



Overcoming Anxiety Optimism: Exploring Pakistani English Fiction with Existentialist Philosophy

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Abstract

Absurdism as an offshoot of existentialism and frequently understood in a negative connotation, however, the current study reflects absurdism as a fundamental positive value related to practical life. The present study explores absurdism in selected texts of Bapsi Sidwa and Nadeem Aslam Khan. The importance of absurdism is crucial in elevating positivity in an individual life. With the help of the thematic analysis technique, a qualitative study is carried out to analyze absurdism in selected fiction. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. This study is significant as the theory of absurdism is related to the problem of human lives. The theory of absurdism lets individuals face the hardships of life. The more an individual is aware of the realities of the universe, the more he is responsive to universe irrationalities. The present study helps to overcome anxiety, loneliness, and solitude through discussion and extended illustrations from literature as a reflection of life. The current study contributes to overcoming our anxiety with optimism. Future studies can be conducted as the appeal of this theory is universal. This study deals with the question of human existence and meaning.

Introduction

The meaning of human life and existence have core importance in the human past and as well as in the present history. The study of absurdism provides an insight into the meaning of life. The chapter provides a background of the study, where detailed discussion is provided on absurdism and how different authors view absurdism. Furthermore, the chapter presents a short biography of the authors and a brief introduction to the texts. Moreover, the chapter elucidates the objectives of the study, research questions, problem statements, significance & rationale of the study, and delimitation of the study. Existentialism is a philosophical theory that gives one the idea that human beings are free in determining their future. There should be no external authority who decides your future. In history, there are different movements like idealism, realism, transcendentalism, rationalism but the term existentialism has its intellectual history. Existentialism is a broader term because, on one hand, it has philosophical implications while on the other hand it is considered as a literary theory. The study of 'being' is the central focus of this theory. Absurdism is based on the notion that the world is irrational and meaningless and search for order, rationality, logic, and wit is leading an individual to conflict with the universe. Different theologians and philosophers interpreted the meaning of human lives. Absurdism appeared as the only answer and the intellectual explanation of the irrational response of the world. Human questions were genuine but the response of the universe towards human rational questions was irrational. Absurdism was the beginning of optimism and end of pessimism. The present study

contests the idea that absurd arises when an individual experiences the irrational response of the world to his/her rational questions. The confrontation leads to the concept of absurdity. When an individual confronts the world logically, one finds if there is no meaning. The world does not answer to human rational questions. Such irrational response of the universe leads to chaos, disintegration, loneliness, and pessimism defined as 'absurd'. Accepting and understanding pessimism is a means of optimism. The present study will analyze the selected novels to emphasize how absurdism is used to find meaning in life. Pakistani fiction is mostly based on patriarchal issues, the common theme of marriage, identity loss, the role of minorities, Islamic fundamentalism, and women marginalization. All these issues are addressed in Pakistani English fiction. The texts selected for this study are the 'Maps for lost lovers' (2003) by Nadeem Aslam Khan and 'American Brat' (1993) by Bapsi Sidwa. The idea that human beings are free in determining their own future through the act of free will. Existentialists argue that 'existence precedes essence', which means that an individual present decision can decide his future. There is no external agent responsible for man's happiness and unhappiness; if an individual wants to be happy, he needs to decide the things which cause happiness. Absurdism is an offshoot of existentialism and frequently understood in a negative connotation, however, it may reflect fundamental positive values related to practical life, which the present study aims to explore. Nothingness and meaning of life are contradictory notions. Individual freedom owes much to these concepts. The rationale behind this study is to demonstrate how people of particular geography i.e. Pakistan have followed ideology about individual freedom. Moreover, western concepts of existentialism have prompted the present study to analyze the perception in the Pakistani community. This study is very significant to highlight anxieties that are spread due to misconceptions, little understanding of the external world. The study helps the researchers to point out solutions to that anxiety caused by the misconceptions of the least understandings of the world. The main objectives of the study are to identify absurdism portrayed in Pakistani English writings. It also investigates fiction. To illustrate the contradictory relationship between nothingness and the meaning of life. It asserts absurdism as a fundamental value and related to practical life.

