

# যবনপট

Yavanpat  
18th annual edition

## Albert Camus

*Celebrating 100 years of the  
Great Philosopher & Author*

Estd. 1992



**SANSAPTAK**  
(a group for theatre)

# Editor's Desk

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This issue is a part of our project, **Exile and Kingdom**, commemorating the birth centennial of the great French philosopher and author, Albert Camus, while presenting a wide array of articles in the hope of bridging his philosophy with theatre and its various facets. The project **Exile and Kingdom** includes two plays, **Na Hanyate** (inspired from Camus' **The Just Assassins**) and **Mritashaucha** (inspired by Camus' **The Misunderstanding**), both plays written and directed by Sir (Sh. Torit Mitra). Both the plays are the result of collective and individual researches, workshops, talk shows and study group discussions.

## Why Camus?

What is so important about a French writer? What does he have to do with us? This must be some mere pseudo-cultural indulgence! These are few of the probable reactions to one of the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century minds, especially, when he is introduced to our artistic ambiance; if they have heard his name. Well, not knowing cannot be a crime. But criticizing with parochial biasness or blinded practices of a discipline, without an open global learning portal (not I.T.!), is, certainly, pitiful.

The aim of our group has always been to uphold theatre as a learning tool to think out of the box; beyond all boundaries and prejudices. As avant-gardes, we have no nation, that's why we belong to every nation. We have no language, so we have the right to all languages. We have no religion; we are not dogmatic with fanatic beliefs. The group's theatre newsletter, 'Yavanpat', is one such voice that connects to the contemporary cultural practitioners and aesthetes with thought provoking ideas. Sansaptak believes in creating a legislative theatre that can create, and also govern, free art practices. We are the Prometheus, bringing the fire of artistic activism to the people. We are the Sisyphus, moving the stagnant rock uphill; that will inevitably roll down. It's not a painful act, but an absurd transcendence!

Albert Camus has always been a youth icon, with dynamic facets as a writer. He is a political, action-packed hero with a twist of a philosopher's creed. His ideas always made him stand on the other side; accused and undermined. Though he belonged to the existentialist intellect (although debatable for some), his political activism made him one of the strongest individual proponents of human morality in the realm of absurdity. Camus' strength was that he was able to stare down the comfortable complacencies of life under the capitalist-social democracy, without losing his head to whatever extremism might seem to offer an alternative. This driving viewpoint finds its simile in our quasi-feudal, quasi-capitalist and quasi-democratic control, where our grounds are loose and the common man becomes a refugee in his own land; an outsider!

**ANJON BOSE**  
Editor-in-Chief

## Editorial Team

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**Editors-in-Chief** - Anjon Bose, Sreemoyee Dasgupta

**Sub Editor** - Nilanjan Guha

**Cover Design** - Sreemoyee Dasgupta

**Design and Layout** - Sandipon Choudhury

**Compilation of articles** - Nilanjan Guha,  
Paroma Bhattacharya

**Advisory Board** - Torit Mitra & Ruma Bose

**Call for articles for next issue on  
Shakespeare and Theatre**

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[www.sansaptaktheatre.com](http://www.sansaptaktheatre.com)

[sansaptak.theatre@gmail.com](mailto:sansaptak.theatre@gmail.com)

[info@sansaptaktheatre.com](mailto:info@sansaptaktheatre.com)

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# President's Note

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*Ruma Bose, President, Sansaptak*

Sansaptak, a group solely dedicated towards the cause of theatre, has always been inclined to extend its reach to the hearts of theatre connoisseurs through its pioneering and mammoth productions and comprehensive projects. Besides having staged mesmerizing and critically acclaimed theatre productions, the group has also grown stronger in regularly conducting value adding workshops, National and Regional seminars, symposiums, talk shows and poetic and academic discourses.

The group has won many prestigious awards, like 'Utkrishi Natak for the years 2008, 2009 and 2013 and performed at the Bharatendu Natya Utsav under Sahitya Kala Parishad, participated in International Drama Festival of National School of Drama (Bharat Rang Mahotsav; 2003) & Week-end Theatre Festivals, Delhi Cultural Events sponsored by Sanageet Natak Akademi (2009), participated in collaborative events of Sahitya Akademi, Delhi, and Central University of Rajasthan, Kishangarh, performing at their Seminar on Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and his literature (2010), Legends of India, Delhi, and also invited by Sanglap & Anik (Kolkata) to perform at Theatre Festivals organized by them. The group has also hosted several productions in Kolkata at various auditoriums, from 1996 and 2007 receiving grand appreciation and media coverage.

Sansaptak bagged International appreciation and acclaim for publishing a bi-lingual book **Home & The World (Ghar Aur Bahar)** under the prestigious Tagore Centenary Grants Scheme under the Ministry of Culture during the year 2011. The book was launched in 2012 on the occasion of *Baise Srabon* (7<sup>th</sup> December) by Dr. Karan Singh, President of ICCR. **Pancham Vedic**, yet another significant mega-venture was **Pancham Vedic** that included a National Seminar on Contemporary Theatre for 2 days at IIC and a festival of Plays by various acclaimed theatre groups including a mega-production by Sansaptak at LTG Auditorium in the year 2013. Repeat shows of **Na Hanyate** (a Hindi play) were performed in December 2013 and a new

play **Mritashaucha** will be performed in March 2014 at B.C.Pal Auditorium. Both the plays have been written & directed by Torit Mitra inspired from Albert Camus' **The Just Assassins** and **Le-Malentendu** respectively.

Playwright, Shri Torit Mitra, has been awarded the **Gunijon Sambardhana** from various regional cultural bodies and the **Best Director** Award for the year 2011 from Sahitya Kala Parishad. He has three published plays, namely *Atmadaho*, *Nijo-bash Bhoomey* and *Garvoj*. Another hardback collection comprising the Hindi translations of his original Bengali plays, namely *Garbh*, *Zawal-e-Azim*, *Hari Bhari Khwaish* and *Na Hanyate*, have been published and titled as **Hari-Bhari Khwaish Tatha Anya Natak**.

**Jabonpot** is the group's multilingual theatre newsletter covering views of not only the artiste members of the groups, but also prominent and aspiring theatre activists of other theatre groups, eminent theatre personalities and theatre lovers of Delhi. Hope this 18<sup>th</sup> edition of *Jabonpot*, dedicated to Albert Camus' on his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary (2014), will reach you as a reminiscence of Camus' life and works.

