

## Chapter 1

### Social Scenario in Upadhyay's *Buddha's Orphans*

#### Introduction

Samrat Upadhyay's novel, *Buddha's Orphan* is a social novel that depicts existential features in the modern characters as they disregard social norms and values to lead the life they want to have. The main argument of the present study is that the major characters quest their existence rising beyond the social norms and parameters. The culture and religious faith of Nepalese people are falsely portrayed in this novel through the means of so many characters. The major character Raja, Kaki, Ganga Da, Jamuna, Nilu, Ranjana and Pratemala are such characters who always try to behave on their own way without being bound by social norms and values. Several changes and improvements have occurred in the mindset of people and their culture. The human beings are all connected to one another in the field of suffering. Upadhyaya represents how Nepalese citizens are locked in the iron cage of their respective sufferings. The main argument of the present study is that the major characters quest their existence disobeying rules, norms and people. As we try to see in a simple way the name Raja, must be living in a abundance of luxuries but in the novel he have to suffer from the beginning to an end who is the protagonist of this novel. Where is his identity? What is things happening behind him so that he must face trouble from the starting to and end of the novel? Is Muwa have a right to break the social norms and value,? There are easily seen the social crisis, economical crisis, physical crisis, spiritual crisis political crisis, intellectual crisis as well as mental crisis. In fact none have a good vision over their life standard in the future and have a no proper guidance between them. All of these situation creates the existential crisis for their day to day life in this novel. When we analyses from the perspective of characters, setting, their behaviour

and the situation they are facing in everyday life. If we see closely the new interpretation digs beneath the surface and opens up a new approach to think of the novel at the heart of existential philosophy.

### **A Glimpse of the Novel**

Kathmandu, The capital city of Nepal is chosen as the setting of the novel. The different glimpses of lives of people living in Kathmandu are depicted in the novel. The characters in the novel struggle for freedom from tyranny, helplessness of orphans, lack of love and care in old age, corruption, and the clash between the interests of the youths and the old people. Constant political agitation is some of the things that are represented in the novel. The novel mainly concentrates on the birth, nurturing and upbringing of an orphan named Raja. Nepalese society is depicted as a typical society in which people's struggle for freedom from their miserable condition is frozen and has become spotlessly clean. Nepalese society tries to come out of the case of comfortable convention. But circumstances hardly stand in this favor. A woman, named Mohini, who is the mother of Raja, drowns in Rani Pokhari. Her son Raja becomes orphan. When the orphan infant is taken to the child care world run by the government, the responsible person scolds very bitterly to Kaki and Bokey Ba. The official person says that their child care center does not accommodate the orphan. The irresponsibility on the part of the holders of government offices is the distinguishing feature of Nepalese society. Ganga Da, who works in the Planning Commission, has fallen into the net of corruption. He constructs a large building with the money he takes illegally from the Commission.

In 1962 A.D. Kathmandu, a baby boy, just a few months old, is abandoned by his mother who then takes her own life by drowning. The infant is picked up by an old man, Bokey Ba, and taken to a nearby lady, Kaki, a woman who sells grilled corn on

the pavement. Finding no mother Kaki looks after the child, naming him Raja literally, king. She starts to raise the child as her own and does so until he is six year old. One day one customers, Ganga Da, offers her a servant job and a place to live, so her son can go to school. For the sake of the boy, Kaki accepts the position and housing.

Most of the Nepalese youths are depicted as aggressive and impulsive. Raja also quarrels aggressively with Ganga Da. He almost forgets that he is the adopted son of Ganga Da. Ganga Da is soft to his son and Kaki. But he too demonstrates his aggressive attitude and temperamental mentality. This is shown by his success to make the forged birth certificate of Raja by bribing the staff of Patan Hospital. He forcefully snatches Raja from his nurturing mother, Kaki. Worst of all, Jamuna is portrayed as the schizophrenic woman whose marriage with Ganga Da ruins Ganga Da's life. Jamuna is portrayed as the great burden and tension to Ganga Da.

Kaki becomes jealous, withdraws her son from school and leaves their home for another servant position at the home of Muwa, a lady who is recently widowed and often in a drunken stupor. Muwa's four year old girl Nilu attends St. Augustine's private school. Nilu and Raja spend much time together, playing and learning. Though two years younger Nilu, takes charge of her and Raja's activities. Her mother does not want her to play with a lower class child but Nilu ignores her requests. Raja runs away and shows up at Ganga Da and Jamuna's house. Ganga Da realizes that it is only Raja's presence that diminishes his wife's crazy mood. Ganga Da bribes officials in order to get documents showing Raja to be their son. He and his wife raise Raja; who attends a government school.

Several years later, Muwa's drunkenness and detachment, along with a suspension from school, leads Nilu to think about Raja, She surreptitiously seeks him

out. While teenagers Raja and Nilu become closer over several years and eventually elope, getting married at a nearby temple and setting up their own little household in a poorer area of the city without informing parents of their whereabouts. The landlady's daughter-in-law, Bhairavi, is very good to the newlyweds and she and Nilu strike up a particularly strong friendship. Nilu and Raja are happy in their marriage amidst meager surroundings. Ganga Da needs Raja as his wife's mental state leads them to go in and out of a mental hospital while Nilu's mother, with her erratic, untrusting boyfriend and alcoholic state, disapproves of her daughter's marriage, further distancing herself from Nilu.

Raja teaches at a school while Nilu unsuccessfully looks for work for quite some time until he briefly holds a job at a bookstore, and then lands an editorial job with possibilities for advancement. Ganga Da offers to help the couple out but Raja and Nilu decline until after they have a baby who they name Maitreya. When the baby is two they move to a house Ganga Da had built and rented out for some time. Their boy dies due to a fever and though Raja grieves openly, Nilu goes into a long state of grieving and depression. As part of her depression she keeps seeing images of their boy Maitreya.

Raja and Nilu drift apart and he moves out and lives with a younger woman, Jaya, a singer and musician. Nilu stays depressed while her mother continues to live in a debauched state. Nilu finds out about Raja's woman, becomes jealous, and eventually takes up with a man, Shiva, in order to use him as an instrument of revenge. With Nilu out for a walk, she steers Shiva towards her husband's and girlfriend's apartment. The two couples find themselves having tea at Raja's with the awkward, tentative exchange of the two couples waiting for disaster to happen. It does not occur but this scene ends Book I of the novel.

Nilu sends her husband off to America on a plane to search for their daughter Ranjana while she, on a hunch, believes her daughter is somehow back in Kathmandu. In a Kathmandu neighborhood a young woman in a black overcoat shows up at the place where Raja and Nilu first made their home; now it is an even more run-down place of rented rooms but Bahairavi, after her husband's death and her grown up children move away, rent upstairs rooms. The woman in the black overcoat turns out to be a pregnant Ranjana who, near exhaustion and close to birthing, rents a room. She had gotten pregnant by a man in Chicago, a one and only passing relationship, and had dropped out of college. She does not tell Amos, the black father, of her pregnancy and they had no further contact with each other. Somehow, with her guilt, she could not make herself tell her roommates or her parents as she hid herself away until she flew back to Kathmandu when she was more than eight months pregnant.

During the later stages of her pregnancy Ranjana, in her confused, isolated, and guilt-ridden state, had dreams and visions of a past she did not know, a woman glancing back at baby while she heads towards a pond and thrashes about in the water. Ranjana somehow thought and felt she was not living her own life. Meanwhile, Nilu, after frantically searching the city, finds her daughter at Bahairavi's. She arrives not only to find her daughter Ranjana, but is there in time to help with the birthing of a baby girl. She is also reunited with a long lost friend Bahairavi.

Since there is the projection of identity and existence in the novel, the traits and tenets of existentialism has a social impact and most of the characters in the novel suffer from the existential crisis. In this novel, people see the darkness in upcoming future even in the modern world. It is symbolic and ironic too because the main character's name is Raja, who must be rich with the abundance of luxury, but he is suffering for minor things, lodging, fooding and so on. Existentialism emphasizes

individual existence, freedom and choice. It is the view that humans define their own meaning in life, and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe. It focuses on the question of human existence, and the feeling that there is no purpose or explanation at the core of existence. It holds that, as there is no God or any other transcendent force, the only way to counter this nothingness (and hence to find meaning in life) is by embracing existence.

