human life.15 The existentialist thinker sees only despair at the cost of joy, success, and hope. The Indian philosophers lay equal emphasis on both the opposites as relative and complementary to each other, thus imparting the quality of transience to human life. Nothing is permanent in life. Suffering and joy all change with time. The existentialists maintain that the fact of suffering is a distinctive and permanent feature of human life and that it cannot be transcended. Camus rejects this concept, appearing thereby to be proximal to the Indian view that the experience of ‘dukhah’(suffering) is only an intermediary state in the spiritual progress of the individual. And man, in his authentic existence, should not only face it (as the Existentialists also point out) but should seek to transcend it by cultivating a state of spiritual calmness.16

This is an important instance of basic similarity between the Indian thought and Camus’ philosophy. Camus recognized the nature of human life as essentially tragic, but he was not a pessimist and did not produce a literature of despair. One of the main charges leveled against the Indian philosophy is, that it is pessimistic and therefore, pernicious in its influence on practical life. The Indian philosophy can be called pessimistic if by pessimism is taken to mean a sense of dissatisfaction with what is, or exists. In this sense all philosophy can be characterized as pessimistic. The suffering of the world provokes the problems of philosophy and religion. Those systems of religion which emphasize redemption seek for an escape from life as we live it on earth, but reality in its essence is not evil. In the Indian philosophy, the word, ‘sat’ indicates both, reality and perfection. Truth and goodness, or more accurately, reality and perfection go together. The real is also supremely more valuable, and this is the basis of all optimism. Professor Bosanquet writes, “I believe in optimism, but . . . no optimism is worth its salt that doesn’t go all the way with pessimism and arrive at a point beyond it. This, I am convinced is the true spirit of life.”17 Indian thinkers are pessimistic insofar as they look upon the world order as an evil and a lie or ‘mithya’; they are optimistic since they aver that there is a way out of it into the realm of truth, which is also goodness.18 In this respect, the essence of Buddha’s enlightenment, the four noble truths, sum up and voice the essence of every Indian school. Pessimism in the Indian thought is only initial and not final. The influence of such pessimism on life is more wholesome than that of uncritical optimism.

Camus had an instinctive fidelity to the brighter side of life. His optimism was born of a wish to go beyond the prevailing misery. He vehemently protests, “of course, I am not a certain kind of optimist” and then goes on to describe his attitude thus,

I grew up to the drumbeat of the First World War, and since then our history has been murder, injustice, and violence. But true pessimism, the kind that is common today, consists in exploiting all the cruelty and infamy of our time. I, for one, have never ceased to struggle against this degradation, and I hate only the cruel. In the lower depths of our nihilism, I have searched only for reason to transcend it. Not out of virtue, or because I am blessed with rare loftiness of spirit, but because of an instinctive fidelity to the light which shines at our birth, and which for thousands of years, has taught men to hail life, even in suffering.19

He belongs to that class of writers, in the centre of whose work, however dark, there burns an indomitable sun.

The outlook that keep the Indian mind from sinking into abyssal despair is its spiritual quality, an affirmation of an existing eternal moral order, and an unflinching hope of attaining liberation, freedom in the end. The same idea develops into the law of karma. The karma has a cosmic as well as a psychological aspect. Every act produces its natural effect in the world, and simultaneously it leaves an impression on, or forms a tendency in, the mind of man. It is this tendency or ‘samskar’ that inclines man to repeat the act he has once performed. Thus all acts have their rewards or consequences in the world and their effect on the mind. So far as the former are concerned no man can escape them. But as regards the mental tendencies man can control them. His future conduct holds all possibilities. By self-discipline he can strengthen his good impulses and weaken the base ones.20 Camus knew that self-control is necessary to concentrate mind on the truth and to make it effective in life, and he practiced it off and on. He had faith in the theory of Karma as is evident in Caligula’s cautious admonition to Scipion, “ . . .we are never alone! . . . .All around us the same weight of the future and the past accompanies us.”21 He, however, did not ascribe to the connected Hindu notion of a succession of lives.

Camus refused to draw the nihilist conclusion that since the world is irrational, the irrational is the only logical principle of conduct. He proves this through the character of Caligula. Discovering that the world is absurd, the emperor undertakes to transform it by proclaiming himself the prophet of the absolute absurdity, and when his conduct exceeds life’s actual absurdity, he is destroyed by a revolt. Both in *Caligula* and *Le Malentendu,* there is a spirit of revolt against the hostile aspect of the world’s absurdity. In *L’ Etranger* (*The* *Outsider* ) the revolt is directed against man-made standards of absolute morality. This short novel is written in a style where each sentence forms a self-enclosed whole, with the result that life is registered as a succession of perceptions with no meaning beyond themselves. Camus’ goal was to reproduce a feeling of the absurd. Nothing is explained, yet it conveys all and the effect is marvelous.

Meursault, the hero of *L’ Etranger*, a clerk in an Algiers office, is a man completely indifferent to everything except his immediate physical sensations. The death of his mother, the offer of a promotion, the love of the girl he is sleeping with, have no importance for him. In due course he drifts into a situation in which, dazed by the blazing sun he kills an Arab who seems to be menacing him with a knife. His lawyer assures him acquittal if he pleads self-defence. But Meursault is incapable of pretending to emotions he does not possess. His complete honesty at the trial makes him appear a callous, inhuman being and he is sentenced to be guilliotined. The imminence of death makes him conscious of what he has always believed to be true, that life is meaningless. “Emptied of hope’ he realizes that he has been happy and was ‘happy still’. To me, he appears to be an ideal illustration of one who has attained that high level of detachment where the insignificant pursuits of material life do not have any meaning.22 Although young, Meursault is shown to have already reached that state of complete equanimity, ‘samatva’, where both, joy and sorrow are immaterial to him. And yet he is calm, composed, and happy. In chapter two of *The Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna counsels Arjun to learn to endure the sensations of pain and pleasure with equanimity. Once you master this the mind becomes free and disinterested sinking into that secret serenity where the consciousness becomes illumined and it gladly accepts whatever happens without getting affected by it.23

In order to trace the origin of most of Camus’ views it is obligatory to refer back to the essays he wrote in his early twenties, *L’ Envers et l’ endroit* (1937) and *Noces* (1939), published as *Betwixt and Between* and *Nuptials* in English. These lyrical pieces contain in germ almost all principal motifs of his thought on the human condition, and also demonstrate the organic bond between his personal experience and his ideas. This is especially true of the more philosophically reflective essays in the latter volume. His profound attachment to his native African soil, his intimate knowledge of and deep communion with nature, his most strongly felt reactions to his immediate experience of the world are nowhere more apparent than in these poetically written pieces.

The underlying themes to which Camus continually returned, whether as a novelist, short story writer, dramatist, or essayist are almost all presaged in the following single passage from “Summer in Algiers” ,

To feel one’s ties to a land, one’s love for certain men, to know there is always a place where the heart can find rest—these are already many certainties for one man’s life. Doubtless they are not enough. But at certain moments everything yearns for this homeland of the soul. “Yes, it is to this we must return.” What is strange about finding on earth the unity Plotinus longed for? Unity expresses itself here in terms of sea and sky. The heart senses it through a certain taste of the flesh that constitutes its bitterness and greatness. I am learning that there is no superhuman happiness, no eternity outside the curve of the days. These ridiculous and essential assets, these relative truths are the only ones that move me. I have not enough soul to understand the other, “ideal” ones. Not that we should behave as beasts. But I can see no point in the happiness of angels. All I know is that this sky will last longer than I shall. And what can I call eternity except what will continue after my death. . . .Everything that exalts life at the same time increases its absurdity.24

This long passage is central to an explication, both of the basic themes of Camus’ work and of the experiential substance of his reflections. Here one can discern the leitmotifs believed by Camus to be the only ‘certainties’ of life—man’s joy in nature, the total this-worldliness of life, the conjunction of happiness and absurdity, and complete honesty of oneself.

The glorious joy of communion with the earth, the sea, and all the fierce beauty of nature finds repeated expression in these essays. Camus speaks of throwing his body into the pungent flowers, and in so doing, “fulfilling a truth that is of the sun and also of my death. . . . I have a wild love for this life and want to speak of it freely: it bestows upon me the pride of my human condition.” Against those, who would denigrate this pride, he rejoins that indeed he is rightfully proud of “this sun, that sea, my heart leaping with young blood, my body that tastes of salt, and the enormous painting of the sky, where tenderness and glory meet in yellow and blue.” From such experience he draws this conclusion, “Everything here leaves me intact, I surrender nothing of myself, and don no mask: learning patiently and arduously how to live is enough for me, well worth all their arts of living.”25

Camus thus declares that if we can forget our prejudices; throw aside the masks with which we screen reality from our vision, and revel in the glory of the sun, flowers, and the sea we will experience the sheer joy of life that man in this happy condition can know through natural, instinctive - almost animal like – exaltation of the body. Camus derived this attitude not from the romantic verses of Chateaubriand or Victor Hugo but from his own immediate experiences so well described in the essays. For the young Camus, life at its best was a nuptial feast spread out by nature for the man who would seek simply to enjoy her bounties. Later, when Camus attempted to elaborate a more intellectualized approach to life, seeking to know how to live, the fundamental value of life for him remained the exalted joy which he had tasted in its purest form on the sun-swept beaches of Algeria. Significantly, elemental physical happiness recurs in his writing as a supreme value throughout his life. Immediately after going through the ordeal of German occupation he writes, “Purely physical joys with the mind’s consent. There lies perfection, harmony with one’s condition, man’s gratitude and respect.”26

Camus constantly oscillated between the physical and the spiritual. He frequently admits that such bodily joy cannot be the sum of man’s existence, because he possesses the inescapable capacity for self-consciousness; “Thought is always out in the front. It sees too far, farther than the body, which lives in the present. To abolish hope is to bring thought back to the body. And the body is doomed to perish.”27

The second principal motif in Camus’ early thought is, his refusal to believe in the reality of any life other than the present earthly existence: “pointlessness of the problem of immortality. We are interested in our destiny, admittedly. But *before*, not after.”28 In this life we can know such intense happiness that speculation about a life that we have not experienced seems grossly irrelevant. This deeply felt conviction of mortality leads Camus to a fully conscious savouring of each precious moment of life,

What is meant by the heart’s progress? If I obstinately refuse all the ‘later ones’ of this world, it is because I have no desire to give up my present wealth. I do not want to believe that death is the gateway to another life. For me, it is a closed door.29

Kierkegaard, and Heidegger and Sartre later on believed that the acceptance and anticipatory appropriation of death transforms human life in the direction of an authentic existence. But Heidegger differed from him in believing that death introduced ‘nothingness’ into human existence, and Sartre insisted that death ultimately rendered existence ‘meaningless.’ Kierkegaard, on the other hand, reflected rather in the Hindu way of thinking that because of its very inevitability and imminence, the fact of death makes the present human life all the more important ethically. The anticipatory conception of death reminds the individual of his finite status, making him aware of the need to lead a life of high ethical standard.30 The inseparable relationship between birth and death is repeatedly affirmed in all systems of Indian philosophy. And the phenomenon of death is recognized as belonging structurally to human life. Death, therefore, becomes part of the life itself. It is the innermost experience of each human existence which can neither be escaped, nor transferred to anyone else. The same thought echoes through the observation made by Camus sometime in November, 1945, “Man is not *only* social. His death, at least belongs to him. We are made to live in relation to others. But one dies, truly, only for himself.”31

A third theme in *Nuptials* is the conjoining of man’s desire for happiness and his awareness of mortality, resulting in a feeling that the human situation is absurd. Camus writes movingly of his conviction that it is man’s role in nature to be a happy creature. After a day of unsullied physical enjoyment he felt that he had fulfilled his vocation as a man.32 The possibility, and at times the reality, of such a joyous existence leads man to desire life’s everlasting continuance. But the impossibility of fulfilling this yearning means that one must surmount his trepidation at the prospect of death, and in full cognizance of his inescapable fate, affirm the happiness that he can know; “ . . .what is happiness if not the simple harmony between a man and the life he leads? And what more legitimate harmony can link a man to life than the twin awareness of his longing to endure and the death which awaits him.”33

Life is very good and yields a fierce, tender, bittersweet happiness to those who love its beauty with all their hearts and dedicate themselves to its perishable reality. This passionate endorsement of life has the paradoxical effect of intensifying one’s feeling of the absurdity of human existence: “Everything which exalts life , at the same time, increases its absurdity.”34 If life is joyous and good, it is for man the ultimate absurdity, that he should be aware of his inevitable extinction. Here we find the experiential origin of Camus’ concept of ‘absurdity’. Despite his efforts to treat this idea in a logical fashion in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, absurdity, for Camus never became an abstract argument. Rather, it was always a deeply felt existential reality that does not submit readily to a systematized philosophic treatment.

