

## Chapter: I

### Existential Concerns in Nasrin's *French Lover*

In this research, it is analyzed how female characters of the novel quest their existence in the modern world. Nilanjana, one of the characters as well narrators of the novel, searches her existence and establishes affair with a French man which lead her into the point of dualism. She is neither interior nor exterior position that made her to commit suicide because her appearances is non privilege for other.. The appearance refers to the total series of appearances and not to a hidden reality which encompasses the true being of the existent. Neither is appearance an inconsistent manifestation of this being. Nilanjana's position seems to be as the crisis that leads her into the morbid. By the awareness of self, created under the gaze of another, destroys our basic humanity; we are thereby degraded and reduced to a state of being suspended in a fixed, dependent way between the "already", and the "not yet". It is a state of consciousness of shame, having a sense of having fallen into the world, and needing the mediation of another to be made what one ought to be. In the novel, the principle of existentialism work out and female characters commit suicide for their existence.

Through the novel Nasrin analyzes the nature of human being which makes the life of character fundamentally distinctive from common human being. Her characters are guided toward themselves (ontology) lies in man's. Nilanjana wants to enjoy having free choice so that she loves French young man.

In case of Nasrin, she has expressed her strong ideas against Islamic society where women are treated as objects. She criticizes the tendency of using women in advertisements

in Bangladesh. They appear in advertisements with their physical seductiveness, dress and makeup, and are presented in such a way that the women become more important than the product itself. Taslima opines that these women are not actually doing anything in these advertisements; they are just being used and the society considers that their primary task is to be used. Through her writing, she desires to awake the women from their sleep by helping them know their follies. She wants to alert those who think that their identity is given by their husbands; they are incomplete without them and their likes and dislikes are to be determined by males. These women themselves are accountable for their weak condition in the society. Whenever two women talk to each other, they talk more about their husbands than about themselves. A woman, while making an acquaintance with another woman, does not ask even her name; she just asks a number of questions about her husband. Moreover, men deprive women of their rights. Women are not behaved as human beings at all. But women tolerate all types of exploitations without any complaint. Nasrin wants such women to be bold and conscious of their rights. She further argues that if a woman wants to be a human being, she first has to be wrong in the eyes of such a society; if she is not willing to be bad, she will never be a truly strong, independent and free person.

It shows that she is determined to write about women's miserable condition in Muslim societies without caring at all what misfortune may happen to her. Her comments about religion made people angry. She said that Islam oppresses women and is against humanity. She criticized verses in the Koran that treat women as property, as slaves, and as sexual objects. She said, "According to the Koran, woman's heaven is to be like our Mother Earth which man should irrigate in order to make her fertile (*View Full Version*1). So, she was determined to write against the Koran for the rights of women and humanity and as she

wrote, she was charged of going against the Koran. Due to the rising intolerance of the Islamic clergymen, she was forced into exile in Sweden. Abdul Malick remarks "She has insulted our religion: she must die!" (*View Full Version 1*). Since then she has been suffering a lot from the Muslim fundamentalists.

She appears as a revolutionary writer in south Asia after 1993 A.D. with the publication of *Lajja*(1993). In the same Meyebela was published in 1999 A.D., and French lover was published in 2002, A.D., way she published From the time, she has not appeared in public place. In this research, it is tried to explore the existential quest of the Nilanjana, the protagonist of the novel, *French lover*. After marriage, she was shifted from her homeland and reached in Paris. When she was in Paris, she asked herself a question is she an object controlled by a male? What is value of life in this new land? She searches her existence in this new world and escape from the apartment. After being the friend of French young man, she lost herself and ready to sacrifice for the sake of existence.

*French Lover* is the story of Nilanjana, young Bengali women from Kolkata moves to France to Kishanlal, a restaurant owner of Paris. When she arrives in Charles de Gaulle welcomed by Sunil, her husband friend. She lives with Krishanlal in a luxurious apartment although she could not become happy. She compares the apartment as a gilded cage. She feels boredom and starts to think the existence of life in that city. Her depression and dissatisfaction enforce her to think her existence and started to affair with the Benoir, a blond blue eye handsome French man. Nilanjana gives priority of Benoir love. She feels relief and accepts him as the French lover although she could not clear about it and again falls in the crisis of existence. Existential crisis could not do anything and she is compelled to think who is she and how the life is passing in this new world.

In the novel female characters find themselves in the hostile world. Nilanjana, her mother Molina, Denielle and Monique search the meaning of their life and value of living in this world. Due to the consciousness, they found their position which made them depressed. Nilanjana seems to be more radical on the way that she is heading on. When she arrived in Paris, she felt like every belonging are not belonged to her. She is merely a means of pleasure and domestic working house. There is more autonomy in the workers of Kishanlal's restaurant although she could not realize and internalize the situation which she experienced in restaurant. She leaves Krishanlal and started to, live in the counter part of the Paris where other sex worker also sales their sex to their customers. By observing the scenario of Paris, she has chosen homo sexuality for her sexual freedom. She found that there is freedom for marginalized. She started to hate dirty, fat and hairy body of male and searches autonomy existential of female body. She and her other friends found great contrast in their life and thought. Among her Bengali friends, Mithu commits suicide to relief from this world. She found her existence in death.

From the publication of the novel, many critics, writers and news paper reporters editors and columnists had the different opinioned about the novel. Narsoin Janete Ingraham is one of them expresses his idea about her witting and states, "A seething indictment of oppression and religious fundamentalism couched precariously as a novel, this important work is impassioned but difficult to read. More reportage and protest than story, it is recommended more for its historic than its literary value (*Library Journal I*). So, for Ingraham this novel has more historical significance than literary value because it the documentary which presents the struggle of Indian women as form of local narrative. Similarly, Tutul Gupta writes:

*French Lover*, the controversial novel by Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin, is a savage indictment of religious extremism and man's inhumanity to man. Unremittingly dark and menacing, the novel exposes the mindless bloodthirstiness of fundamentalism and brilliantly captures the insanity of violence in our time. (*Afterword*)

According to him, this novel displays the terrible effects of the existence of the female in the Islamic fundamental world. Nyal Dau, a columnist of *U.S. Today* expresses his views and supports her ideology. In this regards, he asserts:

Taslima Nasreens” *French Lover*”, also available in English translation is a polemic with a tortured plot design to showcase her view of oppressed women in south Asia. In contrast, *French Lover’s* is an unsteadily exploration into a new culture. Her willingness to see fault everywhere is appealing but her refusal see anything positive is sub continental culture leaves an imbalance in the book. (21)

Above lines, highlight theme of the novel in the context of Muslim culture. Her altitude of Muslim culture is negative.

In the novel, *French Lover*, she presents the world of women which is different from the ideology of normal Bengali women. They are conscious; the consciousness compels them to think about the existence of this world. In this regard, Malik Abdul writes, “Bold in concept and powerful in execution, *French Lover* is a fascination glimpse into the working of a women’s mind as the struggle to come to them with her identity in a hostile world”(xi). In the same line, famous Indio Asian Critic Ananada Sharma expresses his idea about the

novel *French Lover* in *Atlantic Journal* and asserts, “For myself, I am not afraid of any challenge or threat to my life. I will continue to write and protest persecution and discrimination” (3). Sharma praise honesty and boldness of the Nasrin which he found in this novel also.

None of the critics, however, concerns with the existential quest that Nasrin ascribes to her female characters. Thus the present research contends that the female characters in the novel exhibit their existential concern through their obsession with freedom, choice and the suicide. Moreover researcher concerns the existence of female characters in *French Lover* who assert their existence through suicide or homosexuality.

From this novel, Nasrin evokes idea of existentialism through the choice of female characters such as Nila , Mithu, Danielle etc. Nilanjana hates Kishanlal and starts loving French lover Benoir Dupont. At the end of the novel, she chooses to leave Benior and wants to get her own existence. Lastly, she finds herself in the condition from where she cannot return to her previous position. Similarly, the next character Mithu does not find her existence and commits suicide and Daniela finds her existence in homosexuality.

## Chapter :II

### Existential Alienation, Choice and Suicide

In *Existentialism*, distinctions do not exist. The appearances which manifest the existent are neither interior nor exterior; they are equal; all refer to other appearances, none is privileged. The dualism of Being and Appearance is not allowed any legal status within the philosophy of existentialism. The appearance refers to the total series of appearances and not to a hidden reality which encompasses the true being of the existent. Neither is appearance an inconsistent manifestation of this being. Sartre analyzed the term and states, "The appearance is "full positivity"; its essence is an appearing which is not *opposed* to being but on the contrary is the measure of it. The being of an existent is exactly what it appears"(22). This is the idea similar with the theory phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger. The phenomenon remains relative, for "to appear" supposes somebody to whom to appear. It doesn't have the double-relativity of Kant (the phenomenal-nominal). It doesn't point over its shoulder to a true being which, would be, for it, absolute.