Existentialism and Absurdism

Existentialism is a philosophical approach that had given the idea that human beings are free in determining their future through the act of free will. Existentialists argued that 'existence precedes essence', which means that an individual present decision can decide his future. There is no external agent responsible for man's happiness and unhappiness. If an individual wanted to be happy, he needs to decide the things which cause happiness and vice versa (Lawler, 2005). The advocates of existentialism were of the view that through free will, awareness and a person's responsibility can make a sense of the world that has no meaning at all (Warnock, 1970). The existentialism explained by Kierkegaard had more religious elements than rational elements (Ferguson, 2005). Before existentialism, in Europe, people of Europe were familiar with the concept of nihilism. Fredrick Nietzsche was the advocate of this theory. According to Nietzsche, 'nihilism was the idea that all ethics were baseless and that nothing can be known or communicated (Gillespie, 1995). Nihilism was considered a pessimistic approach because it did not provide any solution to human problems. If there was no meaning in life, life would become more nihilistic and least optimistic (Weller, 2005). Absurdism provided an opportunity that a realization that life has no meaning, is, in fact, a basis for living life to the fullest (Demastes, 2005). The notion of the absurd was that the universe was irrational and meaningless and that the search for meaning could bring an individual into a constant clash with the world (Cornwell, 2016). When an individual reached the point of the irrationality of the world, the individual then understood the meaning of existence (Morris, 2009). Those individuals who attached themselves to hope they remain, while those who did not, they perish (Bennett, 2015). Life was not a quest for pleasures, nor power but

a pursuit for meaning (Bowker, 2008). The great achievement of an individual was to find meaning in life (Pytell, 2015). Camus offered an interpretation of the meaning of existence that the world was not reasonable at all to answer human philosophical questions because the world in itself was irrational and that is all that can be said (Bralina & Shilke, 2012). Camus in his theory of absurdism, described revolt as an act of heroic resistance to the state that oppressed humankind (Mohseni, Iranpour, Naghibzadeh-Tahami, Kazazi, & Borhaninejad, 2019). The opposite of meaninglessness was meaningful and that was the point where Camus shifted from existentialism to absurdism (Bennett-Hunter, 2009). The external universe did not care about the problem and questions of human beings. It did not answer to a human philosophical question. Existentialists did not find ways to counter this problem of pessimism (Dienstag, 2014). Our very existence was irrational and inappropriate (McMurray, 1977). When humans faced difficulties, diseases, and deaths then such questions came to mind unconsciously that why humans were targeted through the divine plan. An individual became directionless, purposeless, helpless, and meaningless in this universe because his feelings of humanism were suppressed by the feeling of materialism (Michie, 2011). Camus was of the view that why we humans penetrate ourselves in sorrows and pain when in the end we all die at the same point (Henke, 2013). Life is a continuous struggle (Sjöling, Ågren, Olofsson, Hellzén, & Asplund, 2005), one should not quit this struggle for meaningless, if life did not respond to our serious and philosophical questions then as a whole we need to stick with a hope (Pözlner, 2014). As the world was a very difficult place to live so there was no point in committing suicide or to frighten from this world, one needed to be very well prepared and positive and spent life with full zeal (Johnson, 2018). The modern man only has subjective thought and he wants to be noticed by society (Koltun, 2018). These worldly passions let the man work extra hard to attain all these things in his life (Candelaria, 2018). Camus was of the view that we must believe in Sisyphus to live life happily (Byala, 2008). Camus considered the universe as irrational but he did not recommend suicide as a solution to world problems (Bertman, 1971). Whenever we change our decisions the next moment we change our future (Olley, 2010). Everything is constantly changing. There is no fixity even in the language (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010). When all the philosophies failed to respond to human unhappiness, Camus stands to flourish happiness in human lives (Neves, 2003).