Full acceptance of one’s humanity, in its joy and in its absurdity, as advanced by Camus leads to a whole-soul honesty which is another characteristic feature of Camus’ early writings. In September 1939, he defines his attitude toward the absurd thus, “The will is nothing. Acceptance everything. On the condition: that faced with the humblest or the most heart-rending experience, man should always be ‘present’; and that he should endure this experience without flinching, with complete lucidity.”35 Camus could conceive of no legitimately human way of confronting his experiences and perceptions except in complete openness and without fear of the consequences.

The absurd, generally treated as a conclusion is considered by Camus as a point of departure in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. This he makes clear at the very outset in a short introductory passage to his main idea:

In this sense it may be said that there is something provisional in my commentary: one cannot prejudge the position it entails. There will be found here merely the description, in the pure state, of an intellectual malady. No metaphysics, no belief is involved in it for the moment. These are the limits and the only bias of the book. Certain personal experiences urge me to make this clear.36

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that Camus never intended to be primarily a “philosopher of the absurd”, either in the sense of presenting absurdity as fully descriptive of human existence, or as leading irrevocably to nihilistic conclusions. The absurd, for him was nothing but a point of departure, a place where, bereft of convincing transcendent meanings or imperatives, he felt compelled to take his stand before setting out to chart a path to authentic human existence. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* he evokes a picture of absurdity emerging from the monotonous round of everyday life. The man who is totally lost and insensitized by a fixed daily routine may suddenly wonder, why is he living as he is? This sudden questioning makes the individual aware of the absurd. When he is wholly caught up in the seemingly absurd pursuit, in an instant he finds himself oppressed by the apparent futility of all his efforts and aspirations, for “no code of ethics and no efforts are justifiable *a priori* in the face of the cruel mathematics that commands our condition.”37

Camus quickly moves from the description of this anguished experience to a more philosophic consideration of the meaning of absurdity as it confronts the man who is seeking to comprehend the conditions of his existence intellectually. The desire to understand his natural surroundings, the physical universe he inhabits is instinctive for any man. But he is left baffled. According to Camus, neither the world, nor the man individually, is absurd. They are simply incommensurate to each other. This is what Camus says,

A world that can be explained even with bad reasoning is a familiar world. But on the contrary, in a universe suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. This is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of the memory of a lost homeland as much as of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting actually constitute the feeling of absurdity.38

This radical disjunction between man and the natural world he perceives around him is a significant evidence of the absurdity of human condition. And intellectual inquiry into the nature of things does not quell this feeling of absurdity but intensifies it. The theme of man’s communion with nature scarcely appears in *The Myth of Sisyphus.* And when Camus tries to see meaning in it the immediate experience is one of frustration:

Here are trees and I know their gnarled surface, water and I feel its taste. These scents of grass and stars at night, certain evenings when the heart relaxes, how shall I negate this world whose power and strength I feel? Yet all the knowledge on earth will give me nothing to assure me that this world is mine.39

Camus does not attach any transcendent meaning to the world nor does he concede to a conception of after-life. He determinedly reasserts his preference for the known certainty of man’s present finite existence:

What can a meaning outside my condition mean to me? I can understand only in human terms. What I touch, what resists me, that is what I understand. And these two certainties- my appetite for the absolute, and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle, I also know that I cannot reconcile them. What other truth can I admit without lying, without bringing in a hope I lack and which means nothing within the limits of my condition?40

An existential awareness of death and of its utter finality for a human being results in greater metaphysical freedom, “ . . . there is no future. Henceforth this is the reason for my inner freedom.”41 There is no point for living for the ‘later ons’ of the world, in the vain hope of fulfilling one’s proper role in life to qualify for a future reward. The absurd man is free to live with passionate awareness in each successive moment, and “it is clear that death and the absurd are here the principles of the only reasonable freedom: that which a human heart can experience and live.”42

Devoid of ultimate explanations for his existence man is aware that he is quite capable of understanding many things that are important to him. The renowned critic, Pierre-Henri Simon reflects that, “from the moment Camus recognizes ‘this efficacious but limited reason’, we can discern that Camus’ thought seeks, “a positive humanism and a relative optimism.”43 Camus’ concern for human happiness assumes a focal point in his interpretation of the ancient myth. Sisyphus is the prototype of his absurd hero. He scorned the gods, despised death, and had a passionate love for life. He was condemned to spend eternity pushing a mammoth boulder up to the top of a steep hill only to roll down perpetually. Camus imagines Sisyphus’s reaction, not one of despair and monotony, but rather of a defiant happiness in his sublime struggle. In his estimation, “Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks.” Elaborating Sisyphus’s belief, Camus adds, “He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth, without a master seems to him neither sterile, nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night filled mountain, in itself forms a world. . . . The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”44

The intensity of apparent cause of all human misery— the disjunction between man’s desire for unending happiness and the inescapable fact of death—can be extenuated by a brave struggle against bondage, injustice, and unhappiness. The fundamental human problems will persist despite any amount of progress or improvement achieved in social or political institutions. The only solution lay in a metaphysical freedom which could only be attained through rigorous self-discipline.45 For instance, Caligula, the happy and extremely popular emperor plunged into sorrow on discovering that ‘men die and are not happy’. This discovery makes him acutely conscious of the ultimate absurdity of human life. In frenzy, he sets out to remake the absurd order of things by striving for the impossible. The symbol of this yearning is his desire to possess the moon. He lashes out a reign of terror transvaluating the virtues normally held in high respect. A large number of virtuous men are put to death, crime and debauchery are rewarded, and Caligula uses his unrestrained powers to negate the world as we know it, declaring that “this world has no importance; once a man realizes that, he wins his freedom.”46 Cherea, a young statesman in his court, shares the emperor’s belief of the absurdity and horror of a world full of unhappy mortals, but does not approve of his riotous reaction. Caligula’s ‘metaphysical rebellion’ , as Camus later termed it takes the form of a claim to total freedom, a liberty completely devoid of regulative principles of human behavior. Like Dostoyevsky’s Ivan Karamazov, a pivotal figure in *The Rebel* (1951), Caligula proclaims in effect, that if God is dead, if there is no discernible transcendent order of things, everything is permitted. To Caligula freedom becomes a synonym of nihilistic destruction and oppression. Cherea however feels that it makes no sense to react to mortality and unhappiness by taking the side of death and misery. Though, obviously, unable to articulate the rationale for his decision, Cherea instinctively rebels against the emperor’s frenzied nihilism to side with man’s desire for happiness. He concludes that true freedom carries within itself inherent limitations, a belief Caligula also realizes just before he is assassinated, “I have chosen a wrong path, a path that leads to nothing. My freedom isn’t the right one.”47 Nevertheless, the last words uttered by Caligula, “I am still alive !” confirm once again that the absurd survives all meaning and that the threat of nihilism persists as a challenge to mankind.

In the end, I would like to emphasize that Camus’ quest for the Truth, or the Self, as I have mentioned earlier, was ethical and not metaphysical in nature. His love of the idea, of peace and tranquility which come from contemplation, his avowed preference for all ancient systems of philosophy, inclination toward Greek philosophy, admiration for Vedic sayings, for the austere teachings of Buddha, for mystic trances of Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna, his amazing knowledge of the Indian scriptures- obvious result of random but attentive reading of some of them, have imparted an unmistakably Indian aspect to his philosophy. Camus prime concern always remained the human conduct, character, and the values. His approach to philosophy was practical, as such, Indian in principle. As one of our eminent modern philosophers has remarked, “love of wisdom and the passion for the saner pursuits of the mind is not a luxury but a way of life in India.”48 The most distinguishing feature of the Indian Philosophy is the pragmatic view it takes of knowledge. As a consequence, throughout its long history it has accorded a foremost place to human values. They form its central theme and the questions of ‘being’ and ‘knowing’ follow as a matter of course. It may, on this account, be described as essentially a philosophy of values.49

Camus abhorred self-righteousness, refused to be counted among the moralizers, and disliked being called a moral force, yet even during his life he had come to represent to his numerous admirers on the European continent, ‘ the conscience keeper of the age’ and ‘the conscience of the age’.50 Judging from his increasing readership and unwavering popularity all over the world, it seems he will soon be cited as the most popular and widely read moralist of the century. (It is already so as I realize while revising this book in June, 2016, after 26 years of its publication). He stands like George Orwell, a resonant spokesman for decency, a thinker of intransigent integrity and bracing independence, in sum a good man. In the Nobel Prize citation the Swedish Academy honoured Camus—ostensibly an atheist—not only for “his important production” but also, and specifically “for illuminating the problems of the human conscience of our time.” The role he had consciously assigned to himself was that of a keeper of conscience, a guardian of values. “Mon role, je le reconnais,” he had said in 1945, “n’est pas de transformer le monde, ni l’ homme: je n’ ai pas assez de vertus, ni de lumieres pour cela. Mais il est, peut-etre, de server a ma place, les quelques valeurs, sans lesquelles, un monde meme transforme, ne vaut pas la peine d’ etre vecu, sans lesquelles un homme , meme nouveau ne vaudra pas d’ etre respecte.”51 It is Camus’ spiritual approach to the practical problems of life, his almost religious response to simple joys and fears of the heart, his passionate love for humanity, to which the Indian readers identifies spontaneously. The outward material aspect of the world changes with the time, and is different in each culture and geographical region. But the inner complexities of the mind belong to that part of human nature which is permanent and same everywhere. Hence, the close affinity among its adherents. The goal of life as interpreted by the Indian philosophy is the attainment of freedom, release (moksha) from the empirical state of ‘samsara’ or the recurrent round of birth and death. It means becoming one with Brahman, or the realization of one’s true nature, after the concept, “I am Brahman”, (Camus would call it a state of moral and intellectual perfection) of transcending the distinctions one commonly makes between the self and the not-self, and between good and evil. Taken as a whole, the Upanishads teach that this goal is achievable in an individual’s lifetime and is known as ‘jeevan mukti’ or liberation while still living. “When all desires lodged in the heart disappear” enunciates, the *Katha* Upanishad, “then man becomes immortal and (even) here attains Brhaman.”52 It is not an easy path, but those few who practice the prescribed austere discipline do succeed in sublimating all their passions and acquire complete enlightenment. The large majority, however, consists of those who yield to natural impulses because they do not possess self-control. For them the Upanishads point the path of right action, while Camus would have advised purifying sessions of self-restraint, a life of ‘samyam’.