In the same way, Upadhyay also describes the Nepalese people as impulsive and impracticable. Ganga Da easily believes that bringing Raja into his home can help him to soften the schizophrenic wildness of his crazy wife. Nilu assumes that she will live a better life by eloping with Raja. All such decisions taken on short time being impulsive and temperamental turn out to be the real causes of their miseries.

This thesis has four chapters. The first chapter contains social scenario in *Buddha's Orphans* elaboration of hypothesis, brief introduction of author and his stylistic trait, views of different critics and the point of departure. The second chapter deals with the philosophy of existentialism. The third chapter presents the projection Revelation of existentialism in the characters that is revealed through the novel. The last chapter includes the existential crisis as a conclusive findings of the research.

### **Review of Literature**

There are many explicit and implicit evidences in the text to support the claim that Upadhyay's method of representing the Nepalese society is entirely problematic. To him, Kathmandu is shapeless, exotic and inscrutable which is isolated from the progressive waves of modernity. To the author, Kathmandu and the country are no less than a shapeless, mysterious and exotic land where people act, think and responding such a way that it is really difficult to know them. Concerning the novel, *Buddha's Orphans*, Rabi Thapa opines:

*Buddha's Orphans* is ambitious in a way perhaps no work of fiction by a Nepali writing in English has been. It spans almost the entirety of post-Rana Nepal, ending with the royal massacre of 2001, and in doing so follows the lifelines of four generations in Kathmandu. An abandoned orphan, Raja grows up next to Rani Pokhari, the site of his unknown mother's suicide. (8)

The above lines prove this novel as a very ambitious Nepali writing in English. It talks about post Rana time of ending with the royal massacre of 2001 A.D. And also weaves the story from generations in Kathmandu, where an orphan boy, Raja marries a girl from privilege, Nilu.

Upadhyay's treatment of Buddhist conception of human suffering is also painted with orientalist biases. In the Buddhist philosophy of sufferings, Buddha points out the paths to the liberation from the inescapable tragedy of life. But Upadhyay sees Buddhist notion of suffering opposite to his view. Upadhyay only shows suffering and pain in the life of character without any resolution. The journeys of the characters in *Buddha's Orphans*---Raja, Kaki, Nilu, Ganga Da, Jamuna, Mohini, Shiva, Ranjana---intersect and intertwine in ways that takes away at the notion that people are self-enclosed entities merely running after our own narrow interests. By the novel's conclusion, it becomes clear that there is no escape from how tightly people are bound to one another, whether they live in prosperous America or poor Nepal, and that there is no escape from suffering. This is what Gautama Buddha discovered under a tree in Bodhgaya, India, ages ago, and this fundamental truth permeates *Buddha's Orphans*.

Adhikari highlights:

*Buddha's Orphans* is viewed by different critics at various levels.

While attempting to depict the experience of south Asian community, its diversity, political upheaval, struggle and hope in *Buddha's Orphans*, Upadhyay characterizes Ranjana as a symbol to explore the issues of migration. Personal hybridity and cultural assimilation into this globalized world. Ranjana born in a politically unstable country, migrated to the US with some hope of future and sadness of losing her family, experiences different cultural circumstances. (5-6)

These lines portrays that the life of Nepalese youth follow of migrating to the western countries to fulfill their dreams and desires. Exchanging culture and knowledge as well as diversity of people. Due to the condition of excessive political agitation of Nepal and its situation many students dreams for the foreign countries for their study and work as they wish for the bright future ahead.

Ligaya Mishan is another prominent critic of Samrat Upadhyay. According to him, the harsh reality is handled in this novel in a fantastic way. Of course, there is a difference between the practical reality and the reality introduced in a work of art. But Mishan argue that Samrat has not given a chance to feel this difference. Ligaya Mishan gives the following remarks:

In ambition and heft, however, *Buddha's Orphans* is a departure for Upadhyay. The story traverses half a century of political and social upheaval in Nepal, from the 1960 A.D.to the present day. From the opening scene, in which a young mother abandons her baby and then commits suicide, the novel takes the aerial view, providing geographical coordinates and historical context. The year is 1962 A.D; the child is left on the parade ground, site of future anti-government demonstrations; the girl drowns herself in a pond built to console a



queen mourning a lost son. (31)

It becomes clear that for Ligya Mishan, *Buddha's Orphans* differs drastically from other previous novels. Historical sites and monuments are portrayed as though they are the sites where any dangerous and disastrous activities take place. A woman commits suicide in the pond that has historical importance. The common incidence of the events having serious political importance are mentioned in the novel.

Upadhyay shows the lives of poor and middle-class people. Middle class people of Nepal try to adjust themselves in their day to day life. They do not have new things to use. They use one item in replacement of others. When Maitreya, son of Raja and Nilu, was very small; he did not get any new clothes for his care. They were unable to buy new cotton clothes. It proves that Upadhyay inspects of real life of middle class people.

Kanak Dixit view *Buddha's Orphans* from different lights and reminds us that the picture of Kathmandu before 1990 A.D. Upadhyay has gone to some effort to recreate the setting in which his characters take root. And it is instructive to observe how he incrementally exposes the chaos and shapelessness of the modern-day capital. Dixit makes the following disclosure with respect to the novel, *Buddha's Orphans*:

The very strangeness of a tale is often that which warrants its narration. Whatever charm there is in Upadhyay's straightforward, detailed prose is diminished by the sloppy editing, which is an affront to Nepali audiences. If there is a true orphan in this tale, it has to be the novel itself. Thus we are introduced, obliquely, to Raja, as the foundling is named by his indigent rescuers. In literature, there's something liberating about being an orphan. (47)

Wayne Dyer, the noted reviewer and critic, finds out the subversive elements in the

novel *Buddha's Orphans*. In the Nepalese society where no woman dares to express her desire for another man openly, Nilu freely begins to live with a man other than her husband. Along with such an immoral act, the fallout of the underground Maoist insurgency is also mentioned in the novel. Dyer expresses the following opinions:

Nilu takes to the streets to hunt her down. Meanwhile, Nepal shudders as caste lines and gender roles break down and protesters jam the streets. Occasionally Upadhyay seems to be hurrying through a checklist of major events: the Maoist rebels, “with their old, clunky rifles,” make a brief cameo appearance, as does the crown prince who gunned down his entire family, precipitating a constitutional crisis.

(17)

The sober and sacred views and norms are sharply mocked by Upadhyay in *Buddha's Orphans*. Tradition no longer works as the burden. Most of the people with awakening have started crossing the lines. The restrictive and suffocating forces of society are challenged by most of the youths. Such emerging acts and spirit show how the Nepalese society is walking towards liberation from the burden of tradition.

Although critics have examined the novel *Buddha's Orphans* from different perspectives and arrive at different findings, none of them deal with the issue of existentialism. This research work attempts to explore the role of Raja in every corner of the book from existential point of view. He suffers from the birth to end of the novel. In fact the most of the characters are suffered more or less facing the critical situation from the different perspectives. Here, most of the characters suffer from minor problem such as; they have to suffer just to make hand and mouth connect in this novel. In the subsequent chapters, much discussion will be on the revelation of the existential crisis in *Buddha's Orphans* by Upadhyay

## Chapter 2

### The Philosophy of Existentialism

#### Kierkegaard and the Concept of Subjective Existence

The abstract enters into a thought world of conceptualizing and theorizing; this is the sociological equivalent of theory without praxis. The delusion of abstract thinking, according to Kierkegaard, is that the individual thinks in regard to existence when one ought simply to be existing. The moment one seeks to objectively analyze, the self-detaches; it abstracts from concrete life and loses identity as an existing individual. For Kierkegaard that implies that the analysis itself becomes supremely important. That is the point about abstract thought he makes with this statement: "it is thinking where there is no thinker... existence is not thoughtless, but in existence thought is an alien medium" (332). It shows that, for Kierkegaard the existence for 'me' is important unlike Descartes he believes that one exists therefore he is.

Kierkegaard was the first person who used the word existence in a religious sense. His main interest was the possibility of man's self-realization. According to him, to what extent can Man realize himself by withdrawing from the irresponsibility, superficiality, and forgetfulness of everyday life? So, for Kierkegaard existence is the attainment of self-possession in the spirituality directed and determined life of the individual.

