EXISTENTIAL CRISES AND SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION IN SALAR SIKANDER'S JOURNEY: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF PEER-E-KAMIL

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ABSTRACT
This study explores the complex existential and psychological dimensions of Salar Sikander's character in Peer-e-Kamil, analyzed through the existential philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. The research investigates whether Salar's actions, including his suicidal tendencies and existential crises, reflect a deeper quest for meaning or are indicative of profound psychological conflict. Employing qualitative textual analysis, the study examines key dialogues, reflections, and actions, linking them to broader philosophical and psychological frameworks.
The findings reveal that Salar's reckless behaviors and self-inflicted harm symbolize a confrontation with mortality, aligning with Émile Durkheim's concept of egoistic suicide and Camus' notion of the absurd. His journey is further complicated by sadistic and masochistic tendencies, reflecting his internal struggle for control and understanding of suffering. A pivotal transformation in Salar's narrative is his spiritual awakening, which resolves his existential despair and highlights the role of spirituality in constructing meaning.
This transformation aligns with Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, emphasizing how spirituality provides a structured framework for meaning-making beyond intellectual and material pursuits. The study concludes that Salar's transition from nihilism to a spiritually grounded existence underscores the transformative power of faith and relationships in addressing existential crises. By synthesizing existential philosophy, sociology, and psychological insights, this research offers a nuanced understanding of Salar's complex character and the broader implications of existential dilemmas in Peer-e-Kamil.
Keywords: Salar Sikander, Peer-e-Kamil, Existential Crisis, Suicidal Ideation, Spiritual Transformation, Existential Philosophy, Search for Meaning.

INTRODUCTION

Umera Ahmed's Peer-e-Kamil stands as a seminal work in contemporary South Asian literature, offering a compelling portrayal of existential crises through the lens of its

characters' spiritual and psychological journeys. This study focuses on the protagonist, Salar Sikander, whose recurring suicidal ideations and existential dilemmas form the core of a narrative deeply intertwined with the philosophical questions of meaning, identity, and resilience. Salar's intellectual brilliance and material success, juxtaposed with his profound inner turmoil, invite an exploration of the tensions between societal expectations, individual autonomy, and the human need for purpose.

This research is rooted in the framework of existentialist philosophy, a movement pioneered by thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus, who emphasize the individual's struggle to create meaning in a universe perceived as absurd and indifferent (Camus, 1942; Sartre, 1943). Salar's confrontation with the alienation of modern existence mirrors key existentialist themes, such as the absurdity of life, the rejection of external moral frameworks, and the necessity of authentic self-definition. The study also draws on Émile Durkheim's sociological theory of suicide, which categorizes suicides into egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic types (Durkheim, 1897/2005). Salar's behaviours, particularly his reckless disregard for life, align closely with Durkheim's concept of egoistic suicide, arising from a sense of disconnection and meaninglessness.

Moreover, this paper situates Salar's existential crisis within the broader socio-religious and cultural context of Pakistan, where traditional values often collide with the rapid globalization and technological advancements of the modern era (Kazmi et al., 2023). This duality amplifies the alienation experienced by characters like Salar, who struggle to reconcile their internal crises with the societal norms surrounding them. By integrating a multidisciplinary approach—combining literary analysis with philosophical and sociological frameworks—this research provides a nuanced understanding of Salar's existential struggles and their implications for contemporary South Asian literature.

The study further examines Salar's spiritual transformation as a counterpoint to his earlier nihilistic worldview. Drawing parallels with Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, which posits that the quest for meaning is central to human existence (Frankl, 1985), the analysis highlights how spirituality and relational bonds eventually serve as antidotes to Salar's despair. Through an in-depth exploration of key dialogues, pivotal events, and the interplay between societal and psychological factors, this research aims to unravel the intricate relationship between existential crises, suicidal ideation, and the enduring human quest for meaning in Peer-e-Kamil.

Research statement:
Salar suicidal thought is caused by his existential crisis or what is the purpose of his life; he is always in search of the meaning of his life, and every time he attempts to commit suicide, to know his answer to the question, what is next to ecstasy? Four times, he attempted suicide, first by speeding and breaking signals on the road, second by hanging himself in water, third by taking pills, and the last attempt by cutting his vein. Every time he questions himself why he has been gifted with 150+ IQ. What is the use of his high intelligence? Whenever he tries to do anything, he finds it boring and unchallenging because of his intelligence.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE(S) :
• To analyze Salar Sikander's suicidal ideations and existential crisis, focusing on their psychological and philosophical dimensions.
• To explore the role of spirituality in resolving Salar's existential struggles and redefining his sense of purpose.