Camus’ philosophy revolves around human behavior. His works are the outcome of his deep preoccupation with human values. According to Indian ethics there are four main values or ‘purushartas’ which guide human conduct, namely, ‘kama’ (desire, wish, pleasure), ‘arth’ (wealth, material possession, means), ‘dharm’ ( virtue, moral knowledge, discretion) , and ‘moksha’( liberation or self-realization). The first two are sought not only by human beings but by all sentient creatures with the only difference that while man can seek them knowingly and consciously, other creatures do so instinctively. This distinction underlines the characteristic feature of the ‘purushastras’, namely, that they represent ends that are consciously pursued. When they are sought otherwise they remain ‘values’, but not ‘human values. The fact of a man seeking them consciously or unconsciously points to the combination of the spiritual and the animal in his character, therefore, a natural response to these urges. In Camus, sensual pleasure serves as an agent to transport the subject to a an elevated mystical level of a perfect yogic union of the being with the atmosphere, the infinite nature. The third value of ‘dharma’ is an aid to cleanse one’s mind by purging it of all lower, or selfish impulses. The spiritual cleansing or purification is effected through a disinterested, relentless performance of one’s duties.53 As a matter of fact, moral purification or the conquering of the lower self is only the immediate end of ‘dharma’, with its final or ultimate aim remaining to be ‘moksha’ or self-realization. The ‘moksha’ is the ultimate value and its conception is absolutely positive, since it consists not merely in subjugating the lower self, but also in advancing into or progressing toward the higher one. Camus’ adherence to the values of ‘dharma’ and of ‘moksha’ are examined in detail in chapter two.

All philosophy, in general, is always universal in outlook. The terms, ‘Eastern’ or ‘Western’ philosophy only indicate the philosophy developed in a certain region of the earth. It does not ever mean that the truth aimed at is of a provincial character. The search for truth may be conditioned or restricted by the mental attitudes and traditions of different countries but the essential aim of philosophy, that of reaching the truth, is universal and as such imparts a universal character to any work resulting from this pursuit.

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Notes and References

**Abbreviations used**:

Except where mentioned otherwise all page references to

Camus’ original writings are from the La Pleiade edition ed.

by Roger Quilliot, referred to as

Pl. I. *Theatre, recits, nouvelles*, Paris. Gallimard. 1965

Pl. II. *Essais*. Paris Gallimard 1965

Carnets I for Carnets Mai-1935-Fevrier 1942 Paris. Gallimard. 1962

Carnets II for Carnets Janvier 1942-Mars 1951.Paris. Gallimard 1964

Correspondance for Albert Camus, Jean Grenier: Correspondance-1932-1960, Gallimard,1981

Up. For Upanishad

BU for Brhadaryanaka Upanishad

CU for Chhandogya Upanishad.

TU for Taittriya Upanishad.

**Chapter I**

1. Nobel Prize citation
2. *Caligula*, Pl.I, p. 34
3. Paul Viallaneix in his introductory essay to *Youthful Writings by Albert Camus* (Penguin, 1984) p.18
4. Ibid.
5. Pl. II p. 1258
6. Ibid. p. 1674
7. Ibid. p. 1258
8. Carnets I, p. 40
9. Carnets II, p. 77
10. Lottman, Herbert R., *Albert Camus: A Biography* (London, Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1979) pp.50-51
11. Camus’s daughter, Mme. Catherine Camus, Mme. Jean Grenier, M. Lottman and M. Paul Viallaneix.
12. Simone Petrement, Simone Weil: A Life ( London Mowbrays, 1976) pp.422, 432, 450.
13. Carnets I, p. 84 The quotation used by me is not from this book.
14. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Madras, Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1977) p. 65
15. Albert Camus, Youthful Writings tr. Ellen C. Kennedy (Penguin Books, 1984) p. 118
16. Ibid.
17. Carnets I, p. 185. The actual Shloka from BU (IV.iv.5) reads, ‘ . . .As it does and acts so it becomes; by doing good it becomes good, and by doing evil it becomes evil . . .’ . Similar thought in BU, I.iv.16; TU I.x; *Manu Samhita*, II.4; *Katha* Up. II.5 Cf. Plato : ‘Such as are the trend of our desires, and the nature of our souls, just such each of us becomes,’ quoted by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *Principal Upanishads*, London Allen and Unwin, 1968, p. 272
18. Robert Kanters, *La Gazette des Lettres*, No. 28, June 1947
19. Albert Maquet, *Albert Camus: The Invincible Summer* (London, John Calder, 1958).
20. John Cruickshank, *Albert Camus and The Literature of Revolt* (London, OUP. 1958) p. vii.
21. The first feature of Indian thought is the recognition of the essential tragic nature of human life. Five main causes of suffering are acknowledged, namely, ‘avidya’, ‘asmita’, ‘asakti’, ‘raga’, and ‘abhinivesa’ (Svetasvatara Up, I.5.) However, all Indian systems suggest a way out. That is why the Indian philosophy is considered optimistic and not pessimistic. See Dr. S. Radhakrishnan’s *Indian Philosophy*, (New Delhi, Blackie & Son, 1983), Vol. I, p. 50
22. ‘Lettre a un ami Allemand’ , Pl. II, p. 241.
23. Actuelles I
24. Ibid.
25. ‘L’ Envers et l’endroit’ , Preface. Pl. II, p. 12.
26. ‘Le Myth de Sisyphe’ , Pl. II, p. 101
27. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, II, 48.
28. Pl. II ‘Il ya ainsi une volonte de vivre sans rien refuser de vie qui est la vertu que je honore le plus en ce monde.’
29. *La Mort Heureuse* (Paris, Gallimard, 1971) p. 70 & Carnets I Eng. Translation, p.42.
30. ‘Nobel Prize Library, Albert Camus’ p, 3
31. *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western* ed by Dr, S. Radhakrishnan (London, Allen & Unwin, 1952) Vol II, p. 443.

**Chapter 2**

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (Delhi Blackie & Son, 1983) Vol. I p. 70.
2. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* 9London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd.1932) p. 198
3. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (Delhi Blackie & Son, 1983) Vol. I p. 142.
4. *Brhadaranyaka, Chhandogya, Aittreya, Taittreya, Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundak, Mandukya, Svetasvatara, Kaustiki, Maitri, Subala, Jabala, Paingala, Kaivalya, and Vajrasika*.
5. *Svetasvatara* UP. I.1-3.
6. Pascal quoted by K. Gurudutt in *Existentialism and Indian Thought* (Bangalore, The Indian Institute of World Culture, 1960) p. 63.
7. *Myth of Sisyphus* tr. Justin O’Brien(Penguin, 1983) p. 12 and Pl. II. p.99
8. *Brhadarnyaka* Up. IV.iv.5, ‘sa va yam atma brhama.’
9. S.N. Dasgupta, *History of Philosophy* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 19750 vol. I, p. 48
10. *Chhandogya* Up. ,V.xi.1, ‘*ko nu atma, kim Brhaman’*
11. Cf. Pascal in Pascal: Pensees Extraits (Paris, Librairie Larousse) pp. 41-42. ‘When I consider the tiny span of my life which is swallowed up in the eternity which precedes and follows . . .’ (tr my own)
12. Brahadarnyaka Up. , II.i.20, *satsya satyam.*
13. *Katha* Up. , III.15. Also *Mundak* Up., II.ii.10.
14. Brh.Up.*,* IV.iii.33.
15. TU. II.8.
16. CU. VII.xxiii.
17. TU, II.1, *Satyam jnanam, anantam brhman*.
18. The Indian materialistic philosophy of *Carvak*a excepted.
19. Cf. Western theories of Existentialism and of Humanism.
20. BU. IV.iv.5. Cf. Camus’ reproduction of the text in Carnets I. p. 185.
21. CU , V.x.7.
22. J.W. Hauer. In the Hibbert Journal, April 1940, p. 341 quoted by Dr. Radhakrishnan in *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New Delhi, Blackie & Son, 1977) p. 11.
23. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New Delhi, Blackie & Son, 1977) p. 12.
24. *Bhagavad-Gita* II, 29. & *Katha* Up. II.7.

*Bhagavad-Gita,* II, 29 & Katha Up. II.19.

*Bhagavad-Gita,* VIII, 11, & Katha Up. II.15.

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New Delhi, Blackie & Son, 1977) p. 14.
2. *Bhagavad-Gita* XV. 7.
3. Cf*.* BU. IV.iv.5.
4. *Bhagavad-Gita* IV. 39 and II.44.
5. Cf prescribed asceticism of the Upanishads and the eight-fold path of the Buddha.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (New Delhi, Blackie & Son, 1977) pp. 52-53.
7. *Bhagavad-Gita,* II, 27.
8. Ibid. II. 18, 37. III.19, IV.5, VIII. 7, XI.33, XVI.24, XVIII. 6 and 72.
9. Ibid.VI.5,6.
10. Ibid. VI.19.
11. Ibid. V.10, and VI.8.
12. Ibid. II, 70.
13. *Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi, Blackie & Son, 1983)Vol I, p. 521
14. *Bhagavad-Gita* Chap. XI.
15. Humboldt quoted by P. Nagaraja Rao in *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy*(New Delhi, Indian Book Company) p. 73
16. P. Nagaraja Rao in *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy*(New Delhi, Indian Book Company) p. 74.
17. The Buddha belonged to the Sakhiya clan of Kapilavasthu.
18. Anatole France quoted by P. Nagaraja Rao in *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi, Indian Book Company) p. 165.
19. *Dukha, Samudya, Nirodha, Marga*
20. *Dhammapada* tr Dr. Radhakrishnan, (Madras, OUP), 1966
21. Katha Up. I.i.26.
22. *Dhammapada,* XI, 146, 148.
23. *Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi, Blackie & Son, 1983) Vol I, p.364
24. Ibid. p. 365
25. Ibid.pp.413-415. Also P.T. Raju, *The Philosophical Tradition of India* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1971) p.116
26. P.T. Raju, *The Philosophical Tradition of India* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1971) p.118
27. S.N. Dasgupta, *History of Philosophy* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 19750 vol. I, p. 108.
28. Ibid. p. 109.
29. Ananada Coomaraswamy, Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1956), p.106
30. Ibid. p. 108
31. With the exception of Carvaka.
32. Cf. BU. IV.iv.5.
33. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (Delhi Blackie & Son, 1983) Vol. I. p. 366..
34. Ibid. p. 676.