Existential sociologists challenge the long established notion that Kierkegaard is an irrationalism. His arguments against objectivity and his praise of individuality and subjectivity can be distilled from his recently translated *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. That is the work that contains his polemical idea that "truth is subjectivity.

Kierkegaard's position can be clarified by calling the former "scientific

knowledge" and the latter "existential knowledge." Scientific knowledge strives for objectivity. It includes propositions from the natural and social sciences, all those areas of study which aim at objective truth. Existential knowledge is subjective, the knowledge of human existence. Kierkegaard's focus is on the inescapable role of subjectivity in objective knowledge, a key theme in existential sociology.

Kierkegaard illustrated the difference in objectivity and subjectivity through his familiar attack on the Danish Christian Church. He often asserted that the people of his day claimed to have knowledge about God, but no knowledge of God. In other words, there was no subjective interest, and therefore no compassion and praxis, behind their objective theories. They called themselves "Christians" merely because they were born into "Christendom" (where all citizens were baptized Lutherans). In Kierkegaard's analysis, they had scientific knowledge, but no subjective knowledge. He represents it this way in his journal:

Imagine a country where generally everybody is able to swim—but swimming is understood to mean putting on a life-jacket or tube and then going through the motions of swimming. That is called swimming—and a good deal of attention is paid to who can, as they say, swim the best, make the most beautiful motions, etc. If a genuine swimmer came to such a country he would say: You are not swimming at all; this whole business of determining who makes the most beautiful motions is pure nonsense, for not a one of them is swimming.

(520)

Kierkegaard's notion of existential knowledge breaks with the epistemological tradition that placed a premium on "knowledge about." One example of this kind of thinker is Descartes. His *cogito ergo sum* is an attempt to prove existence by the fact

that one is presently thinking. Kierkegaard maintains that the Cartesian dictum resolves itself into pure tautology:

If the I in cogito am understood to be an individual human being, then the statement demonstrates nothing: I am thinking ergo I am, but if I am thinking, no wonder, then, that I am; after all, it has already been said, and the first consequently says even more than the last. (317)

Kierkegaard seeks to methodologically undercut the subject-object dichotomy by positing a way of knowing, which is existence itself. This of course cannot be done in the sense of transcending the logical law of no contradiction, but represents an attitude aiming at not separating, but preserving the union between the known and the knower.

Existentialism came in to prominence particularly in German and France as a philosophical movement or tendency after the world wars. The world war gave rise to widespread feelings of despair and separation from the established order and gave and rises to the term absurd. Existentialism emphasizes on the existence of human being, the lack of meaning and purpose in life and the solitude of human existence. It is based on individual experience rather than abstract thought and knowledge which are for grounded in this philosophy.

### **Sartre and the Freedom of Choice**

For Sartre, each agent is endowed with unlimited freedom. This statement may seem puzzling given the obvious limitations on every individual's freedom of choice. Clearly, physical and social constraints cannot be overlooked in the way in which we make choices. This is however a fact which Sartre accepts insofar as the for-itself is facticity. And this does not lead to any contradiction insofar as freedom is not defined by an ability to act. Freedom is rather to be understood as characteristic of the nature of consciousness, i.e. as spontaneity. But there is more to freedom. For all that Pierre's

freedom is expressed in opting either for looking after his ailing grandmother or joining the French Resistance, choices for which there are indeed no existing grounds, the decision to opt for either of these courses of action is a meaningful one. That is, opting for the one or the other is not just a spontaneous decision, but has consequences for the for-itself. To express this, Sartre presents his notion of freedom as amounting to making choices, and indeed not being able to avoid making choices.

Sartre's conception of choice can best be understood by reference to an individual's original choice, as we saw above. Sartre views the whole life of an individual as expressing an original project that unfolds throughout time. This is not a project which the individual has proper knowledge of, but rather one which she may interpret (an interpretation constantly open to revision). Specific choices are therefore always components in time of this time-spanning original choice of project

The individual self is an important theme in existentialist philosophy. It is often said that we are self-conscious beings, and this is exactly what an existential being is, one who is self-conscious. However, it is not always clear what this means. Most existentialists believe that man is free and Jean-Paul Sartre also agrees with this view. "I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free" (567). Even when man tries to refuse freedom, he is still making a conscious, free decision. It is his choice to give another being the opportunity to make a choice, and he must still be responsible for that decision. Sartre goes on to explain, "Human reality may be defined as a being such that in its being its freedom is at stake because human reality perpetually tries to refuse to recognize its freedom" (568). We are all free beings; although, we do not all accept this freedom. Freedom is the actual being of man and how he constructs himself, and therefore, is also our consciousness of

being. This is because the acts of freedom are not distinct from my being, but “it is a choice of me in the world and by the same token it is a discovery of the world” (594).

We are always threatened by the burden of having to choose ourselves. Our construction of our own reality and being rests upon our freedom to choose that reality and being. Sartre also believes, though, that freedom is not without responsibility the following lines show:

In this sense the responsibility of the for-itself is overwhelming since he is the one by whom it happens that there is a world; since he is also the one who makes himself be, then whatever may be the situation in which he finds himself, the for-itself must wholly assume this situation with its peculiar coefficient of adversity, even though it be insupportable. He must assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it, for the very worst disadvantages or the worse threats which can endanger my person have meaning only in and through my project; and it is on the ground of the engagement which I am that they appear. It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, or what we are. (707-8)

This responsibility is not resignation to our freedom. It is the accepting of the consequences of our freedom. Sartre also argues that there is no non-human situation. It thus follows that man is always what is happening to him and how he reacts to the consequences. “Everything that happens to me is mine”(708). The existential individual will embrace freedom and own up to all of his choices, regardless of the consequences. We are responsible for everything that occurs in our own lives because

we make decisions on what to do and how to react to others' choices.

Following this view of freedom and responsibility, Sartre believes that there are no accidents in a life. Every event that happens in my life is "in my image and I deserve it" (708) because I have chosen it. Most of the time, however, Sartre believes that we flee from freedom through anguish and bad faith. In this attempt to overcome our freedom, we lie to ourselves about who we are and what we are.

Sartre defines anguish as the consciousness of one's own freedom.

Anguish is a type of self-consciousness and is experienced by man when he realizes that any conduct is possible. It is his choice and his responsibility as to which conduct is made actual. He literally has the freedom to choose any action, and he must accept the consequences for those actions. Anguish is different from fear in that "fear is fear of beings in the world whereas anguish is anguish before me. (65)

It shows that for Sartre the relation of the self to the others, and to see others in relation to the self is existence. You can fear or be afraid of death, but anguish occurs when you are afraid of being afraid. You become filled with anguish before yourself in this situation. In this way, Sartre Says "A situation provokes fear if there is a possibility of my life being changed from without; my being provokes anguish to the extent that I distrust myself and my own reactions in that situation." (65)

Most of the time, we flee freedom by using bad faith. In order to understand how most individuals use this mechanism to escape the anguish caused by freedom, we must first fully understand what bad faith encompasses. Sartre states that bad faith is the attitude "Which is such that consciousness instead of directing its negation outward turns it toward itself?" (67) This can be identified with falsehood in that bad faith is a lie to oneself. The essence of the lie implies in fact that the liar actually is in



complete possession of the truth which he is hiding.

A man does not lie about what he is ignorant of; he does not lie when he spreads an error of which he himself is the dupe; he does not lie when he is mistaken. The ideal description of the liar would be a cynical consciousness, affirming truth within himself, denying it in his words, and denying that negation as such. (87)

In the instance of bad faith, the person sees the truth and denies that truth at the same time. The person guilty of bad faith is lying to himself about his own facticity. The one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth.

Sartre gives the example of a homosexual to illustrate bad faith. He attempts to show that bad faith involves distinguishing what I am for others (my essence, or facticity), and what I am for myself (my freedom, or transcendence) and, at the same time, affirming that what I am for myself is my essence. He puts:

Homosexual frequently has an intolerable feeling of guilt, and his whole existence is determined in relation to this feeling. One will readily foresee that he is in bad faith. In fact it frequently happens that this man, while recognizing his homosexual inclination, while avowing each and every particular misdeed which he has committed, refuses with all his strength to consider himself 'a paederast. (107)

In this example, the subject does not want to be seen as an object by others. He realizes that he is a homosexual for others; however, he does not feel that homosexuality is an objectifying quality.