In analyzing the nature of human existence, Sartre claims that the fundamental distinctive of human "Being" (ontology) lies in man's ability to make free choices, which freedom defines man as a "subject", rather than an "object". Sartre equates this freedom with complete "Autonomy". This word comes from "auto" (self) and "nomos" (law), yielding the meaning of being totally a law unto oneself, answerable to no other. "If man exists, God cannot exist...", says Sartre, because God's attributes, particularly that of "Omniscience" (having all knowledge) would reduce man to a thing, an "object", thereby destroying man's ontological distinctive of freedom"

(2). In other words, it means that man's autonomy towards self directed choices is being destroyed by the presence of omniscient being .

Existential Self-Awareness", created under the gaze of another, destroys our basic humanity; we are thereby degraded and reduced to a state of being suspended in a fixed, dependent way between the "already" and the "not yet". For Sartre, God's omniscience would make human free moral choice impossible, for such a choice under the scrutiny of another is not altruistic. Further, declaring total moral independence from any standard other than one's own with impunity would also be impossibility. In Sartre's play, *No Exit* this sense is elucidated in the closing scene where the character, feeling himself under the gaze of others, turns in surprise to discover what he assumed would be a multitude to be only a few people, their eyes intent upon him. His next lines express his discomfort and feeling of de-humanization. In this regard, he says:

All those eyes intent on me, Devouring me. What? Only two of you? I thought there were more; many more. So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone, the "burning marl." Old wives' tales! There's no need for red-hot pokers. जर्मी प्क((यतजभव  
उभयउभिर्दृष्ट०

Assuming you are accustomed to thinking in something akin to rational categories, the question has probably occurred to you of how a person's discomfort with a concept can be used as a proof for or against a truth-claim for an ontological objective reality. "If man exists then God cannot exist." Not without upsetting Jean-Paul, evidently.



Existentialism draws attention to the risk, the void of the human reality and admits that the human being is thrown into the world in which pain, suffering, frustration, alienation, isolation, sickness, contempt, malaise and death dominates. So, as a self-conscious movement it is primarily a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon, embracing Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but its characteristic features occur earlier, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thinkers Friedrich Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard. People are free to choose, they exist up to the moment they make choices, and existentialism gives stress on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice.

Existence means to stand out in the universe that is against us, and existentialism means ‘pertaining to existence’. Now the term existentialism is used to describe a version of the condition and existence of man, his/her place and function in the world and his/her relationship or lack of it with God. It is a “very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood” (Ellmann and Feidelson 803). Sartre defines existentialism as an attempt to continue life by creating a system in which one realizes human loneliness and “human subjectivity” (*Existentialism* 10). The focus of existentialism is on ‘being’ and ‘subjectivity’ as opposed to logical reasoning and ‘objectivity’. However, it suggests a major theme that is the stress on concrete individual human existence. According to Ryan, ‘subjectivity, individual freedom and choice’ are:

Hence, there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given. However, it may be said that with the existentialist, the problem of man is central and that they stress man’s concrete existence, his

contingent nature, his personal freedom, and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. (639)

Therefore, existentialists really mention the problems of man. They focus on man's concrete existence and his personal freedom of choice.

There is no single definition of existentialism for its principal theorist did not adhere to common body of doctrines. As a doctrine emerged worldwide, the existentialist thinkers also differs emerged worldwide, the existentialist thinkers also differed guilty in a various ways. Because, during the Second World War Europe was threatened by materialism and she faced spiritual decay. So, the negative aspects of human existence such as pain, frustration, sickness and death become for existentialist the essential features of human reality. Existentialism has had an enormous influence on outside philosophy, for example psychology, and although it is compatible with atheism, as well as Christianity, similarly on theology. Existentialism as such entails no particular political doctrines, but its stress on responsibility and its aversion to conformism and to whatever impairs human freedom can be conducive to political activism (Sartre). Although most existentialists have disregarded Kierkegaard's exclusive recommendation of 'indirect communication', the importance of specific situations and autonomous choices implies that existential truths can be conveyed in drama and fiction as well as in direct philosophical discourse. The concerns of the movement have inspired a large body of imaginative literature (Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir). In addition, the philosophy has provided a means of articulating and interpreting these same themes as discerned in works of literature from periods for example Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Faulkner and others.

Existentialism is often seen as a revolt against traditionalist philosophy. It contradicts view that man is open to the world and its objects without intermediary stratum of ideas or sensation. Also, there is no distinct realm of consciousness on which one might infer, project, or doubt the existence of external objects. Existentialists are more concerned with being rather than with knowing, which is a rejection of Cartesian dualism.

Søren Kierkegaard, Danish Christian philosopher begins for existentialism as a distinct philosophy in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In contrasting philosophy from Plato to Hegel with authentic Christianity, Kierkegaard emphasizes the concept of individual, of choice, of dread, and of paradox. He swerved the study of the philosophy to the subjective, emotional and abstract of human existence as against Hegel's philosophical system analyzed being or existence in an abstract and impersonal way. But Kierkegaard discusses that man's essence consists by the existential predicaments and limitations such as on hope, despair, anxiety and so on. In *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder acknowledges that "he thought that both the idealism of the Romanticist and Hegel's Historicism had obscured the individual's responsibility for his own life" (377). Therefore, obviously, existentialism is opposite of idealism, abstract thinking and objectivity.

The development of modern tradition of existentialism was preceded by the works of the German Phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. He was immediately followed by the modern existentialists. German existentialism was represented by Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers French existentialism by Jean -Paul Sartre .The most forceful voices of existentialist thought were the works of the French existentialists: Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Camus. In literary

influence the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky and Austrian Jewish writer, Franz Kafka contributed significantly.

Existentialism has its root in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger who focuses on the internal role and attitudes of the individual in the production of emotion or belief rather than the external world. So, the existential notion of individual can be considered as the systematic growth of the phenomenological concept of intentionality. Husserl's method, simply stated, was to find and examine the essential structure of experience, with the aim of establishing the Universal truths necessary to basic consciousness. Husserl's own philosophy was primarily concerned with abstract questions concerning the foundations of mathematics and matters of *a priori* knowledge, but Heidegger borrowed the phenomenological method and applied it to more personal problems - questions about how human beings should live, what they are, and the meaning of life and death. His seminal work *Being and Time* is nominally concerned with metaphysics, but it has been widely read as a radical reassessment of what it means to exist as a human being. Heidegger rejects the classical Cartesian concept of consciousness and replaces it with the concept of *DASEIN*. He rejects the idea of a consciousness, separate from the world in which one finds oneself abandoned. The ontological problem of *Dasein* is to find out who one is and what to do with oneself, or, as Nietzsche said, how to become what one is. Phenomenology, for Heidegger, becomes a method for disclosing [one's] being. In this regard Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define the term phenomenology as:

Phenomenology aims to describe the everyday items that we use, as they appear to us: the pencil with which I am now writing is described as it is in this context. Phenomenology attacks the view that this school aims to reconstruct the universe

in all of its diversity and fullness, with all of these qualities, as opposed to one-dimensional standardization based on scientific philosophy. (440)

Martin Heidegger likewise is considered the central figure in contemporary existentialist work. His central concern is the analysis of the way in which human beings, as distinct from things, exist, which he calls 'Dasein'. According to him, "man exists in an already existing world which is his world, which could no more exist without it. He exists only as a particular 'he'" (Wiener 193). Heidegger talks of the fact that man is born into a world which, he did not make and which, hence, sets limit for him. Likewise, Heidegger has elaborated das Nichts (nothing) which means, the no-thing and given phenomenological approach to the situation of human existence.

Likewise, Heidegger declares that the individual has to face the absolute problem of being, that is, one has to decide one's own existence create one's potentiality and make cliché and promises. Sartre praises the freedom of the individual human being. He describes existentialism as a means of confronting the result of World Wars and issue of world that wants on absolute power like God. He focuses on freedom of choice, commitment and responsibility. Sartre claims that there is no absolute reality at all but in action.