Research Method

This study is qualitative in nature and within that exploratory and explanatory methods help to analyze the fictional text. Thematic analysis is used in qualitative research and focuses on examining themes or patterns of meaning within data. It illustrates the data in detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis 1998). The thematic analysis allows the researcher to determine precisely the relationships between concepts and compare them with the replicated data. The focus of this study is on the research technique adopted and used for this study to achieve the research objectives. Qualitative research type emphasizes both organization and rich description of the data set and theoretically informed interpretation of meaning. Nadeem Aslam was born in Pakistan in 1966 and moved to the UK as a teenager, his family settling in Huddersfield. His second novel, *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), which took 11 years to write, won the 2005 Encore Award and the 2005 Kiriyama Pacific Rim Book Prize. This was a commentary on working-class Pakistani immigrants living in the United Kingdom. Bapsi Sidhwa is a Pakistani American novelist of Gujarati Parsi descent who writes in English and is resident in the United States. The story of the Novel revolves around Feroza who was very impressed by the environment, she lives in. When Feroza was in Pakistan, She was happy and satisfied with the fundamentalist regime of Zia, however, when she migrated to the USA, She was happy and enjoying her life in that environment. The story is the transformation of character from a religious zealot to an independent woman.

Xistentialist Strain in Maps for Lost Lovers (2003)

This novel is written by Nadeem Aslam Khan, the selected novels is a commentary on working-class Pakistani immigrants living in the United Kingdom. The selected text describes how people are divided by cultures and religions. The spirit of love is destroyed by the passion of culture. There are different characters in this novel. Shamas, Kaukab, Jugnu, Chanda, Ujala, Mahjabin, Charagh, Suraya, and Kiran. All these characters are fighting with their luck and destiny. Through the character of Kaukab, Islamic fundamentalism has shown. Kiran is the symbol that how minorities are treated in Muslim populated areas. Jugnu and Chanda love each other and want to spend life with each other without marriage. Society does not accept this decision and the brothers of Chanda killed the couple. This novel further describes the role of women in Islamic society. The character of Suraya is the representation of the exploitation of women's rights in Islamic society. All these incidents in the novel describe the mentality of Muslims living in Dasht-e-tanhai in the United Kingdom. Nadeem Aslam is a Pakistani English novelist. Nadeem Aslam's novel *Maps for lost lover* explores the lives of those people who are living in the United Kingdom and all the commentary is on working-class living in the United Kingdom. Shamas is the main character and protagonist of the novel. He is standing at the balcony at the first snow of the season thinking about life and its meaning. He is thinking about the tragedies of the universe as everything in Dasht-e-tanhai, a small place in England for immigrants goes out of hand. There are different religions, cultures, and social norms that divide the people. Human beings want to drive things in one direction but the universe has decided something else for him (Pytell, 2015). An individual has the desire for one thing but things occurred differently. At the start of the novel, when the young couple was killed the society starts arguments on it that who killed this young couple? Nadeem Aslam unveils the religious norms of the working class of Pakistani immigrants. There are different characters in the novel. Every character shows a different point of view. Our convention of behavior is chosen, not given. Chanda and Jugnu were killed by the brother of Chanda as the family thinks it brings shame to their family. A girl, whose name was Kiran was in love with a Muslim. Yet she cannot express her love due to religious restriction. As absurdism is not only to think about rationality, it praises the natural beauty of this universe (Candelaria, 2018). At the start of the novel, "Shamas stands in the open door and watches the earth, the magnet that it is pulling snowflakes out of the sky towards itself" (Aslam, 2003, p.1). This was the first snow of the season and Shamas although have thinking about life but still enjoying nature. When Shamas was in Pakistan, they have to enjoy four seasons although when they shift to the United Kingdom one monsoon season has added. "Among the innumerable other losses, to come to England was to lose a season" (Aslam, 2003, p.6). This line from the selected text brings the idea in mind that common man understands that United Kingdom is rich in everything but the situation is different as the line 'innumerable other losses' bring the idea forward that they have lost not only a beautiful season but also lost their social cultures as in England it was difficult to exercise all those norms easily. Shamas was unable to predict the future situation as, "Almost five months of not knowing when the time would stir again and in which direction it will move, tip him into darkness or deliver him into the light". (Aslam, 2003, p.8) The present study illustrates that women are considered as a 2nd class citizen in our culture as the character of Suraya. She was very innocent in her case. Her husband was drunken and three times he says, 'talaq, talaq, talaq' and religious cleric told Surayya that to reunite with your husband you must have to marry another man for maintaining a relationship with your previous husband. All these marginalized women of Dasht-e-tanhai were constantly finding out meaning in this meaningless universe.