We also understand the responsibility to inculcate in today's generation an enhanced sense of responsibility and bonding with the fraternity and to guide them toward the objective of pursuing Art and theatre. We heartily welcome enthusiasts to join Sansaptak (a group for theatre); after all it's a human need to express life in unique ways; and enrich themselves 'to do Art' under the tutelage of Guru, Shri Torit Mitra, who believes in experimentation and intellectual growth and bequeath his knowledge and legacy to the younger generation.

The Ministry of Culture has been generous enough to support us for long. The cooperation that we have received from various sectors promoting Indian Theatre fraternity has also aided in our sustainability and productivity; the epicenter of which is the love and acclaim showered by our audience.

# আলব্যোয়ার কামু - আত্মহত্যা এবং মৃত্যুশৌচ

তড়িৎ মিত্র নাট্যকার এবং নির্দেশক,

একজন মানুষ কেন আত্মহত্যা করবে? মানুষের কি আত্মহত্যার অধিকার আছে মরা এবং না মরা-এই এ্যাবসার্ড প্রশ্নটি কামু করেছিলেন THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS রচনায়।

এই প্রসঙ্গে প্রথমেই বলে রাখা দরকার, কামু বিশ্বাস করতেন - এই পৃথিবীর পার্থিব যা কিছু, বস্তুত তা সবই অলৌক বা মিথ্যা কিছু ধারণা। আর এই ধারণাটাকে সম্বল করে, মানুষ সংঘর্ষের মধ্য দিয়ে বেঁচে থাকে এবং শেষ পর্যন্ত, অনিবার্যবসত, মারা যায় - যে মৃত্যু আদতে এক দুর্ঘটনা মাত্র। অর্থাৎ মৃত্যু আসলে কন দৈব বা নিয়ম সিদ্ধ ঘটনা নয় - বরং আত্মহনন। যে আত্মহননের মধ্য দিয়ে মানুষ জৈবিক জীবন থেকে মুক্তি পেতে চায়। যে জীবন মানুষের বেঁচে থাকবার কারণগুলিকে অর্থবহ করে তোলে না, যেখানে বিতৃষ্ণা বিরাগ এক অন্ধকারময় অর্থহীন বিভ্রম, সেখানে আত্মহত্যা নঞ্চর্থক ব্যবস্থা নয় বরং এক মানবিক উত্তরণ! মৃত্যুর মধ্য দিয়ে জীবনের বিশৃঙ্খলা কে শেষ অবাধ সুশৃঙ্খল সমাধানের পথে নিয়ে আসা!

ঠিক এমন এক আপাত দুরবন্ধ, কিছুটা হাড় কাঁপানো সংবেদনায় তথা অন্তর্দৃষ্টিতে, কামু শিল্প সাহিত্যের, এক গহন সত্য কে, প্রকাশ করেছেন। হয়ত আমাদের অনেকের কাছেই এই সত্য ভাষণ কিছুটা তেঁতো, কিছুটা প্রলাপ হয়ত বা মারো-মধ্যে চূড়ান্ত প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল বলেও মনে হতে পারে। এই বিরোধভাসের স্বপক্ষে "দ্য স্ট্রেনজারের" নায়কের কথা বলা যেতে পারে। উপন্যাসের নায়ক, লেব্রাজ ম্যোরেস, এক আশ্চর্য মানুষ। যেন অনেকটা আগন্তুক। আমাদের চিরাচরিত সমাজে যে ভয়ংকর রকম ভাবে খাপছাড়া, সে তার মায়ের মৃত্যুর দিনক্ষণ নিয়ে মাথা ঘামায় না - বরং অশৌচ চলাকালীন বান্ধবীর সাথে অবলীলায় যৌন সহবাসে কাটিয়ে দেয়। এই মানুষ কে আমরা যদি মধ্যবিস্তৃত নৈতিক রোদচশমা

দিয়ে লক্ষ্য করতে বসি - তাহলে তা হবে এক মুর্থতার কারণ। কামু স্বয়ং বলেছেন - "আমি ম্যোরেস কে কিছুতেই অস্বীকার করতে পারবো না! সে এক বেচারি মানুষ! নগ্ন, কিছুটা ভীতু! আত্মমৈথুন লোভী! তপ্ত রোদে, হিমবরফপাতে, সে ভালবাসার আচ্ছাদন পায় না! পায় না ছায়া! তার সব অনুভব, সংবেদনশীলতা, তার নৈতিক স্পর্শগ্রাহ্যতা, সব লুপ্ত। সে ক্যাবল জৈবিক চেতনায় বেঁচে আছে। এক অনমনীয়, দুরন্ত জীবনের প্রতি দুর্বীর কামনা। কোনরকম হিরোয়িক ভাবনা ও ভান ছাড়াই, সে তার নিজেরই তৈরি করা সত্যের ব্যাখ্যার জন্য মরতে রাজী আছে।" এই উদ্ভট সামঞ্জস্যহীন, দার্শনিক সত্যই কামুর আদর্শের সঞ্জা নির্ণয় করে। এই অলৌক পৃথিবীর কোন প্রয়োজন নেই। না আছে কোন কার্যকারণ উদ্দেশ্য। যা আছে তা হল আন্তিতরক্ষার উদ্দেশ্য। যে উদ্দেশ্য পৃথিবীর যাবতীয় নীতি শাস্ত্রের চোখ রাঙানীকে নস্যাত করে, ঈশ্বরহীন পৃথিবীর ভালোটুকু কে অধিকার করে নিচ্ছিলো স্বেচ্ছাদর্শের স্বাধীনতায়।

কামু যেন কিছুটা নীৎসের অনুরক্ত। হয়ত তেমনই একটা বোধ থেকে পরিষ্কার কণ্ঠে ঘোষণা করলেন - মানুষের হতাশা কে নৈরাজ্যের উৎস বলে ব্যাখ্যা করা উচিত হবে না। পক্ষান্তরে ঈশ্বরের মৃত্যু বস্তুত মানুষের স্বপক্ষে এক চূড়ান্ত স্বাধীনতা। সর্বশেষ মুক্তির দিশা! এ এ্যামন এক মুক্তি, যেখানে এই ঘৃণ্য স্নৈরাচারী পৃথিবীতে ব্যক্তি মানুষ নিজের মুক্তির উপায় নিজের অধিকারে রাখতে উৎসাহী। আর এই সক্ষমত, এই উৎসাহ সর্বপরি আত্মঅধিকার বোধের অপর নাম - আত্মহনন! দ্য মিথ অফ সিসিফাসে, আলব্যোয়ার কামু, এ কথা শোনালেন।