He could honestly claim that he is not a homosexual for-himself. "He has an obscure but strong feeling that a homosexual is not a homosexual as this table is a

table or a red-haired man is red-haired.” (107) He makes a claim of not being in the same way of being.

He understands “not being” as “not-being-in-itself.” “He lays claim to “not being a pederast” in the sense in which this table is not an inkwell.” (107)

This makes him guilty of bad faith. Bad faith is not a problem for the existential being. “If man is what he is, bad faith is forever impossible and candor ceases to be his ideal and becomes instead his being.” (101) The person that affirms his freedom and overcomes anguish has no need for the use of bad faith because He accepts who he is and that he has made what he is through his freedom. For the existential individual, there is no need to oscillate between facticity and transcendence, because they are equal entities.

### **Camus and the Realization of Absurdity**

The existential man is also what Albert Camus calls the absurd man. Camus’ works are infused with the theme of the absurdity of life. Camus begins *The Myth of Sisyphus* by saying “there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy” (3). Camus is interested in the individual’s choice that life is not worth living. He is concerned both with the relevance and consequences that occur due to the existence of absurdity. For Camus, absurdity is alienation between man and his life, and this is both an emotional and intellectual alienation. This information is between man’s life and the questions he has no answers for. He says:

...in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This

divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity ( 6)

This divorce between man and his life is precisely what the absurd is. The absurd can be an event that for which man has no explanation. It is the questions in our lives that we cannot find any plausible answer for.

It is here that the question arises whether or not life is worth living. Similarly, Camus explains this further.

So long as the mind keeps silent in the motionless world of its hopes, everything is reflected and arranged in the unity of its nostalgia. But with its first move this world cracks and tumbles; an infinite number of shimmering fragments is offered to the understanding. We must despair of ever reconstructing the familiar, calm surface which would give us peace of heart. (18)

This lack of understanding causes despair or, as Sartre calls it, nausea. Once we recognize this lack of understanding it is almost impossible to overcome. Camus goes on to say that “What is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart.” (21) This is precisely the cause of despair. As humans, we yearn for understanding and a rational explanation of the universe, but the absurd takes control of our lives and robs us of any possible clarity.

Camus believes that once absurdity is recognized, it becomes a passion and that there is happiness in realizing the absurd. The absurd man is no longer bound by the need to gain an understanding of the world. When you find the absurd, you give up the illusion that there are answers to the universe. You give up your search for the ultimate understanding of the universe. “A man who has become conscious of the

absurd is forever bound to it. A man devoid of hope and conscious of being so has ceased to belong to the future” (32). The absurd man is completely free and has found his existential freedom. This freedom comes from the realization that we cannot find meaning in the universe. He is no longer restricted by the future. This individual cannot escape the absurd, and it is impossible for him to ignore it. Once you have recognized the absurd, you cannot forget its place in the world.

The word Existence is the key concept in Existentialism. It is used in this philosophy in a very special sense. The existentialist uses existence to refer specifically to human existence. There is a common belief that only a concrete thing can exist. Existentialists also support this view and describe man as a concrete individual capable of being an existent. The Existentialist considers that to be an existent one has to be capable of being conscious that one exists. In this sense man alone can exist.

## Chapter 3

### The Revelation of Existential Crisis

#### Existential Crisis and Discovery of Self

The research is that Upadhyay's *Buddha's Orphans* presents Nepalese culture and the Nepalese people's religious. He portrays Nepalese people and their behaviors and activities. Kaki is one of the characters of this novel and Upadhyay portrays her highly temperamental. Out of her maternal affection, she does wrong judgment by nurturing an orphan infant because she is too poor to nurture him.

There are several reasons to clarify the term existential crisis. First of all Raja himself is facing a great trouble from the beginning to an end. Although, he is named as a Raja but he suffers from the womb to an end of his living, for his living, studying, expenditure name for him and he never is able to know his families. What can be the bigger issue than that of existential crisis? On the other hand Kaki, who is Raja's nurturing mother, she was kicked by her own son, what can be the bigger issue for the matter of existential crisis. Bokey Ba himself doesn't have his identity; he is in the verge of identity crisis. Muwa's husband death in youth in a car accident and compelled to live with liquor and with the half- aged man with Sumit. Is the society allowing her to live with the man without marrying in the same house openly? Is it not the great proof of existential crisis? Jamuna lives in a depression because of her cannot give birth to any child. Is Jamuna cannot be cured permanently? To be fair all the characters from the novel suffered more or less from the existential crisis from the beginning to an end. To be true one cannot find anyone living together with the happiness and solitary life. In fact, they do not have a good co-ordination each-other, such as mother and son does not have a fine relationship. It proved for that from the relationship of Kaki and her son's relation and Ganga Da's and his mother. If they are

happy in their home why should two mothers compelled to leave home for and senior age, when they need a extreme help. At the end they don't obey any of the relation and they does not have a respect for their elder and love for the younger.

Similarly, Bokey Ba puts the unknown and unidentified baby on Kaki's lap and abandons. Ganga Da marries a woman named Jamuna who is schizophrenic. His simple belief in arrange marriage brings him to the path of tragic life. Throughout his life he has to live with a mad woman disregarding the happiness of conjugal life. Though on the surface level of the novel he presents political upheaval of Nepal from 1960 A.D. To the present situation along with the story of young lovers. Through various issues, characters' portrayal, their behavior and setting, we can find the notion of existentialism.

Characters like Kaki and Bokey Ba are represented as very poor Nepalese in the condition of homelessness. Bokey Ba dies due to the shivered cold, lack of shelter, care and medicine. Kaki also makes her livelihood by selling corn in Ratna Park, who is abandoned by her own son and daughter-in-law and she is left homeless. One morning, Kaki's son Kicks her out of the house. His harsh treatment is unexpected. He complains her of stealing money from his mattress. The rest of the day Kaki roams the city with her belongings. She is in too weak condition to carry her belongings, and she roams in search of shelter. There are sufficient evidences in this novel, which illustrate that representation of beliefs and customs of Nepalese people for existentialist. Ganga Da is a government employee. He works in planning commission. He has constructed a house by using money which he misused from government fund. Although he is prosperous and rich, he is not happy but is in reality of pathetic condition. His wife is schizophrenic. Her activities and reaction puts Ganga Da in distress. His mad wife reacts in an unexpected way. She has become

burden to him. She is a sterile woman. Ganga Da is carrying a burden of his wife's schizophrenia and sterility.

All the families he portrays in this novel face problems regarding social norms and values. In some family, daughters elope, in some mother is drunkard and irresponsible toward own children, in some son kicks his old mother, in some, women are mad and burden to her own family, in some, girl dies of illegal relationship in young age.

So, Upadhyay hardly deals with the speciality of Nepalese family positively and sensitively. To him, Nepalese families are weak and fragile. Such biased representation of Nepalese society by author is unacceptable. To him, this city Ganga Da is also a resident of the same city and he is so cunning and fraud that he snatches other peoples' children and makes his own by making duplicate document of birth certificate. He snatches Raja away from Kaki, who has nurtured Raja when he was infant. He bribes the staff of Patan Hospital to make forge birth certificate of Raja to cure his schizophrenic wife. So, in this city, this sort of people are dwelling who can cheat and trick other people very easily. People are fighting against monarchy. There is always strike and normal life is always disturbed, poor people's lively wood is very badly disturbed. Due to strike in Kathmandu valley, Nilu's Maitreya dies untimely because of lack of treatment on time. In the same city, youths with progressive and democratic consciousness are demanding reform and multiparty democracy. But in the same city, some blind followers of king are crying that they need their king -god because they worship king as the incarnation of Lord Bishnu. Upadhyay portrays the city of Kathmandu torn between ideological superstition and political modernism.

The journeys of the characters in *Buddha's Orphans* Raja, Kaki, Nilu, Ganga Da, Mohini, Shiva, Ranjana intersect and intertwine in ways that chip away at the

notion that we are self-enclosed entities merely chasing after our own narrow interests. By the novel's conclusion, it becomes clear that there is no escape from how tightly. We are bound to one another whether we live in prosperous America or poor Nepal, and that there is no escape from suffering.