The selected text illustrates that the members of Dasht-e-tanhai are divided on the base of religion. Kiran, having religion other than Islam tries to knot with a Muslim boy but it was a failure. Jugnu, a young boy has killed as he violated codes and conduct of his religion by continuing his relationship with Chanda before marriage. Surayya tries to tie a knot with Shamas however it was a failure. Kaukab, the wife of Shamas. She was very religious. Every time she gives reference from hadith and she follows the instructions of her prophet. Shamas was outspoken, he was a superficial Muslim. They have three children Ujala, Charagh, and Mahjabin. Ujala at the age of 16 leaves home and became an outspoken atheist. Another son Charagh prefers arts over medical. Mahjabin was sent to Pakistan to marry but this marriage was a failure as she wears western clothes and has short hair as Mahjabin thinks that she is free in the selection of her clothes. The story ends with a point that all family members sharing their point of view on the murder of Jugnu and Chanda at dinner. Absurdism is confronting the irrational response of the universe towards an individual rational struggle, this confrontation of an individual with the universe gives rise to absurd (Cornwell, 2016). Shamas is the main protagonist of the novel. He tries to manage all the things but nothing reformed. He wants to have a lovely relationship with her wife Kaukab but she was the product of religious fundamentalism. His wife's religious beliefs were devastating. She has a firm belief in her religion and whatever is propagated by her religion, she stuck to those guidelines.

As humans are surrounded by chaos and disintegration (Heffernan, 2011). Therefore,

Kiran was a girl of thirteen back in the 1950s when Shamas had arrived from Pakistan. Her father had lost all the members of the family during the massacres that accompanied the partitioned in India in 1947. (Aslam, 2003, p.14).

These difficulties let Kiran be a strong woman. The outside universe will make you happy and unhappy but it is an individual who needs to understand this wave of pessimism and optimism. According to absurdism, life provides obstacles and challenges but it does not mean that individuals will stop there. (Demastes, 2005) argue that a realization that life has no meaning is the actual realization and pave way for a prosperous life. These challenges are healthy. These are positive gestures for individual social upbringing. Marriage is the proponent theme of the selected text. Kaukab, being the religious fundamentalist, married Shamas who does not care about religious rituals. Jugnu, younger brother of Shamas, has an illicit relationship with a woman who was triply divorced. Surayya living in Pakistan, have divorced by her husband as she was drunken. Surayya tries to tie a knot with Shamas however it was a failure. Kaukab, the wife of Shamas. She was very religious. Every time she gives reference from hadith and she follows the instructions of her prophet. Shamas was outspoken, he was a superficial Muslim. They have three children Ujala, Charagh, and Mahjabin. Ujala at the age of 16 leaves home and became an outspoken atheist. Another son Charagh prefers arts over medical. Mahjabin was sent to Pakistan to marry but this marriage was a failure as she wears western clothes and has short hair as Mahjabin thinks that she is free in the selection of her clothes. The story ends with a point that all family members sharing their point of view on the murder of Jugnu and Chanda at dinner. Shamas was trying to cope with the situation, as he was the only reasonable individual in the Dasht-e-Tanhai, "He tries to inhale but can't breathe because of the undesired situation of life" (Aslam, 2003,p.339). These lines explicitly show the idea of absurdism that life is left with no purpose, it is difficult to inhale as the situation is not under the control of humans. Human offers one solution to difficulties of life while the universe offers another solution to human worries and anxieties. Life is undesired and barren because we humans are unable to implement our solutions as this confrontation of the man's rational attitude with the universe's irrational response leads towards absurd. As absurdism is a universal phenomenon, so the Pakistani literature is not devoid of absurdism.

It is said that when an individual tries to understand this world with his intellect and rationality he comes in close contact with problems but these problems are of good gestures (Cornwell, 2016). When Shamas was finding a solution to problems but he does not find any solution, even he has not a good relationship with his wife Kaukab, as she was very religious and Shamas was a very liberal mind and was a good poet, “He does not know what to do about the knock and in his life”. (Aslam, 2003, p.269). A man reaches a situation in life where he is surrounded by difficulties, chaos, and disintegration that he does not know what to do next (Camus, 1942). It is the dilemma of this world that it is not good for those people who do well. The universe most of the time, offer bad things to good people and good things to bad people. The universe has no rational system, which resultantly leads to disintegration. When an individual reaches that point, he is unable to do something in his life. In this context the life of Shamas was surrounded by absurdities, he tries to cope with the situation but every time he was facing new challenges which were different from the previous challenges. Every character in the novel was struggling. Chanda was struggling against the centuries-old custom that her third husband has lost somewhere and he was unable to divorce his wife who ties a knot with Jugnu. Surayya was struggling in her life as she was the victim of religion. Charagh was fighting with society as he opted for arts instead of the medical field. Mah-Jabin was fighting against her fate as she was married in Pakistan, later divorced.