RESEARCH QUESTION(S):
• What existential and psychological factors drive Salar Sikander's suicidal tendencies in Peer-e-Kamil?
• How does spirituality contribute to Salar's transformation and reconciliation with his existential crisis?

LITERATURE REVIEW:
Existential Crises and Suicidal Ideation in Literature
Nick Hornby's A Long Way Down presents a nuanced exploration of suicidal ideation through the character Martin Sharp. Dientara et al. (2019) analyze Martin's isolation, shame, and hopelessness, linking them to Schneidman's theories on psychological pain

and Durkheim's egoistic suicide (Durkheim, 2005). Similarly, Salar's existential despair mirrors this internal conflict, exacerbated by societal expectations and personal disconnection.

Lia Meurman's (2024) analysis of suicidality in The Bell Jar and A Little Life reveals how characters grapple with alienation and despair. Both Esther and Jude experience suicidal thoughts as a means of regaining control over their lives, paralleling Salar's attempts to confront his mortality and understand life's purpose. These works underscore the role of internal turmoil and societal pressures in shaping characters' crises, resonating with Salar's narrative in Peer-e-Kamil.

Rajan et al. (2018) explore the monster's existential struggles in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The creature's alienation and quest for acceptance mirror Salar's detachment from society despite his brilliance. Bandura's social learning theory highlights the creature's failed attempts at integration, reflecting themes of societal rejection and individual despair central to Salar's existential crisis.

Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms examines existentialist ideals through the character of Frederick Henry. Scholars like Soqandi and Birgani (2020) highlight Henry's rejection of societal constructs and his pursuit of personal meaning amidst chaos. Similar to Salar, Henry confronts the absurdity of life and grapples with alienation, echoing Camus' philosophy of rebellion against meaninglessness (Camus, 1955).

Albert Camus' The Stranger provides a profound exploration of absurdism, with Meursault embodying the "absurd man." Camus (1942) emphasizes the tension between humanity's search for meaning and the universe's indifference. Salar's indifference and existential questioning closely align with Meursault's journey, particularly in how both characters confront the inevitability of death.

Existentialism and the Search for Meaning

Sartre's existentialism, centered on the concept of "existence precedes essence," argues that individuals must create their meaning (Sartre, 1943). Chukwuokolo and Jeko (2020) contextualize this within existentialism's broader focus on freedom,

choice, and authenticity. Salar's quest for meaning and rejection of societal norms exemplify these themes. His intellectual superiority isolates him, much like Sartre's critique of "bad faith," where individuals evade responsibility for their freedom.

Viktor Frankl's Man's Search for Meaning introduces logotherapy, emphasizing the role of spirituality and purpose in overcoming despair (Frankl, 1985). Frankl's assertion that meaning arises from confronting suffering aligns with Salar's spiritual awakening, marking a shift from nihilism to a search for divine purpose.

Alfried Längle's framework of existential motivations offers insights into the factors driving Salar's crisis. Längle (2004) outlines four motivations—existence, relationships, identity, and purpose—all of which intersect in Salar's narrative. His dissatisfaction with material success reflects a failure to align activities with meaningful values, leading to existential apathy.

Cultural and Sociological Dimensions

Durkheim's theory of suicide provides a sociological lens for analyzing Salar's behaviour. As noted in Durkheim's Suicide (2005), egoistic suicide arises from detachment and lack of belonging. Salar's high IQ and disconnection from societal norms mirror these dynamics. His reckless actions, such as dangerous stunts, signify a subconscious challenge to life's fragility, aligning with Durkheim's concept of suicide as a response to alienation.

Kazmi et al. (2023) examine the socio-religious context in Peer-e-Kamil, focusing on the tensions between modernity and tradition in Pakistani society. Salar's existential crisis reflects this duality, as globalization amplifies his alienation. Similarly, Zahra et al. (2023) explore the use of code-switching in the novel, which underscores the characters' multilingual identities and fragmented self-perceptions, echoing Salar's internal conflicts.

Spirituality as a Resolution to Existential Crises

Spiritual transformation plays a crucial role in Salar's reconciliation with his existential struggles. Kapoor's (2019) comparative study of Siddhartha and The Stranger highlights the transformative power of

spirituality. While Siddhartha achieves enlightenment through personal growth, Meursault embraces life's absurdity. Salar's journey bridges these paradigms, as his spiritual awakening helps him redefine purpose and move beyond despair.