পরবর্তী কালে কামুর এই তত্ত্ব অবশ্যই তাঁকে অনেক ঘনিষ্ঠ, সম্পর্কিত মানুষদের কাছ থেকে দূরে নিয়ে গিয়েছিল। বিশেষ করে জা-পল সার্ভে এবং সিমন দ্য বোভেয়ার, এদের মধ্যে

অন্যতম উল্লেখযোগ্য। সার্ভের মধ্যে চির ধরবার সাথে-সাথে সার্ভেরই গুণমুগ্ধ শিষ্য, ফ্রান্সিস জার্স – অত্যন্ত কঠিন ভাষায় সার্ভেরই পত্রিকায় লিখেছিলেন – “কামু মানবিক অধিকার চর্চা করছেন এবং বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা বামমতাদর্শের সাথে।” জবাবে কামু বললেন – “তারপরেও আমি আমার স্বপক্ষেই থাকবো। নিজের প্রতি বিশ্বাস বোধ আমার অধিকার! যে কোন রকম স্বাধীনতাই বস্তুত মানুষের স্বাধীনতা। তা সে ঈশ্বর অস্বীকার হোক কিম্বা নিজের ঐহিক বেঁচে থাকবার বিরুদ্ধে। এ এক ধরণের বিদ্রোহ! আর বিদ্রোহের ঐতিহাসিক বাস্তবকে অস্বীকার করা ব্রিথা!” (দ্য রেবেল)

কিন্তু আমার জিজ্ঞাসা – ঈশ্বর বিরোধিতা কি প্রথম ঘটিত হল? পাগলা বখাটে কবি, আর্তুর রবীন্দ্র, কি বহু আগে বলেনি – GOD IS DEAD! ঈশ্বরের অস্তিত্ব নিয়েই কি সংশয় প্রকাশ করেননি নীৎসে? বোদলেয়ার? এ্যামন কি স্যুরিয়ালিস্ট-এর দূর্দান্ত নেতা ত্রিস্তানজারা? এ্যামন কি দস্তয়েভস্কির THE POSSESSED-এর নায়ক, কিরলোভ, কি ঠিক একই পথের পথিক নন? ভগবান নেই, এই সত্য প্রমাণ করবার জন্য সে কি আত্মহত্যার পথ বেছে নেয়নি?

আসলে মুহূর্মুহু মার খেতে খেতে মানুষ একদিন ঈশ্বর এবং ঈশ্বরের তৈরী করা সমাজবদ্ধ ধর্মীয়ো ছাবলামোকে বুড়ো

আঙুল দেখিয়ে আর কিছু না পারুক নিজেকে খুন করতেই পারে! তাই নয় কি? এ এক অন্য বিদ্রোহ। সকল জ্ঞানকে বিচ্যুত করে, সমস্ত রকমের প্রথাকে অস্বীকার করে নিজেকে মৃত্যুর কাছে সমর্পণ করা। “আমার কিছু নেই। আমি কিছু নই – কিন্তু মৃত্যুকে আমি বেছে নিতেই পারি – আমার জন্মসিদ্ধ ঙ্ধিকার” – ডায়লগ বিটুইন আ প্রিস্ট আন্ড আ ডাইং ম্যান বইতে সাদে ঠিক এই উচ্চারণেই কথাগুলো বলেছেন।

এবার তাহলে আমরা কি বলবো? কামুর বিরোধিতায় যদি যেতে চাই তাহলে তো অনিবার্য ভাবে অস্বীকার করতে হবে – “জীবন নামের ভয়ংকর এবং বিপদজনক পরিস্থিতিগুলোকে। স্যার হার্বট রৌডের কথা মতো – “হিসাব করে নয়, জীবনের নামে সব কিছু এ্যামন কি মিত্রভুক্তও আত্মমর্যাদার সমস্ত গুণগত কৌশল দিয়ে আপন করে নিয়ে বন্ধপারিকর ছিলেন – আলব্যোয়ার কামু।”

আমার মৃত্যুশৌচ এ্যামন এক বিমূর্ত আত্মহত্যার ব্যালাড। এ্যামন এক দুঃসহ এলিজি। এক নৃশংস কাব্যিক ট্র্যাজেডি! অসম্পূর্ণ কিন্তু যা যা মঞ্চে ঘটবে – যা অতীতে ঘটে গ্যাছে, সবই হিসাব করে নয়, জীবনের নামে সব কিছু দিয়ে এবং জীবিত মানুষের নামে – এক দুর্দমনীয় বিদ্রোহ। এক ভয়ংকর প্রতিবাদ! অথবা এ্যাবসার্ড।



# Camus as a Part of SANSAPTAK'S Tradition

*Nilanjan Guha, Sub-Editor, Sansaptak*

## The Interpretation of *The Just Assassins*

Since the inception of the group, Camus' has had his presence registered in the texts of Sansaptak. Camus' *Just Assassins* is truly, one of his groundbreaking offer to the world of existential literature. The principles that govern the human nature primarily are constant throughout this planet, which, while being independent of the acute transitions expected for different individuals, takes a different course of action in every event that takes place in this world. Be it the communist outrage in Russia or the history of struggle for India's Independence, it is one and the same. The struggle for independence is a sense of glory for every Indian, where the greatest and the most courageous of our fellow countrymen laid down their lives to fight for the cause of "Swaraj" or "Freedom".

Were people who had immense love for the country, really focussed on their objectives of revolution? Why could not they organize a mass based arms revolution? Was use of violence for acquiring independence justified?

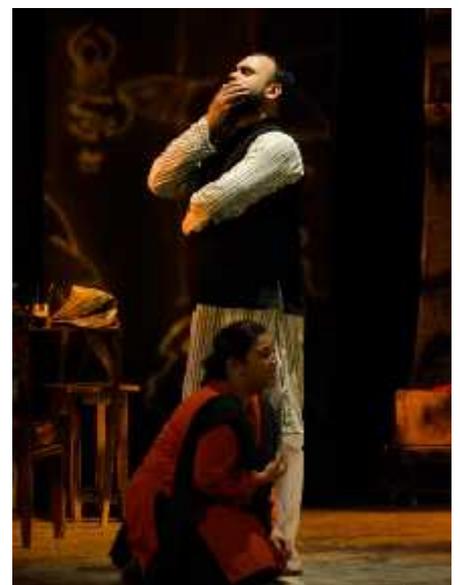
A mega dramatic production by the group, had two of its shows staged at Bipin Chandra Paul Auditorium, C.R. Park, New Delhi on December 28th - 29th, 2013 and received a tremendous response from the batch of audience who had been present to witness the play. The play, which was presented in Hindi and had a running duration of 110 Minutes, has been inspired from Albert Camus' 'The Just Assassins', translated in Hindi from original Bengali interpretation 'Hanyaman', written and directed by Sh. Torit Mitra, tries to find the answers to the questions posed above.