Some people are attached to hope they remain and they spend a joyous life and those who are away from the ray of optimism they perish (Bennett, 2015). Shamas in *Dasht-e-Tanhai* was the only individual who thinks rationally. Shamas have a very intellectual response to the tragedies of this world. Her wife Kaukab was busy finding out solutions to problems that are irrational and make no sense at all. An intellectual individual cannot spend time with fundamentalists as the wife of Kaukab finding solutions to every problem in religious scriptures. She linked every recent phenomenon with centuries-old ways of life. Therefore, Shamas was very bored in that situation “He said, I want to leave this life, but the world won’t let me go” (Aslam, 2003, p.11). The Muslim community living in a rural area of the United Kingdom involves religious fundamentalism. Being the minority in *Dasht-e-tanhai* they were exercising their religion. Jugnu and Chanda were killed by Chanda's brother. Kaukab, wife of shamas become happy at this murder as the couple spending life that was prohibited in their religion. Surayya becomes the victim of her husband's anger. Kiran was in love with Kaukab’s brother but the environment of *Dasht-e-Tanhai* stops her from love with a Muslim boy. “Kiran says, but I was not able to do anything” (Aslam, 2003, p.16). Both men and women of *Dasht-e-tanhai* cannot decide their future as they were surrounded by difficulties and indecision. The suggested text shows that there was a storm of the difficulties in the *Dasht-e tanhai*, one problem leads to another, the husband-wife relationship was disturbed, parents and children's relationship was disturbed as Ujala and Mahjabin go against the will of their parents. As (Klemke, 2000) stated that our world is surrounded by irrationality, human beings try to adjust themselves with difficulties. As Jugnu was the brother of Shamas. Jugnu has affairs with Chanda, a double divorced girl. Jugnu and Chanda were shot dead by the brother’s of Chanda as they have illicit affairs before marriage. Shamas was devastated by the news of his brother's death. When Shamas hear the news of the death of Jugnu, “He lay down in a complete paralyzed form because of the shock of Jugnu’s murder” (Aslam, 2003, p.143). As existentialism and absurdism are considered the same, however, there exist some core differences. There is a contradictory relationship that exists between these two theories. The theory of existentialism focuses on nothingness (Macann, 1993). The advocates of existentialism are of the view that individuals will strive for a better life but this struggle has no purpose. All the things and events are useless. In other words, it spreads pessimism. If an individual thinks that life is of no value, he becomes hopeless and does not struggle for the meaning of life (Weller, 2005). On the other hand, absurdism is the product of

existentialism. Absurdism is a theory that emphasizes that individual lives in this universe and this universe do not respond to human serious questions but it does not mean that life is of no value (Morris, 2009). All the things in the universe are of no value except human beings (Bralina & Shilke, 2012). Human beings will confront this irrationality and will lead to confrontation, this confrontation leads to absurd and this is a point where the individual understands the meaning of life. According to absurdism, the most important question in this world is that human understands their own meaning if human beings excel in scientific studies and they reach to the moon but unable to find the meaning of their own existence, the question of the human existence should solve first then any other question (Gordon, 2015). This is the most urgent question to be solved. Rational Human beings have to understand the bitter realities of the world such as death, destruction, devastation but at the same time he needs to understand the meaning of his own existence, he will enjoy the beauty of this physical world. He will appreciate nature and will spend life with challenges. These challenges will have positive gestures for human beings. The response of absurdism was intellectual. The theory of absurdism creates this understanding among the individuals that every single human being is responsible for making their own future (Lawler, 2005). Take the example of Shamas, how reasonable and intellectual he was. He does not implement anything even on his children. His three children were free to decide their own future. Shamas was not interfering in their life. Shamas says,

The almost five months since the lovers disappeared have been months of contained mourning for Shamas, but now the grief can come out. He is not a believer, so he knows that the universe is without saviors (Aslam, 2003, p.27).