Salar's shift mirrors Irvin Yalom's existential realities—freedom, death, isolation, and meaninglessness. Yalom (1980) contrasts the tragic dimensions of existence with the potential for growth through meaning-making. Salar's eventual embrace of faith echoes this perspective, illustrating how spirituality offers a counterpoint to nihilism.

Cultural Contexts and South Asian Perspectives

The socio-religious fabric of South Asia adds unique dimensions to existential crises. Kazmi et al. (2023) analyze how Peer-e-Kamil navigates the tensions between modernity and tradition, situating Salar's crisis within Pakistan's rapidly globalizing society. His detachment from societal norms reflects not only a personal struggle but also a broader commentary on cultural dissonance.

Islamic perspectives on existentialism emphasize submission to divine will as a resolution to existential despair. Ahmed (2017) highlights how Islamic literature often reconciles existential questions with spiritual fulfillment. Salar's spiritual awakening mirrors this reconciliation, reflecting the integration of Islamic teachings with existentialist thought.

Moreover, globalization and technological advances exacerbate feelings of alienation, particularly for individuals with heightened intellectual capacities. Raza (2021) examines how globalization intensifies existential dilemmas in South Asia, aligning with Salar's detachment from his surroundings despite material success.

The reviewed literature provides a multidisciplinary understanding of Salar Sikander's existential crisis and its resolution. Philosophical works by Camus, Sartre, and Frankl contextualize his struggles within existentialism, while Durkheim's sociological theories highlight the role of alienation and societal disconnection. South Asian perspectives enrich this analysis by situating Salar's narrative within a unique socio-religious and cultural framework.

Salar's eventual spiritual awakening underscores the transformative power of faith, aligning with Frankl's logotherapy and Längle's existential motivations. This synthesis bridges Western existentialism with South Asian spirituality, positioning Peer-e-Kamil as a pivotal work exploring existential crises in a culturally rich context.

METHODOLOGY:

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing textual analysis of Umera Ahmed's Peer-e-Kamil to uncover the psychological and existential themes embedded in Salar Sikander's narrative. Qualitative textual analysis is particularly suited for this study as it allows for a deep exploration of the narrative's complex themes, enabling a detailed examination of the characters' psychological and existential dimensions (Creswell, 2013). This research aims to examine the existential and psychological factors contributing to Salar's suicidal ideation, focusing on his dialogues, reflections, and key actions. Additionally, it investigates the transformative role of spirituality in addressing his existential struggles.

The analysis was conducted in two stages: a comprehensive reading of the novel in its original Urdu to understand its broader narrative and thematic context, followed by a focused reading to extract and categorize Salar's behaviors and thoughts, including explicit and implicit references to his existential dilemmas and suicidal tendencies. Textual analysis is crucial for interpreting literature, as cultural and linguistic nuances play a significant role in shaping the narrative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

To ensure the integrity of the interpretations, all translations of key dialogues and reflections were meticulously undertaken. Translation accuracy is critical in literary analysis to preserve the original meanings and cultural context, as emphasized by Venuti (1995), who argues for the importance of maintaining the original text's cultural specificity. To validate the accuracy and reliability of the translations, expert reviews were conducted. Specialists in Urdu literature and existential philosophy provided critical feedback, ensuring that the translated excerpts faithfully conveyed the intended meanings. Expert validation is a recognized

method for enhancing the reliability of qualitative research (Patton, 2002).

The study contextualizes Salar's actions within Émile Durkheim's sociological framework on suicide, categorizing his tendencies using Durkheim's typology of egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic suicides (Durkheim, 2005). Salar's behaviors, particularly his reckless stunts and detachment from societal norms, are analyzed as manifestations of egoistic suicide stemming from alienation and isolation. Furthermore, existential philosophies from Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus are applied to explore themes of absurdity, alienation, and the search for meaning (Camus, 1942; Sartre, 1943). Comparisons with other existential literary figures, such as Camus' Meursault in The Stranger and Hemingway's Frederick Henry in A Farewell to Arms, are made to illuminate Salar's internal conflicts (Soqandi & Birgani, 2020).

The study also examines Salar's interactions with other characters—family members, peers, and societal figures—to reveal how his relationships contribute to his psychological and existential crises. Salar's eventual spiritual transformation is analyzed using Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, which emphasizes finding meaning in suffering, and Alfried Längle's existential motivations, which focus on aligning life's pursuits with meaningful values (Frankl, 1985; Längle, 2004). His shift from despair to a spiritually grounded existence highlights the interplay between existential philosophy and Islamic spiritualism, demonstrating how spirituality resolves his existential dilemmas within the socio-religious context of South Asia (Kazmi et al., 2023). The narrator's descriptions of Salar's mental state, along with other characters' perceptions, provide additional insights, presenting a multidimensional view of his existential crisis and its resolution.