Kaki is helpless character in her own house, Ganga Da's wife, Jamuna is schizophrenic. Ganga Da's mother is too much spiritual and leaves all the material things and leads the life of Saint. And most of the female characters are represented as lecherous creatures only. To exemplify this, we can take the name of Muwa. She is a 'widow' who lost her husband in an accident in her youthful age. She is very prosperous in terms of material possession. She is living with her daughter Nilu and starts having relationship with a boy Sumit, who is half an age younger than her. She is enjoying living together with Sumit. She is drunkard and gambler at the same time. The important thing is that living together is not practiced in Nepalese society. But Upadhyay shows Nepalese women living together with their respective male partner. Nilu also elopes with Raja without the consent of family. And her daughter Ranjana also returns from America with a child of Habsi on her womb. Not only this, Mohini, who is Raja's dead mother has such story. She bears child before her marriage which is against Nepalese social norms and values and she is compelled to commit suicide in Ranipokhari. Such representation of female character by Upadhyay clarifies that either Nepalese women are harmfully spiritual or embarrassingly lecherous.

So, the journey from essence to existence finds its value in this work of Upadhyay. All these evidences clarify that the author shows his Existential attitude while portraying Nepalese society and culture.

Most areas of Kathmandu are represented as land inhabited by freaks and fakirs. The socially alienated youths loiter irrationally and insanely on the streets of



Kathmandu. Kathmandu seems to be alien land of freak and fakir. Buses and vans that drive on the road are not in systematic order. There is no systematic rule and regulation while managing things. The following lines justify the point:

In Freak Street, dreadlocked hippies with long beards and baggy corduroys hung about, looking stoned and happy. A heavy smell of ganja and has permeated the air. A multi-colored van sat outside a shop, and a girl in a long, flowing frock, a cigarette in her hand, was arguing with a Nepali shopkeeper, probably unhappy over a business deal. From the second floor of a house, the steady, rhythmic beat of reggae, lending the argument below an almost sensual tone are fine and charming. Nearby, a black man in a crew cut chatted with a saffron-robed sadhu, explaining to him that he was an American marine. The sadhu, fingering his dirty beard, was nodding. (149)

The above lines present Kathmandu valley as the dwelling place of fakirs, freaks and saintly motorcyclists. Kathmandu is not the place where rational and pragmatic people live. It is just the shelter of those who have one screw loose.

In this novel, entire Kathmandu valley is represented as a place in which many unprecedented anarchic things take place. Kathmandu is anarchic and amorphous. At any time government properties can be destroyed. Institutions and buildings of public importance are burned on the spur of moment. The following descriptive part portrays Kathmandu valley as a volatile and unpredictable place:

Soon after Nilu and Raja sat for their SLC exams, the city exploded. Some students were hauled around the city in pushcarts, a garland of shoes around their necks, their faces blackened. The Royal Nepal Airlines office in New Road, right across the street from the parade

ground where the Rana autocrats had gathered their soldiers for pompous and useless ceremonies a century ago, became a focal point of the public discontent. Cars were torched and further up the road the buildings of the government newspapers were set on fire. (150)

Disgruntled students set fire on cars and other public properties. It appears that they have no control over their impulse and anger. Unaware of the consequence of their aggressive actions, the disgruntled groups set fire and create agitation and public protest. The government administration is too weak to impose harsh and punitive measures to control such kinds of aggressive activities. In the backward and least developed country like Nepal, government is not able to impose strong rules and disciplines.

In this novel, the relationship between Raja and Nilu indicates many things. There is huge gap between them. Raja is an orphan boy who grows in a rich man's house due to Ganga Da's help. Nilu is born and brought up in rich family. Regardless of Raja's anonymous background, she does come close to him. Their nearness and intimacy sparks sexual interest. They involve in passionate sexual activities which expose their impulsive and impetuous habits. The following lines show their maddening sexual spree and impulsive exchange of passionate gestures:

Before now, they had petted each other in alley, he had sucked her breasts in his house in Lainchour, and she had given him a hand job. But they had not gone beyond these. One time, in Lainchour; with Ganga Da and Jamuna Mummy away to Manakamana, they had come very close: Raja's pants were down to his knees and she had taken off her t-shirt and her panties, but just as he readied himself to enter her, she moved away from him and said, Raja, no, let's wait. He hadn't

argued with her, just held her tight. (158)

In this novel, even the attraction and love between young boys and girls are portrayed as loveless bare attraction based on sexual attraction only. The mutual exchange of affection and care is represented as just the sexual attraction between young girls and boys. It appears that affection, sentiment and care are no longer important to human relationship. The existing evidences from the text suggest that Nepalese people are devoid of affection. They just show their vulgar sexual hunger. The sole aim is to enjoy the instant gratification of vulgar sexual pleasure.

In this novel, Upadhyay does not portray Buddhist monasticism as the holy shrine; rather it is represented as a place in which sexually repressive monks live. Swayambhunath is the famous Buddhist shrine. Upadhyay reproduces Swayambhunath as the residence where Buddhist monks take voyeuristic delight by looking at the girls who come on a date with their boyfriends. The monastery and its surroundings are represented with derogatory view of author toward Nepalese religion and spirituality. It is desecrated and profaned by the irresponsible remarks of the writer. The following lines show how Upadhyay desecrates and profanes holy shrines like Swayambhunath:

Sometimes in their walks they ventured as far as Swayambhunath temple to the west, climbed the hundreds of steps that would leave them breathless. From the top, surrounded by monkeys, they would watch the city. Buddhist boy-monks in saffron robes would stand a few feet away, their arms crossed at their chests, gazing longingly at Nilu. These young monks, mindful of their doctrines on the impermanence of desires, only watched, but the bands of young men in the street corners teased, heckled, and badgered. (173)

This extract illustrates how the novelist has spoiled the spiritual significance of holy shrine, Swayambhunath. Of course, youths visit Swayambhunath temple for relaxation. But Upadhyay says that monks who live there are voyeuristic. They take voyeuristic delight by looking at the private parts of girls who come on date with their boyfriends. To represent holy place as the corrupted site of dating and voyeurism is to belittle and weaken spiritual importance of holy shrines. On the one hand, he depicts entire Nepalese people as absurdly religious. On the other, he desecrates temples like Swayambhunath.

An existential crisis is a moment at which an individual questions if his/her life has meaning, purpose, or value. It may be commonly, but not necessarily, tied to depression or inevitably negative speculations on purpose in life. This issue of the meaning and purpose of human existence is a major focus of the philosophical tradition of existentialism. An existential crisis may often be provoked by a significant event in the person's life—psychological trauma, marriage, separation, major loss, the death of a loved one, a life-threatening experience, a new love partner, psychoactive drug use, adult children leaving home, reaching a personally significant age, etc. Usually, it provokes the sufferer's introspection about personal mortality, thus revealing the psychological repression.

Samrat Upadhyay's fiction has tended to be small in scale, charting the infinitesimal tremors of middle-class angst. That his characters happen to live in Katmandu instead of, say, Bloomington, Indiana where Upadhyay, who was born and raised in Nepal, now makes his home is at times almost incidental. The worrying, the obsessive nostalgia, the muffled ache: it's all distressingly familiar.

*Buddha's Orphans* is a departure for Upadhyay. The story traverses half a century of political and social upheaval in Nepal, from the 1960A.D. To the present

day. From the opening scene, in which a young mother abandons her baby and then commits suicide, the novel takes the floating view, providing geographical coordinates and historical context. The year is 1962A.D. The child is left on the parade ground, site of future anti-government demonstrations; the girl drowns herself in a pond built to console a queen mourning a lost son.

Raja, as the foundling is named by his poor rescuers. Raja ultimately ditches the servant woman who raises him; becomes the doted-on only son in a middle-class family; gets a good education; marries an upper-class girl; and, after a few years of feckless reflection, blunders into a career as a journalist.

As a hero, Raja isn't wholly satisfying. He's a bit of problem, even to himself. More fully realized is his wife, Nilu, a child of privilege but a fellow orphan in spirit. Nilu also takes charge of her destiny at an early age, dropping out of her privileged convent school and running off to find Raja, low-class boy. Later, while Raja lies in bed, Nilu goes to work. When their marriage falters, she toys with a younger man. Years later, when her adult daughter disappears, Nilu takes to the streets to hunt her down.

