

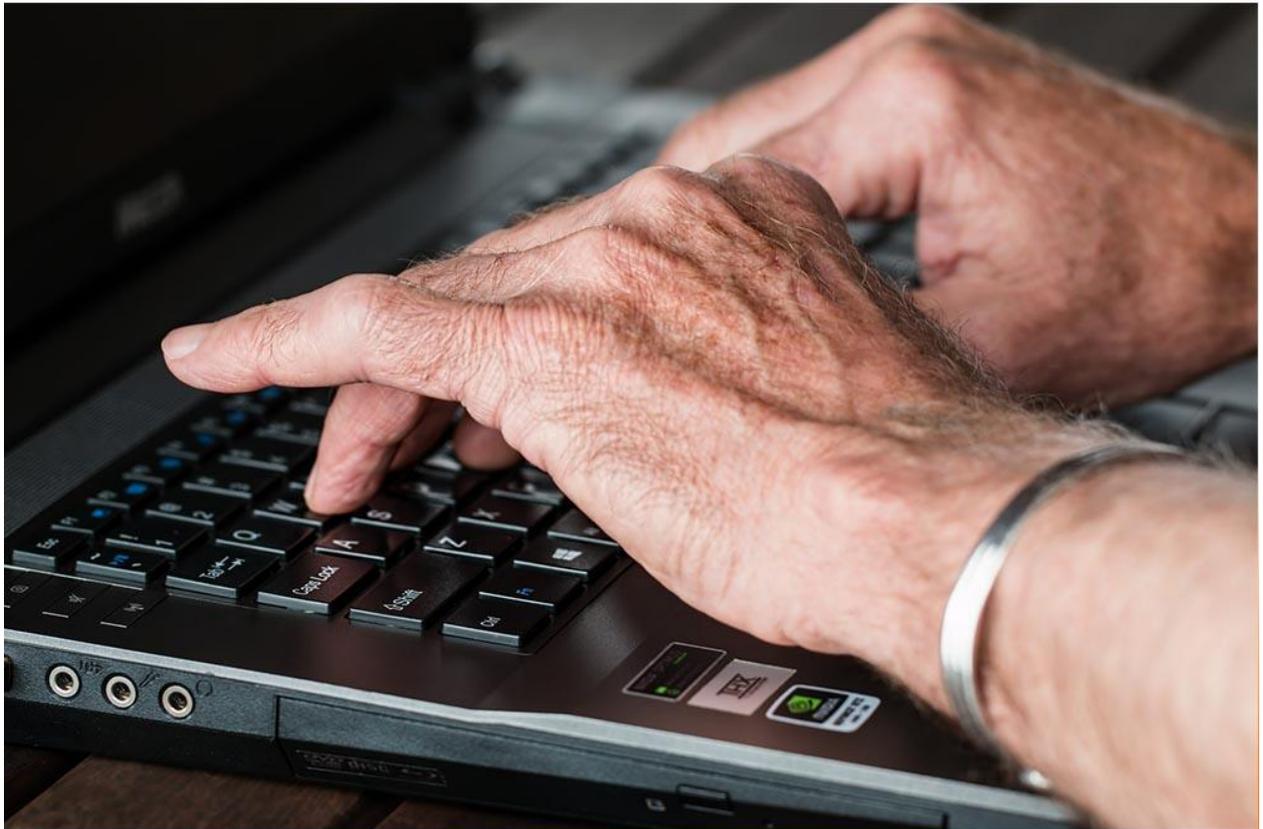
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### Where the Mind is Without Fear...

#### Abstract

Proposed paper intends to talk about ‘Indian Scene’ as projected by post-colonial Indian English writers’ in context to Rabindranath Tagore’s “Where the Mind is Without Fear...”

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high*

*Where knowledge is free*

*Where the world has not been broken up into fragments*

*By narrow domestic walls*

*Where words come out from the depth of truth*

*Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection*

*Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way*

*Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit*

*Where the mind is led forward by thee*

*Into ever-widening thought and action*

*Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake*

Alienation, despair, hopelessness and aimless living threaten humanity at large in this tech pro world. Writers share their fears through their writings. Their pain is apparent in

works like that of native Indians and those of Indian Diaspora. Rabindranath Tagore had not dreamt of present day 'India'. Vernacular literature has been translated and is available for students of English literature. The paper invites budding minds to glean knowledge about their brethren, and to make efforts to pave way out of difficult predicament that is stopping India from awakening to a New Dawn.

Key Words: Consciousness, Psychological, Existentialism

Escaping the Labyrinth

'Where the Mind is without Fear' was written before India got its independence. Rabindranath Tagore was a mystic poet. He poured out words from deep realms of his consciousness. His poem is plea to God to make slumbering Indians become aware of binding chains of slavery. He wanted his fellow countrymen to throw away shackles of foreign yoke. This visionary poet not only wanted India's freedom at physical level; his plea was for individuals to come out of darkness into light that is full of knowledge and glorious comfort. Only a free man can contribute to future of posterity to the best of his ability.