Heidegger is known as the leading existentialist thinker despite denying having anything to do with existentialism. Although he claimed he was not an existentialist, his influence on Sartre and the existentialist movement is unavoidable.

He distinguished between 'being' and 'Being'. The oblivion of 'Being' (individual) into the beings (group) has made us lost in unreal existence. To get back the lost Being, Heidegger suggests us to return back into the ground of metaphysics and find the roots of our existence.

According to Heidegger, to consider individual only the representation of mass is the recurrent mistake of metaphysics. Heidegger was interested in the 'question of being'. For him being is not realized in normal situation. It does not occur all the time. It is realized in the state of boredom, anxiety or ill-at-ease. So he states in *What is Metaphysics?* "It irrupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence, like a muffling fog, removes all things and men and oneself along with it into a remarkable indifference. This boredom reveals being as a whole" (4).

For him, western philosophy is obsessed with the problem of knowledge and it is less concerned with the issue of existence. Like other existentialists, he is interested in the study of 'Dasein' who believes that we have been living in an incomprehensible, indifferent world. The universe is alien to us. We have to choose a goal, with the awareness of certainty of death and meaninglessness of one's life.

For Heidegger, the principal object or investigation is the search for the being (skin) and more particularly man's being (Dasein). Thomas Maunter explains:

Dasein, this particular way of existing is different from the ordinary existence of things in the world around us. The thing is that things are determinate and have their distinctive properties. That is their kind of being. But the sort of being that I manifest is not that of a thing with properties. It is a range of possible ways to be. (183)

Heidegger considers human existence as tied to the temporal dimension, which is the existential time. He accepts that one cannot escape the historical context because he is always bounded by conditions and outlooks inherited from the past.

To sum up, Heideggerian existentialism stress on existence, boredom, goal, choice and freedom. But in freedom, there is dread and anxiety (angst) that compels the human being to select and take charge of his being. Anxiety shows the light of dynamic existence.

French novelist, playwright, and exponent of Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, defines existentialism as an attempt to continue life by creating a system in which one realizes “human loneliness” and human “subjectivity” (*Existentialism* 10). He emphasizes subjectivity but says that is not free from others. “The other is” as Sartre states, “indispensable to my existence and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself” (18). As Sartre said, “Man is a useless passion”(18). He identifies the idea of perfectly self-sufficient beings who are the cause of their own existence. He says each of us wants to become God, and God cannot possibly exist. In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre presents his political and sociological theories, which he considers to be a form of Marxism. In his first novel, *Nausea* (1938), he describes the horror and mystery which a man experiences when when he considers the unexplainable fact of a things’ existence.

In his chief philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre investigates the nature and forms of ‘existence’ or ‘being’. He claims that human existence, which he calls ‘being-for-itself’, is radically different from the existence of such in animate objects as table, which he called ‘being-in-itself’. Sartre opines that only human existence is conscious of itself and of other things. He argues that a person is not a coward, for example, in the same simple way that a table is only a table. A person is a coward only by choice. Sartre says that a person, unlike a table, has no fixed character of “essence” that has been assigned. Primarily, people ‘exist’ as beings who

must 'choose' their own character or 'essence'. Thus, in his essay *Existentialism and Humanism*, he defines existentialism as the doctrine that for humankind, "existence precedes essence" (19).

Sartre believes that people are completely free but are afraid to recognize this freedom and to accept full responsibility for their behaviour, which such freedom implies. Thus, people tend to deceive themselves about their true situation. Throughout his philosophical and literary works, Sartre examines and analyzes the varied and subtle forms of self-deception.

Sartre was offered the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964, but he made the Existentialist choice of refusing it. Though there are no perfect causes, he believes, the human being must support the cause least undesirable in order to act. Sartre thought that there is no fixed human nature or essence and so the individual has to choose his/her being. This choice brings with it responsibility. Those who do not choose, but base their lives on pre-arranged moral and philosophical systems are said to be acting in bad faith.

Sartre first gives the term 'Existentialism' general currency by using it for his own philosophy. He declares Marxism is the only contemporary philosophy; so Marxism must come to recognize the human being's existentialist freedom. He, however, never joins the communist party and denounces Soviet intervention in Hungary. For him, political commitment means taking the side of the proletariat and calling for authentic and free values.

Sartre made a contrast to a divine viewpoint on the world and on human nature with a human viewpoint where there is no divine element. When God thought about creating the world, he conceived it first-he had in mind what the world was going to be and what human nature was going to be. These were the 'essences' of the world and of humanity, the things that will make them what they are. Then God created everything and gave existence to the essences. Thus, to



God, 'essence precedes existence'. Now, Sartre did not believe in God, so there was no place for the essence of humanity to be before human existence. To us, existence comes first. The essence comes later.

Indeed, the essence is whatever we decide it is going to be. Unlike Kierkegaard, Sartre was an atheist. As God does not exist, there are no 'essences'. By essence, Sartre is talking about a pre-defined human nature. By the phrase 'existence precedes essence', Sartre meant - if there is no cosmic designer, and then there is no design or essence of human nature. Human existence of being differs from the being of objects in that human being is self-conscious. This self-consciousness also gives the human subject the opportunity to define it. The individual creates his/her self by making self-directed choices.

As human existence is self-conscious with being pre-defined, we, as autonomous being, are 'condemned to be free' - compelled to make future directed choices. These choices induce anxiety and uncertainty into our psyches. If we, as individuals, simply follow custom or social expectations in order to escape this angst, we have escaped the responsibility of making our own choices, of creating our own essence. This is the acting in bad faith. To act authentically, we must take responsibility for our future. A man cannot choose what gender, class, or country he was born into, but he can choose what he makes of them. We are free to create our own interpretation of ourselves in relation to the world, to create a project of possibilities, of authentic actions as the expression of freedom. Thomas Mautner mentions the nature of existence in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*:

The structure of *Being and Nothingness* is clearly Cartesian, despite the strong influence of Heidegger at the time. On the one hand, there is consciousness

(‘being-for-itself’ or pour soi) and on the other, the existence of mere things (‘being-in-itself’ or ensoi). (379)

Ensoi is the being of an object that is fixed and static. Pour soi is the being of the human being that is fluid and free. It is open towards the future. The human being is nothing at birth and in life, he is just the sum of life. To refuse in bad faith is to despair freedom. The human being, Sartre declares, is the maker of his destiny and is condemned to make his own decision. The human being exists but is only a contingent matter of fact, as there is no more reason for non-existence. Yet, in this hopeless world, the human being can develop his own essence; for the human being is what he projects himself in actuality. Hence, the human being is responsible for what he is. The human being uses his freedom to create and to be committed. The psychological problems of life are portrayed with an incomparable literary brilliance, creativity, and imagination on Sartre’s philosophical essays, novels, short stories and plays.

Another prominent French existentialist was Albert Camus .He himself laid no claims to be an existentialist. Camus concerns with the freedom, and responsibility of the individual, the alienation of the individual from society, and difficulty of facing life without the comfort of believing in God or in absolute moral standards. Camus opines that human existence is absurd. The modern world is full of injustice and millions work is repetitive exploitive jobs. He thought that men should rebel against these absurdities by refusing to participate in them. In *Myth of Sisyphus* (1943), Camus asserts that, by refusing to surrender, Sisyphus, the representative of modern man can create meaning through a free act for affirmation in which he gives meaning to a situation which until then .

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of mountain! One always finds one's burden again.  
But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and rises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe hence forth without a master seems to him neither sterile not futile. Each atom of that stones, each mineral flake of that night filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

An existentialist is always stranger than other and certainly going to have no patience with conventions the isolation produced by existentialist value decision also explains why few existentialists are self-identified as such. If we could give us a common basis to make a connection with them, that is inauthentic existence. If it just happens by chance, that our own decision produces something that of those someone else, well then we have a connection, but is likely to be volatile. As we make new decisions, the probability of our connection with other is going to decline. We are isolated by our own autonomy. The values and decision of other, whether authentic or inauthentic, will be foreign or irritation.

Camus believes that anxiety, despair and crime have emerged from World Wars I and II. The external supports in which the public belief rested in the past were religious in character. Camus, like many other existentialists, believes that the decline of religious belief in modern period forces people to realize the dilemma of Sisyphus.

In Albert Camus, we find the secularist's denial of the eternal and yet another proponent of the doctrine of the absurd: Human life is rendered ultimately to meaningless by the fact of death and the fact that the individual cannot make rational sense of his experience. The "Absurd Hero" gains victory by focusing on his freedom, his refusal to hope, and his knowledge of the

absurdity of his situation. He continues to perform his duty no matter how useless or how insignificant his action. Man's proper allegiance is to man and not to abstractions or 'absolutes'.

