

## I. Society and Struggle in *Silas Marner*

This research deals with the antagonistic relationship between individual and society in *Silas Marner* (1861), one of the spiritually laden works by George Eliot. Her works are full of profound feeling and realistic portrayals of humble rural folks and their lives during the Victorian era. Her works are greatly influenced by the then trend of struggle of an individual against the society during the Victorian society. The period was when people were in search for meaning of their being. However the society, still under the puritan influence of religion and church, did not allow individuals to venture in activities other than, those within the religious and social boundaries. Based on this idea of conflict among the society and an individual, the present research exposes the ‘antagonism between the society and an individual’ of the contemporary society.

*Silas Marner* tells the story of a weaver, Silas Marner, who is falsely accused of theft as a young man in the era of radical social and economic changes. Besides, the Victorian era was also a period of rapid changes in moral and ethical values. When, Silas is accused, he becomes alienated from the society and its trend. Meanwhile, his fiancée, Nancy Lammeter, leaves him, and later on marries the main culprit, Dunsey Cass. As a result of these events, Silas becomes a reclusive and embittered being until an orphaned girl, Eppie, comes into his life. The arrival of Eppie in Silas life, once again connects him to societal ways and the ethical values which he had lost when being accused of theft.

In this perspective, *Silas Marner* is an inquiry into the existential purpose of life and living of an individual amid the difficulties imposed on him by the puritans of the Victorian societies. However, these impositions paves path for Silas towards the quest of existential identity. But the notion of Silas’s search for identity is criticized by few critics. In their opinion, struggle for life is a notion to search for meaning of an

individual within the social, political and religious and such periphery. However, Silas takes a different way in his struggle against the widely prevalent antagonism in the then society.

The novel is a depiction of changing societal values and an individual's space in it. Silas, a humble villager, takes different ways to showcase his dislike towards the fast changing norms and values towards the society. By doing so, he ventures into a philosophical movement that interprets the meaning of human existence. Thus, there is a struggle focused on an individual and his relationship to the universe. This notion of struggle of a human is an isolated existent in an alien universe. Further it opposes the traditional belief which sees truth as objective and universal. This philosophy takes truth as subjective, so what is true to one may be false to another. Whether a thing is true or false, it depends on the decision the individual takes. As such, when Silas, the protagonist decides to remain silent rather than to disclose his friend's dishonesty, it is his way of understanding the meaning of life.

*Silas Marner* is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between individual and society. It draws from Eliot's own experiences of living in the Warwickshire countryside, and it reveals her instinctive understanding of human nature. Henry James is one of the admirers of Eliot's works. James is of the opinion that through a personal depiction of sufferings and loss of values, George in "Reading between Industrialization and Social Values," depicts:

Though *Silas Marner* is in a sense a very personal novel for Eliot, its treatment of the themes of faith, family, and class has nonetheless given it universal appeal, especially at the time of publication, when English society and institutions were undergoing rapid change. Silas's loss of religious faith recalls Eliot's own struggle with her faith, and the novel's

setting in the vanishing English countryside reflects Eliot's concern that England was fast becoming industrialized and impersonal.

Many of the novel's themes and concerns stem from Eliot's own life experiences. The novel's concern with class and family can likewise be linked back to Eliot's own life. The voice of the novel's narrator can thus, to some extent, be seen as Eliot's own voice — one tinged with slight condescension, but fond of the setting and thoroughly empathetic with the characters.

However, it is here, where the conflict starts in the plot of *Silas Marner* – a search for self in a society marred by declining values and ethics in a time of great social and economic change. The temperament of declining social and religious values that people once enjoyed in the past comes to the forefront as the cause of struggle in the novel. This is the ground for the conflict of an individual with the society that is marred by Puritans values versus modern changes.

The Victorian era was marred by people who initially lost religious faith due to the wave of enlightenment, similar to the trend set up by French philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's notion expressed in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" as, "Death of God" (37). This notion was further cemented when the world witnessed a sharp fall in morality and social values invited by the two World Wars (1914-18 and 1941-45). However, the seeds of alienation and loneliness were sown in Victorian era. In this context, Silas is a fore-runner in the trend that saw a rapid fall in societal norms and values.