**Chapter 3**

1. Camus’s review of *La Nausee*. Pl. II, p. 1417
2. Satishchandra Chatterjee & Dhirendramohan Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1984) p. 117
3. Actuelles I. Pl. II.
4. Philip Thody, *Lyical and Critical Essays of Albert Camus* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1967) p. 264; Pl. II, p. 1339
5. Rgveda, X, 129, “ the one which in the beginning breathed calmly, developed by religious fervor and austerities.”
6. CU. III.xvii.4, “atha yat tapo danam arjavam ahimsa satya-vacanam iti, ta asya daksina.
7. BU. I.ii.6. “sa tapo atapyata, tapastapyate Bahumi varsha sahasrani” and III.viii.10. ‘yajnena, danena tapas.’
8. TU. I.ix.1; III.iii.1, ‘tapo brahman’.
9. *Jabala* Up. Shloka 3.
10. *Katha* Up. III.4; Maitriyani Up. II.6.
11. *Katha* Up. II.vi.11.
12. ‘Panna’ in Pali or ‘prjna’ in Sanskrit is often translated as wisdom but is closer in meaning to insight or discriminating knowledge, or intuitive apprehension. In the Pali canon ‘panna’ is concentrated insight into the three characteristics of all things, namely, impermanence, suffering, and no-self, and the four noble truths.
13. Cf. texts of Sattipatthana Sutta.
14. *Bhagavad-Gita*, V, 24; VI, 15, 19, 27, 28, 31, 1nd 32.
15. *Maitrayaniya* Up, II.2 and Chap IV.
16. *La Mort Heureuse*, Paris Gallimard, 1971, p.204
17. Ibid. p. 75. While writing this passage perhaps Camus had in his mind the image of Bodhisattva described in the book, *The Footsteps of the Buddha* by Rene Grousset pub in France in 1930
18. Ibid. p.75.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. p. 178. Camus’ definition of happiness. **20 a**. Ibid. p. 191.
21. Jean-Paul Sartre, “Explication de L’ Etranger” in Situation I, (Paris, Gallimard, 1947) p.112.
22. *Le Monde*, jeudi, 20 November 1986, p.9
23. Same as n. 20.
24. Pl. I, *L’ Etranger*.
25. Pl. I, p. 1212
26. *The Myth of Sisyphus*
27. *La Mort Heureuse*, p. 204
28. Pl. I, p. 1928. Camus’ preface to the American University edition of *L’ Etranger*.
29. Ibid.
30. ‘I didn’t perhaps, know what actually interested me, but I was absolutely sure oof what didn’t interest me.’
31. ‘ . . . she asked me, if I loved her. I told her, it meant nothing.’
32. ‘she then remarked that marriage was a serious matter. I replied, “no.”’
33. ‘I was thinking at this moment that one could kill or not kill. It was all the same.’
34. Pl. I, p. 1210.
35. Ibid.
36. *The Outsider*, tr. Joeph Laredo Penguin, 1983pb. p. 116, and Pl. I, pp. 1211-1212.
37. *The Outsider*, tr. Joeph Laredo Penguin, 1983pb. p. 116; Cf. Concept of liberation as given in the *Katha* Upanishad.
38. See *Katha* Up.
39. *Katha* Up. I.i.26.
40. Mencius(372 – 289 BC) was a Chinese philosopher who is the most famous Confucian after Confucius himself
41. Quoted by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London, OUP, 1940) p. 25
42. *Katha* Up. I.27, “Man is not to be contented with wealth. Shall we enjoy wealth when we have seen thee? That alone is (still) the boon chosen by me”. (tr. Dr. Radhakrishnan)
43. *Katha* Up. I.i.26 ‘(Naciketas said) : Transient (are these) and they were out. O, Yama, the vigour of all the sense of men. All life (a full life), moreover, is brief. Thine be the chariots, thine the dance and song.’ (tr. Dr. Radhakrishnan).
44. *Katha* Up. I.ii.12.
45. Kena Up. IV.8.
46. Carnets I. pp.192-93.
47. In *L’ Etranger, La Mort Heureuse*.
48. In *La Mort Heureuse.*
49. Ibid*.*
50. In *L’ Etranger.*
51. In *L’ Etranger* and *La Mort Heureuse*.
52. Carnets II. p. 72
53. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 176; Pl. I, p. 1395-6.
54. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 178; Pl. I, p. 1397.
55. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 186; Pl. I, p. 1405.
56. S. Radhakrishnan in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London, OUP, 1940) p. 21.
57. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 251; Pl. I, p. 1473.
58. Pl. I, p. 1473.
59. Thomas H. Hanna, “Albert Camus and the Christian Faith” in *A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Germaine Bree (Prentice-Hall, 1962) p. 58.
60. *Actuelles*, I. Pl. II, p. 380.
61. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 207; Pl. I, p. 1425.
62. *La Peste*, Pl. I, p. 1425.
63. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 190; Pl. I, p. 1409.
64. Pl. I, p. 1427.
65. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 pp. 177-178; Pl. I, p. 1396.Cf. the description of life as suffering and misery in all the systems of Indian philosophy.
66. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 207; Pl. I, p. 1425.
67. *La Peste*, Pl. I, p. 1426. Cf. Hindu concept of death as liberation.
68. *La Peste*, Pl. I, p. 1426.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. *La Peste*, Pl. I, p. 1326.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid. Also see Camus’ reply to Emile Simon in an interview given in 1948 where he says, “. . . les homes ne sont coupable que d’ ignorance.” Pl. II. p. 380.Cf. Buddhist “avidya” as the main cause of all human suffering.
74. S. Radhakrishnan in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London, OUP, 1940) p. 43.
75. *Mythe de Sisyphe*, Pl. II. p. 101. “A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity.”
76. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London, OUP, 1940) p. 44.
77. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 136; Pl. I, p. 1352.
78. Herbert R. Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography* (London, Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1979) p. 51.
79. *Bhagavad-Gita*, II. 47.
80. Ibid. III.19.
81. *The Plague* tr. Stuart Gilbert. Penguin pb. 1948 p. 136; Pl. I, p. 1352.
82. Ibid.
83. *“Sivam astu sarvajagatah, parahita niratah*

*Bhavantu bhuta ganah*

*Dosah paryantu nasam*

*Savatra sukhi bhavatu lokah.”*

1. *The Fall,*tr Justine O’Brien Penguinpb.1957 pp. 52-53. *La Chute*, Pl.I. p. 1511.
2. *The Fall,*tr Justine O’Brien Penguinpb.1957 p. 103; *La Chute*, Pl. I. pp. 1547-48.
3. *The Fall,*tr Justine O’Brien Penguinpb.1957 p. 97; *La Chute*, Pl. I. p. 1543.
4. Philip Thody, *Albert Camus*, *1913-1960* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1961)p. 174.
5. *Taittriya* Up, II.8.
6. *Svetasvatara* Up. VI.15.
7. *Isa* Up. 7.

**Chapter 4**

1. Banquet Speech,Nobel Prize; Discours de Suede, Pl.II p.1069
2. *Exile and the Kingdom*, Penguin, pb 1982, p. 23; Pl. I, p. 1570
3. *Exile and the Kingdom*, Penguin, pb 1982, p. 29; Pl. I, p. 1575
4. These steps are described by S.N. Dasgupta in *Yoga Philosophy* (Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass, 1974) p. 330
5. S. Radhakrishnan in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London, OUP, 1940) p. 78.
6. Cf. Arjun’s mental state immediately following the celestial vision in chapter XI, *Bhagavad-Gita.*
7. ‘”Le Renegat” is the most densely metaphorical piece of narrative prose ever published by Camus, and it marks indeed the extreme limit to which imagery can go in this genre.’ Stephen Ullmann in *The Image in the Modern French Novel: Gide, Alain Fournier, Proust.*Quoted by Peter Cryle in *L’ Exil et le Royaume d’ Albert Camus: essai d’ analyse*. Paris, Minard, 1973. P. 96
8. *Exile and the Kingdom*, Penguin, pb 1982, p. 33; Pl. I, pp. 1581-2
9. *Exile and the Kingdom*, Penguin, pb 1982, p. 43; Pl. I, pp. 1589-90
10. Adele King, *Camus* ,London, Oliver and Boyd, 1964. p. 99

**Chapter 5**

(only the original page numbers are quoted since translation by Stuart Gilbert often changes the text).

1. *Caligula*. I. iv, Pl. I. p. 16
2. *Caligula*. II, ii. Pl. I. p.34
3. *Le Malentendu*, III. iv, Pl. I. p. 178
4. *Le Malentendu*, III. iv, Pl. I. p. 179.
5. *Le Malentendu*, III. iv, Pl. I. p. 180.
6. *Caligula*. I. iv, Pl. I. p. 16. Cf. The four Noble Truths of Buddhism: There is Suffering. There is a cause of Suffering. Suffering can be overcome. There is a way to overcome it.
7. *Caligula*. III. ii. Pl. I. p. 69.
8. *Caligula*. I.x i. Pl. I. p. 27
9. *Caligula*. I. v . Pl. I. p. 18
10. *Caligula*. I. vi. Pl. I. p. 19
11. Same as n. 2
12. *Caligula*. I. iv, Pl. I p. 15
13. *Caligula*. I.x i, Pl. I. p. 27
14. *Caligula*. I. x, Pl. I p. 25
15. *Bhagavad-Gita*, XIII, 7-10.
16. Ibid. XIII, 11.
17. *Chhandogya* Up. VII, first three shlokas
18. The theme of the play as presented by Albert Camus in the U.S. edition of *Theater* in 1957
19. Cf. Eightfold path of Buddha. Chatterjee & Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. Univ. of Calcutta, 1984, pp.129-30; and *Brhadarnyaka* Up. IV.iv.23.
20. *Caligula*. I. iv, Pl. I p. 15
21. Ibid.
22. *Caligula*. I. iv, Pl. I p. 16
23. S. Radhakrishnan, Principal Upanishads, London, Allen & Unwin, 1968. p. 114
24. BU, III.ii.13. Camus has tried to reproduce the text of this shloka, or of BU IV.iv.5 where same words are repeated, in *Carnets* I, p. 185: ‘Vedas, ce que l’ homme pense, il le devient.’ This thought appears repeatedly in Camus’ writings.
25. *Caligula*. II,xiv. Pl. I. p.59
26. Rev. B.D. Brayan Kretser, *Man in Buddhism and Christianity*, Calcutta, YMCA Publishing House, 1954. p. 77
27. *Dhammapada,* chap. 12.
28. *Le Malentendu*, I. iv. Pl. I. p. 127
29. *Le Malentendu*, III. iii. Pl. I. p. 178
30. Ibid,
31. *Le Malentendu*, III. iii. Pl. I.p.179
32. *Le Malentendu*, II. vii. Pl. I. pp. 160-61.
33. *Le Malentendu*, III. iii. Pl. I. p. 179.
34. Ibid.
35. *Svetasvatara* Up. I, 1. ‘What is the cause? Whence are we born>By what do we live? And on what are we established? O, ye, who knows Brahman, tell us presided over by whom do we live our different conditions in pleasures and in other than pleasures (pains)’
36. Ibid. I. 2, ‘Time, inherent nature, necessity, chance, the elements, the womb or the person (should they ) be considered as the cause? It cannot be a combination of these because of the existence of the soul. Even the soul is powerless in respect of the cause of pleasure and pain.’

**Chapter 6**

1. “Love of Life” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed. Philip Thody Hamish Hamilton, 1967. p. 43
2. S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, University of Calcutta,1984.p.13
3. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Delhi. Blackie & Son, 1983, Vol 1, pp. 49-50.
4. “The Wind at Djemila” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed. Philip Thody Hamish Hamilton, 1967. p. 60
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. *Actuelles*. I, Pl. II. p.
8. “Entre oui et non” in *L’ Envers et L’ Endroit*, Pl. II, p. 23
9. *Carnets* I. p. 15
10. “L’ Ironie” in *L’ Envers et L’ Endroit*, Pl II, p. 15
11. Quoted by Pierre Rube, Yale French Studies, No. 25, Spring 1960, p. 6
12. “Camus on Himself; Three Interviews” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed. Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967. p. 263
13. A. J. Appasamy, “St. Augustine and His Precursors”, *History of Philosophy; Eastern and Western*, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan, London Allen & Unwin, 1953, Vol. II. pp.112-13: “As a young man Augustine was greatly attracted to the philosophy of Manichaeism. There were several reasons why he, though born in a Christian family was attracted to the strange medley (Manes claimed that his teaching was identical with Christian doctrine, and that he had direct communion with Jesus Christ and derived his authority from Him), of Manichaean beliefs. The Christian teaching which had been given to him in his youth was utterly inadequate to meet the problems and need of a brilliant, restless, and enquiring mind. He did not understand that Christianity did not make God the source of evil. The existence of evil in the world perplexed him greatly and he thought that Manichaeism offered an effective solution while Christianity failed to do so. Moreover, in his youth his ideas were strangely materialistic. He had, therefore, no difficulty in accepting the doctrine that evil was a material substance which existed from eternity and which was in continual conflict with God. But the main attraction of the religion of Manichaeism, to his mind was its appeal to reason without any demand for faith. The Manichaean teachers constantly emphasized the term ‘Truth’ and claimed that their followers need not accept anything on the basis of faith but were expected to believe only those doctrines which could be demonstrated satisfactorily to the intellect.”

