



Sample Personal Statement for Fellowship

Reading Herman Hesse's novel 'Siddhartha' while in high school changed my perspective on life itself. Till that point in time, I was a naive young man who wanted to be a doctor or an engineer when I grew up. Its safe to say that I was following the crowd and the herd mentality was an obstacle in my path that limited my knowledge. But shortly after reading Hesse's magnum opus, I was burdened by the questions "who am I?", " what is my purpose?" and as I sought answers to these questions, I learned more about myself and the philosophy of existentialism.

By the time I completed my intermediate education, I was ready to take the road less travelled. Most of my friends pursued medicine but I decided to enroll in the BA program in English Language and Literature at Christian College. During this period, I utilized my time learning more about existentialist thought and philosophy. I was intrigued by Albert Camus' work 'The Myth of Sisyphus' because his interpretation of human life and its meaning was very positive. Later, I moved onto writers like Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Kafka and the master himself Jean-Paul Sartre. Their teachings and ideologies on human life and its purpose allowed me to formulate my own theories and assumptions. During the final year of my bachelor's, I decided to take up research in existentialism and pop culture. My thesis topic was "The Existentialism of the Joker", based on Christopher Nolan's movie The Dark Knight. I proceeded to argue that the character of the Joker in the movie displayed traits of existentialism such as absurdity, dread and angst.

All the while, I have been a committed academic and I graduated from Christian College with 90%. After that, I went onto pursue my master's in Philosophy from the University of Hyderabad, which is one of the reputed central universities in India. This institution provided the ideal academic atmosphere to continue my research in existentialist philosophy. Under the guidance of Prof Mahesh K****, I worked on my master's thesis 'Post Existential Thought in Modern Literature'. My aim was to decode how modern Indian writers incorporated existentialist ideas into their works in a modern cultural setting. This study allowed me to transgress the boundaries between literature and philosophy and understand the plight of alienated characters in an uncaring and materialistic world. My research work was well received and selected for the 2019 Annual Philosophy Conference held at Chennai. I completed my master's in 2020 with 9.2 CGPA.

It was my intense urge to take up further research in existentialism that motivated me to pursue my PhD at the reputed University of British Columbia, Canada. I am currently working on my thesis titled 'From Dostoevsky to Sartre: The Epistemology of Existentialism' under the guidance of Dr. Amijee Fatmah. My thesis aim to consolidate various theories related to existentialism and analyse how they have changed over the course of 400 years. A research work of this scale has never been attempted before and it requires me to invest a lot of time and resources. In such a situation, additional financial support is something that I would whole heartedly welcome. That is precisely why I am applying for the Junior Research Fellowship for Outstanding Academics offered by this institution. Being bestowed with this fellowship would be a huge boost to my confidence and I will be able to better focus on my research with the extra resources at my disposal. I feel that I am passionate and dedicated young researcher who is eligible for this fellowship. It is my dream to follow in the footsteps of Sartre and publish my own findings and ideologies related to existentialist philosophy and become a harbinger of change in the domain. I am sure that this fellowship would a stepping stone in realizing that goal.