The plot of the novel gets into track when Silas is falsely accused of stealing the congregation's funds while watching over the very ill deacon of the group. Two clues are given against Silas: a pocket-knife and the discovery of the bag formerly containing the money in his own house. There is a strong suggestion that Silas' best friend, William Dane, has framed him, since Silas had lent the pocket-knife to William a short while

before. Silas is proclaimed guilty and the woman he was to marry casts him off, and later marries William Dane, the culprit who is solely responsible for the lost money. Despite the fact, Silas has good reasons to accuse Dane; he does not put an accusation in against him. This is what can be taken as one of the best examples of puritan values that guided the then society.

The novels of Eliot study a small segment of society in order to explore individual character. They generally address two themes: the loss of illusions – usually leading characters to a more mature outlook – and the clash between traditional moral ideals and the everyday demands of life. In most of her novels, Eliot's characters correct their faults through lessons learned as a result of tribulation. Because of her sensitivity to universal patterns of human behaviour, many readers regard Eliot as one of the fore-runner novelists of the nineteenth and twentieth century's.

Few critics were convinced on the depiction of the central character in the form of a rather slow and inactive guy who is silent when it is time for action. It was a trend that almost in against the fashion of writing of the day. However, Walter Kaufmann was exceedingly moved and pleased by the depiction of such a realistic character, and who remains under the societal values, despite the injustice on him. He writes:

It interested me so much that I have lost (or won if you like) a whole day in reading it at the busiest period. It not only surprised me, but almost all scholars of the day; especially, by her choice of the central character, a little typically rural hero who lets things in the hand of fate. At the time of its publication, most critics were amused to have such a protagonist in against the demand of the then social and economic environment. (37)

Initially, welcomed as swarthy novel, *Silas Marner* eventually won the hearts of people and critics for depiction of a realist character. Hence, fate is one of the most important

aspects of finding respite by a common man. In fact, many of the incidents that turn the life of general public are assumed as destiny and, which is hardly taken in consideration.

Conflict between an individual and the society is a tendency that depicts the picture of an individual's notion that is at stake in against the societal barriers and imposition. As such, it is a philosophic movement that seeks freedom of choice of an individual in regards to various societal norms and values imposed on him/her in the name of tradition and legal implications. Existentialism is spread in diverse positions associated with various social, ethical, legal and institutional aspects, the term is impossible to define precisely and definition varies in accordance to visions provided by various philosophers. Simon Blackburn in *Dictionary of Philosophy* defines, “. . . it is an individual experience of choice and the absence of rational understanding of the universe with a consequent dread of sense of absurdity in human life” (129). Blackburn further opines that it is “the so-called rational understanding of the universe, invited by various philosophies, which has marred humans' want for a free and independent life” (130).

However, there are certain themes common to virtually all existentialist writers and which can be identified. The term itself suggests one major theme: the stress on concrete individual existence and, consequently, on subjectivity, individual freedom, and choice. It is a philosophic movement that began in the nineteenth century, denies that the universe has any intrinsic meaning or purpose. It focuses on the essentiality for the people to take responsibility for their own actions and shape their own destinies.

The notion of conflict is a literary and philosophical movement that interprets the meaning of human existence. It also focuses on an individual and his relationship to the universe. It believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. Further it opposes the traditional belief which sees truth as objective and universal.

According to this philosophy, truths are subjective, so what is true to one may be false to another. Whether a thing is true or false, it depends on the decision the individual makes. Thus, it emphasizes on individual choice and freedom of an individual.

The idea to seek freedom has its root in enlightenment, where people lost their faith in religion. As a result, Friedrich Nietzsche announced the 'Death of God' as God was associated with values that were unquestioned and imposed on rampant manner. Similarly, the horrors of the First World War caused man to abandon faith in social progress. Many more people predicted the hope of radical social revolutions but Stalin changed the Soviet Union into a totalitarian tyranny. As a consequence, people no more believed in them. Likewise, during the Second World War, barbarism, mass murder and genocide compelled man to lose the faith in humanity. So, the horrific situation of the wars evoked the sense of despair, alienation, anxiety, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. Spiritual emptiness spread in rich societies of Western Europe and the United States. As a result, peoples' formerly held certainties about the way of life and values collapsed.

The horror of changing values of the then time and the War made people think on alternative measures other than the customary practice of religion and God. Then, for man the world lost its meaning and stopped making sense. These resulted in man finding himself thrown in a universe that is frightening, illogical, and incoherent, disordered, chaotic, irrational or absurd. In such conditions, the belief in concepts like unity, morality, value, rationality, logicity, absolute truth and Christianity was shattered. This realization gave rise to the idea that human existence is meaningless.