13a. *Hortensius* or *On Philosophy* is a lost dialogue written by Marcus Tullius Cicero in the year 45 BC. The work had followed the conventional form of a protreptic and taught that genuine human happiness is to be found by using and embracing philosophy. The dialogue was extremely popular in the ancient world. It is considered lost except in the fragments preserved by St.Augustine.

1. Plotinus, *Enneads*, III, pp.8-10. Quoted by A. J. Appasamy in *History of Philosophy; Eastern and Western*, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan, London Allen & Unwin, 1953, Vol. II. p.114
2. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Delhi, OUP, 1985, p. 215.
3. Ibid. p.214
4. “Three Interviews” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed. Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967 p.263. Original pub in *Les Nouvelles Litteraires*, May 10, 1951.
5. Ibid. p. 263.’What a marvelous friend, always bringing you back to the essential, in spite of yourself. Grenier was my master and still is.’
6. *La Mort Heureuse*, p. 64.
7. *Correspondance*, p. 144
8. Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, London Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1979, p. 50
9. Name of a parish in the viccinity of Paris.
10. Noted by Christopher Isherwood in his book, *Vedanta for Modern Man*, New York Harper & Bros.,1945.p. 410
11. *Correspondance*, p. 81
12. Ibid.
13. A list of the books possibly read by Camus is provided in Appendix I. Some of them are actually present in his collection in his house at Lourmarin seen by the author.
14. *Carnets* I and II.
15. “On Jean Grenier’s *Les Iles*” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical* ed. Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967, p. 238
16. “Three Interviews” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed. Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967 p.273.
17. Jean-Claude Brisville, *Camus*. Paris, Gallimard, 1959, p.259.
18. Herbert Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, London Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1979, p. 50
19. “Three Interviews” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed. Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967 p.262.
20. “On Jean Grenier’s *Les Iles*” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical* ed. Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967, p. 238
21. “Irony “in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed. Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967, pp. 15-22.
22. “Iron in the Soul” in *Albert Camus*: *Selected Essays and Notebooks*. Ed. Philip Thody, Penguin pb, 1970.p.55
23. “Love of Life” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed.Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967.p. 43
24. Chhandogya UP. VII.xxiii.1.
25. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1932.p. 19.
26. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual heritage of India*. Madras,Ramakrishna Math, 1977.p. 209
27. “Love of Life” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed.Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967.p. 43
28. Ibid.
29. “Nuptials at Tipasa” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed.Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967.p. 53
30. Ibid. pp 55-56.
31. “The Wind at Djemila” in *Albert Camus*: *Lyrical and Critical*, ed.Philip Thody, Hamish Hamilton, 1967.p. 59
32. “Summer in Algiers” in *Albert Camus*: *Selected Essays and Notebooks*. Ed. Philip Thody, Penguin pb, 1970.p.89
33. *Carnets* II p.51 ‘Sexuality leads to nothing . . . only chastity is linked to a personal progress’ cf Katha Up I.ii.1.
34. “Return to Tipasa” in *Albert Camus*: *Selected Essays and Notebooks*. Ed. Philip Thody, Penguin pb, 1970.p.153

**Chapter 7**

1. Camus’ *Preface* to the American edition of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, March 1955.
2. *Le Monde*, October 25, 1986
3. Camus’ letter to Mathieu Dec. 1958.Quoted by Roger Quilliot in *The Sea and the Prisons,* University of Alabama Press, 1970.p. 266
4. *Caligula* I. x. , Pl. I, p. 25
5. *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Penguin classics. pb 1975, p. 109
6. See the Buddha’s Four Noble Truths, and the doctrine of the chain of twelve links of suffering.
7. *Gautam the Buddha*, Bombay, Hind Kitabs Ltd. 1945, p. 22. Cf. Brhadarnyaka Up, IV.iv.5 ‘A person consists of desires, and as is his desire, so is his will; and as is his will, so is his deed; and whatever deed he does, that he will reap’
8. *Noces* (Eng. *Nuptials*)
9. See the Indian Carvaka system of philosophy.
10. Cf. the anti-speculative attitude of Buddha. ‘He was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer, not a metaphysician. The message of his enlightenment points to man the way of life that leads beyond suffering.’ S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1984. p. 117.
11. *Carnets* II, p. 113
12. Pl. I. p. 1473
13. *Chhandogya* Up. VII.xxvi.2.
14. Camus wrote in 1945, ‘I have little liking for the too famous existential philosophy, and to speak frankly, I think its conclusions are false’ *Actuelles* II, Paris Gallimard, 1953, p. 48
15. G. Srinivasan, The Existentialist Concepts and the Hindu Philosophical Systems, Allahabad, Udayan Publications, 1967, p. 21.
16. ‘Social and International Ideals’ quoted by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in *Indian Philosophy* , London Allen & Unwin, 1962, Vol. I, p.50. cf. Schopenhauer: ‘Optimism when it is not merely the thoughtless talk of, such as, harbor nothing but words under their low foreheads, appear not merely as an absurd but also as a really wicked way of thinking, as a bitter mockery of the unspeakable suffering humanity.’
17. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, London Allen & Unwin, 1962, Vol. I, p.50.
18. “What a Writer Seeks” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 191, June 1953, p. 73.
19. In the ‘Shantiparva’ of *The Mahabharata* Bhishma teaches that self-control(*dama*) is the sum of all virtues and the secret of truth, S. Chatterjee and D. Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1984. p.29. See also *The Bhagavad-Gita*, III.41-43; and the *Katha* Up. I.iii.3-9.
20. *Carnets* I, pp. 192-93.
21. *Caligula* II.xiv. Pl. I. p. 59
22. Cf. *Katha* Up. I. i. 26, 27, 28; & *The Bhagavad-Gita*, VI.4.
23. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, II, 14-15; XIII, 9.
24. “L’ Ete a Alger” Pl. II. p. 75. In English, “Summer in Algiers” in *Albert Camus:Lyrical and Critical* ed, Philip Thody, New York, Vintage, 1970, pp.90-91
25. “Noces a Tipasa” Pl. II. p.58. In English, “Nuptials at Tipasa” in *Albert Camus:Lyrical and Critical* ed, Philip Thody, New York, Vintage, 1970, p. 69
26. *Carnets* II, p. 27.
27. *Carnets* I, p. 28. Cf. *The Bhagavad-Gita*,II.27, ‘. . . to the one that is born death is certain.’ & XIII,27, ‘Never perishing when they perish.’ Both the shlokas refer to perishability of the body and the immortality of the soul.
28. *Carnets* I, p. 51.
29. “Le Vent a Djemila” Pl. II. p. 63; In English, “The Wind at Djemila” in *Albert Camus:Lyrical and Critical* ed, Philip Thody, New York, Vintage, 1970, p. 76.
30. G. Srinivasan, *The Existentialist Concepts and the Hindu Philosophical Systems*, Allahabad, Udayan Publications, 1967, p. 12.
31. *Carnets* II, pp. 157-8.
32. “Noces a Tipasa” Pl. II. p.55-60; In English, “Nuptials at Tipasa” in *Albert Camus:Lyrical and Critical* ed, Philip Thody, New York, Vintage, 1970,pp. 65-72.
33. “Le Desert” Pl. II. p. 85; In English, “The Desert” in *Albert Camus:Lyrical and Critical* ed, Philip Thody, New York, Vintage, 1970, p. 101.
34. “L’ Ete a Alger” , Pl. II. p. 50; In English, “Summer in Algiers” in *Albert Camus:Lyrical and Critical* ed, Philip Thody, New York, Vintage, 1970, p. 91.
35. *Carnets* I, p. 172.
36. *Le Myth de Sisyphe*, Pl II. p. 97; *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Penguin classics. Pb. 1975, p.10
37. Ibid. Pl II, p. 109.; Eng. p. 21
38. Ibid, Pl II , p. 101; Eng. p.13
39. Ibid Pl II, pp. 111-112.; Eng. pp. 24-25.
40. *Le Myth de Sisyphe*, Pl II. p. 136.; Eng. p. 51
41. Ibid, Pl II p, 141.Eng,p. 57
42. Ibid. Pl II p, 142.Eng, p. 58
43. Quoted by H. Wilhoite in *Beyond Nihilism*, Luisang University Press, 1958, p. 33.
44. *Le Myth de Sisyphe*, Pl II. p. 198.;Eng. p. 111
45. Cf, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, V.19, 21, 22; VI. 7, 27; XIII, 24.
46. *Caligula* I. x. , Pl. I, p. 25
47. *Ibid.*
48. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* London, Allen & Unwin, 1962, Vol. I, p. 22.
49. M. Hiriyanna, “Philosophy of Values” excerpts quoted by W. Gerber in *The Mind of India*, London, Macmillan, 1967, pp. 217-24.
50. Charles Rolo, “Albert Camus: A Good Man” in *The Atlantic Monthly*: 201, 1958, p. 27.
51. *Actuelles* I, Paris, Gallimard 1950, p. 206. “My role I admit, is not to change the world, nor man. I do not have enough virtues, nor knowledge for it. But it is, perhaps, to serve in my place some values, without which a world even when changed will not be worth living in, without which a man, even new, will not be worth respecting.”
52. *Katha* Up. II.iii. 9; and *The Bhagavad-Gita*, II. 52-53.
53. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, II. 47-50.

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Appendix 1

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2. ***Les Cahiers du Sud***; 1949 “Approches de L’ Inde” containing articles by Rene Guenon, Aurobindo, Jean Herbert, A.K.Coomaraswamy , Simone Weil, and others.

***Les Cahiers du Sud*** was a French literary magazine based in Marseilles. It was founded byJean Ballard in 1925 and published until 1966

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Appendix 2

Camus’ Desire for Unity

*... everything at certain moments yearns for that spiritual home.1*

*To a man without blinkers there is no finer spectacle than that of the*

*intelligence at grips with the reality which surpasses it.2*

Camus was not a philosopher in the traditional sense of the word, nor one by profession like Sartre. He was obliged to abandon his aspiration to become a philosophy teacher in the early preparatory stage on account of the fragile state of his health. Nevertheless, he maintained throughout his life a steady, passionate concern for the philosophical, religious, and moral problems of his age: God, death, truth, the reality, salvation, and. the presence of evil. Camus did not expound or develop a metaphysical system of his own, but the profundity of his contemplation on these questions has carved him a high place among serious thinkers of the century and his philosophical views have a strong appeal in the east and the west alike.

Camus’ treatment of these issues--central to human life—reveals a practical and logical mind, one with strong spiritual inclinations. And the method used by him is meditative relying more on intuition than on reason with his search directed within, at the inner self rather than at the given external phenomena. His way of thinking with a distinct religiousness of intention and a sense of the sacred align him with the characteristic Indian tradition of thought suggesting a close kinship of vision. His assiduous quest for truth, and thirst for reality show a deep affinity with the Upanishads and their search for the One.

As is well known the Upanishads contain the quintessence of Indian philosophy: reality of the Brahman, the ‘unsubstantiality’ of the phenomenal universe, and the ultimate oneness of individual soul and the Supreme Soul. They have treated every fundamental problem of life including death, the last *samskar* or rite of a human being’s life3. I find the echo of essential Upanisadic thought reverberating through the works or Albert Camus, particularly the ones he wrote during the 'Absurd' phase. This peculiar effect may or may not have been a conscious or unconscious effect of his reading of “la philosophie hindoue” during the years 1931-364, the similarity is unmistakable and will so impress anybody familiar with the Upanisadic doctrines.