Rabindranath Tagore stresses upon 'dignity' of individual heads. A dignified person will never need to serve others or follow wrong path to attain his goal. Such a person is example of self-made man who has labored hard and achieved high status in life. Bonded person can never lead others to joyful and harmonious future. Free mind generates pure and lucrative thoughts. These thoughts are building bricks of good actions and proceeding works that provide strength to build a strong nation. This patriotic poem talks about more than just patriotism. It stresses upon total freedom that helps in constructing new worlds. Fear dominates today's world. And Tagore was well aware of state of mind of his fellow human beings. He wanted shackled minds to be free as fearlessness makes creativity blossom.

This paper goes on to explore different facets of what enslaves humans through great masterpieces of Indian English Literature and especially that which was written by Varanasi born Indian English writer, Arun Joshi. Joshi like Tagore well understood what ails mankind. Like the laureate poet, Sahitya Kala Academy award winner discusses modern Indian scene that does not give a glorified picture of independent India. Tagore had feared this very thing. His fears have come true. India is independent of foreign regime, but is not free from poverty, hunger, ruthlessness, greed, hunger for power and evils that stop it from growing into a truly powerful nation. In 1916 he had written to his son,

*“I have it in mind to make Shantiniketan the connecting thread between India and the world. I have to find a world centre for the study of humanity there. The days of petty nationalism are numbered-let the first step towards universal union occur in the fields of Bolpur. I want to make that place somewhere beyond the limits of nation and geography-the first flag of victorious universal humanism will be planted there. To rid the world of the suffocating coils of national pride will be the task of my remaining years.”*

This paper emphasizes on various evils that exist in and around Indians. Joshi's famous work, 'The Last Labyrinth' has been discussed to certain extent in this regard.

Joshi was a practical man. He stuck to one publisher and this shows that he was truly interested in penning down worthy words and did not believe in running after famous high sounding names like that of Penguin publishers that had come up during his time. His sticking to his ground sheds light on his steadfastness and this in turn shows what is source of strength of a creative mind that feels comfort and is at rest as it does not flit from one place to another, from one thought line to another. His characters from different novels are never satisfied and are always in search of that particular 'something' that would give meaning to life. Today's generation has lot of lines to explore as far as studies and professions are concerned. This makes them move all the time. Lack of dedication to one particular company

or profession etc. does not allow mind to be at peace and this often causes friction in those around him. Little time is spent on firming relationships and more on hunting for material sources for satisfaction. Restless man makes others restless. Man today wants more than is required to satisfy basic necessities. This leads to problems as greed is the motivating force behind all that he does. This certainly does not point towards a happy and contented future of mankind. Tagore had rightly said in one of his essay,

*“If the remnants of Indian civilization were to become the foundation on which European civilization is to be built, what a most wonderful sight that would be. The European idea in which freedom predominates, and the Indian idea in which welfare predominates; the profound thought of the Eastern countries and the active thought of the western countries; European acquisitiveness and Indian conservatism; the imagination of the Eastern countries and the practical intelligence of the west-what a fullness will emerge from a synthesis of these two.”*

It is clear that root cause of psychological problems need to be eradicated to build a nation of healthy humans for a healthy nation.

Existentialism of 20<sup>th</sup> century glares back at reader from Joshi's novels. His characters are convinced of their own doings and want to get some kind of personal truth from out of their deeds. There are always in search of some purpose of life. For them this world is a hostile place to live in. They are baffled amidst this chaos and want to know reason for their existence. This Indian author wrote about alienated characters from Indian point of view. Dark identities of his characters are reflected through their mental conflicts, personal sufferings and spiritual disturbances. Thomas Hardy said that things just happen and man is drawn towards his own destruction with nothing to stop him as fate takes its own course. Indian existentialism differs slightly due to karmic theory of Gita and Upanishads. According to this the characters lead lives of their own choice and their fates are thus not predetermined

by God, society or any kind of biological fact. Indian existentialism in Joshi's characters gives hope for his characters' salvation.

Tagore saw unrest in society that was slowly making man move towards his own destruction. Freedom at physical level was sought by Indians, but as a conscientious human being and sensitive writer, he could sense that inner strength of man which shapes the moral character was ebbing away. He cried to almighty for salvation of this inner strength more than he cried for freedom from the English. Joshi's characters are very much under western influence and their materialistic outlook causes unrest in them. This stresses upon the fact that western values have not totally been able to dominate over spiritual heritage of sufferers. According to him, "Hinduism is a highly existential philosophy that lays too much emphasis on the right way of living." He has studied human predicament through sufferings of his own characters and their lives.