This study does not aim to psychoanalyze Salar in clinical terms but seeks to interpret his actions and reflections through sociological, philosophical, and literary frameworks, focusing on the interplay between existential despair and spiritual reconciliation. By incorporating expert validation of the translations and ensuring cultural fidelity, the study offers a robust and nuanced analysis of Peer-e-Kamil.

DISCUSSION

This discussion explores Salar Sikander's character in Umera Ahmed's Peer-e-Kamil, addressing the two primary research questions:

- What existential and psychological factors drive Salar Sikander's suicidal tendencies in Peer-e-Kamil?
- How does spirituality contribute to Salar's transformation and reconciliation with his existential crisis?

The findings are analyzed through the lens of existential philosophy, sociology, and psychology, using key textual references and relevant theoretical frameworks.

The exploration of Salar Sikander's character in Umera Ahmed's Peer-e-Kamil reveals a profound and intricate interplay of psychological, existential, and spiritual dimensions. This section delves into the analysis of his suicidal tendencies, existential crisis, and eventual spiritual transformation, integrating key sociological and philosophical frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of his journey.

Suicidal Tendencies: Existential and Psychological Dimensions

Salar Sikander's recurring suicidal tendencies are central to understanding his existential crisis. These tendencies are not merely a reflection of impulsive behavior but are deeply rooted in his psychological and existential struggles. His actions exhibit a persistent confrontation with mortality, marked by both explicit and implicit suicidal behaviors.

Explicit Suicidal Behaviors

Salar's explicit suicidal behaviors are vividly depicted through deliberate and calculated actions, reflecting his complex psychological state. One of the most striking examples is his consumption of sleeping pills, described in the text as:

"He drank the milk in one gulp" (Ahmed, p. 21). This act is not impulsive but a well-thought-out attempt to confront death head-on. It signifies his desire to experience the finality of life, indicating a profound psychological conflict and a deliberate engagement with mortality.

Another significant instance is Salar's near-drowning experience, where the narrative

vividly captures the moment:

"His head hit the water… His lungs now felt like they were about to burst" (Ahmed, p. 49). This depiction emphasizes his physical confrontation with death, as he willingly places himself in a life-threatening situation. The act of near-drowning symbolizes a deeper existential exploration, where the boundary between life and death becomes a critical space for understanding his existence. When analyzed through the lens of existential philosophy, these actions transcend mere suicidal ideation. Albert Camus (1942) describes the absurd as the conflict between humanity's inherent desire for meaning and the indifferent nature of the universe. Salar's actions are emblematic of this struggle, where his confrontation with death serves as a reflection of his quest to understand life's meaning amidst a seemingly indifferent world. His survival after such attempts highlights an unresolved existential conflict, where the tension between despair and a search for purpose remains.

4.1.2 Implicit Suicidal Behaviors

Beyond explicit attempts, Salar's character also exhibits implicit suicidal behaviors through reckless and self-destructive actions. His dangerous motorcycle stunts, such as:

"Without a helmet, he recklessly broke the signal" (Ahmed, p. 32), and "Violation of one-way traffic rules" (Ahmed, p. 32) demonstrate a blatant disregard for his own safety. These actions suggest a subconscious desire to challenge life's fragility, reflecting a form of indirect suicidal ideation.

Émile Durkheim's (2005) theory of egoistic suicide provides a sociological framework to understand these behaviors. Durkheim posits that egoistic suicide results from a lack of social integration, where individuals feel disconnected from societal norms and collective values. Salar's reckless behaviors and detachment from his family and peers exemplify this detachment, aligning with Durkheim's concept. His actions, therefore, serve as manifestations of his alienation and existential despair.

Additionally, existentialists like Jean-Paul Sartre (1943) argue that such behaviors can also be seen as acts of rebellion against the monotony of life. Sartre emphasizes the human responsibility to create meaning in an otherwise indifferent universe. Salar's risky

actions can be interpreted as attempts to assert his existence and seek a form of transcendence beyond intellectual and material success. These behaviors are not merely self-destructive but also symbolize his struggle to break free from the confines of a life devoid of meaning.