Of the fourteen principal Upanishads, the *Kathopanishad* enjoys an important place, and is most widely known as much for its stimulating subject-matter as for the imagination and exquisite poetry with which it is treated. The central idea of the *Kathopanishad* is death, the actual, exact experience of that significant moment of transition, and presumptuously enough it is the god of death himself who is approached directly to enlighten the subject. This dramatic handling of the theme of death has made this Upanishad extra attractive and particularly relevant to the present time—death being the most prominent feature of twentieth century literature, although like all other Upanishads the primary aim of the Katha Upanishad too, is to inculcate in man the knowledge of the self, of the Brahman, and of the essential oneness of the two. The kernel of the entire disquisition is to indicate that the ultimate power of the universe is also the deepest power of man's being5; that, deep below the plane of man's empirical life of imagination is his will which is the ultimate being of man, his -true centre which remains unmoved and unchanged even when he might experience, on the surface, the fleeting play of thoughts and emotions, hopes and desires. When we withdraw from the play of outward faculties, and pass over the divisions of discursive thought, we retreat into the soul and become witness to the spirit within. Man possesses the unique gift of realizing unity. He only needs to be made aware of it. The Katha Upanishad lays emphasis on this faculty, on man's inherent potentiality to attain immortality while living, his ability to transcend death, and on the need to assert this very distinctive trait.6 Every creature has the possibility of becoming a Buddha.7 In a less exalted situation, but in the same context Camus avows an identical faith in man and acclaims this exclusive faculty with no less vigour when he says, "man... can create, all by himself, his own values"8, and again, "this world has no superior meaning. But I know that something in it has meaning: it is man, because man is the sole being to insist upon having a meaning."9 I am not quoting this particular statement as an instance of Upanishadic influence or impact on him, nor as an illustration of subtle parallel thinking. The striking similarity apparent here is purely one of the spirit, and of thought. In fact, the daring, defying, and persevering image of Naciketas keeps coming back to my mind while reading Camus, for instance, his reflective, lyrical essays, or quite frequently in the action and mind of Caligula– the same philosophical detachment (or ’indifference’ – the term used by Camus to refer to the concept of non-detachment), indifference to worldly possessions usually considered valuable, a spiritual turn of the temperament, high moral sense, and a persistent, devouring desire to penetrate the mystery of death, to discover the inner spirituality of man, to know and realize the highest truth, a certain 'nostalgie' to unite. It is this desire for truth and unity evident in Camus from beginning to end which places him close to Indian thought and which, I feel, must have got strengthened after his reading of the Indian Philosophy.

In the *Katha* Upanishad the abstract subject of metaphysical unity is very artfully introduced through the fascinating story of Naciketas taken from the ancient Sanskrit literature.10 A poor and pious brahmin, Vajasravasa performs *Visvajit yajna* (sacrifice performed to acquire victory over the whole world) with the sole purpose of acquiring heavenly rewards. In the observance of necessary sacrificial ritual he gives away a few old, decrepit, useless cows to the priests as offering. His son, Naciketas who has a genuine reverence for spiritual practices feels disturbed at this false show of piety and reasons that since he is healthy and strong he will make a better propitiatory gift and immediately asks his father, "Whom dost thou give me father?" The vain Vajasravasa ignores, and evades his son's repeated query. Later pestered by Naciketas' persistent demands, unable to control his anger he shouts in rage, ‘Unto Yama I give thee’11. Dutiful Naciketas proceeds forthwith to the abode of yama. Reaching there he finds the God of death, Yama was away. Deciding to wait for him he stays there for three days and three nights unfed, till yama returns. Yama feels extremely sorry for the discomfort caused inadvertently to his fearless visitor and by way of recompense offers him three boons. Naciketas’ first two wishes, “Let me return alive to my father”, and, “That sacred fire which leads to heaven. Explain it to me”12  are happily and instantly granted. His third wish, “There is doubt in regard to a man who has departed, some (holding) that he is and some that he is not. I would be instructed by thee in this knowledge,”13 embarrasses the god of death. He cannot impart Brahminic knowledgejust for the asking. He hesitates, tries to dissuade, and at the same time also test Naciketas’ sincerity, by offering him all the riches, all the pleasures of the world in place of the knowledge demanded by him. But the intrepidyoungman is unwavering in his determination and resolutely refuses the allurements pointing out their utter insignificance (unimportance) compared to the knowledge he had requested for, namely, the secret of the immortality of soul. While going through this mythological tale it should be kept in mind that according to the Indian philosophy the highest truth cannot be ‘known’ in the usual sense of the word. It can only be ‘realized’. And realization of truth is liberation: Once a man realizes truth or unity, he becomes it. Ultimately Yama gives in and Naciketas comes back home a conqueror. The entire philosophy of the Upanishads, and the individual soul's perennial search for the Brahman (or the One, or the Supreme, or Truth, or Reality) and attaining of salvation on eradication of ignorance is beautifully revealed through long and illumin­ating talk between Naciketas and Yama, man and god, a mortal confronting the immortal and finally winning over him by strict and unswerving adherence to his ideal and high values. Nothing is impossible for man.

Unbounded faith in man's potential in the face of a realistic recognition of an ever present conflict between intention and reality, philosophical analysis of his 'absurd' condition from an essentially religio-spiritual stance won Camus a readership far beyond the frontiers of France, among academics as well as non-academics, and a reputation, which even today in some countries – like the United States14 and India – is probably higher than in France. Many fiction writers demonstrate in their work the same disquiet, anxieties, apparent lack of meaning and hope as analyzed by Camus in the *Myth of Sisyphus*, and they share with him a common concern for religious and moral themes, especially in terms of the struggle to find value and fulfillment in a world without God. Camus' exploration in the *Myth of Sisyphus* of what the western scholars'15 call "the modern complex environmenf"16 is-compassionate feeling. This philosophical essay is considered to be of great assistance in understanding not only Camus’ own fiction but also most of the fiction written by others on the theme of the absurd after him.

In his appraisal of *The Stranger* Sartre has remarked that Meursault is a perfect portrayal of the absurd sensitivity described by Camus in the *Myth* of Sisyphus."17 According to him, the absurd, in Camus' work takes on two different meanings, "a state of fact," and "the lucid awareness which certain people acquire of his state of fact." He further clarifies that "the stranger is a man confronting the world." He has a `passion' for the absurd. Despite full knowledge of his meaningless condition he does not try to escape from life by committing suicide but stays there boldly to live and struggle. It was Camus' firm belief that an illumined man, in his struggle, has a greatness that makes him equal to god.

Insofar as Meursault is the illumined, absurd hero of Carnus, capable of telling the real from the unreal, who knows that no material possession, or economic or social promotion is of any real value in life, who accepts death with the detachment of a philosopher, he "stares at death with passionate attention, and this fascination liberates him,”18 who alone under a divine sky experiences a strange tranquility flooding into him, he is reminiscent of Naciketas. Whether the search is for the absolute or for the highest truth their common goal is immortality in a deathless and indestructible spiritual experience. He is a passive Naciketas, caught in a different situation therefore, reacts differently. He is as spiritually awakened as Naciketas and ideally shares with him what Sartre calls, “the lucid awareness.” His mature spiritual insight is clearly emphasized by Camus himself in his preface to the American edition written in 1955, "Far from lacking all sensibility, he is driven by a tenacious and therefore profound passion, the passion for an absolute and for truth.” Meursault, for Camus “is not a reject, but a poor and naked man, in love with a sun which leaves no shadows." The word 'naked' here means that he is shorn of all sensuous imagery or thought. The entire description of Meursault so closely resembles the description of God­ seeing man given by Jan Van Ruysbroeck, the Dutch mystic who lived in thirteenth century and whom Camus was very fond of reading,19 that it seems to have been borrowed from him. Ruysbroeck describes his "God-seeing man" thus:

The God-seeing man ... can always enter, naked and unencumbered with images, into the inmost part of his spirit. There he finds revealed an Eternal Light . . . . It (his spirit) is undifferentiated and without distinction, and therefore, it feels nothing but the unity.20

Meursault is the absurd hero par excellence confronting life with extreme lucidity. He is not indifferent, but rather non-attached, an attitude which results from an elevated state of mind, the normal stand taken by a wise man “who leaves behind both joy and sorrow.”21  He was not always so disinterested, we are told. As a student he had plenty of ambitions but he soon realized that it was pretty futile22. That’s why now he doesn’t find any attraction in his employer’s offer of a better position.

Meursault has a passion for truth and lives purely by truth. His impassioned outburst at the prison chaplain offers a glimpse of his convictions. He is very sure that in life, “nothing, nothing at all had any meaning”23, and he also knows why. He is absolutely, “sure of himself . . . Sure of everything….sure of my life and of the death which was coming to me.”24 This lyrical passage in *The Stranger* puts forward three arguments, three reasons behind its pro­tagonist's 'strange' behaviour, more or less of the same nature as advanced by Naciketas to Yama. First, that certain things usually considered important are really unimportant. Naciketas is unmoved by the promises of transient pleasures and obtains from the god of death the secret of the knowledge of Brahman. The material guarantees of human security are unsubstantial, of no real importance.25 Naciketas refuses all temptations of wealth and pleasure. He thirsts for the eternal in which alone he can find real satisfaction.26 Naciketas represents the human aspiration to reach the eternal as the goal of the truest safety from the ills and anxieties of finite experience. It is mostly the simple minded who prefer *ksema* or well-being to yoga or contemplation. Second, there are certain values but it doesn't matter whether we pursue or neglect them: And third, as conveyed in Meursault's confident affirmative, that there are certain permanent, positive values which remain unaffected by the inevitability of death. For him 'grief over death is a meaningless abstraction, and death, an insignificant occurrence whether it is his mother's which doesn't sadden but `bores' him,27 or the Arab's, or his own which he is going to encounter shortly. He is very calm and resigned to the fact of death. Actually, he seems to be preparing himself for the great spiritual merging, “. . . I woke up with stars shining on my face. Sounds of the countryside rose up to me. Odours of night, earth and salt refresehed my face. The marvelous peace of this sleeping summer came flooding over me . . . . in the face of this night full of signs and stars I opened myself for the first time to the tender indifference of the world.”28

In Meursault’s meditation on death the sensation of light, noise, and smell take on a significance that is more than physical. His rejection of the usual non-transcendental forms of consolations forces the reader back to God, and constitutes what Patrick McCarthy calls “religious writing.”29 Germaine Bree also feels the same and has described Meursault's entire adventure as “essentially spiritual in nature."30  His experience of the approaching transcendent tranquility indicates not merely that death is near but that he has attained to some kind of truth or harmony and is now ready for the “final consummation." It is the same Brahman-atman identity doctrine of the Upanishads, the merging of the individual self with the Universal Soul, the 'great transition' from the temporal to the eternal. For the Indians death is never the final end in itself. In the like manner the death experienced by both, Mersault (in A Happy Death) and Meursault is more than extinction even though the eternal is dimly perceived.

