

Absurdity and Tragic Consciousness: A Comparative Study of Albert Camus and William Shakespeare in the Context of Modern Indian Identity

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a comparative examination of Albert Camus and William Shakespeare, reading the absurdist consciousness articulated in works such as *The Stranger* alongside the tragic vision embodied in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, in order to illuminate the existential predicament of the modern Indian man. While Camus theorises the absurd as the unresolved confrontation between human longing for meaning and an indifferent universe, Shakespeare dramatises the collapse of inherited moral orders—kingship, kinship, providence—through protagonists undone by ambition, conscience, and circumstance. The study argues that, despite their distinct historical and philosophical origins, both bodies of work converge on shared concerns: alienation from self and society, the burden of moral choice under conditions of uncertainty, and the search for an authentic mode of being within a destabilised value system. These concerns acquire renewed urgency in the Indian context, where rapid modernisation, political corruption, caste hierarchy, and the tension between communal obligation and individual conscience replicate, in localised form, the crises both writers stage. Drawing on recent Indian literary and cinematic adaptations—including Vishal Bhardwaj’s Shakespearean trilogy and existentialist re-readings of contemporary Indian fiction—this paper contends that Camus and Shakespeare together offer a productive critical vocabulary for understanding the contemporary Indian man’s negotiation between public role and inner truth. The study concludes that their continued relevance lies not in treating them as distant Western or Renaissance classics, but in their capacity to be reactivated through Indian cultural and existential particularities.