In the end, Upadhyay is most effective in close-up, as when Nilu consults a lama with a sideline in real estate, or tries ganja and notes beatifically how the air is lighter and sweet at the same time. When she simply falls into bed with her husband, in what may be some of the happiest marital sex scenes in recent fiction.

So, there is Existentialism in this work of Upadhyay. All these evidences clarify that the author shows his Existentialism attitude while portraying Nepalese society and culture. The novel *Buddha's Orphans* represents Nepalese society and Nepalese culture. Kathmandu valley is portrayed as the exotic city that is torn between the temptation of modernity and the burden of tradition. Upadhyay depicts

Nepalese families as if they are loose and fragile. No coherent normative forces bind Nepalese society. The family of Ganga Da is on the verge of disintegration. His wife, Jamuna is insane and schizophrenic. Her fit of schizophrenia tortures Ganga Da severely. Kaki's son kicks her from his house. Even the educated ladies like, Nilu and Prateema profess belief in superstitious practice. Muwa is a drunkard and gambler women who enjoys living together with half age younger boy being irresponsible toward her daughter Nilu. Ganga Da's mother seems mature but she was not happy being with her families so that she left home to Ashram, transferring all the wealth to her son. All the characters does not have a good company as well as good guidance from the child, Nilu was a bold girl from the age of four, but being a rich daughter turns to poor wife due to wrong decision. Ranjana is the modern girl with the education but she also faces a miserable life having unfair relation before marriage while she was in US. Due to the reason of giving birth to Kali before marriage, she faces a lot of criticism from the Nepalese society, but she is struggling her life on. On the other hand Ganga and Jamuna is Religious River they must match in the religious manner. Several years have gone of marriage that couple cannot have a child yet in the hope of having child and Ganga Da's mother have an only question when I will be able to see the grandchild. She have also some hope and faith of being grandmother in the future. They are keeping some hope for the better days ahead in the future.

### **The Picture of Fragmentation**

As Sartre claims that the discovery of determined conditions does not come from the acceptance of day to day activities or from internal perspective. Only saying "our life is determined, so we have no choice but to accept it" never brings the discovery of realization. Only the external perspectives lead to self-discovery of

determined conditions. We have to realize the life as an integrated from, at the same time detaching ourselves from the banalities of life. The true meaning of life is revealed in the reaction of the internal and external perspectives. It seems non existence can best be described as being caught between two worlds. By realizing that oneself does not belong to either one or the other world, namely neither to the one of the intellect or of the academia or to the world as defined by common people and their everyday chores while struggling to just survive, the impossibility to exist becomes a real threat. What outlets, alternatives or possible exists from such an 'existential crisis' can be found in time, that is before being too late, that depends on circumstances, mind set but also possibilities to discuss the issues with someone who seeks to understand first of all and avoids making any judgments, in particular crude ones.

The novelist Upadhyay portrays the mother-son relationship in an unusual manner. A mother who lives on her earning made by selling corn on pavement has to meet an unexpected response from her son and daughter-in-law. Mother is embittered by her son and nagging daughter-in-law. The traditional stereotype that there is constant quarrel and misunderstanding between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is perfectly reflected in this novel. The fragmentation in relationship shows the sense of alienation and meaninglessness.

Why have you to given up on your marriage like this? What is the point of remaining marriage if you're each going to go your own way? "In anger, he had then suggested that they get divorce which wasn't, of course, what he really wanted. But he'd say it only as a desperate attempt to startle her into the realization that divorce was a real possibility unless she and Raja amended their ways. (305)

These lines show that how is the relationship breaks each-other with the marriage couple. It seems that the characters do not have a co-ordination and faith each-other. We cannot find proper guidance to the children and the adult; it seems that they are just roaming in the clouds. In fact most of the characters do not know that where they are come from and where they have to go. The misery faces and have to face obstacles day to day living and it seems that they are just the wandering for their identity. Most of the characters do not know that where are they from and where they must go for the future.

Kaki is one day kicked by her son. She has nowhere to go. Kicked by her son and daughter-in-law, she is forced to pass night on road. Finally, she is compelled to work as a servant in a rich man's house. The noisome vulgarity, querulous family and constant acrimony among family members are some of the unavoidable features of Nepalese family. To Upadhyay, Nepalese families are exotic. Any kind of bad event can happen sporadically. The following lines reflect this attitude of the novelist:

One morning, Kaki's son kicked her out of the house, accusing her of stealing money from under his mattress, which she had to pay for the goat. The rest of the day Kaki roamed the city with her belongings. Too weak to gather the bedding in her arms, she had left it in the courtyard where her son had thrown it, so all she had now was a box filled with jewelry and trinkets, a black and white photo of her young son taken by the street photographer of Baghbazaar, and a bag crammed with two petticoats, three blouses, and an extra dhoti. (10)

Can an own son kicked her mother from his house in old age? What sort of image do you find here as the son behaves in like that way in your society? Can you imagine that, is it not a fragmentation of families? There are two mothers one mother kicked



from home and another leaves a home in the quest of spirituality. Whatever the reason behind this one thing should be noted that they are fragmenting the families. Losing faith and believe even in the families and society than depression emerges there than get absurd grows up in one's thinking then become alienated and life goes meaningless and then hopelessness. Through the absurdity one cannot find their and purpose of life than comes spiritual or philosophical suicide. It symbolizes this is the world of pain, anguish, alienation and in fact meaninglessness. Instead of being caring and loving to his mother, son behaves aggressively. In Nepalese society, sons and daughters care their mothers and fathers as though they are no less than gods. The belief that caring and loving one's parents in old age is more valuable than paying a pilgrimage to the holy places. Of course conflict can occur between parents and offspring. But offspring hardly goes to the extent of kicking parents. Upadhyay's treatment of underlying socio-cultural values is unacceptable.

Upadhyay's mode of representation of Nepalese people and their culture in this novel is not free from the politics of power. In this novel, Ganga Da's mother is overtly spiritual. She does not live with her son and daughter-in-law. She lives under Swami Nityananda's tutelage. Ganga Da's mother has renounced this material world. She is overtly religious. She takes pride in her commitment to the act of renunciation. She assumes that she will never get peace and happiness so long as clings to this material world. She comes in a hustle and bustle to her son's house. She pressurizes her son to take all of her properties along with the properties of his dead father. Her spiritual pursuit shows she is spiritual. People are heedless of the temptation of materialistic world. That is used by Upadhyay while portraying Nepalese people. The following lines suggest this fact:

Ganga Da's mother visited, unannounced. She told him that she had

come to Kathmandu to transfer all their property to his name-the house and the close to one lakh rupees Ganga Da's father had left for her-as she now wanted to renounce all earthly matters and devote herself to God under Swami Nityananda's tutelage. But her first question to Ganga Da and Jamuna was why they had not yet given her a grandchild. The next day Jamuna entered the living room carrying something cradled in her arms. (40)

Upadhyay style of representing the Nepalese society fits into the expectation of audience. To become popular among readers and scholars, he represents Nepal and Nepalese culture. The only one idea comes to the mind of author-this idea is that Nepalese people are spiritual and unnecessarily transcendental. To represent Nepalese people as spiritual beings under the influence of transcendental fantasy is to commit a bias. Upadhyay is not above this prejudice.