Thus, they believe that they can create value for their lives by making choices. Existentialism as a mode of thought believes that man has to choose and create meaning for his own existence in the world. So man is what he makes of himself. Man is free to

do whatever he wants and responsible for whatever he makes. Thus existentialism talks about individual existence, freedom and choice.

Richard Tarnas, one of the contemporary critics on existentialism opines that the human condition, more precisely and clearly than any other schools of thought, is responsible for the crisis of individuality. According to him, “Spiritual emptiness, senses of insecurity and cosmic absurdity are the depiction of an individual’s loss of identity” (388). Man, who is given an existence without essence finds spiritually alone and when dumped in the larger part of the world, cannot lift himself to the status of collective happiness. Further, he is entrapped by morality, fear, uncertainty. There is no ‘super being’ or ‘transcendental absolute’ to help fulfil the needs of human life. So, Tarnas states that “existentialist thinkers concerned themselves with fundamental problems of human existence like-suffering, death, loneliness and dread, spiritual emptiness, sense of insecurity, cosmic absurdity, inability of human reason and tragic human condition” (389).

Existentialists deny the existence of God. Nietzsche’s announcement ‘God is dead’ influenced existential philosophy. Hence, the belief among atheist existentialists is that there is no God to determine our existence. First, we exist, and then we create our essence ourselves. We are what we make of ourselves. In that sense, we are in the state of becoming but not in the state of being. We are consciously choosing and creating ourselves because it is not possible for us to stay without choice. Even when we don’t choose, we still choose by not choosing. In this context Tarnas say: “Even if I do not choose I have chosen not to choose” (149).

The idea of conflict and struggle against the society is closely related with phenomenology, which is a philosophical perspective and method established by German thinker Edmund Husserl. It emphasizes on the self or subjectivism. It studies

human consciousness. The world is as it appears to us. So, it means it lays emphasis on subjectivism. Husserl talks about phenomenology in this way: “Phenomenology itself learns its proper function of transparently human living from an entire relationship ‘self. Phenomenology is not less than man’s whole occupation with himself in the service of the universal reason” (qtd. in Tarnas 15). Thus, phenomenology stresses individuality and subjectivism. It rejects the idea of the objective. There is no absolute thing in the world. Things are as they appear to us our senses.

The major themes of existentialism are existence, alienation, frustration, loneliness, anxiety, dread, awareness of death, etc. Existentialist philosophers think that man is conscious and because of the consciousness he feels tragic, miserable, and lonely in the world. Nietzsche has criticized Western philosophy and Christianity. According to him, Western philosophy and Christianity both were corrupt since they taught abstractions. The Western education system tries to prepare the historically educated/learned man but historical knowledge doesn’t serve life, rather it corrupts life. Then, people become purposeless. Such knowledge cannot provide happiness to people because they become like pendulum in the chain of history whereas man has to face the present for happiness. For Nietzsche education should be for the sake of human life and existence. In his essay, “On the Use and Abuse of History” he says that “we need education for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act. According to him, history is useful only in so far as it serves living” (152).

He also does not believe in the thought of absolute truth that controls an individual. Man is the product of his own action from his choice. Since, God is Dead; there is nobody to govern an individual. So, he is the master of himself. For Nietzsche, as Blackburn comments in the *Dictionary of Philosophy*, “No moment is more



important than the present in which one has the opportunity to make active choice that influences the character of the whole” (292).

Nietzsche also denounces the existence of God and further says even if there is God, he is dead. Therefore, there is nobody to determine our existence. He also calls “Christianity a shelter only for the weak, sick and disabled and at the same time it possesses a slave morality” (912). Thus, religion for him is only a refuge for the person of weak mentality and who cannot fight their way out of the crisis in life. This sense is one of the features of humanity, that they need shelter during the time of dejection and catastrophe. Nietzsche seems to be quite positive towards suicide because it is also one of the choices that individual makes. He takes the suicide as a solution in some way. So, suicide is not surrender but a means to achieve goals. It also makes fulfillment, thus for Nietzsche, suicide is a positive means to end one’s sorrow and tragedy.

Another existential critic, Jean Paul Sartre, emphasizes on individual freedom and responsibility. Robert Solomon opining the Sartre’s vision states: “The central tenet of Sartre’s existentialism is the freedom of human consciousness, freedom to act, freedom to value and freedom to make itself” (86). He also agrees that “existence precedes the essence” (86). In accordance with Sartre, first exists appearance on the sense and thereby it makes choice/chooses and, we create. It means we make ourselves what to be only after we exist. We create meaning in our life by making choices.