Exploration of Novel an American Brat (1993)

Bapsi Sidwa is a renowned Pakistani English novelist. In her novel *American Brat*, Sidwa highlights the role of Parsi girl living in Pakistan and America. Feroza is the main character and protagonist of Sidwa's novel. Feroza is the symbol of marginalized society in Pakistan. Her life in Pakistan has many restrictions. She needs to take permission from her parents in every decision. The selected text is revealing the agenda of Zia's Islamization in Pakistan. Life of Feroza completely changes when she shifts to her uncle Manek in America. Her views of fundamentalism transform from conservatism to modernism. The concept of absurdism is related to practical life (Bowker, 2008). Absurdism is simply finding ways in a difficult situation. Feroza, the main protagonist of the novel, is a girl from the Parsi community living in Pakistan with her parents. From the example of Feroza, we realize that Feroza was fighting with her luck and destiny. When she was in Pakistan, she had a fundamentalist view of life. At one time in the text, she has an objection to her mother's sleeveless sari as she was influenced by the environment of Zia's Islamization. She does not talk to anybody. In the text, there are different places where absurdism is portrayed. As the theory of absurdism explicitly explained that life is full of challenges, life gives a tough time to every individual (Morris, 2009) but these difficulties are not to torn the individuals. The purpose of these difficulties according to absurdism is to reform an individual. If life has no meaning, then there is only a philosophical response to that meaningless and that is suicide. Rather stick to meaningless, absurdism is an intellectual response towards the meaningless of life, towards anxiety. Absurdism changes an individual from unhappiness towards happiness, it guides an individual from darkness to light, it leads an individual life towards rationality, wit and logic. 'When Zareen said: "I am really worried about Feroza" (Sidwa, 1993, p.1). Zareen worried about Feroza, as she goes away from the company of the people, Feroza loves to be in solitude and in loneliness. Loneliness leads to anxiety. Zareen, therefore, decides to send her daughter to America. Pakistan is a society where every individual is bound to their parents. Feroza, living in

Pakistan is subordinate to her father Cyrus. She is bound to Cyrus, for continuing her education, for her decision of marriage, in her decision to go to America to her uncle Manek. Sidwa highlights the role of men in the Parsi community as well. Men are considered as the source of power and he is the sole decision-maker of the home. “on the fourth evening, Cyrus took matters in hand”.(Sidwa, 1993, p.19). every member of the family is bound to the father. When Zareen decides to send her daughter to America, she is bound to Cyrus, she takes his opinion. Both Zareen and Cyrus were discussing the changing attitudes of Feroza. “I think Feroza is confused by these sudden switches in attitude. She probably feels she has to conform, be like her Muslim friends. There is hardly any Parsi girl of her age”. (Sidwa, 1993, p.5). Sidwa highlights the role of minorities. She notices interfaith harmony among people of different religions. A subcontinent is a place where the people of different religion enjoys individual freedom.

They came to the fifteenth-century Sufi's shrine from all over Pakistan, and before partition, they came from all over northern India. When Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from across the border in India visit the temples and Gurdwaras in Pakistan, they never fail to ‘pay their respects’ to the Muslim mystic known for his miraculous power to grant wishes. (Sidwa, 1993, p.12)

Sidwa narrates the history of pre-partition India and posts-partition India. pre-partition India has a love for each other, religious harmony establish between different religions. Love prevails among the society members. She laments on the current situation as Zia’s Islamization policy was against history. The subcontinent never disappoints the inhabitants of its land in the past. As (Morris, 2009) argues that absurdism connects individuals, thus it’s stop individuals from disintegration. Sidwa focuses that human beings need to connect with each other on humanity basis. There are always struggles inside the human body. Both internal and external struggle is going on in an individual. Feroza once living in Pakistan, is having shy behavior, she does not want to discuss political matters with people, when guests come to their home, she goes away from the company of guests. She wants to be alone in her room. “She avoided meeting her parents’ evening guests, who had become almost a part of her extended family, and stopped listening to the political arguments that become so heated over dinner”. (Sidwa, 1993, p.15). Sidwa never disappoints her reader. She appreciates good and criticizes badly. Although, she has a love for American culture at the same time she criticizes the behaviors of American policymakers with the immigrants. Through her writing, Sidwa portrays the image of security. The behavior of the police officers at the airport is dehumanizing. Both Feroza and Manek were insulted at the airport. The question, answer session with the security officials at the airport was a bitter memory for Feroza. They asked questions in a very rude manner.