It talks about the time when the battleground was being prepared in our country – millions of lives were getting lost, their cries can still be heard today. The British colonial octopus had engulfed the very existence of human conditions and its implications had ignited the hearts of many rebellions. But we cannot

deny that the historical reality of every revolt traverses through the concepts of liberty and terror, hand in hand, and our struggle for independence was no different. As much as the revolt had the fervor for freedom, it was also greatly imbued with personal and ideological dilemmas, treachery, political disorientation and chaos.

The production kick started on October 21st, 2013 with the customary orientation of the entire production team of Na Hanyate towards the setting of the play. Members of the cast, support crew and backstage support were selected and apprised of their roles and responsibilities through verbal and written orientation. The cast consisted of nine members while the support responsibilities were identified for Production Management, Light Setting, Music Setting, Costume, Set, Promotions, Printing and Properties.

Every day the following week, an orientation workshop was conducted by means of physical and mental activities with the intention of grooming the team according to the socio-political crisis featured in the play. Activities for the members of the cast involved reliving their earliest childhood memories and presenting it theatrically according to a given situation under mandatory constraint while following the contemporary modes of drama. The series of workshops helped in developing the physical exposition of the



actors. Other exercises aimed at apprising the actors with the penetrative insight of their own physical details, knowing the essentials of their bodies and the corresponding projection on the stage as a part of a theatrical composition. Subsequently a schedule for the production was drafted.

The official reading of the play was scheduled on October 28th. The entire play was read out in presence of the entire cast and crew who noted down the intrinsic details and their own doubts with regards to various aspects of the play. The reading was followed by the discussions and deliberation by which the true interpretation of the subject portrayed in the play became increasingly apparent. The following week was reserved exclusively for individual character study while the reading went on every evening at the Sansaptak Studio.

After the actors had completely blend in with their characters, the director initiated scene-wise blocking

### **The Interpretation of The Misunderstanding**

Perhaps the genius of Camus lies in his rendering of human nature which can be applied across all strata of human civilization, across geographical boundaries, ethnicities and faiths. Such is his precision in which he explains the human behaviour to all kinds of crisis that sometimes one wonders if one's life is partially mirrored across every individual in belonging to a society. Camus' play, *The Misunderstanding* (French: *Le Maletendu*) is one such rendering where the obscure human nature is portrayed in all possible manners of perception.

The interpretation of the play, *Mritashaucha* written, designed and directed by Sh. Torit Mitra, is the dramatization of a social rebel, when two socially discarded women stand up against the injustice and anarchy of a decaying system by living up the essence of their existence. A son returns home long after he has deserted his family only to find a necropolis of degenerated existence and faces a brutal fate.

The play showcases the rebellion of two different aged helpless women against the social injustice attributed by a poor, uncouth, uncultured and imbecile system. It might lack a clear logic, somewhat oriented more

in which the movement of each character was precisely mapped on the stage in sync with their dialogues on a mock set created within the studio. Rehearsals were in full flow now as it would go on till the show date. The director and assistant director made necessary tweaks to the flow and composition as the understanding intensified. In parallel with the rehearsal, regular exercises on how to approach the part were conducted during the penultimate week in November and it helped the pre-production process to progress to the next stage. Following it was a week of psychological interactions where the members of cast were subjected to mental portrayal of their characters in various pragmatic situations. The last week before the show, the primary focus was on creative individuality, composition, performance, action and gabble. On the promotional front, personal and public invitations were sent across to all theatre enthusiasts in the city and beyond, prominent theatre activities and drama governing bodies.

towards a criminal mindset and being anti-social and alienated. Nonetheless, such alienation compels one to accept the illusion that he experiences on watching his reflection in a mirror as a residue of truth. *Mritashaucha* is a play that pushes one's life from self-delusion to self-destruction.

The three protagonists of *Mritashaucha* — the mother, the daughter and the old man — have a chimerical will of imagination and incorrigibly optimistic to face an unseen crisis. So strong is their desire to liberate themselves from destitution, atrocity, social alienation and the pain of exile that an improbable event is made to stand on the practical grounds of crisis and counter crisis, expression and projection that appears ruthless.

Primarily, it is the story of the liberty sought by the helpless human beings. It is the dramatization of the ill-company of self-forgetting humans and their individual revolutions. The play encompasses the rebel that may be slightly distasteful or *absurd* to the law abiding humans with high social and moral values. It administers a stern rebuke to today's post modern mechanical euphoria and the virtual degeneration of

values in this, so-called, global village. The play has extracted seven years of the playwright's intellectual output and thus has intensified in theory that draws its references from socio-economic framework of a lesser known tribe, its correlation with Camus' pragmatic theory of existentialism. It almost appears impossible to appreciate the connection on a single reading. But everytime the text is read over, a completely new aspect surfaces itself to the foreground.

The production of this project went beyond the ordinary, partly because of the complexity of the concept, but primarily due to the depth of the crisis of the characters. The characters demanded an astronomical level of psycho analysis, to get associated with the irrationality of a dark philosophy, something Camus' was very good at articulating. The entire structure of the rehearsal process was not be based on dramatic craft, but on rediscovering the fundamental conceptualization of a ruthless crisis of a primitive nomadic tribe based in Rajasthan, completely alienated to the ways and mannerisms of a doctored civilization we dwell in.

One of the major challenges was the setting of the play which was beyond comprehension of the group members. The play is set in the depths of deserts of the Rajasthan-Gujarat Kuchch region and is focussed on the local kalbeliya tribe which earns its livelihood mainly by prostitution and renting their shacks to tourists who come for short visits to witness the local festivals. Understanding the social setup of the tribe was a path less tread and the playwright, Mr. Mitra took it on himself to dig up the essential cultural

essence of the tribe, going out of way to understanding the social norms, civil mannerism and the general mindset of the localites. Beyond this, lied the discovery of the crisis they face on a regular basis. Mr. Mitra spent about a fortnight in the depths of Kuchch, talking to the localites, visiting their residences, attending their cultural events and being privy to the rituals they follow. Living in the barrens of Rajasthan, Mr. Mitra was able to excavate facts which are found in no journals, songs which are not found in any text and retellings which had not yet escaped the boundaries of the tribe. He came back with a vast knowledge of the unknown ways of life man chooses to live.