Both Joshi and Tagore could see modern man's agony. Old values of knitted life had lost their hold and new world was frightening. Modern society lives amidst chaotic conditions. These conditions are at times generated due to his own actions. Man yearns for old order. He prays to God, he goes to temples, but nothing soothes him as there is too much gap between what he wants and what he deserves due to his own life style. Confusion and anarchy reigns over society in Joshi's novels. This confusion is caused by man's inability to realize that he has become irresponsible towards his own duties and responsibilities. Man is bent on exploiting others. Som Bhaskar of 'The Last Labyrinth' wants another man's woman. His crime is multifaceted. He befriends a man in order to take over his business. He wants to ruin the man both materially and emotionally. Bhaskar represents modern man who is selfish, without a thought for others, without shame or regret for his deeds. Bhaskar has wealth, name and fame very early in life. But in contemporary society he finds himself to be frustrated, isolated, dejected and lonely. There is a cry of, "I want. I want. I want. I want." that seems to

follow him all the time. He is a bad husband and a bad father. Problem is not with his family but with him. He is unable to give love to others and is then unable to feel that which is bestowed on him.

Present society strives to be both modern and cultural at the same time. But the twains never seem to bridge the gap that is there. This hints at psychological problems that man is facing today. Though other novels come with happy ending, "The Last Labyrinth" escapes the writer as Bhaskar is too complicated a character. 'The Last Labyrinth' is true to what life today is like. Man strives to get out of the maze he finds himself in, but this maze is full of quick sand that does not allow him to escape from its clutches. Alienation from one's own culture is alienation from other human beings. This has been rightly captured in full intensity by Joshi. Today's society is full of moral complexities. Hunger of body and spirit assails man.

His character in 'The Apprentice' adjusts himself to corrupt society in order to survive. This makes a mockery of all his moral values and beliefs. There is warped sense of what a religion is in 'The Last Labyrinth'. Religion stands for making man moral, but Joshi portrays Bhaskar as immoral man who wants peace from religion by cheating upon his life partner. Anuradha is supposed to be deeply religious and Gargi wants Bhaskar to get peace from Anuradha. Chastity does not seem to be part of religion in this insistence. Religious rituals of Anuradha are emphasized upon, but along with these is her time spent with her keeper and Bhaskar. She is unable to prevent herself from being slave to both men. Being a woman, Anuradha does not give much thought to Bhaskar's family before providing physical consolation to him. Sacred vows of marriage are broken for self-appeasement. Rituals and din of ringing bells on Ghats of Varanasi make Bhaskar forget his empty and meaningless existence for some time. But away from it he again resorts to medicines and drugs. Joshi freely talks about present day society that is trying to draw breath of life from out of sin, lies, hypocrisy, womanizing and unfair means of livelihood.

Life seems ruthless where Bhaskar is concerned. His spiritual alienation is born out of his mother's strong belief that God will save her from her illness. Joshi talks about agony felt by a son on seeing his mother losing battle of life irrespective of her strong belief in her savior. This generates spiritual displacement and materialistic corrupt society adds on to this confusion. His character constantly battle against social maladjustment. Their social insecurity does not allow their psychic wounds to heal. As a result they become cynical towards everything that surrounds them, be it life or its values.

Tagore shows God's path to keep up hope for future in faltering countrymen and Joshi's characters come with existential vision that is doled out by Hinduism and is affirmative in nature. Bhaskar sees light of God when coming face to face with another person's death. What he could not experience in a temple, he experiences in cold dark night on walking with funeral procession. He feels that death does away with all fears. Spiritual world co-exists with real and physical world for characters of Joshi, the same as it exists for all natives of this land. Joshi emphasizes on the nature of man that is not alienated irrespective of man's habitation.

Loneliness is dangerous to living beings. This has been emphasized upon by writers like Anita Desai in her 'Cry, the Peacock' and 'The God of Small Things' by Arundhati Roy. Small things often have great impact on human mind. Poverty, alcoholism, physical abuses are social evils that have been touched upon by Roy. She discusses how people who become embittered, take delight in ruining others' lives by constant interference and manipulation. Rape of minors is another evil that is prevalent in society. Roy writes about after effects of this evil. Psychological novel of Anita Desai explores human mind of pampered rich woman, Maya. Maya lives in world of fantasy. This hypersensitive character has everything in life but because she does not allow herself to stay with reality, she slowly becomes insane. She always wants more and more from others. She feels as she does not have enough love in her

life. Merits of joint family system can be a solution to problems faced by people like Maya. But present day living style does not allow this. Maya is afraid of everything. She hears voices from her childhood. Astrologer's prediction keeps reverberating in her mind. And this becomes root cause of her husband's death. Tagore warns Indians about both rejecting and accepting European lifestyle. He believed that European plus points in trading and governing should be taken and at the same time social organization and religion of India should not be ignored as Indian society owed its survival to spirituality and life of self-sacrifice.

Kinship, brotherhood, respect for other's wishes and love, strengthening moral values from early childhood, practice of ingrained moral and spiritual values, development of sense where unity is concerned, cooperation in right sense and sympathy for others are some key factors that can free humanity from Labyrinth of human mind and hardships of life.

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