Then starting from the back, he leafed through the pages, studying them minutely. He asked her how long she’d stay, where she’d stay, who’d support her. When Feroza told him she would stay with her uncle Manek, who’d naturally support her, he became very inquisitive about her uncle. Was he a united state citizen, resident, visitor? How old was he, what did he do? (Sidwa, 1993, p.51)

Absurdism is to find out solutions for meaninglessness and hopelessness. When Feroza reaches the airport she does not expect the mention situation, yet she copes with that situation. She calmly bears the whole episode of the airport. Identity loss is a common phenomenon for immigrants after post-colonialism. The selected text shows how it is difficult for immigrants to stay in a country where they lose their identity. Feroza was the victim of identity loss. She lost her culture and cultural loss leads to identity loss. It is a culture that holds one’s identity. In America, Feroza lived in a way that she completely forgets about her own culture. At Lahore, she had hesitantly talked

to young men, but in modernized America, she flirts with Shashi, an Indian university student of Denver. Feroza exposed to a new lifestyle of America, forgetting her own ways of life. Gradually she starts love affairs with an American Jew David, a practice forbidden in her religion. Her religion does not allow her to have relations outside the Parsi community. Human beings are the creatures who are helpless against the irrationalities of the world. They cannot change the absurdities of the universe but they can only adjust themselves with that irrationality. When Feroza come back from America, things were not as usual. Everything changes even her family member have changed significantly. The wave of time is merciless. Time is a great ravisher and destroyer “it hurt her to see both her grandmothers look significantly older” (Sidwa,1993 p.247). As women are marginalized in every community, so as in the Parsi community. Sidwa, on one hand, appreciates the Parsi religion but on the other hand, silently criticizes the unfair and unjust codes of a marriage of the Parsi community. Parsi men can marry outside their faith and remaining Parsi but Parsi women cannot. Feroza wants to marry David who was a Jew, but her mother informs her about the consequences. As the theory of absurdism put an individual on track (Fiut, 2009) such is the case of Feroza, when she shifted to America, her life was completely changed. She then understands her tasks and familiar with her responsibilities. Feroza have an objection on her mother dress: “Mummy, please don’t come to school dressed like that” (Sidwa,1993, p.2). These were the discussion when Zareen and Cyrus discussed the dress of Zareen. Zareen reply to Cyrus that I will dress the way my grandmother dresses and no one called us indecent except you because you have the mullah-ish mentality. These lines show the absurd behavior of Zareen towards her husband. They both have a deadlock on the issue of dress and then Zareen used these lines to defend herself against the narrative of Cyrus.

Feroza banged shut bedroom doors, whipped open car doors, and smashed shuttlecocks over the net at her startled adversaries. She avoided meeting with her parents’ evening guests, who had almost a part of her extended family and stop listening to the political argument that become so heated over dinner(Sidwa,1993. p.15)

In absurdism, if someone reaches the state of optimism he must have to face the state of pessimism (Weller, 2005). In Pakistan, Feroza was so frustrated, lonely, and pessimistic. She does not want to meet anyone and do not take part in political argument. This absurd behavior was installed in her mind through the external environment. When she was in Pakistan, she was hopeless and more religious. As discussed in the literature review, absurdism is the confrontation of an individual with the universe, humans are searching for the rational answers while the universe does not respond to a human serious question(Pözlzer, 2014). So there is only one way to go ahead. Humans’ have to find out their own way to fight with the challenges of the world. They have to reorient their destiny (Warnock, 1970). As Feroza was in Pakistan, she was in the grip of the society; she was not participating in any event. Her life was full of pessimism, hopelessness, and meaningless. She was more serious and her perception of life was a change from their family members. She was more concerned with trivial matters.