A persistent troubled religious urge for unity runs through Camus' early writing31. He talks of "my so mystical soul which demands an object for its fervour and faith." Even God laments that he has no God to turn to. One -of his few poems, "Mediterranean" depicts death as part of some greater Mediterranean ritual :

Alone, naked without secrets, your sons await their deaths,

Death will return them to you purified at last.32

Time does not diminish the urgency of this need. Many years later we find Caligula almost haunted by the desire for the absolute, “This world, as it is made is unbearable, so I need the moon or happiness or immortality or something else which may be mad but is not of this world.” At the core of his essays in *Betwixt and Between* lies a two-sided experience of the loss of self into something that is greater than the self. People and objects give way to shapes and sounds. The smiling sky, the strange peace, and the disembodied voices Camus hears are fragments of a greater whole. Man’s individual consciousness is lost to become part of a ballet which is eternal. In another mystical moment the narrator sits in a cafe alone, except for the Arab proprietor- The Arab-helps the­ narrator to entre his trance : The world sighs out to me long and rhythmically and it brings me the indifference and tranquility of that which does not die . . . A kind of secret melody is born of the indifference, Once more I am at home."3*3* *A Happy Death (1971)* is an important landmark intracing the development of Camus’ spiritual thought, and his desire for unity. It spells out more fully than the essays the initiation that man must undergo in order to attain the mystical state of oneness. Mersault is an apprentice mystic trying to reconcile his individual awareness with the universe, Camus saw in the natural world a harmony which, was more than the mere regularity of a row of cypress trees.34

In Camus' thought two streams run parallel to each other: an ever deepening urge and occasional glimpse of a partial merging. He denies the existence of God yet always hints that the universe might, after all, be shaped in his all pervading image. This obvious dualism or split in his thinking is acknowledged by his critics. His vision alternates between religious and the absurd. The absurd in any case, is a form of religious experience since it stems from man's awareness of the godhead. Man needs a *totality*, which Camus seems tosay, only religion can offer *but* that it fails in doing so. The trace of the godhead present in “the night full of signs” in *The Stranger* becomes clearer in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The absurd existence which Meursault has learnt to value is happy because of these signs, Which are not the signs of the night but of his nostalgia. By now, the absurd has already acquired a shape and coherence in Camus’ mind and he presents it fully in the *Myth of Sisyphus.*

A prefatory note to the main essay in the *Myth of Sisyphus* informs that ‘the following pages deal with an absurd sensitivity widespread in the age' and not with any absurd philosophy, metaphysics or belief. Nevertheless, the discussion on the argument which for the author sums up ‘the lucid invitation to live’ midway takes a turn towards a veritable analysis of the fact or feeling. The plea put forward by Camus communicates his most emotional and fundamental views on the absurdity of human condition, his enunciation of the problem of human search for the real: the desire, the Reality, and the arising discrepancy. The truth on which he builds up his reasoning is not a recent discovery for him. He had encountered it many years back "in this world of poverty and sunlight in which I lived for so long." It was there that he found that single stream which "each artist keeps in his heart of hearts," and "which, so long as he is alive, feeds what he is and what he says." Camus' first description of this feeling can be seen in the collection of his essays, entitled *Betwixt and Between*.

At about the same time he started thinking of writing a long essay on the theme of the absurd. We are told that the Myth of Sisyphus is the work of long maturation.35 Camus had been contemplating the theme of absurdity since 1936 when he first felt besieged by this thought : distressful realization of a deeply felt urge for unity; and the subsequent frustration it has to face; a confrontation between the desire to live and the irrationality of the universe. Camus’ examination of the problem and of the inexplicable nature of reality, the empirical world bears a striking resemblance to the *Maya* doctrine of the Vedanta. His interpretation of truth, preference for intuition against reason as a means of realization, and his insistence on ethnical purity and moral discipline as a prerequisite condition to ultimate knowledge offers an intriguing parallel to Upanishadic thinking.

Camus refused belief in God. All the same, in all his writings one comes across a profound longing for unity, “le desir eperdu de clare,” a need, a consciousness known to be religious. The very concept suggests a fundamental kinship between the aspiring spirit of man and the spirit of the universe which it seeks to attain. The wish to know the real presupposes its knowledge to some extent. The desire for unity and the accompanying sense of being in exile, the corollary feeling of alienation implies the reality (or the existence) of the real, or of the absolute in the individual. All spiritual progress is the growth of half-knowledge into clear illumination. The identity of the Brahman (or the Absolute) and atman (or the individual soul) is the fundamental thought of the entire doctrine of the Upanishads. The great Upanishadic sayings, very often quoted, *tattvamasi* (meaning that art thou’), *aham brahmasmi* (meaning ‘I am Brahman’), and *Brahm-atmaikyam* (meaning unity of the Brahman and the atman) refer to the same important discovery. The ancient Greek philosophy speculations about One Reality underlying material phenomena is the same as the Upanishadic search for that light, “by knowing which everything else becomes known.”36 The absurd as depicted in *The Myth of Sisyphus* has a distinct religious tenor. Camus’ descriptive analysis revolves around the antithesis of man’s desire, need, determination to see a reflection of himself in the universe and the universe’s inability to resemble him. The universe is not absurd to a cat or a tree because they have their place in it; it is absurd to man because he has no place and is tormented by a ‘nostalgia’ for unity and ‘a hunger for the absolute.’37 The unity or certainty demanded by Camus’ man is not intellectual knowledge but the feeling that he is part of a greater intelligence, which means an emotional, and spiritual bond with some kind of God. In the course of his argument Camus even clarifies that no scientific comprehension can satisfy man and that “to understand is above all to unify.”38

The quest for unity in Indian philosophy reaches its culmination in the Advaita Vedanta of Samkara. Very breifly, his thesis is, that the Brahman is real (sat). The world is not absolutely real, but it is not a-sat or unreal, or non-existent for we apprehend it.39 It is an appearance or illusion (Maya) of the real, or of the Brahman, just as a snake is of the rope or silver of nacre. It has an empirical existence, different from the eternal being of Brahman which is the basis of the empirical world. The individual souls have individual status only so long as they retain their body-mind identification complexes, which are not­self.40 In other words, their individual identity relates to the empirical world and not to the real world. When the wrong identification is cleared through eradication of ignorance, the soul realizes itself as not different from the Brahman or the Absolute. It attains liberation, knowledge, unity.

Camus begins his essay on the absurd by saying that the sense of the absurd for him is the starting point and not a conclusion: If the absurd is understood as the state of lucid awareness it cannot be otherwise. Awareness of limitation initiates search and struggle towards the unlimited. Men, usually, go on living their unregenerate lives in the world governed by time and necessity till “one day the why appears and everything begins in a weariness tinged with surprise.”41 The moment of revelation is always sudden and is followed by an effort to understand reality, and ultimately to transcend it. This causes confrontation with the absurd (now a state of fact). In order to continue the spiritual search it is necessary to keep the absurd alive. In Camus’ rapid and vigorous reasoning it takes on a variety of meanings. He enumerates a number of situations in which men are led to question the meaning of their existence. The absurd, according to him, is present, (i) in the finite character of man’s life coupled with his passionate claim to eternity; (ii) in the irremediable incoherence of his experience and his drive for rational unity, in Sartre’s words the “concern” which constitutes man’s very essence and the vanity of his efforts42 ; (iii) in the insignificance of his life and passion for absolute values and meaning. Man wants to comprehend the world through a unifying principle, but his desire for absolute cannot *be* satisfied because the absurd obstructs his view of the essence of anything. He is able to reach only to some traits and appearances. He can knowtruths, but never the truth because***,*** Camus says,the worldisultimately unknowable. It is “neither completely rational, nor quite irrational either,” and therefore inexplicable**.**

The*Maya*doctrine of the Vedanta revolves around a similar confusing, confounding, misleading appearance of the empirical world frustrating man's innermost effort at comprehension. Samkara describes the world as, "not real, nor un-real either." For him it is *anirvacaniya*, which in Sanskrit means inexplicable. Moreover, the problem, according to the *Maya* doctrine does not reside in the factuality of the world, nor in man’s desire by itself; it is the interplay between the two. In Dr Radhakrishnan’s words, “Maya is concerned not with the existence of the world but with its meaning, not with the factuality of the world but with the way in which we look upon it.”43  Camus’ appraisal of the notion (as different from the feeling of the absurd) of the absurd is also concerned primarily with the question of meaning: “I do not know whether or not this world has a meaning which transcends it. But I am aware that I do not know this meaning and that at the moment it is impossible for me to know it.”44  The absurd, for Camus also does not reside in the meaningless universe. By itself the world is not absurd; it is neither rational nor irrational, it is simply unreasonable. The absurd is not the quality of man alone. The absurd arises when man confronts the irrational with all his nostalgic longing for happiness and reasonable unity. “The absurd is born of that confrontation of the human appeal and the unreasonable silence of the world.”45

The absurd corresponds toMaya in its main import aswell as in most of its different connotations:

(1) The term *maya* is used to designate the phenomenal character of the world as against the underlying reality-the world of truth, light and life. Throughout the history of human thought men have taken refuge from the world of stress and strain in the apprehension of a spirit beyond. The Upanishadic prayer to “lead us from unreality to reality, from darkness to light, from death to irnmortality”46 assumes the distinction between reality, light and immortality and unreality, darkness and death. The *Katha Upanisad* warns against finding reality and certainty in the unrealities and uncertainties of this world.47 The *Chhandogya Upanisad* speaks of a covering of untruth biding the ultimate truth.48  The *Brhad-aranyaka* and *lsa­ Upanisads*mentiontheveilingoftruthbyadiscofgold.49 Camus'desirefortruthandunityprovidesthebaseforthischapter.He concedestoanunderlyingreality,and also says that this is covered by a certain ‘epaisseur’.

(2) *Maya* refers to the dual nature of the world. The incomprehensibility exists because of the heterogeneous character of the two concerned values. In reality they are one. The world of fact cannot be apart from the world of being. From one being no other being is born. It exists in another form.

(3) Though devoid of all specifications, Brahman is the root cause of the universe.50 The world is not self-explanatory; it is not the cause of itself. It is an effect, an echo of a pre-existent sound. The *Isa Upanishad* indicates that the basic reality is the One, and the derivative and dependent reality is the many.51

(4) The principle assumed to account for the appearance of Brahman as empirical world, or the power of creation is called *maya*. If we turn to the world process which is a perpetual becoming, we discover it as a mixture of being and non-being, *sat* and *asat*, the eternal principle and its appearance. The temporal world of becoming is not real but by no means false.

The *Maya* doctrine goes deeper into the feeling of absurdity. According to it, the mind in juxtaposition with two categories of reality produces a third category which for the moment remains inexplicable to the individual because of the temporary dullness of his understanding. This category is neither real, nor unreal, nor both. It is indefinable. It is an illusion but not a substance less illusion*.* For itis produced by reality passing through the prism of mind. The individual knows it as illusion and is yet deceived. The passage from illusion to truth which the human mind covers in life is due to the basic reality of consciousness which splits itself in various colours. Ignoranceof reality results in illusion, and once it is removed the individual becomes conscious of thereality. Camus' absurd comprises three different elements: the desire, reality, and the resulting discrepancy. And according to him the only true, honest, and dignified way of life is one which keeps the “odd trinity” intact52, the absurd alive. The feeling of cleavage between two opposing values irreconcilable by thought does not lead one to an ordinary incompetence or inadequacy but to an expanded consciousness. Contradiction and consciousness increase or decrease in proportion to each other. Life is worth living only if one realizes it as absurd.

There is an integrative progression in Camus' thought on the absurd. First there is the ordinary absurd, and then the feeling of incompetence created by contradiction, followed by a heightened sense of contradiction, resulting into an intense desireto know itself, and ends up in an anguished realization of the vanity of his efforts at reasoning. For the absurd challenges reason, but it can know itself. It can intuit itself and the result is extreme lucidity. "The absurd is lucid reason noting its own limits”, "Man integrates the absurd and in that condition causes to disappear its essential character which is opposition, laceration and divorce. This leap is an escape."53 Camus often uses the word ‘leap’. Needless to say it is a leap in consciousness, a leap of faith.54 Camus himself confirms the religious essence of his search:

In fact, our aim is to shed light upon the step taken by the mind, when starting from a philosophy of the world's lack of meaning, it ends up by finding a meaning and depth in it. The most touching of those steps is religious in essence; it becomes obvious in the theme of the irrational.55

It is by reflecting upon Camus' use of the word, "nostalgie" in the *Myth of Sisyphus* that we best appreciate the state of mind in which he accomplishes his leap. The need for a solution to the human predicament is basic to Camus' outlook. But it is not so weak that he will consent to surrender to a blind faith of religious orientation. Actually, he does not use the word "faith" at all. Instead he favours another term which on the surface seems to resist the very first step to faith: the surrender of lucidity. This term is ‘revolte’ about which Camus writes:

That revolt gives life its value. Spread out over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to that life. To a man devoid of blinkers, there is no finer sight than that of the intelligence at grips with a reality that transcends it.56

Camusdoesnotconcealfromhisreadersthathehasmadehisleap. Infact,liehasbeenconsistentlyfollowingthislineofthought throughoutthe*MythofSisyphus*.His sentences are loaded with a meaning that makes them significant only in the context of thought which has leaped the void so as to move freely on the side of faith: “We call the lucid ones virile and we do not want a strength that is apart from clairvoyance.”57 Clairvoyance refers to the “faculty of perceiving mentally what is happening or exists out of sight; exceptional insight.58  Specific use of this term by Camus here as well as in his working notes59  testify to his confidence in the ability of a medium to open up vistas previously hidden from sight. He later enunciates his idea of this medium under the section, “La Creation Absurd.”