The script walkthrough commenced on February 2nd when the director and assistant director focused on one scene at a time and polished the diction of the actors. All this while, the support crew was in full operation designing the set, lights, music, properties and costume. Regular technical meetings were scheduled in between the rehearsals where these designs were reviewed, contemplated and modified according to the evolving composition of the play. When the cast eventually got proficient in the dialogues, the mode of delivery and the character sketch of their respective roles, an in-house seminar was conducted where the entire production team presented their opinion of the character digression that they had done and deliberated on their relationship with the play. They were also tasked with the portrayal of their visual interpretation of the play through the means of artworks.



# A Memoir

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*Ruma Bose, President, Sansaptak*

The presentation of any Art form or work of creation by an artist goes along with one's own life-story — the story of his journey to become an artist, the stages of his creation and the discipline undertaken to complete his journey. The foundation of an artist is based on real-stories and, in some cases, in the form of myths. And together, both the real stories and myths, takes the form of a creation.

Life is tangible, a truth known to all. On the contrary, a theatrical reality is intangible and illusive, though based on real-life situations; it is a 'reflection' of the tangible reality. This becomes the inspiration for a performer.

Inspired by Albert Camus' **Le Malentendu (The Misunderstanding)**, Torit's ***Mritashaucha*** is a psychological play that can be lived, but the state of living cannot be believed. Nonetheless, Torit's plays are perpetually based on the ever-existing dreadful truth, interwoven with intrinsic complexities of thoughts and experiences raising alarming questions toward the Humanity and the human existence.

For me, there are two kinds of truth — one that we see and the other we understand. While building this character, I faced inextricable phases. Initially, the playwright did not name the character of mother, I am playing in ***Mritashaucha***. I named her **Sarju**. My readings of human behavior, conscience and sensibility based on my life's experience and realization of mythic concepts in social phenomena, and, of course, the dynamism of the script inspired

me to get into the character of the mother belonging to the Kalbalia community of Rajasthan. I was able to venture through the character with three predominant facets. Sufferance of age old decadent practice of inequality and atrocity against women, a life thriving to survive in a hostile landscape with lack of water and vegetation and inert hyper metaphysical sense of being delivered through their songs and poetry. Sarju's leap is the fact that she courageously faces the horrifying truths of the lives of her and her daughter and lives on; even to the extent of celebrating death. I like to put this existentialist angst as a superlative but hope for brighter light beyond absurdity is much stronger.

***Moments never stop passing,  
never shall the heart cease beating.  
No matter where they lodge,  
the distance closes in,  
the horizon gets brighter.  
We stretch our hands to touch our longings,  
to explore each other!***

If there is a story behind the presentation of Art, certainly there is no shortage of such stories amongst the artist community. SANSAPTAK, a group for theatre, itself has its own story — a past, present and, definitely, a future and the credit goes to all those who have dedicated their lives to its cause and, undoubtedly, the audience who have always remained our inspiration. Hope, the performance of ***Mritashaucha*** will be a huge success and we will be able to communicate with the audience through it.

# Absurdism that Changed the Contemporary Philosophy

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*Akhilesh Pandey, Journalist, Dainik Jagaran*

Albert Camus is the name who stands in the leading row of some of those writers who changed the contemporary interface of the whole world. Be it through novels, stories, letters, essays and plays, Camus established several milestones in his short period of 46 years. On his work, not only the literature world witnessed the second youngest Noble Prize winner, after Rudyard Kipling, but also experimented a lot in all the creative fields by taking his creations and ideas. What we see on the stage these days and what we read in contemporary literature have a great impact of Camus' philosophy of absurdism and existentialism.

Camus' works are full of surprising factors from the beginning till the end as he broke the conventional style of writing by establishing the concept other than linear way. He defined that apart from good or bad, there is something which is not good and not bad. Similarly, he showed that besides hero and villain, there is possibility of other characters in leading roles. He gave the creative world a new domain to think and feel the individuality and individual truths with experiments and experiences and not from the society. The approach of his absurdism leads him to a new concept 'existentialism'.

Camus made a significant contribution to a viewpoint of the Absurd, and always rejected nihilism as a valid response. In his creations he focussed that our life must have meaning for us to value it. If we accept that life has no meaning and, therefore, no value, should we kill ourselves? In a letter he wrote to a German friend, he shows his concept of whole creations and life he spent, "If nothing had any meaning, you would be right. But there is something that still has a meaning."

Camus' understanding of the absurd promotes public debate and advocate scientific approach as well. He showed his approach during his movements in France and association with Communism to bring a change. Concepts such as cooperation, joint effort and solidarity are of key importance to Camus, though they are most likely sources of 'relative' versus 'absolute' meaning. He often can be seen with such human values breaking the social barriers and leading a revolution for the cause of humanity. Through his writings and activities, Camus had always been busy in bringing a scientific approach and rational thinking. In his creation 'The Rebel', which reflects his inner-depth of thinking and revolutionary approach for the world, Camus identifies rebellion with a deep association for human solidarity. Camus mentions, "When he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself, and from this point of view human solidarity is metaphysical. But for the moment we are only talking of the kind of solidarity that is born in chains." Similarly, in his work 'Le Mythe', Camus focuses that on one hand we value our own lives in spite of our morality, on the other hand we can live with dualism, but we cannot live with the paradox. Such things have made him distinguished in literary art and he established absurdism and existentialism.

Camus initially was a sports lover and he played football till the age of 17 from his university, but after getting ill due to TB, he left the game. But his romance with the game inspired his as well in his works and the game remained his first love besides theatre. Though Camus' life was badly affected by TB, he continued writing novels, stories and staging plays. He was active in the late forties and early fifties in theatre creating an impact on the social revolutionary ideas of the time.

# Camus' Absurdity

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*Aditya Chowdhury, Design Engineer, STMicroelectronics*

Though absurdism is not an ideal, and not even good, place to begin a study of modern philosophy, yet without it, the understanding of the school of existentialism is incomplete. Albert Camus, a French Algerian Nobel Prize winning author cum journalist, was the father of this school of thought, and as his thoughts and experiences evolved from before to after the war, his works shaped and re-shaped the intravenous structure of what everyone knows as the 'Absurd'.