Despite man's irrational desire for unity, for absolutes, for a definite order and meaning to the objective universe, no such meaning exists. It is this juxtaposition of the irrational, longing human heart and the indifferent universe that brings about the notion of the absurd. For Camus, it is refusing to hope that makes the "Absurd Hero", he who embraces despair and realizes that the only question left for philosophers to consider is the question of suicide.

For Albert Camus the absurdity of life is the first concept. Fredrick Olafson genuinely remarks that "Camus believes in fraternity and humanism rather than in nihilism" (12). Camus sees the condition of modern man similar to that of Corinthian king Sisyphus. Sisyphus is the master and teacher of all modern man who because of his disobedience to God and this passion for life suffers eternal torture heroically. "This universe," states Camus, "henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile" (852). Camus reaches to the conclusion to declare the condition of man absurd when he realized that the speculative system of past provided no reliable guidance for life or guaranteed any foundation of human values. According to Camus, when the absurd man becomes aware of his futile living, he is naturally filled with anxiety and hopelessness but he does not surrender himself in the mouth of death. Instead, he acknowledges the consciousness of absurdity as a reality and clarity has made the world more complex and inexplicable, terminating itself to a mere hypothesis. The only predictable truth is that the world is absurd and unintelligible. But suicide cannot be the solution to the discomfort of absurd man if he is conscious of human pride which always negates the nihilistic attitude of life. Sisyphus

continuously rolls the boulder up the hill that makes him happy because he is fully aware of his absurd task. Camus makes this explicit thus:

Suicide is repudiation. The absurd man can only drain everything to the bitter end, and deplete himself. The absurd is his extreme tension which he maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day to day revolt, he gives proof of his only truth which is defiance. (824)

While thinking on the common condition of men Camus considers human rights. The revolt against the injustice done upon man was as relevant as the revolt against the absurd condition. Sisyphus maintains at the same time the revolts. The injustice done upon him by God has made him conscious of his absurd task. Camus is careful about the unjust practices being carried out by the totalitarian political system such as Fascism and Nazism. He was of the opinion that no one has the right to take life of another being. Political revolt is violent revolt, as much unwanted as the metaphysical revolt of Nietzsche and others. The metaphysical revolt, according to Camus, anticipates either a suicide or demonic desire to destroy the world (Olafson, Camus). Camus hates the destruction of the world and mankind as carried out in World War I and II to get liberation from the anxiety of the absurd world, one may go to the rules of God or he may submit himself to the hand of death. But either of these choices is ridiculous and bad for the absurd man. The living absurd man depends upon the maximum struggle against this absurdity. Thus, Camus's philosophy is not pessimistic and anti humanistic but optimistic and humanistic. As Ellmann and Fiedelson note, Camus sees man "arriving, through admission of absurdity, at an affirmation of his own worth" (806). He focuses on struggle against absurdity for humanism and optimism.

Alienation in the existential philosophy occupies a significant place. Gwynn Nettler defines “Alienation is a certain psychological state of a normal person, and as alienated person is one who has been estranged from, made unfriendly towards his society and the culture it carries” (672). Alienation bears the constant notion of having the feeling of being a strange or an outside. The existentialists point out that all of our personal human relations are poisoned by feelings of alienation. Alienation, arise within the family between parents and children, between the husband and the wife between the child. Alienation affects relation and most cruelly, it dominates the relationship of love

It is in exile - exile from the milieu one lives, from one’s products and even from oneself. Eric and Mary Josepson comment that “alienation is an individual feeling or state of dissociations from self, from others and from the world at large” (13). Thus, sense of alienation engages an individual in conflict within himself and with the ‘herd’ as well. Alienation, in the simplest understanding, refers to the arrangement of individuals from one another and from a specific situation. The term is applied as the summation of the individual emotions and it comprises (1) meaninglessness, when the individual believes his activity will fail to yield the result he seeks, (2) isolation, that is, estrangement, of the individual from values of his society, (3) self-estrangement, which is the individual’s estrangement from the self, the feeling that his own self and its abilities are something strange.

Existentialist are obsessed with the meaning of life. They focus exclusively on the individual. Though life is very difficult and does not have any objective or universally known value, yet, existentialism attempts to find happiness and meaning in a modern world characterized by alienation, isolation, loneliness, frustration, inauthenticity, and absurdity.

Existentialism deals with man's disillusionment and despair. Existentialism maintains that man is full of anxiety with no meaning in life, just simply exists, until he makes a decisive choice because he creates his self by making self-directed choices. Man's autonomy, assertion of his subjective self, his denial of traditional values, institution and philosophy, his exercise of choice and freedom, and his experience of the absurdity and the meaninglessness of life are some of the existential theme as which are reflected in the writings of the exponents of existentialism.

Existential predicaments mean the dichotomy between real experience and logical apprehension of the world. It is the recollection of past, evaluation in present mental activity. The novel presents through the consciousness of the narrator and narrator's ability to interpret existential experience. There are two problems: What happens to the character and what is the attitude of the narrator toward what happens. The first problem is insoluble if by what happens in the real experience of the other human. The right tracks if by what happen means the narrator think happens. For the solution of the first problem it must investigate the mental process of the narrator.

Narrator speculates in terms of opposite and narrator's ability to recognizing person as a human being is the second characteristic. The narrator fails to recognize essential identity of another human being. So, narrator lays claim to a superior in perception and arouses tension within himself if other disagree with him. The narrator may have deductive thinking, she/he makes law and categories human being and wants to include to all within it. The narrator's perception of the world is real or not but he is the soul reporter who can't distinguish between real experience and logical apprehension. Reality for the narrator is ideational or does not

experience ideal feelings. She/He sees human relationship as a parallel to mental process and confusion to choose the world. Therefore, she fails to distinguish between experience and logic.

The attitude of the narrator toward what happens evaluates the narrative technique and to what extent does she/he understand his/her predicaments. She/He does not understand the world, and moral issues secured by the society or the personal affairs to the world. The narrator just, equates intellectual activities with creativity which is the emotional life. The narrator concludes mistakenly that the superior perception and highly developed consciousness caused by the predicaments. The consciousness is the knowledge and awareness of the narrator's own existence, sensation and cognition. In this regard Henry James clarifies in his essay that:

Closely allied with this lack of understand is his attitude toward perception and consciousness. On the one hand, he apotheosizes them; on the other hand, he realizes that concomitant with the increasing depth of perception and ultimately the developing of consciousness [...]. (209)

Therefore, predicament is that the narrator fails to get out of his/her self-perception or self consciousness.

The narrator could understand that excessive mental activity is harmful if it destroys reality; that is existential particularity of other human being. The cure lies in narrator's existential particularity and in the identity of other person. To justify this context Henry James remarks that:

Closely related to this dawning awareness is the narrator's incipient recognition of the existential particularity of the other guests. Removed from the events of the



weekend, he can investigate a problem that has been with him ever since. “What was the matter with me? [. . .] Why I should have minded this, should have been anxious” [. . .] anxiety and scared [. . .] was a question troubling [. . .]. (213)

To sum up, ‘*a prior*’ conceptual analysis can’t dictate who or what human being will be. The corrective force of the truth of other human being that improves gradually that is the cause of detached existence or alienation or take part in the world but narrator refuses the logical mind of others’. The narrator’s movement trapped spectator to the label of action and understanding self so that, gradually understanding of the danger mental activity carried to the point where it distorts reality and his/her discovery of the consequent desiccation of the emotional life is bewilderment which is crucial for development.