Every day, for an hour or so after Raja left for school, Jamuna paced the yard, or stood next to the guava tree and rocked and back and forth. Then she went inside and sat on her bad, which was next to the window, and kept watch on the gate, even though Raja wouldn't arrive home until the afternoon. After an hour or two of this, she had fall asleep, her head on the window sill, while lunch that Kaki prepared for her would get cold. (47)

These lines symbolizes the deep desire for the child of Jamuna Mummy, she must have feel tragedy not being a mother. This is also the fragmentation, Jamuna do not care for her food and sleep. Just wondering for Raja and thinking of losing her. Upadhyay depicts the story of an illegal mother. A mother who happens to be a mother without any sense of being able to give birth to her baby and then nurture and

take care of her baby. An unknown mother gives birth to a baby. Perhaps due to the fear of being shamed and embarrassed, she dies getting drowned in Rani Pokhari. It is the famous pond located at the heart of Kathmandu. This pond has religious and historical significance. But the author does not care for its historical and spiritual significance. He simply plays with its importance hilariously. He is not aware of its importance. He upholds condescending attitude to it. That is why; he portrays this pond as a site in which an illegal woman, who gives birth to a baby, dies by getting drowned in it. To show an illicit woman die by drowning on it is to contaminate and poison this pond. The following lines cited from the novel illustrate and expose the condescending of Nepalese sites of religious and historical importance:

For the rest of the morning, she and Bokey Ba roamed the area in search of someone who would claim the baby. Kaki walked in the front, clutching the baby to her chest, already protective. She puckered her lips in kisses at him whenever he cried. They circled Rani Pokhari, where the mother's body now rested at the bottom of the pond, which was the size of a football field, with a white temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in the middle. Kaki remembered vaguely that it was built by a Malla king to console his wife after the death of their son-thus the name, the queen's Pond. (5)

The above citation shows that the author is aware of who makes the pond and why the pond is made. He is conscious of pond's historical significance. Historically speaking, this pond offers consolation and solace to those who are broken hearted. But in this novel, this pond has become the place in which suicide takes place. Upadhyay furthermore says that one of the SLC students had committed suicide due to his poor performance in exam. Nowadays suicide rate is on increase. This pond offers

opportunities to those who happen to commit suicide. The author intends to say that nowadays historically important places have lost gradually grace, charm and importance.

In the novel, there are plenty of evidences which exemplify that representation of beliefs and customs of people is full of prejudices. Ganga Da is a government employee. He works in planning commission. He is a corrupt bureaucrat. Worse than this he is a faithful follower of monarchy. He has constructed a house by using money he embezzled from government fund. Although he is prosperous in terms of material prosperity, he is inwardly miserable. His wife is a schizophrenic crackpot. Her sporadic reaction puts Ganga Da in distress. His schizophrenic wife reacts in an unexpected way. She has become a great nuisance to him. Worst of all, she is a 'sterile' woman. Ganga Da is carrying a burden of his wife's schizophrenia and sterility. Upadhyay mentions some Nepalese families. All these families are facing different problems. In some houses daughters elope, in other houses son brings an untouchable girl to his house and the like. Upadhyay hardly deals with specialty of Nepalese family sensitively. To him, Nepalese families are as fragile as western families. That is why Nepalese families appear to be fragile or breakable. The following lines suggest how schizophrenically reactive Ganga Da's wife, Jamuna is:

Jamuna returned, carrying a bottle and a wad of cotton. She knelt before Raja, who, to Kaki's surprise, did not shrink from her. Jamuna dabbed a piece of cotton with iodine, and applied it to his face. You are a brave boy, son. Jamuna said. A bahadur. She took Raja to the bed and made him sit next to her. You two go out and talk about the wages and other things. He will stay with me. Go! No, no I want to talk in this room. Kaki said, but Ganga Da signaled to her that it was okay.

Reluctantly, she left Raja with the woman and went out. (28)

Ganga Da's wife Jamuna is insane. She is temperamentally schizophrenic. She reacts unpredictably. Updhyay does not mention why she is insane. When Jamuna sees a child named, Raja, her maternal instinct warm up with emotions and feelings. Is her insane reactions caused by sterility or is it caused by indifference of her husband? Updhyay does not bother to ponder upon this issue. He is simply interested in the image of Jamuna. To the author, Jamuna is a mysterious woman who is not easily understandable. Her image fits into the image of a woman who is hysterically affected by the drudgeries of domestic life.

Updhyay also creates meaning about Nepalese culture and society in a biased way. In this novel, Updhyay portrays Kathmandu valley as crime prone city. It is subject to unrest, instability, and metropolitan dread. People are rebelling against monarchy. But some other people are worshipping king as the incarnation of god Bishnu. In the same city, youths with progressive and democratic consciousness are asking reform and multiparty democracy. But in the same city, some vigilantes of king are crying that they need their king-god. The city of Kathmandu is torn between ideological superstition and political modernism. The following lines show this aspect:

Het! The official, a short, plump man with a protruding belly clad in the official daura suruwal, and wearing dark glasses like King M. always did, had scolded Raja. 'You think this button is something cheap? To be worn by every vagrant on the street? See here?' The official pointed his pudgy fingers at the king's profile. This is our king, understand? They say he is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself. You cannot touch our king with your filthy hands. (32)

Demand for democracy is afoot. The strong superstitious base of society hinders political quest. The collective strivings of people for democracy and political reform are pushed to the corner. Instead of defending for public outcry for democracy, Upadhyay throws light on the dim prospect of democracy. It appears that Nepalese society, as depicted by Upadhyay in this novel, is incapable of undergoing progressive reform and socio-cultural transformation optimistically. It creates the existence.

Upadhyay also makes parody of the importance of holy rivers Ganga and Jamuna. Once when Ganga Da plans to marry, someone brings marriage proposal of Jamuna. Jamuna is a girl from rich and cultured family. Ganga Da is also a respectable employee of planning commission. The Brahmin thinks that Jamuna and Ganga are the names of two holy rivers. Similarly the names of marriage candidates are Ganga and Jamuna. The union between these two marriage candidates would be good as the confluence between Ganga and Jamuna rivers. But the confluence of Ganga and Jamuna, that means their marriage, turn out to be source of misery, burden and great nuisance. In this way, Upadhyay portrays the underlying spiritual norms as they are no less than a bag of superstitious belief. The following lines are illustrative of this point:

At the time of his marriage, he had just started his job at the planning commission, where he was now a second-class officer. In the years since his father's death, his mother, clad in the white dhoti of the widow, had turned to scriptures and prabachans. The proposal for Jamuna had come through a distant relative who had known Jamuna's family for years. Both Ganga's and Jamuna's names refer to two of the holiest rivers of India, the man had said with a smile, whose confluence is a sacred spot, thus this marriage dictated by the heavens.

(38)

It is believed that the marriage between Ganga Da and Jamuna is dictated by heaven. But the reality is drastically different. Such a heavenly dictated marriage turns out to be the source of constant quarrel, burden and restlessness. From his heavenly dictated marriage, Ganga Da gets a schizophrenic wife. Throughout his life, Ganga Da does not get peace and happiness. His whole life is ruined by constant pestering and reactions of his wife. In this way Upadhyay ridicules the hollowness of spiritual faith. In Nepalese society most of the heavenly dictated marriage breaks, shattering illusions of devotees and believers.

Female characters in *Buddha's Orphans* are almost all tainted with picture of fragments and deviations. Ganga Da's wife is schizophrenic. His mother is overtly spiritual. Kaki is helpless in the hand of her own son. There is another lady whose name is Muwa. Muwa is a 'widow' who lost her husband when she was in the prime of her youth. She has one daughter whose name is Nilu. By the time Nilu is four, Muwa's husband dies in car accident. Since then Muwa has been living with her daughter. Muwa is prosperous. Though her husband died and she is living a miserable life of a widow, she is rich in terms of material prosperity. At the heart of Kathmandu, she has a large house. But Muwa is not living a normal and ethically sound life. She has fallen into alcoholism and drug addiction. When her only one daughter elopes with Raja, Muwa becomes broken hearted. Muwa has not only fallen into the habit of alcoholism and drug addiction but also to moral debauchery. She is enjoying living together with Sumit. The important thing is that living together or cohabitation is not practiced in Nepalese society.

But Upadhyay shows Nepalese women cohabitating with their respective male partner. Either Nepalese woman is harmfully spiritual or embarrassingly lecherous.

The following lines reflect this point:

Muwa's husband had died in a car accident several years before when her daughter Nilu was four, Ramkrishan told her. He was the owner of one of the city's first travel agencies, housed in an office with large glass windows in Basantpur. He also owned pieces of land and shares in jute and sugarcane factories throughout the country. That unfortunate morning he had parked his car in front of his travel agency and was locking the door when an out-of-control lorry slammed into and crushed his head to pulp. Muwa's mouth smelled of alcohol when she came near. She was never free from the shocks unleashed by disastrous death of her husband. (51)

Muwa's problem and prejudice are not handled by the author in a justifiable way.

The exact reality regarding Nepalese women, socio-cultural life of Nepalese people and other underlying ethos are distorted. It is dreadful to expect ground reality regarding Nepalese society from Upadhyay. The existing norms and values are shattered into pieces. The progressive change and emerging spirit of modernity are cast aside by author in this novel.

