

A Philosophical Study on the Existential Themes in *Virāgaya* Novel and Film

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1. Introduction

Sartre is one of the main philosophers in the existential movement. According to Sartre, ‘existence precedes essence’ to illustrate, the first human being exists and then he tends to define himself through the actions that they perform. He denies the existence of God as he suggests the freedom of human beings. The research problem of this study is whether *Virāgaya* can be classified as a novel which contains existential themes. The objective of this study is to identify the existential key themes that have been used in *Virāgaya*. Existentialism is a western philosophical movement, whereas *Virāgaya* is a Sinhalese novel. Therefore, this study has emphasized the Existential themes that are used in a novel in the Sri Lankan context. In summary, existentialism considers human beings as the centre of their philosophy and their actions and choices that they make provide meaning to their lives. There should be at least one human character that is driven by indicating the existentialist themes; through that character or by the other characters that are influencing the main character. For Sartre, religion, traditional culture, and the society cannot help with that as existence is itself a war. He emphasized freewill. However, the example of a waiter indicates that a particular person does not have freewill. However, we are free to dismantle capitalism. To illustrate, money is the factor which discourages people from experiencing freedom. Existential themes can be summarized as hope, loneliness, despair, choice, anguish, responsibility. All of these themes have been used in *Virāgaya*.

2. Literature Review

Although there are studies which trace the existential themes in Sinhalese books and films, there are no such shreds of evidence for the existential themes discussed in both *Virāgaya* novel and the film. Therefore, this study can be considered as new as this study categorizes *Virāgaya* as a novel that was written to extract a deep meaning of the meaning of life. It can be an explanation of human mental phenomena because one’s actions are derived through those mental phenomena.

3. Research Methodology

Martin Wickramasinghe's Virāgaya and *Tissa Abeysekara's* film are used as the main sources of this study. Sartre's existential philosophy has been used as the theoretical base. Textual analysis has been done and the ideas have been, critically and comparatively analyzed. Finally, the findings are philosophically analyzed.

4. Results and Discussion

There are three characters in *Virāgaya* that influenced the character of *Aravinda* that can be defined as *Menakā*, *Sarojinī*, and *Batī*. *Menakā* was his sister who is a mercenary character, *Sarojinī* is the person who loved *Aravinda* and *Batī* was his adopted daughter. *Aravinda's* father wanted to make *Aravinda* a doctor. It has been mentioned that "while father had been anxious to make a doctor of me I hadn't felt the least flicker of interest in studying for the entrance examination to the university" (Wickramasinghe, 1985, p. 91). For Sartre, it is up to us to choose our essence. For instance, teachers, government, and other institutions cannot determine who we are. For Sartre, if we follow a path which has decided by someone else, then we have a 'bad faith.' It would be false if I suggest that *Aravinda* has done everything according to his preference because he was afraid of the things what others said as "people would despise us, they would snigger at us" (Wickramasinghe, 1985, p. 85). In that sense, he had a bad faith as he did not take immediate actions to fulfill his desires. The way that people feel when they are not able to accomplish what they have desired has explained in *Virāgaya* through the character of *Aravinda*. He has stated that "elation, regret, fear, shame, churned in my mind" (Wickramasinghe, 1985, p. 82) after receiving *Sarojinī's* letter. It proves that he was mentally unstable. There was something different about the way that *Aravinda*, *Sarojinī*, *Menakā*, and *Dharmasiri* looking at the same thing. It was based on the notion of responsibility that they have. As such, existential key themes can be found in *Virāgaya*.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Virāgaya has indicated the sympathetic and the pleasurable nature of the individual's mental derangement. Thus, the author retained the spirit of the novel by delineating the characters. Situational acts, vestures, dialogues, internal mental phenomena, the way that the characters reveal their feelings and the environment that process around the characters are used when delineating characters of the novel. Key Existential themes such as the notion of choice, the notion of hope, incapability of taking decisions, regressive feelings, inactive behavior, and irresponsible character have used in *Virāgaya* which were the causes for the failure of *Aravinda's* life.

6. References

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