Sartre also thinks that God does not exist but he opines that if there is God, he is useless. To support this idea, he states that “existentialism is not so aesthetic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn’t exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing” (51). Though he frequently talks about freedom, his view towards it is negative. He supposes freedom as a curse but not as a boon. For him,

man is condemned to be free because one has to choose the route of life; he is responsible for his actions in life. So, life is determined by choice a person makes.

Further elaborating his idea, Sartre says that there is no predetermining essence but one creates essence by choosing. So, existence is primary and the essence of existence is secondary. He argues that existence and freedom go together, however, the concept of freedom is determined the environment of factors motivating and determining existence. For Sartre, "Freedom is existence, and in its existence proceeds essence" (66). When he talks about freedom, he also states individual freedom relies upon the freedom of others. In this way, like most of the existentialists, Sartre focuses on freedom of choice and personal responsibility conveying that there is no absolute power to control a man.

Existentialism could be best understood through the concept of absurd, first coined by Albert Camus to indicate the pathetic situation of Sisyphus, a legendary hero whose pursuit for achieving goal has been commented and analyzed by hundreds of scholars and critics. Sisyphus was entitled by God to place a round stone at the top of a hill, as a punishment. But, as the stone was round it was impossible for him to place it at the top. He knew well that his attempt was worthless and the job was impossible but, he continued to do it every time he failed. His never dying pursuit of spirit has been termed as 'absurd task' by the Gods.

Hence, the idea of life is like an absurd drama that remains very much the same but only the style changes. So, absurd drama is not new but as old as farce. In fact, farce and tragedy are the double masks of absurdity. The absurdist dramatists think that the subject of farce is like that of the tragedies and their subject matter is the terrible or comical disclosure of man's absurdity, ignorance and impotence. The farce rouses laughter, removes our sympathy away and frees our cruelty. But tragedy causes tears

and awakens our sympathy. On the other hand, the absurdist's of today mix up the qualities of farce and tragedy that make us laugh at that which hurts us most and weep at that which is most foolish in our nature.

Absurdist is a thinker who accepts that the human condition is absurd. So, he knows his own absurdity very well. He thinks that realization of the absurdity is important for people to live a reasonable life full of expectations, importance and responsibility. If one recognizes absurdity, he in his life knows what is right to do and wrong not to do. If man doesn't know absurdity he is a puppet who is being dangled on the strings of dogma and illusion. It is a bitter discovery for all men and at the same time the only judgment that will rightly evaluate man's power of perception, action and success. It is ironically also only ground upon which man's mind can stand secure it clearly says that he takes the absurd positively because it helps man live a reasonable life by abandoning unnecessary strings of dogmas and illusions.

As such, an absurdist is a social farce also. He tries to lead his audience to the logical inference of absurdity for their good. He has to inform the audience that they must encounter the absurdity of their own existence so that they can be bold and courageous to face the difficulties of life. He has to show the audience the reasonable benefits of absurd living in order that people get convinced of giving up their bundles of dogmas illusions and superstitions. Likewise, in Simon du Pollock's opinion:

The absurdist as a technician has to choose those devices which can convey his ideal and purpose indirectly. He can use expression, allegory or irony to express his ideas, in this way, the absurdist dramatist will search for such a form and style that first of all act as a disguise of his assertions rather than a direct and complete expression. In the same way, the ideal absurdist will never present his opinions in symbols and action

which implies that the encounter with the absurdity is a nihilistic experience. (15)

Observation of all these ideas, we come to know that all writers lay emphasis on meaningless, futility, irrationality, disorder, illogicality, foolishness and purposelessness of the human condition in the universe.

Thus, the illogicality and irrationality of human life is determined the varying antagonistic forces that comprise a society. Every individual have their share in the fate of ups and downs in their life. The narration of hardships in the life of Silas Marner is not only due to his stand of not exposing the possible culprit, but also because, he takes life in the way as it comes to humans.

In consideration to all the above debates, the present research takes on the typical nature of struggle undertaken by a lowly individual, Silas in against the antagonistic forces that were existent in the then society. For the same, the first chapter is entitled ‘Society and Struggle in *Silas Marner*’ that discusses on the adversaries present in the then society. The next chapter “Antagonism between Individual and Society” will take instances from the text to depict struggle prevalent between the society and individual in those days. Finally, the last chapter concludes with depiction of fall of value-laden society.