Kathmandu appears as exotic and inscrutable city in the narration of Upadhyay. The exotic images are used in this novel. The following lines, which capture the exotic taste of Nepalese people, illustrate politically charged view of author:

Kaki and Ramkrishan talked as they washed the dishes, cut and sliced vegetables, swept the floor, tasted the food with their ladles, plant flowers and vegetables in the garden. Raja wandered around house, and every now and then Kaki called him to make sure he was not



bothering Muwa, who while not drinking, napped in her room on the second floor, or her curtains drawn in the middle of the afternoon, a bedside lamp on, read Indian magazines detailing illicit romances, and murders and decapitation. (52)

The irrational habit of Nepalese people is described in the above-cited excerpt. Most of Nepalese people are seen eating with ladles. Their custom of eating is totally irrational. It is not hygienic to eat by everyone with the same device with which people use to cook. The views that outwardly Nepalese people seem to have interest in gardening and planting flowers in garden. It appears they have idea of cleanliness. But the reality is drastically different. They read magazines which contain articles about murder, decapitation and illicit romance. This taste shows how violent their taste is. The outward gentility is threatened by the inner violence which is reflected in their taste in decapitation, murder and illicit romance.

In the fictitious world of narration, Upadhyay presents Nepalese people who believe more in witch doctors than medical doctors. Ganga Da does not take his sick wife to psychiatrist. He does not take her to hospital. He takes her to miracle healer. Like Ganga Da and his wife, several sick women and men rather go to witch doctors. The following lines prove this point:

Although he did not take her to Ranchi, Ganga Da tried other treatments. He took her to people known for their miracle curers: a healer at the base of the Swayambhunath hill; the college girl in Thamel who became possessed by a powerful Newar goddess at the chant of a few mantras; Patan's Ama, who was reputed to heal patients declared untreatable by the doctors in the nearby Shanta Bhawan. But Jamuna's condition, instead of getting better, got worse. Towards the

end of their second year of marriage, it became further exacerbated after she failed to get pregnant. (40)

Due to her inability to get pregnant, Jamuna is losing her normal psychological condition. The patriarchal society dictates every married woman to be pregnant after marriage. In case she remains stable, she is likely to get cursed and disgraced. The sterile woman is mocked and then left in pain. The pressure put by patriarchy to Jamuna puts her on the verge of insanity and bout of schizophrenia. The strong desire to be mother is deprived. As a result, she turns into the patient of schizophrenia. But Ganga Da does not take her to hospital. Instead of taking Jamuna to hospital, he takes her to witch doctor. Because, nowadays there is enough development in health and medical sciences so that people are aware of their health and dignity. And Nepalese people have also become much aware than before regarding superstitions practice. But Upadhyay present this fact in biased way.

Nepalese society hardly witnesses lesbian practice. Although there might be some lesbians in Nepalese society also, the lesbian relation is not as openly manifested as the author believes. The author exhibits the lesbian attraction between Nilu and Sister Agnes. Nilu is not aware of the growing lesbian interest of Sister Agnes. When Sister Agnes expresses her lesbian interest in Nilu, then Nilu begins to quit Sister Agnes. In the beginning there is a good friendship between them. But Nilu is not aware of Agnes lesbian interest. That is why she is surprised by Agnes growing interest in her. Such an open exhibition of the case of lesbian relations between girls reveals that Upadhyay thinks that Nepalese society is sunk into perverted sexuality and other deviant cases of sexuality. The following lines show this point:

Sister Agnes placed her right hand on Nilu's thigh, which was exposed as her tunic had slid up while sitting. Go on, Sister Agnes said, and

yawned. Nilu squirmed and shifted, so Sister Agnes' hand would slip away, but it remained on her thigh. Rumi... Well.... He suggests that physical desire can be channeled for union with God. There was no mistake now: Sister Agnes' fingers had travelled further up Nilu's thigh, closer toward her crotch, and with a jerk Nilu bolted out of the bed and stood. Her breath had become stuck in her throat, and when the words came out, they tumbled out rapidly, I have to go. (85)

Lesbian relationship is as rampant as the author simply assumes. Nepalese society is not as sexually corrupted as he believes. But Upadhyay views sexual experience of Nepalese people from western angle. That is why he is tempted to impose sexual perversions and deviant sexual longing. The blatant expression of lesbian interest between Nilu and Sister Agnes produce bad effects in the established codes prevailing in Nepalese society.

The historical reality that is represented in the novel is politically charged. We find false representation of Nepal and Nepalese people in this text. The efforts of Nepalese people to improve their tastes are sidelined as vulgar and debased. Over the last few decades before the restoration of democracy, many youths of Kathmandu cultivated the taste for videos and movies. Most of the youths liked pornographic movies. On the streets of Thamel several music videos and pornographic C D shops were established. The tastes of youths take new direction. It shows a kind of change in society. Other admirable things have also appeared in Kathmandu valley. But Upadhyay depicts the shifting taste of Nepalese youths as vulgar and debased. Nepalese youths are portrayed as aimless guys who roam casting glance on shops of pornographic CD and horror movie. The following lines show this sort of bias on the part of author:

Over the past year, every year valley inner Kathmandu seemed to boast a video parlor, where bootlegged, grainy copies of Hindi and English-language movies, some pornographic, were shown for a fee. Nilu and Raja had been to a couple of these video parlor, where old men with dentures sat shoulder to shoulder with young, boisterous boys, and young brides with gold jewelry sparkling and tinkling on their wrists jostled for space with grandmothers suffering from arthritis. (147)

In this novel, Thamel area of Kathmandu valley is portrayed as the underworld of vulgarity and degradation. It is the destination of those who are temperamental and impulsive. They turn to Thamel to expose their debased passions. In their attempt to fulfill their vulgar and debased passions, they are totally neglectful of their duties and responsibility. They represent a group or a class that is on the path of deviation. This place is not the underworld of moral debauchery. It is the favorite destination of tourists both domestic and foreign.

## Chapter 4

### Existential Crisis in *Buddha's Orphans*

We find that our life is determined by many factors like sensations, needs, death, nature and culture. The biologically determinant factors are sensations, needs and death. Nature is genetic and nurture is joined with the culture. So whatever actions and mental activities that we undergo, we pass them in perviously determined condition, as confirmed by spinoza.

Life is to be accepted to be lived within the context of determined conditions. Our life goes ahead with the parameters set by these factors. However, the discovery and realization of such factors and determined conditions take us away from this condition to existentialism, as Kierkegaard and Sartre have also suggested in their works.

The struggle to exist is the central theme of this novel. Raja is an existential character, who has been an Orphan. Raja struggles in the family, where pain, domination, failure, frustration and humiliation prevail. He plays the role of problematic character and the problematic self has to face identity crisis. and society Nepalese culture and the Nepalese people's religious. He portrays Nepalese people and their behaviors and activities. Kaki is one of the character of this novel and Upadhyay portrays her highly temperamental. Out of her maternal affection she does wrong judgment by nurturing an orphan infant, because she is too poor to nurture him. Who is father and mother who gave birth to him? People may have sympathy upon him because he is the Raja but living with the ironical condition in the crisis of his identity. Another major crisis is seen in this novel none of the characters have their family name.

Upadhyay portrays distinctive vision of reality with personal vision through

the characters. His characters are seen in the totally freedom, neither they follow the social rule, norms and value nor they obey the elder and respect them. We cannot find any co-ordination between the characters from the beginning to an end. Upadhyay begins with the Raja's birth in parade ground and ends up with the birth of Kali, one symbolizes as a male god and another symbolizes as a female goddess. In fact, Upadhyay mixes with the vision of social life with political, moral and spiritual manner. There are plenty of crisis of living, feeding, walking, curing health issue, sleeping. These are the fundamental issue for our day to day living. Political agitation, corruption in the society, deceiving, forging make so hard for the people who are from the middle class. Many people are jobless, faithless, and ultimately dreamless. It's never known there, in fact we find crisis in every corner of the novel and between all the characters. Even though they try to exist and have a drop of hope further future. One of the best examples we can find in this novel is that Ganga Da's mother she is still hopeful to become a grandmother.

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