One of his very first, and perhaps the one book in which Camus delves quite deep about the idea of the absurd, and explains his rebellion towards Nihilism in detail is 'The Myth Of Sisyphus'. This work of his is also the most significant in the sense that it would lay the foundation for every single principle and doctrine which Camus would explore in his later fictional as well as non-fictional works. As the final chapter of the book compares the absurdity of the human existence, to that of the Greek figure Sisyphus, who was condemned to roll a boulder up a hill, only to have it roll down, and undergo the task repeatedly, thus the name. This particular non-fictional essay was written by Camus in his prime. This essay serves as the basis of Albert Camus's idea of Absurdism, as it was in this essay only, Camus delved upon the question that 'If god is dead, does it require suicide for a man to attain the absurd?', to which he answered in a certain 'No' and that 'Rather than suicide, it requires a revolt, the kind of revolt seen in Sisyphus' drudgery of rolling the boulder.' Among the initial few chapters of the book, Camus takes upon the problem of Suicide and all the people that have suggested it as the only one true alternative, head on. He states that it is not the world that is neither absurd, nor human thought: the absurd arises when the human need to understand meets the unreasonableness of the world, due to "the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle."

He then characterizes a number of philosophies that describe and attempt to deal with this feeling of the

absurd. All of these, he claims, commit "philosophical suicide" by reaching conclusions that contradict the original absurd position, either by abandoning reason and turning to God, or by elevating reason and ultimately arriving at ubiquitous Platonic forms and an abstract god, as in the case of Husserl. He argues that if god is actually dead, as suggested by Zarathustra, then that naturally elevates man to the platform of Godhood, and when man attains the freedom of this thought, rather than committing suicide, he tells his readers that man has to come to terms with the knowledge that 'there can be no ultimate knowledge or deepest understanding', and then, live his/her life with revolt, freedom and passion. After that he describes in detail, the caricatures of various characters as examples of the absurd life. Namely, the supreme seducer, Don Juan, whose equal love for everyone and everything Camus terms as absurd, the actor, who Camus claims achieves the absurd by living multiple lives under the same skin on the stage of the play, and the conqueror, whom Camus christens the forbearer of the absurd as he chooses action over contemplation, knowing fore well that no victory is final and permanent. He touched upon the realm of the artist, the philosopher and briefly the scientist too, while he talks about absurd creation.

While he draws out the caricatures for all of these, the scientist or science in general is something which Camus seemed to despise, in all his works in which he touched upon the subject. Even though Science forms perhaps the most legit source of understanding, for Camus, it remained to be a futile and obsolete instrument of understanding, which again, Camus talked about as the last resort for the absurd man. Thus, what this author feels is that, Camus's absurd demands from its follower, this unquestioned acceptance of the so called fact that there is no ultimate truth or knowledge, and hence that makes every step in that direction a waste. This is where Absurdism branches off from traditional existentialism. This school of thought basically ensures

that there is no ray of hope left, and the world is a dark, desolate and strange place for humans. That is why Camus in his writings, although touches upon almost all major works of Kafka and appreciates them but fails to recognize Kafka as an absurdist author as he argues that Kafka's work had shades of hope tailored in itself. Yet, true freedom should not be at the cost of completely turning oblivious of the nature of things. If anything, in Feynman's words, "Understanding what brings a flower its beauty doesn't necessarily undermine it, instead it simply allows us to appreciate its beauty in a more enhanced manner."

The Stranger on the other hand, though not a literal masterpiece when it comes to his writings (as is often the case when such Epic works are being translated to a foreign Language like English), plays with the reader and their own sense of innocence, their relation with the society and how it all relates to the absurd. By making us relate to the protagonist, Meursault of the Stranger, Camus wants us to feel first empathy, then disdain for his apathy and guilt, and then through his questions and outburst, relate to his condition and the lack of innocence which is present in all of us, themes, which Camus portrays in his later novels like 'The Fall' as well. In the process, the main motive seems to be, for the reader to evaluate whether we all are actually innocent (even morally) or not, or are our senses of moral and innocent principles only guided by a higher entity whom we haven't even seen and who is non-existent in all probability. Also, the sense of deeply hidden despair and pseudo-nihilism present in Camus's work comes out in its most tangible form in the last few lines of 'The Stranger'. The Stranger tells the story of a protagonist who after attending the funeral of his mother quite indifferently, becomes involved in a brawl between a local friend and his girlfriend's brother, and after ending up in jail, when his apathy for the crime he committed as well as supposedly his mother's death causes the Judge to punish him with execution, bursts out screaming about 'God being a waste of time', and about the futility of empathy and absurdness of the human condition.

As for other works of his which I got the chance to read, 'The Rebel' and 'The Fall' would need a separate

article altogether to talk about. But to write about them in brief, The Rebel was a turning point for Albert Camus as it was the first time that the father of Absurdism took a plunge into the world of politics or political reasoning, although figuratively. One of the primary arguments in The Rebel concerns the motivation for rebellion and revolution. While the two acts - which can be interpreted from Camus' writing as states of being - are radically different in most respects, they both stem from a basic human rejection of normative justice. Camus spends the better part of this essay drawing caricatures of writers such as Marquis de Sade, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Stirner etc., in order to scale the metaphysical and historical development of rebellion and revolutions in societies. As for 'The Fall', like 'The Stranger', it touches upon the subjects of innocence, non-existence, imprisonment etc., although, if the murder Meursault commits, can only be understood with the help of ideas outside the novel itself, Jean-Baptiste Clamence, the protagonist of The Fall, is full of explanations of his own history. The Stranger and The Fall also offer highly colored characters who are nevertheless unrealized and unconvincing. Meursault, the hero (or anti-hero) of The Stranger, is endowed with vivid external attributes, but is it really possible to believe in, let alone be engaged by, a character so affectless that he decides to marry a woman he scarcely knows or cares about because "it had no importance really," and who then shoots and kills a man because "one might fire, or not fire— and it would come to absolutely the same thing"?

Few other works of Camus which I haven't had the leisure to go through, but which are counted amongst his best also, are his novella 'The Plague' and several of his plays such as 'The Possessed'. As for a writer for whom, his contemporaries had the view that 'For a generation riddled with despair and war, Camus and his philosophy had given hope and the sense for the meaning of life again', the few writings of Camus are too deep and require repeated readings to get to their depth.