### **Undercurrents of existential philosophy in Nasrin’s *French Lover***

क्षल तजभ लयखभि, चभलअज ीयखभच त्वकषिब ल्वकचप्ल ायचभअवकतक तजभ भहष्कतभलतष्वि अयलअभचलक या जभच ाभवभि अजवचवअतभचक। ल्वकचप्ल यदकभचखभक तजभ पिभ या अयलतभउयचवचथ धयचमि तजवत मभकतचयथक दवकष अ जगवलप्लथा तजभ अयलकअप्यगकलभकक या जगवल दभप्लन मभखभयिउक दथ दयतज उजथकअर्वा बलम कउष्वप्लगर्वा भहष्कतभलअभ या तजभ धयचमि। क्षल तजभ लयखभि, तजभ उचप्लअण्डुभि या भहष्कतभलतष्वि धयचप यगत तजचयगनज वअतष्वप्लभक या ाभवभि अजवचवअतभचक धजय अकप्ल कगअप्लभ ायच तजभ कवपभ या भहष्कतभलअभ धजअज ष्क चभवितभम धप्लज तजभ उजप्यकयउजथ या दभप्लन बलम त्भ ९ज्भप्लभननभच० बलम ल्यतजप्लनलभकक ९ऋकगक बलम व्वचतचव०। भवभि अजवचवअतभचक या तजभ लयखभि कभवचअज तजभप्व भहष्कतभलअभ दथ चभवभअतप्लन तजभ लयचक या कयअप्लतथ बलम कभवचअज तजभ कभी। तजभप्व अयलकअप्यगकलभककभक या कभी भलायचअभम तजभ तय भकतवदष्विज भहष्कतभलतष्वि त्रगभचथ दगत तजभय अयगमि लयत। यच तजभ कवपभ या भहष्कतभलअभ, ल्षि चभवभअतक तजभ जभतभचयकभहगवप्लिथ बलम भिबखभक जभच जगकदवलम तजभल भकतवदष्विज चभवितप्लकजण्ड धप्लज म्वलप्लिवा तजभय तजप्लप तजवत तजभ ावभि मकप्लवतभम धयचमि ष्क जयकतर्षि ायच तजभ। म्गभ तय तजभ अयलकअप्यगकलभकक या

तजयगनजत, तजभथ कभवचअज तजभ खबगिभ या पिभ प्ल तजष्क धयचमि दगत तजभथ प्लम लयतजप्लन।ीष्वप्लन प्ल  
लयतजप्लन अयलमप्लप्यल ष्क लयत भवकथ।यच तजभ वलम तजभथ कतचगननभि।यच भहष्कतभलअभा।

### **Chapter: III**

#### **Existential Concerns in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover***

Nila, the main character and narrator of the novel, searches her own existence in the periphery of contemporary world. She starts her journey from Culcutta and reaches Paris. Her

narratives are guided toward the philosophy of existentialism. She wants to break the patriarchal norms and values. For that, she quests existence of her life in this universe. In this regard, it is relevant to assert these lines, “Once the dinosaurs ruled, and now they are no more. One day man will no longer exist; man history will vanish in the deep dark hole of the past. We are nothing, nobody on the face of this instantly, Do you belief in rebirth” (152). She is aware of the existential values and its importance in human life. In the context, she further clears:

She Fingered the books by Balza, victor Hugo, Gustoave Flubert, Maupassant, Albert Camus , Jean Paul Satra, glance through Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine and Paul Eduard. She had read them in Bengali translations. When she picked up the books in the original French, she felt strange. In a trance, Nila handled the book one by one, smelt them, and hugged them to her heart. Kishan was calling out to her, but she did not hear him. (37)

Nila is familiar with the contemporary philosophy of the world which is related with the philosophy of existentialism that enforces her to search her existence in her life. In the same lines, she makes her idea clears and states:

You have become so dressed because you saw someone die in from of your eyes, that you have forgotten man is one species among many others. In this universe, man live in a planet in one solar system among many in one galaxy among many others. You are like this a dot even smaller can you feel your existence anywhere in this vast system or your mothers. (152)

The life of human being also not freed from that existential problems of life. Nila also face the same problem of existence that always hunts her. She deeply thinks about the position of

human being in this world and finds nothing. After being and getting nothing, people fight himself / herself. At last, they kill themselves in the name of established existence. In this regard, the following lines are relevant to quote, “Spring was the season of suicide. Two youths had jumped on to the tracks. They wanted to die and so they did. It happened every spring. People killed themselves under the rail tracks. Nila wanted to know, “why people feel killing themselves as springtime? (154). Giving reference of the spring, she tries to justify the existential quest of the human being. Every person wants to establish his existence in this world for that one separates oneself from other. When they have found lost of dignity, they commit suicide and recover the lost. In this context, the following lines are relevant to quote:

Danielle said those who are lonely who don’t have a partner; they kill themselves at this time. In the spring, your loneliness taunts you because it tells you that summer is here; summer long is the time of joy of loving and enjoying life. All summer long lovers walk hand in hand, have happy couples. The distress drive them to suicide in spring even summer arrive. (128)

Above lines, clear that the desire of being happy is related with the existence of a person for that one want to make love, liberty and prosperity of life. If they find themselves something, lacking in their life they struggle against that lack.

In the novel, Nasrin focuses on the socio religious surrounding of the characters which also appears as the means of existence, “Sunil answered swiftly, why I am not a Muslim’ Yes , why I am not a Muslim”(16). In this regard, Nila remarks, “That like Bertand Russel’s why am I not a Christian. Tell me, has anyone ever written a book why I am Not a Hindu? Chitali shrugged and shock her head slowly not to her knowledge (16). Human beings are alive in

certain demarcations which help to determine the existence in the society. In the sense, Nila describes the scene of society in this way:

The crowd stopped at one point, forming impromptu queue a huge boa constrictor a little like the one that forms in front of the ration shop when they give rice at a throwaway price. The girl tried to pass by the tail and slide towards the middle of the boa. But the others shouted, you there in the red sari, go to the tail. The girl wet her chapped lips and went towards the tail, right at the end, all the way to back, the place for the destitute. The boa slithered ahead with greed.

(1)

Above lines highlight the material existence of the Bengali community where Nila also belongs to. The situation of female is not good in the society. Male dominated patriarchal society denies the proper existence of women. In this regard, she says:

Surprise shocks the girl like a pendulum as she stood leaning on the steel walls. She had no idea that there could be a place in this world where English wouldn't work [... ]In Calcutta, the knowledge of English separated from civilized from the barbarians. She had always been from the barbarians. She had always assumed the civilized people, in any country, always spoke fluent English. (4)

In above lines she presents the contemporary situation of her own society where English people had also lived and ruled but they could not bring change in the situation of women and help to establish proper existence of women. English speakers claim that they are liberal but in Calcutta, it does not effect.

The narrator of the novel searches her existence and asks certain unanswerable questions to the chaos. In this regard, the followings are relevant to quote:

Name ?

“whose?

‘ Yours’

Nilanjana Mandal.

Reason for coming here?

To live my life’

With?

‘with my husband.’

Husband name? (6)

The above sentence structure shows that women have no answers of questions because they are confined into the certain limitation where there is no freedom to give answer. The following lines make it further clear, “The man’s senseless expression gave her neither hope nor despair, Nila began to feel her life would be spent thus waiting in the room, surrounded forever by walls of steel. Impatient and restless, she paced the floor. She could do anything now to leave that corner, even if it meant going back to Calcutta “(7). The existential query appears in the forms of doubt. There is doubt in everything because of uncertainty. In this context, Nila’s husband speaks:

The young man did not answer.

Is it my visa fake?

No answer.

Is the currency fake?

He screamed; hay red- Sari, shut up!

Red sari shut her mouth. (9)

Nila was not sure that of her marriage because she has already started to think herself as independent being like a man. In her view going with husband and leaving under his control is justifiable for independent one. In this regard, she argues, “Nila did not think she was all that dark and in comparison with the Senegalese, she could be called fair indeed. She crinkled her fair nose, eyes, described that man’s stretching and drinking and then said, “He seemed to get away. Nila’s voice resounded with indignation, mainly at the Senegalese’s getting away” (10). Nila asks herself about the Sunil’s physical appearance and again speaks, “Nila thought she could easily have married Sanal. But she didn’t really ordain anything at all? If only Sunil had sent Edamaruku to Calcutta to get married. Nila’s life would have been different. But that’s not what happened” (16). Nila wants to make herself different from traditional Bengali women.

In the novel, writer tries to show the existence of people of India and their manners. In this context, Nila asserts her arguments about the drinking and says “Some had their whisky with water and some had it on ice. Tariq drank his neat. At least twice, he’d remarked, the test of whisky is ruined if you mix it with water. This is the problem with Indian’s they don’t know how to drink and yet they have to” (17). After observing the scenario of the Indian drinking room, Nila compares it with Da Vinci's color of painting and speaks, “Nila wondered whether Oil

declared that smile, made famous by Da Vinci, as a devilish one simply to make people laugh or was that truly her belief. She could not find out because Sanal had already leaped up to her again” (17). Nila could not express her view before her husband. She enquires herself and tries to respond the situation. She feels shock from head to toe. In this regard, she states:

Shook from head to toe. Chaitali covered her mouth with her left hand and Sanal laughed loudly, haha, hoho. Odil’s laugh showed only her pink upper gums and neither teeth nor sound. Rajesh’s moustache and beard covered his whole face and when he laughed, all of it just stretched a little and teeth were hidden in hair, Sunil sucked in his breath when he laughed air only went in and never come out. (18)

Nila compares her existence with the situation of Bengal where thousands are outing from the place and no hope of getting new thing in the county. She searches her existence and her mother land and says, “Population is ruining the country. But why! Human resource is a great strength, if it is used properly. Once the factories of Europe almost closed down and they had to fall back on laborers from other counties (19). There is a question of existence of the Indian people because they are killing the country. They never think about the nation and its existence.