## II. Antagonism between Individual and Society in *Silas Marner*

*Silas Marner* is one of the few novels of the era that depicts the protagonist Silas Marner as a lowly figure and, presents the storyline from the hardships borne by him. Through the challenges imposed on Silas, the novelist challenges the then existing era values and ethics. Eliot tells the story of a weaver, Silas who is falsely accused of theft of the money of a missionary that he has been entitled to keep. However, upon the accusation, he does not stand to immediately defy the accusations, despite the fact that he has not carried such a heinous act and has strong reasons to suspect one of his friends, Dunsey being involved in the act. Thus, the plot of the novel, in process of exposition of hardships borne by Silas goes on to showcase social hardships imposed on the people of Victorian era.

The concept of hardships borne by Silas is largely due to the ‘fate’ that accompanies him until the end of the novel. His notion of struggle is not because he is a lowly hand-loom weaver, but he does not believe that things are not of value when there is a contrast of fate and values. Silas is about forty years old at the beginning of the novel, and Nancy is about forty years old at the end — i.e. George Eliot’ age at the time of writing. We know that the novelist’s early life was considerably affected by her relation with her father. When Nancy separates herself sufficiently from her father to set her hopes on Godfrey, she is about the same age as Mary Anne Evans was in 1842, when her refusal to go to church led to a violent quarrel with her father. In spite of this, however, he continued to influence her greatly, even after his death. Marian met G. H. Lewes in October 1851: he was still married, even though he was no longer attached to his wife. She knew the indignity of having to keep her affair with him secret — the parallel with Molly is obvious; Nancy, one notes suffered no less for her ‘secret’ love for Godfrey. Her instinct to withdraw into herself and to cross-question herself

mercilessly was shared by her creator, who was unusually depressed throughout 1860, occasioned at least in part by society's continued refusal to accept her relation with Lewes.

In spite of all the love by which she was surrounded, and for all her literary success, she continued to be prey to an astonishing lack of confidence in herself. Dessner and others have drawn attention to a great many parallels between the life and the fiction. There is ample evidence to suggest that the dilemma we have identified as confronting Nancy is comparable to that which faced George Eliot in 1860. Its ending represents a tentative resolution to an enormously painful personal experience that "thrust" itself upon George Eliot in 1860.

In the initial phase of its publication, *Silas Marner* was hailed as an anti-societal novel because of the depiction of a hero who goes in to an exile upon knowing that his best friend has cheated on him. A popular trend of a hero in those days was he used to fight against the injustice, through muscle power, and wit or some other means. But, our hero, Silas in a way turns his back to the misdeeds done on him. Despite all these, according to Simon Blackburn, Silas wins the heart of the common people. He opines:

*Silas Marner* eventually won the hearts of people and critics for depiction of struggle for existence of a normal man in a very normal fashion. In fact, today the novel is hailed as a true concept of struggle of a lowly man, as they generally do not reprise the injustice on them but accept it as fate. This is the realist approach of a lowly man whose notion to solve the crisis is not avenge but submission to the happenings. (94)

This notion seems awkward to some critics and scholars; however, today most of them accept it as one of the most fascinating aspects of Eliot to have depicted Silas in the form.

Silas struggles in two ways. Firstly, he denounces the worldly attachment, and secondly, he takes a less traveled way to make his accusers realize his mistake. As a consequence of the accusation, Silas's fiancée leaves him, only to marry his accuser. As a result of these events, Silas becomes a reclusive and embittered miser until an orphaned girl, Eppie, comes into his life. Through her Silas begins to reconnect with people. So, in the course of his existential struggle, power, human love, and justice become central to this gyre in which individuals are associated to.

Silas is a normal character to which readers can associate them to. Despite a contradictory sense on understanding the sense of Silas, it is a realist manner through which the real face of society is depicted. It is also one of the surest ways to dismantle contradictions that surfaces on the irrational behavior of Silas, at least to the people of the day. It is definitely absurd to remain silent when one knows that s/he is not the culprit. Thus, it is a creation of absurd contradictions that has engulfed human society and life.