# Albert Camus and His Creative Connectivity with Other Playwrights

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*Indrajit Das, Theatre Activist, Sansaptak*

## Albert Camus and William Shakespeare

It was way back in the 16th century that Shakespeare wrote his play but we can see an echo of it in the thoughts of the subsequent modern day philosopher Albert Camus and other existentialists

In the **Myth of Sisyphus** that Camus examines the meaninglessness of life and the absurd condition of man. He likens our condition to Sisyphus who was condemned by the Gods to roll rock up the hill for eternity. As soon as he reaches the top it rolls down again and entire process is repeated. We live every day in the hope of a better tomorrow but every tomorrow gives rise to another tomorrow and slowly this brings us closer to death. In this book, Camus says that the real tragic moment is when Sisyphus starts his trek down the hill when he realizes that he has to undergo the exercise again and again. There is no hope, but when he recognizes the futility of his condition and the certainty of his fate, he is freed. Similarly in the play **Macbeth**, Shakespeare brings out the true redemption of Macbeth, where he acknowledges that all he had achieved was for nothing as he was slowly moving towards his death. He equates our life to that of an actor who as long as he is on stage performs and then vanishes as soon as his act is finished

In another of the famous soliloquy from **Hamlet**, Shakespeare examines the existential question, “Why live? For death could be a worse condition. To be or not to be that is the question whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them: to die to sleep, no more; the dread is that what does not return from the dead.” Here Hamlet is contemplating suicide, but ultimately decides against it: “But that's the dread of something after death. The undiscovered country from where bourn no traveler returns puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly others that

we know not of?”

Suicide is not an option. In the **Myth of Sisyphus**, Camus says that the only philosophical question is prolongation of life or to end it. When man is faced with meaninglessness of life and the absurd nature of his condition, he faces the question of suicide. Camus says that this should not be an option, for one does not know death. He says that once the truth is acknowledged for that is the only way you can overcome it, you should revolt.

Both Shakespeare and Camus tread similar lines. Their lifetimes are centuries apart, but the doubt which propels their wisdom is the same – ‘the purpose of life’.

## Albert Camus and Anton Chekhov

The impossibility of knowledge is a problem that concerned more existential thinkers. What distinguished them is the kind of conclusion they draw from their discovery that the world is incomprehensible.

In **Thinkers and Philosophers**, Shestov ends his essay on Antony Chekhov with the description of man's desperate beating his head together 'against the wall' as his final predicament. Curiously Camus starts his **Myth of Sisyphus** precisely with an image of the wall, the concept of 'Absolute Wall': “All man has is his lucidity and his definite knowledge of the walls around him.” Camus uses the analogy of the Greek myth to demonstrate the futility of existence, but ultimately Sisyphus finds meaning and purpose in his task simply by continually applying himself to it. Camus concludes his essay with the assertion that: “One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”

*Where does Antony Chekhov stand in respect to the 'absurd walls'?*

Chekhov's man reaches the state of complete existential despair. He finds himself in an indifferent, ambiguous and absurd universe in which meaning is not provided by the natural order. His only response to this absurd, incomprehensible world is 'to beat his head against the floor'.

According to one of Anton Chekhov's creations, **Boring Story**, the professor's (a character) rebellion can be interpreted as Chekhov's method of the struggle with materialism. Perhaps, Chekhov's method may seem strange to the reader, nevertheless, it's clear that he came to the conclusion that there was only one way to struggle, to which the prophets of old turned themselves: to beat one's head against the wall, in loneliness and silence to gather all the forces of despair for an absurd attempt long since condemned by science and by common sense.

Shestov views most of Anton Chekhov's character as those who know no better strategy than beating one's head against the wall. Shestov concludes: "One must spoil, devour, destroy, ruin. To think out the things quietly, to anticipate the future - that is impossible."

## Albert Camus and George Orwell

Almost 10 years after the publication of the **Myth of Sisyphus**, Camus publishes his second major philosophical work, **The Rebel** (1951). Camus continues the problematic which had begun with the **Myth of Sisyphus**. Previously, revolt or creation had been considered the necessary response to the absurdity of existence. Here, Camus goes on to examine the nature of rebellion and its multiple manifestations in history. In the **Myth of Sisyphus**, in a true Nietzschean fashion, Camus had said: "There is but one useful action, that of remaking man and the Earth." However, in **The Rebel**, reminiscent of George Orwell's **Animal Farm**, one of the first points he makes is: "The slave starts by begging for justice and ends by wanting to wear a crown. He too wants to dominate." The problem is that while man genuinely rebels against both unfair social conditions and as Camus says, against the whole of creation, nevertheless in the practical administration of such revolution, man comes to deny the humanity of the other in an attempt to impose his own individuality.



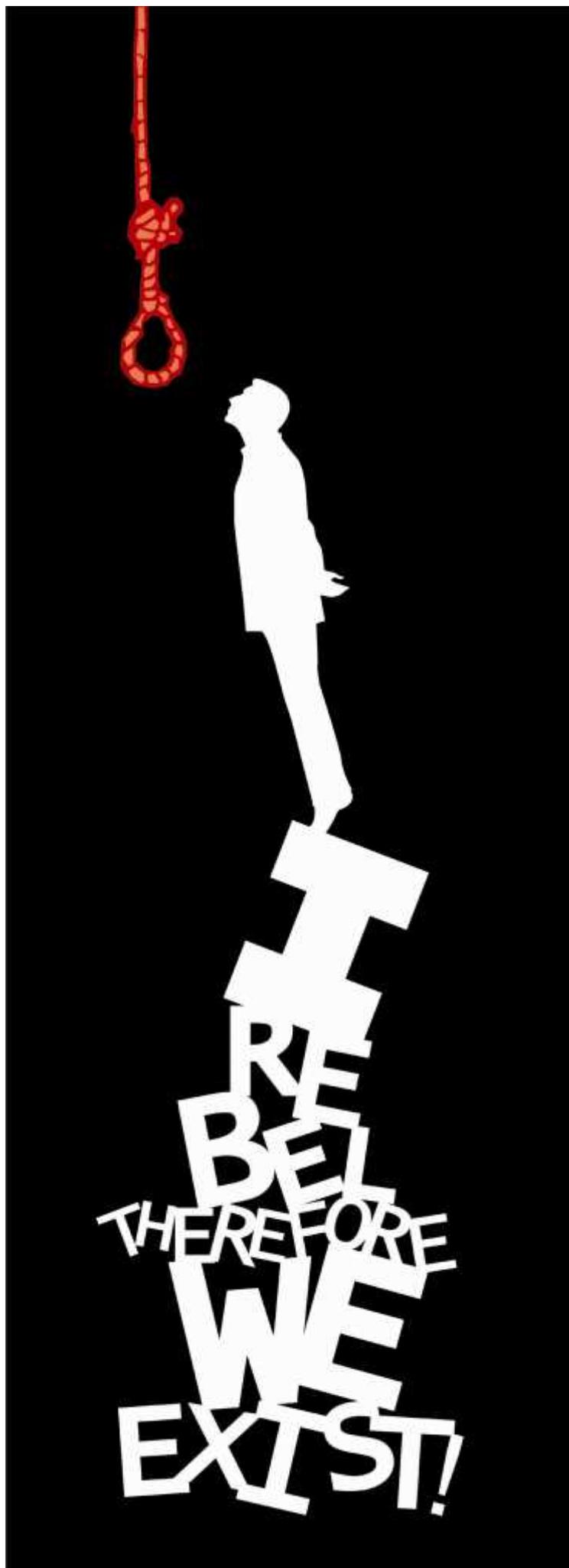
Clockwise from Top-Left  
William Shakespeare, Albert  
Camus, George Orwell and  
Anton Chekov