Nasrin’s speaker valorizes the nationality of Bengali group. It is further clears the view, “Sing? No way. That’s for the Bengali group. Non- Bengalis know nothing of singing! Philistines, all of them. Chaitali spoke in Bangla”(21).

Narsin focuses female's existence through the narrative of Nila who tries to establish her existence in life. She got marriage with Kishan but does not internalize it. In this context, she expresses her experiences in this way:



She went to bed in her full finery of sari and Jewellery and lay in a frontal position. Kishan broke that posture, straightened her, undid the buttons of her blouse and unhooked her bra- Nila's breasts jumped out. Krishan mauled them the way he'd mash boiled potatoes with his hard fingers and soon remembered them lifeless. The room was silent except for kishan's panting. Nila lay inert beneath kishan's hairy body. She asked herself, is this pleasure? The answer comes within no! (22)

Female is taken as an object and man does whatever he wants. The role of husband is not acceptable for Nila because she hates his manner of having sex.

Nila's above narratives clear that the existence of women is nothing like an object made by someone for somebody's consumption. In this context, the following lines make it much clearer, "Nila had seen them last night, in Calcutta she would never have spread them, wipe them and put them a second glance. there were people to take them away, clean them, wipe them and put them away, Kishan remained her that the luxuries of Calcutta were not available in Paris, where they even had to clean their bathrooms themselves (23). She again relates her experiences and highlights the existence of life of Calcutta. In this context, she states:

At this time of the day Calcutta would be split wide open by terrible sounds a siren, a truck's tyre bursting push carts, hawkers, beggars, dogs bickering, women quibbling at the common tube well, and so many other sounds that make life unbearable. Nila felt she landed somewhere outside the planet where there was no dirt, no hassles, nothing that piqued the eye nothing uncontrolled, uncouth or ugly. (26)

Nila compares her life with the lifeless environment of Calcutta where women live as the street workers and sell themselves for the desire of male.

In the novel, Nasrin allegorically presents the women's situation, compares it with horse, and says, "He saw the princess, with long dark tresses, trapped in the house of a wicked giant. The prince charged upon horseback, to rescue the princess. He held magic wand in his hand a touch of that wand and the lock on the giant's doors would break free (26). Nila question herself about her existence and compares her life with the rotten meat. Her life has no connection of spirituality. In this regard, she states, "That's true, Nila wondered how she would react if there was a fire, how she would put it out and for the life of her, she couldn't tell what was the connection between a fire and the door key. She asked, "What happened if there's a fire" (27). The relation between male and female is just like the master and slave. In this sense, Nila speaks, "The only different she could find was that husband cabin get off the hook without ever paying his wife's dues. She felt the prostitute actually had more freedom than the wife is more ways than one (28). In the history of India, Gandhi and his existence, come out big image which is also questionable because he is not clear about women and their existence. In this regard, she says, "They won't do. So what would? Something like Gandhi, How was Gandhi related to food? Even if they were not related, the French could relate Gandhi to India. They knew Gandhi's name far better than they did the Lal Killa. And would the food in the restaurant change? Not at all that will stay the same, the same chef and the same waiter? (30). Nila asks questions herself that shows her ruined psychic. She can't speak clearly:

Why?

Just

No one walk without a reason

I won't go far just close by.,

Why do you to walk to walk in this dirty locality?

Dirty? But it's sparkling clean. (30)

Life of migrants in France is difficult. Most of the Indian people work at restaurant before they shift new one. Nila observes the life of husband in a city and expresses her views:

Before he got the job at the restaurant, Mojammel used to work in packing box factory. There was less money in these jobs because they use illegal labour. The government of this country did not allow to you to apply for a proper job until your paper came through. So whatever you did, it had to be illicit and surreptitious giving the police the slip. Nila was curious about these papers. (32)

Her husband never shares the ideas and emotions with Nila, although the latter read his face and the life of Paris. She determines to do something in the city and says, "I want to work here, built myself heath beautiful life, the kind of life that everyone dreams of they may just allow, but some economic asylum- never!"(33). Nila always remembers her past life of Calcutta. In this regard, she says:

Why don't you go back?

Home? I've spent so many years in the hope of earning some good money. What will I do if I went back home now? At this age, I won't get many jobs and what

will I eat? How would I show my face there? I can't get back with nothing. Even with such menial jobs here, I'm able to send back some money home. (34)

The existence of life is always problematic in the world. Everyone has quest for existence and spend their life to get nothing but only questions as we find in the life of Nila. In this regard, she states," Why does he practice here? Who will give him a job? Even if you have studied medicine in your country, you have to appear for fresh exams here. If you are an illegal immigrant, you can't sit for those exams. Language is a problem .Even if we can speak t we can't write (34). Among various problems, language is one important problem of women in both home and abroad. In India, there is no option to speak with husband or other male in abroad the language is new and there is problem of expression. Only questions remain in their life. In this context, she states:

What is the gift?

I can't tell you that.

Kishan got into the car with spring in his step. The cat drove by the Montparnasse's, through Rud de Rennes keeping Saint- Germainedes press to the left and along boulevard saint Germaine .Nila watched in wastes truck wonder as the sparkling cafes. (36)

Nila's life in Paris is full of uncertainty. She feels strange because she asks unanswerable questions to herself about what kind life is she living in that city. When she visits the market, she finds nothing. In this regard, she says, "When she came to the vegetable section she asked, do they have the sag we eat at home here I really love it. None of the greens that you got at home.

They are all hybrid" (38). She compares the market of Paris and Calcutta and says, "The beef was the most expensive and chicken the least. In Calcutta, it was the other way around. Why was the meat boneless? The bones were the tasty parts. People here had the meat without the bones or the skin (39). Her comparison shows the fakeness of life in city because she finds herself as an animals kept for other's entertainment. In this regard, she states:

"What else?

'Just that and he said he can't get a good job without papers'.

And?

'And that he lives in belle vile'

And?

'And that they stay seven together in one room.

And?

And that the people at home think he is a DC

And?

And that he wouldn't get a job if went back home, he's too old for that. (40)

The series of questions indicate her obsession towards individual freedom .She loses individual freedom and pleasure, get in the male dominated society. To full fill the quest, she reads certain book and exchanges her views with the book, "She picked up three Bengali novels and a book on the glanced at Sunil for permission to borrow them, she found him already nodding and waving

away the question of permission. And two cassettes of Rabindrasangeet by Kanika? That too? (43). During the time of study, she identifies herself with the character of, book, although she cannot find answer in her life which she finds in this book. In this regard, the following lines are relevant to quote:

Tumpa, Rani, will you give me that talking doll?

“Why are they doing this?

Just for fun.

For what?

Fun what? Fun, fun, Kishan had to scream.

Just for fun?

Just

Nila got out of the car and feasted her eyes on the speeding people. (48)

Nila spends her life like a doll that spends life in fun but gets nothing. Kishan humiliates her time and again and plays with her like a child plays with doll. He takes her as a means of entertainment and says, “All week long I work hard. There’s just these two days for leisure. I want to enjoy my wife’s touch all day long. Kishan laughed, trying to hide his buckteeth. This smile was his best. He probably thought this was a lover’s smile. This was how all over smiled at their women when they first fall in love (56). She further imagines the conversation and states:

How do I look? She leaned closer to him and asked

‘Nice ‘

Let’s invite them over once?

“Whom?”

Sunil and his family’

Where’s the Time?

Call them tonight’

You can’t invite people like that. You need them at least two week in advance.

But why are you suddenly thinking of them? (57)

Kishan says with Nila not to talk with other except him because he thinks that she is his private property. In the sense he states, “Why did she want to talk to Sanal? Was it just to talk to someone? If that was it, she could have talked to Molina or any of her friends in Calcutta. Although Calcutta was far away and Kishan had warned her that if she made international calls too often, the sharp razor of French (63). He chases the individual freedom of Nila and threatens her:

What’s wrong? Why are you having a bath at this time? Come on get up.