With a slight inclination of his head, Manek directed Feroza’s attention to a young man drifting ahead of them aimlessly. He’s a male prostitute...she whispered that these are American-style heejras....heejras in Lahore was about as different from these glamorous creatures as earthworms are from butterflies.(Sidwa,1993,p.76)

Feroza questions everything and her uncle Manek was responding to her every question, she adds all these things in her mind and these things increase her knowledge and her love for life. She was interested to make friends from any community. She wants to learn new concepts, new people to make friends. Her focus was to make a connection with people. She believes in humanity. The

bond of humanity is stronger than the bond of religion. Religion divides people while humanity connects people with each other. Absurdism increases individual enthusiasm towards life (Esslin, 2009) and it was what appeared in the life of Feroza. "Manek slid his eyes about furtively by way of example. 'I told you, don't stare at people! Especially if they are doing something funny-it is an invitation to attack'". (Sidwa, 1993, p.78)

Conclusion

The present study concludes that the literal meaning of absurdism creates a negative impact, however, absurdism is a fundamental value of life and related to practical life. For centuries, human beings have this quest for the meaning of their life and existence. Absurdism provides the answer to the meaning of human existence. Absurdism, therefore, elevates the passion for hope, meaning, existence, and optimism. It sets a platform that human beings spent a prosperous life. It states that in the universe everything is irrational except man. Human beings can spend this life happily if they are connected and help each other. An individual is required to understand its responsibilities and spend a life that is meaning. According to absurdism, the question of human existence needs to answer because as humans are stuck in this question, they cannot progress ahead in their lives. If an individual is unaware of the meaning of his own existence, he can know his/her responsibilities. The current study is a ray of hope for those who want a serious answer to the question of human existence. The next important objective of carrying out this study is the identification of absurdism in Pakistani selected fiction. Sidwa (1993), in her novel "American Brat," introduces several characters such as Zareen, Cyrus, Feroza, Manek. Feroza once living in Pakistan was unable to decide her future. She does not want to take part in political discussions. She was lonely and marginalized women. When she was sent to America by her mother Zareen, she was a completely changed woman. She has a company of good friends. She enjoys her full freedom. Feroza once living in solitude, is now having a good connection with other people in America. A man is surrounded and influenced by his environment. Feroza when living in Pakistan was a girl having no big dreams. Her dreams fulfill when she shifts to America. She enjoys absolute freedom in America, she continues her education and she completely transforms from religious zealot to an educated girl. Her previous life in Pakistan was a collection of pessimism, however, in America, she becomes more optimistic and hopeful. Aslam (2003), novel, Maps for lost lovers is the journey of different individuals who were fighting with their luck and destiny. The boundaries that were created by religion and culture put all the characters at risk. Kiran, a Sikh girl who has an intense love for her lover but her lover was Muslim therefore, she unable to marry her lover. Shamas, the only reasonable man in the Dasht-e- Tanhai. When Chanda and Jugnu were killed, Shamas thinks that life is left with no purpose, yet he tries to fight with the irrationalities of the universe. Furthermore, the study explored that nothingness and meaning of life were contradictory notions. When an individual realized nothingness, from this point an individual realized meaning of life.

Moreover, absurdism is viewed as a fundamental value of life and related to practical life. In "American Brat" novel Zareen admitted that if Feroza remains in Pakistan, her career will be ruined soon. She expected her daughter to be ruined socially and morally as Zia Islamization has politicized everything. When Feroza migrated to America, She realized the true meaning of life, she understood how to share problems with his fellow, how to overcome anxiety, how to connect with people. As discussed earlier, absurdism is higher consciousness. Absurdism was a mental state where one understands the irrationalities of the universe and respond back accordingly. Feroza understood the importance of life when she migrated to America. Her love with her parents, grandparents, and family relatives increases when she understands the meaning of life. When Feroza was in America, she missed her relatives and friends. The current study has a very positive

implication for our society as the theory of absurdism did not address regional questions. The questions of human existence and the meaning of life were universal. It uplifts chaos, disintegration, anxiety, and loneliness from society. This study further incorporates hope, optimism, and satisfaction in individual lives. It makes an individual a responsible citizen to face the challenges efficiently. Absurdism prepared an individual to hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

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