**“Don't walk behind me, I may not lead. Don't walk in front of me. I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.”**

**Albert Camus**



Digital Artwork by Rana Mitra



Digital Artwork by  
Sreemoyee Dasgupta

Inspired from Albert  
Camus' 'The Rebel'

# Dead at 47

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*Nilanjan Guha, Sub-Editor, Sansaptak*

I've been rereading Camus, in between my seemingly meaningful routines at the office and my shots at short lived glory in my drama rehearsals, chiefly the stories collected in *Exile and the Kingdom* and the exceptionally long essay "The Rebel". Both of them are the same text with contrasting vocabularies, a far-cry for an impending rebellion. Anyone aware of the socio-political setting around her or him would definitely have discovered the need for the revolt that Camus so blatantly puts up as the primary agenda for the human civilization, and any writer should ask what writing can do for it.

I suppose what most writers believe, with Camus, is that "putting up things badly increases the unhappiness of the world", and that they are honour-bound, therefore, to say things the way it should be said; that is, to be true and honest to their text. In bad times – take the Hitler era, the atrocious Algerian war – Camus had suddenly found himself in a skirmish with the intellectual forces of the world, rendering truth and standing up for it, through projected literature, against all manner of lying propaganda. He fought till he was dead, at 47, an abrupt end of an unusual crusade, fought not by weapons, but by derivatives of abstract ideologies of rebellion.

The underlying principle of his revolt is atheism, which gives rise to his rejection of any ideology that defers human happiness into the beyond; or, in the secular rendition, defers it into an earthly but future ideal state whose attainment will entail the harming or extermination of millions of people who don't find their places in the leader's bigger scheme of things. He oversimplifies atheism, a cause that led many to hate him, and says, "there is then only one hell and it is of this world"; He doesn't say anything after that and we see him preparing for a battle hinting that this hell is what we must struggle against. Shortly after he says that, he dies in this hell, at 47.

Perhaps you would like fiction and poetry to put you at ease in this struggle by creating dis-illusion; but also –

and this really was the only reason one should love him – by embodying a love of the earth and the enjoyment of its gifts and by making works which are fit to be seen in it; which is to say, by making and asserting beauty in the teeth of "a world that insults it. Camus helps you become "the one you are". And the revolt that he is a perpetuator of, an assertion of individual freedom, brings you that much closer to common human suffering and of the common need to curtail it and to enliven the lives of all. We are all, individually, makers of community. "I revolt, therefore we are." That is where we all belong together. Camus, too was the maker and protector of his community, and he holds it together though his philosophy till he dies at 47. The community, however, stays alive till date.

When I first saw a picture of Albert Camus, he was wearing a gaunt trenchcoat. The Cure wrote a song inspired by one of his books, *The Outsider*, because he and his ugly friend Sartre were existentialists (which seemed related, somehow, to the trenchcoat). Once, the best of friends, for once Sartre had offered the most important role in his play to Camus', their differences could hardly have been more acrimonious but, as can happen, the falling out contained a measure of agreement; Sartre of them had agreed that Camus, even by his own admission, had never really been an existentialist. Existentialism, for Camus, was a matter of temperament, not of intellectual, but of the defining facts of his early life, being born (100 years ago, before this year) in the corroded landscape of Algeria. The corrosion had stayed deep within him, and in his writing, long after he dies at 47.

I had admired Camus' narratives of the untamed circumspection of one's own character but it was the discovery of his writings celebrating his life as a juvenile and a youth in all flamboyance that altered my perception of him, from a philosopher to a proficient writer whose intellectual rationality was a product of the wealth – the sensual proximity and precision – that

was what his senses were made of.

His participation in the allied resistance during the Second World War finds a figurative expression in *The Plague* and the profane willingness to take a stand against Communism, all this while his own best friend and rival Sartre enthusiastically toed the line. The Algerian war trapped him in an impossibly vexed position. As Tony Judt puts it, Camus was reduced to 'impotent silence' being unable to support a liberation movement whose tactics could "strike blindly" against his mother.

Albert Camu's Journey was legendary, his death had not even made it to the stands – a telegram explaining that he had won the Nobel prize had to be read to his illiterate mother by a neighbor – but he subsequently

returned to the landscape and history that he had truly belonged to, in *The First Man*, the novel he was working on at the time of his death in 1960, aged 47. An era, short lived but extensively effective in constructing the impression of collective hope in attributing personal glory to a general cause. The narrator of *The Plague* concludes, simply, that "there is more in men to admire than to despise". A life which ended in an insignificant car crash seemed to be a part of bigger scheme of things, out of scope of human comprehension. I believed in his life and believed that he was secretly capable to justifying the philosophy that he penned down, that Sisyphus might just be more than a metaphor. Camus was equally convinced of a more private truth that he carried within him "an unconquerable summer". It still warms us today.



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Official Address: Pocket 52/82, First Floor, Chittaranjan Park,  
New Delhi - 110019

Tel: 91-9871737231, 9818121865, 9818524708

E-mail: [sansaptak.theatre@gmail.com](mailto:sansaptak.theatre@gmail.com);

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Studio: K 1/34, basement, Chittaranjan Park