Why? Nila’s voice was stone cold.

What’d you mean why I have come back” so?

“So you have to get up. The other day you wanted some pumpkins. (67)

Nila could not live long silence and she made plan to liberate from the domination of her husband. She complains Sunil, “The evening nothing happened. Sunil Started about the Puja donations, leaving Nila’s issue unresolved. Nila brought tea and biscuits on a tray. She asked Sunil about his friend who was supposed to go to Calcutta. He had gone and reached the Chanel to Nila’s house and was scheduled to return very soon (74). Nila compares drinking wine with drinking spirituality of individual freedom drunk by someone before. In the sense, the following lines are relevant to quote.

Why aren’t you drinking?

I am not used to drinking wine’

Not used to it? So what do people drink in your country?

Whisky

That’s before meal. What about during the meal/

Water.’

The other people in your country?

Every one drink water.’

Everyone?

Yes everyone.’(83)

Above incomplete sentences raise the issue of existence which is related to nothingness in everyone. There is nothing complete in this world. In this regard, she argues:



Yes.’ Why? What do you mean why? We like them, we vote for them.’ You vote for the communist?”

Sure’

Shame!’

Daniell shock her head all the way back home and exclaimed that Hitler had Killed for less people than Stalin. She claimed Marx was wrong and so was Engle, Lenin was a fake, he was actually a Terrier. (86)

Nila questions the great ideologist and theorist and searches the essence. She finds nothing is complete and everlasting on the earth. Nila assimilates this philosophy although she lives a life that is different from each of these ones. She loses her half identity and speaks, “Maeria asked tentatively are you scared dogs? No one that house had ever seen anything’s strange as someone scrambling instead of hugging dogs. The way the five pairs of eyes were observing her. Nila felt they suspected her to be crazy (89). She is burdened by the so called civilization which teases her time and again although she lives life with others, “Nila ate some mashed potatoes and half a lettuce leaf and got a smell of meat out her mouth. Then the cheese served her baguette and kept it beside their plates. With experienced and civilized fingers, they pierced the cheese with their fork, picked up a bite of the baguette on to it besides their plate of the baguette on it exactly passed into their mouth”(94). She compares civilization with the motion of a frog which is limited in a certain well. The life of women and their right also resembles with a frog.

Nila always asks herself about her individual freedom and search her existence in this world. She compares Paris life and Indian life and says, “You can’t deny that there are such families in India as the one they showed today. There are so many people all over the world living such subhuman lives, Nila. Something should be done for them, especially by the richer countries. It’s true there are the rich in India as well. But we already know how they live (97). Nila remembers some criminal activities which is related to women and their free existence. Nila herself assimilates the events and expresses her emotions, feelings and desires, “Her ashen face made Nila feel like a criminal, as if she’d committed a grave sin and she had an ulterior motive for it. She had to explain, in my country we don’t pay like this. When we got one person pays either I or you”(110). She remembers the film which is made about the foreign women who live in France. The following lines further clear, “The first Rita Cixous was making a film on foreign women living in Paris. She wanted to interview Nila and she would give five hundred francs for it. The second Danielle had asked three of her friends to look for job Nila “(111). Nila compares her life with day to day phenomena and says, “That day Nila saw something that she had never seen a bus before. Two inspectors boarded the bus to check tickets. Nila sat right at the back of the bus. The white man came straight to her trouser pockets or jacket pockets. She dug into her pocket and many tickets came out” (115). When Nila feels boredom, she visits her psychiatrist and tries to be fresh. She meets Danielle cracks and jokes only to be happy. But that happiness is artificial. In this sense she states:

Danielle said, PiPi isn’t peeping.

So why does Nicole have to go to the doctor?

Nicole is very sad she has to see her psychiatrist.

Nila was startled. She was not to laugh out loud but did not ever since she had learnt to kick, Nila had always aimed to kick cat into the kitchen for the bowl of food and stick their tongue into it. (117)

Nila cannot tolerate herself because she becomes sick. She always thinks her position in this world. She hates children and says, “How many more children are needed in this world? There’re enough besides what’s the point of bringing more children into the world of patriarchy and imbalance?”(118). She talks to herself:

Why couldn’t asked me that then?

No that shameful.

Shameful?

Nila could understand what constructed as shame in this society. It hasn’t even summer yet and the girls walked around half dressed, clothes were a problem. (123)

Nila disagrees with role of women in child birth which demonizes the existence of women in lineage so she hates the children. She has taken a child as a block on the way to autonomy. So she protests against her limitation by rejecting it.

Nila concentrates on individual freedom. The existence of life only establishes if there is freedom of choice. Her view is related with the late twentieth century value of existentialism. She observes the society and role of a girl. In this regard, she states, “Know what crime it is this society to say unmarried. I have passed my BA long ago and I am sitting at home. I am nothing but a burden to my parents. I am an eyesore. A maid aboard [...] I am not particular about

religion; anything will do, if only he agree to marry me. There's no one in this country who will marry me" (136). She remembers her own biography and the consequences of her life and states:

Because I want to know if ever, in your entire life, you have cried. Try and remember, have you ever wept for anyone? If not for someone, then at least for yourself have you ever felt tears in your eyes? Eye I am talking about those eyes behind the glasses which you just polished and wore again, those eyes. Have they ever shed a single tear? Have you ever felt four hearts ache, and suddenly reach up to find your cheeks wet? It happens, you know your hand gets or your pillow has it ever happened to you? (138)

Nila describes the destiny of women in a particular male dominated society where there is no individual existence of women. She lives for other and feels enjoys for others. She gives references of her own family and highlights the existence of women in her own community. According to her, "No you have not. There was you need. You married Ma because you need money. That was taken care of by her dowry. You used to study medicine. Ma was like a servant in this house right. No one say anything [...]" (138). In the same line, she further clears the duties and right of a women and says, "Naturally no one wants to know how she is because living there is always good enough. If the daughter served her husband the way her mother served hers, the circle would be complete if the daughter took a divorce and came back to her parent's home, it'll be one hell of a mess"(138). In a patriarchal society, no male members are ready to share pain and pleasure with women. They neglect the problems of women. In this context, Nila presents an example and states:

For ten year ma was bleeding from time and time and you said it was piles didn't you? Now you know it was that. When she had stomach aches, you said nothing, she was just acting up. Actually she wanted to just take the day off isn't that what you said ? [...] don't feel sorry that although you are a doctor and Ma relied on you, she is dying without treatment. (144)

Nila compares her daily life with the darkness of night because she could not enjoy at night. She asks questions herself and the nature of life and activities of a women in male dominated society. She feels sad and expresses her views, "Nila started at the darkness, her eyes focus on the moonless sky. One one such night Nikhl came and sat beside her. Stroked her back comfortable as and said you are not only one. We are all feeling sad. But we can't bring back life has to go on. This is how it is reality can be very harsh, but we have to accept it" (149). Nila wants to be freed from the life where no individual freedom is. She has already cleared that everyone can happy in free life. In this context, she remembers the events and states, "For Nila the sorrow was not for mouth but for three days. She was married and had gone into another family. Now she didn't have so many duties towards her mother. Anirban also maintained the rule faithfully. He was already drawing up the huge list for Molina's death ceremony" (150). Nila hates marriage because it appears as the tool to control over female. It is the starting point of legal prostitution. She argues that suicide is better than living in humiliation. She is not ready to surrender. She wants to struggle for existence and ready to accept death. In this regard, she presents an accounts of Mithu's life and says:

Mithu would be wiped off the face of this earth. No one would be hassled about the back ashes of her dark body. Mithu herself escape from the humiliation of

being dark. But her suicide brought even greater relief for her parents, her brother, who could now marry a suitable girl for a huge dowry. (155)

Above lines highlight the situations of women whose existence is measured with object and she is behaved with an object of entertainment. The idea is further cleared by the following lines, “Although the girls go away to their husbands they don’t forget their father and brothers. They’ll die for them they never covert their father’s property; if they do people don’t approve of them. Girls should be unselfish, unsetting, unspoiled, uncontroversial, unallied, undefiled, unassuming [...]” (156). Nila breaks her silence and searches her existence through remembering the past days when she is happier than now. The following narration states:

Nila gazed at the spreading pink tinge of the sunset indifferently and broke the silence , Data, Ma will come back one day. She’ll wash her feet at the tap, say she’d gone to Darjeeling, and ask if we all fine. At night she’ll tell stories of Darjeeling and feed us , she’ll fine were a red boarder sari smelling of mouth ball’s , sit on this field and sing to us like the old days.(160)

Nila plans to get rid from the boundaries of Kishan, shares happiness with Benior , a French man. She feels happy when she spends time with Benior, is a handsome French lover who shares happiness with her and says:

Nila turned did you say something to me?