Sadism, Masochism, and Their Psychological Implications

Salar Sikander's character is further complicated by his sadistic and masochistic tendencies, which reveal deeper psychological and existential dimensions. These behaviors reflect his internal struggle for control over his life and his attempts to make sense of suffering.

Salar's sadistic tendencies are prominently displayed in his interactions with others, particularly his younger brother. The narrative illustrates his violent behavior with disturbing clarity:

"He punched his younger brother in the face with full force" (Ahmed, p. 14). This act of aggression is not isolated, as his satisfaction is further highlighted in his comment:

"Next time, bring a bat; the tennis racket wasn't as much fun" (Ahmed, p. 14). These instances reveal a troubling enjoyment derived from inflicting pain, suggesting a psychological need to exert control over others. This behavior can be understood as a defense mechanism, where exerting dominance over others serves to mitigate his own feelings of helplessness in an absurd and chaotic world.

Conversely, Salar's masochistic tendencies are evident in his self-inflicted harm. His satisfaction after cleaning his bleeding nose, as described by the "satisfied smile" on his face (Ahmed, p. 54), underscores a complex relationship with pain. Salar's statement:

"I only wanted to see what death feels like" (Ahmed, p. 54) reflects an existential curiosity about suffering and mortality. This desire to understand the nature of pain and death indicates a deeper psychological and existential exploration, where self-inflicted harm becomes a means to confront and comprehend the ultimate limits of human existence.

From a psychological perspective, these sadistic and masochistic behaviors highlight a defense mechanism aimed at regaining control over life and death. They reflect an

internal struggle where inflicting and experiencing pain becomes a way to assert dominance over an unpredictable and meaningless existence. Existentially, they underscore Salar's longing to experience the boundaries of human suffering and mortality, serving as a profound reflection of his internal turmoil and quest for meaning.

Existential Crisis and the Search for Meaning

Salar's existential crisis is central to his narrative, deeply intertwined with his philosophical quest for meaning. His recurring reflections and questioning encapsulate his struggle to find purpose amidst the chaos of existence. The pivotal moment where he questions:

"Am I saved? Why? For what purpose?" (Ahmed, p. 288) serves as a powerful expression of his existential dilemma. This questioning is indicative of a deeper search for meaning in life, where survival itself becomes a point of reflection on the purpose of existence.

Jean-Paul Sartre's (1943) existentialist philosophy, which emphasizes the necessity for individuals to create their own meaning in a meaningless world, is particularly relevant here. Salar's survival after his near-death experiences marks a turning point in his existential journey. His reflections signal an evolving understanding of life's purpose, moving from a state of despair toward self-determined meaning.

Salar's existential crisis is further highlighted in his interactions with his psychologist, where he challenges conventional notions of self-awareness:

"Why don't you try to learn about me things that neither you nor I know?" (Ahmed, p. 53). This dialogue underscores his dissatisfaction with surface-level self-understanding and reflects a deeper existential struggle to define identity and purpose. These reflections reveal a classic existential conflict, where the search for authentic self-understanding becomes a critical aspect of his journey toward meaning.

Spiritual Awakening and the Resolution of Existential Despair

A significant turning point in Salar's journey is his spiritual awakening, which marks the resolution of his existential crisis. His reflection:

"Am I saved? Why? For what purpose?" (Ahmed, p. 160), signals a shift from nihilistic despair to a belief in divine purpose. This transformation aligns with Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, which emphasizes finding meaning through suffering (Frankl, 1985).

Frankl's theory posits that meaning can be derived from even the most painful and challenging experiences. Salar's spiritual awakening illustrates this principle, as he transitions from a state of existential nihilism to one of spiritual fulfillment. His engagement with religious practices and his growing empathy towards others reflect a movement away from existential isolation towards a more connected and purposeful existence.

Unlike Sartre's existentialist view, which emphasizes the individual's responsibility to create meaning independently, Salar's narrative suggests that spirituality provides a structured framework for meaning-making. His shift from materialism and intellectualism to spirituality demonstrates a reconciliation of existential despair with a grounded sense of purpose. This spiritual transformation offers profound insights into how faith can serve as a means to resolve existential crises, providing a pathway to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Intellectualism and Its Limitations

Salar's intellectual brilliance (IQ of 150+) isolates him from those around him, contributing to his existential frustration. Despite societal praise for his intellect, he expresses deep dissatisfaction:

"I'm fed up with hearing my praises" (Ahmed, p. 55). This statement reflects his disillusionment with the limitations of intellectual achievements in addressing life's fundamental questions.