The Upanishads mention two kinds of knowledge, the higher and the lower.60 The lower comprises the knowledge of highest literature, that is the Vedas, linguistics, grammar, sciences and even astronomy. The higher is knowledge of that by which one knows the changeless Reality. By this is fully revealed to the wise that which transcends the senses, which is uncaused, which is indefinable, which has neither eyes nor ears, neither hands nor feet, which is all-pervading, subtler than the subtlest, the everlasting, the source of all.61  The self is perceived not by logical reason, but by spiritual contemplation, *adhyatma-yoga*,62  not by strength of learning, 63 but by clarity of illumination, *jnanaprasadena*,64  and not by a pursuer of knowledge but “by him who longs for . . . Knowledge of the atman, or self, or the higher Soul, or of Brahman is higher knowledge65. It is neither objective knowledge, taking cognizance of the external world, nor subjective experience of concepts and emotions; it transcends all three categories of empirical knowledge-the Knower, the thing known, and the act of knowing. Yet it is by no means a condition of emptiness or darkness. On the contrary, it is associated with fullness of joy an infinite illumination. When the Self is revealed all is light. “Him shining everything shines.”66  With illumination comes peace. "The wise manwho sees him revealed in his own soul, to him belongs eternal peace; to none else, to none else.**”**67

According to Indian philosophy intuition accompanied by a purified, profound desire is the way to the highest truth, or reality, pure intelligence or thought. Because this pure “Being” or the Brahman is not a thinking being but thought itself. The only way to know him is by realizing him. In the Western philosophy Bergson and Croce did point out that the ultimate reality cannot be discovered by intellect alone, but they failed to suggest a way to rise above the intellect. They do speak of intuition but their intuition is confined to the realm of time and plurality of experience. Their interpretation is naturalistic interpretation of reality. It issues entirely from the senses and the faculty of cognition. The Bergsonian *élan vital* is vital expansion within the universe of relativity and plurality, of flux and change – that is, within the bonds of *maya*. Indeed, the word intuition as used by modern philosophers can only mean a sinking below the reason and the conscious mind into the realm of instinct which man shares with animals. It is not “intuitive knowing” which is distinct from the discursive and the mediate knowledge. In the words of Dr Radhakrishnan intuitive knowledge referred to in Indian philosophy is direct knowledge, “more immediate than sensory intuition, for it overcomes the distinction between the knower and the known which subsists in sense-intuition. It is the perfect knowledge…68” This difference in approach and concept is very well acknowledged by Constantin Regamey in his paper on the “Comparison of the General Standpoints of Indian and European Philosophy,” when he, while talking about intuition in Bergson clarifies how it is not the same as in the Indian System. “When the Indians speak of experience, they mean the super-sensuous insight; when we speak of experience, we mean empirical cognition of the external world or psychological introspection without any claim of discovering the ultimate reality through that way.”69  The experience that Samkara speaks of is the immediate, direct, intuitive knowledge of the highest reality, an ultimate mystical experience of an illumined soul. This is what is referred to by Camus. It is the same notion of truth.

The dominant characteristic of Indian mind is the tendency to view truth as a spiritual experience. It is mysticism not in the sense of involving the exercise of any mysterious power but only as insisting on a discipline of human nature leading to a realization of the spiritual. A quick glance at Camus' *Carnets* is sufficient to see how much Camus subscribed to the insistence, as in the Indian system, on ethical purity and moral discipline as a means to realize truth. To the Western philosopher, power of intellectual apprehension, in philosophy as well as science, is quite independent of any moral attainments.

European and Indian scholars have often pointed out almost identical formulae in their respective philoso­phies. But a deeper analysis shows that this identism or sameness is superficial, for the most fundamental notions like truth, reality, absolute, relativity, transcendence have, on both sides, very difference meanings. Even the concept of “Spiritual” is different. It is said that in the west there are two concepts of what is meant by “spiritual”—mystical and non-mystical.70  The most striking feature of Indian thought is, that in almost all its philosophical systems the ultimate reality remains beyond any logical analysis. The very notions of truth do not correspond in India and in the West. Whereas for the Western mind truth is a definition and description of Reality, for the Indian thinker it is something to be realized; it is identification with Reality. To know Brahman is to become Brahman. For them it is an idea, for us it is a being. The etymology of the word ‘satya’ shows that it is “What really exists.” To quote Professor Constantin Regamey, “In the Western philosophy truth is an epistemological notion, in India it is an ontological fact.”71 And facts, whether perceptual or non-perceptual are apprehended by intuition.

It won't be out of context here to point out a similar conceptual difference in connection with `unreal' as the meaning of the term maya.In Indian philosophical language the term "unreal" does not mean exactly the same as in the West. Samkara defines mayaas something not real, but also not absolutely unreal. It is a practical reality. It does not possess the same degree of reality as *the Brahman****.*** It is empirical reality, which is not absolute, and therefore, liableto contradiction. From the Western point of view mayais real inasmuch as it is phenomenal, and the fact that phenomena do not reflect the thing-in­-itself does not yet mean to them that they are false. On the other hand, since for the Indian mind, truth is not a fact of cognition, but the underlying reality itself, the phenomena are not true, they are unreal. For them the real means "absolute" and the unreal, "not absolute." Thus inter­preted *maya* doesnot refer to an absolute illusionand, in its meaning as "unreal" corresponds ideally to the description of the world as "irrational" by Camus.

In the Western philosophy since truth is an epistemological notion its criteria are, its rationality, the coherence and internal non-contradiction of assertion. Understood as an ontological fact the Indian criterion of truth is its identity with the direct, irrational, introspective experience—the experience, the *nostalgie* of which is behind the entire reasoning of the *Myth of Sisyphus*.

Notes and References

Abbreviations used:

PL I=Pleiade ed of Complete Works of Camused by Roger Quilliot .Vol I, Theatre,

Recits, Nouvelles

PL II = Ibid. Vol II. Essaies

C I, II, III = Carnets I, II, III pub. By Gallimard

1. “…a cette partie de l’ame tout aspire a certaines minutes.” NOCES PL II, p.75
2. "Pour un homme sans oeilleres, il n’est pas de plus beau spectacle que celui de l’intelligence aux prises avec une realite qui le depasse. » Ibid. p. 139.
3. According to Hindu concept a human life consists of a total of sixteen ‘samskaras’ or rites-from birth to death, both inclusive.
4. Viggiani, Carl, “Notes pour le future biographe d’Albert Camus” in La Revue des Lettres modernes, 1968, p. 210.
5. I.i. 14.
6. I.ii.13, & II. Xiii. 18
7. Dr Radhakrishnan’s comment on Katha Up. I. ii. 12. *The Principal Upanisads*, p. 613.
8. Actuelles p. 111 quoted by Macquet, A. Albert Camus, London. 1958, p. 107
9. Resistance, Rebellion and Death tr. Justin O’brien, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1961, p.21.
10. Rg Veda X. 135. See Dr Radhakrishnan, Principal Ups. P.593.
11. God of Death in Hindu mythology.
12. For his second wish Naciketas asks for the ire, which is the ultimate power of the universe as also the innermost of the individual soul.
13. *Katha U*p. I.i.20.
14. Donald Schier in *Sewanee Review* No. 4, Fall, 1990
15. The import of Camus’ reasoning in *The Myth* is neither modern nor complex for Indian scholars. It has been there right from the beginning.
16. Galloway, David. *The Absurd Hero in American Fiction, Austin, Univ.of Texas. 1981, p.7.*
17. Sartre, Jean-Paul, Explication de “L’Etranger,” Situations I. Paris, Gallimard, 1947, p. 92
18. Ibid.
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22. *The Outsider* tr. by Joseph Laredo. Penguin, 1984, p.44
23. Ibid. p.115
24. Ibid.
25. *Katha* Up.I.i.27
26. Ibid.I.ii.3
27. Camus’ Preface to the American ed. Written in 1955. Pl. I. p.1928.
28. *L’Etranger* Pl. I. p.1211
29. McCarthy, Patrick, *Albert Camus* : The Stranger, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988, p.75.
30. Bree, Germaine Camus, New Brunswick, Rutgers, 1958, p-111.
31. See Albert Camus : *Youthful Writings*, Penguin. 1984
32. Pl. II. p. 1209, last stanza.
33. Pl. II. p. 24
34. See *L’Envers et L’endroit*, *Noces*, *Carnets I, II*; & the end portions of *L’Etanger*, and *La Mort Heureuse.*
35. Louis Faucon in his « Commentaries » to the Myth of Sisyphus, Pl.II.P.. 1416 & Roger Grenier, Albert Camus: Soleil et Ombre, Paris, Gallimard, 1987, p.107
36. Mundaka Up. II.ii. 12.
37. Myth of Sisyphus Pl. II. p. 110; Eng. tr.p.23
38. Ibid. Pl. II. p. 110, Eng Tr. p.22
39. Samkara on Brahm Sutras, II, ii.28
40. Samkara on Taittriya Up. II. vi.1.
41. Myth of Sisyphus, Pl. II. p. 107; Eng. tr.p.19
42. See note 17.
43. *The Principal Upanisads*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1968, p. 89
44. *Myth of Sisyphus,*Pl. II. P.136, Eng. tr. p51
45. Ibid. Pl. II. p. 117, Eng. tr. p.32
46. Brahd-aranyaka Up. I.iii.28.
47. II. iv.2.
48. VIII. iii. 1-3
49. Isa Up. 15.
50. Samkara on Katha Up. II.. iii.12
51. Isa Up. 4,5
52. Myth of Sisyphus Pl. II. p.120, Eng. tr. p.34
53. Ibid.p. 38, Pl. II. p.124
54. J.H. Matthews amply illustrates this point in his excellent article, “In which Albert Camus Makes hi Leap” *Symposium,* XXIV.3 : Fall, 1970, pp. 277-88
55. Myth of Sisyphus. Pl. II.p.129, Eng. tr. p.44
56. Ibid. Pl. II. p. 139, p54
57. Pl. II. p. 168, tr my own
58. OED Definition.
59. Carnets I, Paris, Gallimard, 1962, pp. 155-57, April, 1939.
60. Mundaka Up. I. i. 4-5
61. Ibid. I.i.6
62. Katha Up. I.ii.12.
63. Ibid. II. 20 & 23
64. Mundaka Up. III.i.8
65. *Katha* Up. I.ii.23
66. *Katha* Up. I.ii.23
67. Ibid. II.v.15
68. Ibid. II.v.12
69. The *Principal Upanisads*, p.96
70. Indian Philosophical Congress 1950 Silver Jubilee Commemoration Volume Supplement, p. 98
71. Stace, Walter T. See note 20, p. 302
72. See note 69, p. 97

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