Are you going to Paris a tourist?

No.’

Then’

To live'

What do you there study?

No work?

No.(164)

Banior gets basic information about Nila and her daily life than he involves with her which she describes in this way, "Benior pick up worthless body led her gently on a bed as soft as clouds and began to undress her slowly. You are so beautiful, Nila oh Nila , the lord made you with great care[ ...]"(170). He convinces her and she forgets every thing and dare the pleasure with him. In this regard, he states, "I don't think that Moniquir has a big heart to that she truly respects the people of Calcutta, Nila's words were enough to ignite Danielle who brought the roof down. You are a strange creature, Nila you just cannot appreciate anyone. How can you not praise someone like Monique (172). After getting much pleasure from Banoir she realizes her existence and compares herself with her deities and states:

A Bed was made for Nila in Chaital'puja room. She had to sleep amidst Lakshmi, Saraswati, Durga . She tossed turned all night long. The night would end and then the morning afternoon and finally the evening would limp around ; then she could dive into that sea of pleasure again. Nila started at the hands of the clock. Time had never moved so slowly for her. (177)

Above lines, highlight the Nila's perception of life and pleasure which help to determine the existence of a person. At that situation, she assimilates herself with the grand narrative of the world and remembers, "The name famous writer s artists who had once died aty the closeries des

liase werthe wtitten on the tablecloth under their plates: Baudelaries, Erazza pound, Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, and Samuel Bwackett etc.”(180). Nila and Banoirs share the sexual pleasure which is new and strange for Nila where she realizes the existence of her life. In this context, it is relevant to quote her accounts:

Then the break like nose kissed them and Benior’s tongue licked them. The nipples work up slowly and he watched without blinking. Lips came down on the aroused nipples, kissed them lightly and when they were fully aroused, reckless Benoir grazed them with his toungue as if they held some immortal fluid and said they were his cherries. (183)

Nila breaks the social norms by having sex with a French lover. Instead of having sex with Kishalnal, a married husband , she chooses French man as a sexual partner which shows that she is seeking her self existence. Moreover, she creates her self by making self directed choices. Nila remembers her past life at the time of feeling pleasure with Benior and states:

Nila was talked by humiliation, it talked in front of her, it flanked her as she walked. It held her against the wall and reeked hove within and without. Nila Now knew that what Benior had done, had nothing to do with love; he had enjoyed her body, just a lusty rapist would enjoy a stupid silly girl. Shames, Nila shame why don’t you die hang you like Mithu “(187)!

Mith is one of the Hindu girls who commit suicide for the sake of freedom and pleasure. Nila also explains her philosophy about the life of women and states “women walked around showing off their waxed, hairless legs, wearing backless dress. They walked and their breasts, their hips



swayed. All winter they had chewed on salads and maintained themselves, got rid of any flab and now they were showing off. It was summer, the enjoy ” (188). When Benoir and Nila share the sexual pleasure Nila asks question to Benoir :

Promising me something? what?

Why are you looking at the street? Look at me.’

Nila looked into his eyes again.

“are you upset?’ No.’ Tell me.

It’s nothing ‘. (201)

Nila thinks that she realizes her existential quest after being lover of Banior. She hates the marriage bounded love and likes enjoying with lover whom she chooses herself. In this regard, it is relevant to quote following lines:

“By now Nila knew that the French didn’t utter the word love very easily. They did it only when they loved truly. It wasn’t like back home, where a Bengali youth had to just catch a glimpse of a girl standing on a distant terrace, to fall in love with her , write a hundred poems without knowing or understanding her but prepared to give his life for her.(202).

The meaning of life is different for her when she gets love from a French lover. She finds life and movement in every object. She defines life in different angle. In this sense, she argues, “Life held little meaning for Nila now, yet she bought expensive things to decorate her home. Molina had never been able to decorate their home according to her wishes. It was always Arbin who

decided where the sofa or the bed would be and even what was to be cooked that day in the kitchen” (215).

At the end of the novel Benior and Nila separate from each other with great unanswerable question before that He express his philosophy of existentialism which is similar with the philosophy of Satra. In this regard, he says:

Benior’s tone was demanding, the demands of love. Being his lover meant sharing her thoughts as giving her body to him.

I’m thinking of Satre?

Yes, you’re Jean Paul Satre.

Benoir laughed. (264)

According to him, the meaning of life is guided by the existentialism quest of life. In this regard, he says, “Benior said, “These things have survived because we have preserved them. In their own countries they would not have lasted. Nila asks, “What would happen? She mused that they would have dug up the pyramids and brought them here”(129). She is ready to accept anything in her life because she has known the secret conspires of man which always guided to the female.

The life of human being is like vacuous being that get nothing. Philosophy of nothingness appears at the last part of novel which makes the research significant in itself. In this regard, it is relevant to quote the following lines:

“You are big zero, a vacuous being. I have seen many people but never one like you. You have sucked me dry, brunt me alive, ruined me ruined my family. I was

such as ass that I loved a lousy woman like you. You are worse then the worst of them. I shudder to even look at you. You are ugly dirty and revolting. Loving you was the biggest sin I ever committed. I hate myself for it.(289)

Above lines show the life of a people in the modern world where people live in nothing in the hope of getting something. Nila is one of those characters, one day Banior leaves her and she realizes that. In this context, it is relevant to quote these lines, “Benior walked out. Nila’s French lover walked out, husband man with his blue eyes blonde hair walked out. She lay on the floor for a long time she could her nothing but the sound of her own heartbeat. Her whole body ached. When she to up, she did four things (291). The novel ends with the existential questions of the world as well as life of human being which is guided by the modern existential philosophy of life such as freedom of choice.

## Chapter: Four

### Conclusion

Taslima Nasrin's *French lover* is a novel dealing with the existential quest of a Bengali girl in the patriarchal society. Nila both narrator and character with the unprecedented courage determinant and dynamism dares to go against long - established ideals and concepts. She has amazed the world by putting forward her strong ideas about the existence of life. Her attempt to liberate from boundaries is not a common event for her. She is cheated by male partner and get nothing in life.

In the novel, Nasrin has exposed the existential quest of Bengali girls who are victimized by males. In the beginning, the writer presents being married with a man, ten years older than her. She never talks with him. She and her husband, Kishan migrated from Calcutta to Paris where she meets a French lover. While living in Paris she realizes the values of life and freedom. For the sake of personal freedom, she is ready to do everything. She shares sexual pleasure with Benior which is the turning point of her life. After that, she hates male as well as marriage institution and questions the existence in the male dominated world. She feels happy at the beginning and asks questions herself about the existence of life and value of pleasure in life but she gets no answer. She again finds zero where there is no position of her although she struggles.

The women in traditional Hindu society do not get any chance to share ideas, emotions and feelings with their male members. The mother of Kishan was ill she cannot get treatment although her son is a doctor; like that a father who invests lot of money for daughter marriage but the money is given to in the hand of husband and the daughter gets anything. Women's situation in Bengali society forces them to commit suicide like Mithu. Mithu, one of the characters of the

novel, commits suicide because she wants to liberate herself from the humiliation. Nila tries to justify the cause of suicide and she is spiritually become bold to fight against the domination and ready to choose anything for the sake of existence.

Committing suicide is a way to get the self existence. It the final choice of human being which help to exist him in this world with certain essence. The female characters of the novel do not surrender with manmade tradition so some of them commit suicide and establish essence in this life.

The novel has also shown the existential choice and freedom of human beings in the world where all the living and non living objects and creatures are seeking their proper position in this vast universe. Nila is the mouthpiece of the writer from whom the existential philosophy of life is expressed. In the periphery of third world where the existence of women is appeared as great issue although, it is the burning problems of contemporary life.

In short, the novel highlights the existential issues of women who deny to accept the humiliation although the struggle is not complete as well. The philosophy of existentialism appears in the life a of Nila which forces them to do something in life. Values of individual freedom forces Nila to cut relationship with Kishan and established to the Benior. After being a lover of a French man, she knows the hidden meaning of life where she found nothing except zero.

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