Viktor Frankl (1985) argues that intellectual achievements alone cannot fulfill the human need for meaning. Salar's journey underscores this limitation, highlighting how reliance on intellectual prowess and material success fails to provide the deeper sense of purpose he seeks. His existential crisis is not alleviated by intellectual brilliance, but rather by his eventual spiritual awakening and the realization of a greater purpose beyond intellectual accomplishments.

Relationships and Existential Isolation

Salar's relationships, or lack thereof, play a crucial role in his existential crisis. His sarcastic and detached remarks about a distressed female character:

"She will surely ask me for poison or a revolver" (Ahmed, p. 161), highlights his emotional detachment and inability to form meaningful connections. This disengagement reflects a broader existential struggle, where he isolates himself from potential sources of meaning and support.

Durkheim's (2005) theory of egoistic suicide underscores the importance of social integration in mitigating existential despair. Salar's isolation from social bonds exacerbates his crisis, reflecting the consequences of his detachment from family and society. However, as his spiritual transformation unfolds, his relationships begin to take on a more meaningful role. His growing empathy and re-engagement with others signal a reconciliation with his social environment, suggesting that relationships are pivotal in overcoming existential isolation and contributing to his search for meaning.

Salar Sikander's character in Peer-e-Kamil embodies the intricate interplay of suicidal tendencies, existential crises, and spiritual transformation. His reckless behaviors and intellectual isolation highlight his profound struggle to find purpose in an indifferent world. By transitioning from nihilism to spirituality, Salar reconciles his existential despair with a fulfilling sense of purpose, emphasizing the transformative power of faith and relationships. This synthesis of philosophical, psychological, and sociological themes offers a nuanced understanding of Salar's journey and provides broader implications for the study of existential crises in literature.

CONCLUSION:

This study has examined the complex interplay of existential and psychological factors that define Salar Sikander's character in Umera Ahmed's Peer-e-Kamil, focusing on his suicidal ideation, existential crisis, and spiritual transformation. Through a detailed textual and thematic analysis, supported by philosophical, psychological, and sociological frameworks, the research addressed two key questions: the factors driving Salar's suicidal tendencies and the role of spirituality in his transformation and reconciliation with his existential crisis.

Salar's character is marked by profound existential despair stemming from his intellectual superiority, detachment from societal norms, and disconnection from meaningful relationships. His explicit suicidal actions—such as consuming sleeping pills and attempting to drown himself—reveal a calculated confrontation with mortality. Meanwhile, his implicit suicidal tendencies, manifested in reckless behaviors like dangerous motorcycle stunts, suggest a latent death wish intertwined with an existential longing to challenge life's fragility. These actions align with Durkheim's concept of egoistic suicide, where detachment from social bonds fosters self-destructive tendencies, and with Camus' notion of the absurd, reflecting a struggle to find meaning in a seemingly indifferent universe.

Sadistic and masochistic tendencies further complicate Salar's psychological profile. His infliction of pain on others, especially his younger brother, reflects a troubling assertion of control over a world he perceives as meaningless. Conversely, his self-harm highlights a complex relationship with suffering and an existential curiosity about death, signalling a deeper psychological and philosophical conflict.

A pivotal theme in Salar's journey is his existential crisis and quest for meaning. His dialogues and reflections reveal dissatisfaction with societal achievements and conventional notions of self, reflecting Sartre's existentialist assertion that humans are condemned to create their own meaning. However, Salar's journey transcends purely existential struggles as it culminates in a profound spiritual awakening. His transition from nihilism to spirituality represents a resolution of his existential despair, aligning with Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, which emphasizes finding meaning through suffering and aligning one's values with a higher purpose.

Spirituality emerges as the key force that redefines Salar's identity and purpose. Through his deepening engagement with faith and religious practices, he moves beyond intellectualism and material success,

which had failed to provide fulfillment. This transformation demonstrates the potential of spiritual beliefs to provide a framework for constructing meaning, complementing existentialist ideas about self-determination. Salar's reintegration into society through empathy and meaningful relationships further underscores the importance of social bonds in alleviating existential isolation.

This study effectively addresses the research questions by illustrating how Salar Sikander's existential crisis, characterized by suicidal tendencies and intellectual isolation, finds resolution through spiritual awakening. The findings underscore the critical role of spirituality in constructing meaning, providing a counterpoint to existentialist notions of self-determined purpose. This synthesis of existential and spiritual perspectives offers a comprehensive understanding of how Peer-e-Kamil navigates the complexities of human resilience and the quest for meaning.

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