In concern, Silas struggle is marred with absurd contradictions. As such, absurdity and contradictions is worth remembering that our universe is full of contradictions and nonsense. So, to be rational is also irrational. Simon du Pollock in *Albert Camus Existentialist or Absurdist* states that Camus might more properly be supposed an absurdist than existentialist. Pollock differentiates Camus from Sartre. Pollock opines:

Camus used the term 'absurdity' to refer to the human condition whereas Sartre used 'nausea' to denote it. Camus views the denial of world and worldly attachment to fulfill the desire of man is essential. However, for Sartre, when man has high expectations but the world does not respond to them, then occurs the situation of absurdity. (15)

In case of Silas, both the situation takes place. On one hand, he denies the worldly pleasure, and on the other hand, Silas is alienated because he is certain that his expectation of eternal world cannot be fulfilled by the worldly objects. As such, being marred in an eternal contradictions of ethical and moral struggle, life for him, turns as an absurd entity. However, these are the ways of life to which individuals have to survive, and there is no escape to it.

Most philosophers since Plato have held that the highest ethical good is the same for everyone; insofar as one approaches moral perfection, one resembles other morally perfect individuals. Christine Korsgaard, reacted against this tradition by insisting that the highest good for the individual is to find his or her own unique vocation. As she writes in a journal, "I must find a truth that is true for me . . . the idea for which I can live or die" (57).

Other writers also have echoed the idea of conflict between an individual and society. It is believed that one must choose one's own way without the aid of universal, objective standards. Against the traditional view that moral choice involves an objective judgment of right and wrong, existentialists have argued that no objective, rational basis can be found for moral decisions. Hence, critics are of the opinion that the idea that individual must decide which situations are to count as moral situations should be left to the person itself.

Critics have followed the idea of stressing the importance of passionate individual action in deciding questions of both morality and truth. They have insisted, accordingly, that personal experience and acting on one's own convictions are essential in arriving at the truth. The idea of change is inevitable, and hence there are many things that ought to be maintained as per the change in time and tide. Thus, the understanding of a situation by someone involved in that situation is superior to that of a detached,



objective observer. This emphasis on the perspective of the individual agent has also made existentialists suspicious of systematic reasoning.

Philosophers and existentialist writers have been deliberately unsystematic in the exposition of their philosophies, preferring to express themselves in aphorisms, dialogues, parables, and other literary forms. Despite their anti-rationalist position, however, most existentialists cannot be said to be irrationalism in the sense of denying all validity to rational thought. They have held that rational clarity is desirable wherever possible, but that the most important questions in life are not accessible to reason or science. Furthermore, they have argued that even science is not as rational as is commonly supposed. Nietzsche, for instance, asserted that the scientific assumption of an orderly universe is for the most part a useful fiction.

Nineteenth and twentieth century was an era of change. First, it was industrialization, followed by fall of social and moral values. The present state of ambiguity and absurdity of the human situation is largely a product of such changes which redefined social and ethical values. One of the most prominent features of a society is its dynamism. This makes an individual fragile and, often leaves in turmoil of life. When s/he cannot adjust to the ever changing pattern of life, there is a sense of ambiguity and loneliness arising, thereby.

Hence, an individual's response to this situation must be to live a totally committed life, and this commitment can only be understood by the individual who has made it. The individual therefore must always be prepared to defy the norms of society for the sake of the higher authority of a personally valid way of life. Kierkegaard ultimately advocated a leap of faith into a Christian way of life, which, although incomprehensible and full of risk, was the only commitment he believes, could save the individual from despair.

Hence, the novelist takes the issue of moral dilemma and struggle to save the same from being dismantled. In the light of this idea, the present research is of the opinion that *Silas Marner* is an inquiry into the life and living of Silas who ventures into the meaning of life from moralistic point of view. Silas's philosophy of struggle in life comes from a rather different perspective because he does not take a straight forward way of imposing faults on the wrong-doer rather he decides to quit his village. This is religious purpose of sustaining life and difficulties when people are in moral crisis. As such, Silas goes on to a self-imposed exile and settles in a village, Raveloe, away from the center of happening.

When Silas settles in Raveloe, he is isolated from the center of village and its social incidents. That "he is a weaver and that his cottage is on the edge of town, next to the Stone-pits" (3) make Silas very different from the rest of the village. Also, the townspeople believe that Silas is connected with the devil because they think he can set curses and charms. The townspeople generally stay away from him, except for the curious children who are interested in the unusual sound of the loom and are "frightened by Silas's glaring face" (9). Deprived of human companionship and love, Silas only has love for the gold that he hoards. Silas remains alone and cold for fifteen years until his days of isolation and exile come to an end in the form of death of Dunsey, and from whom the charity money is retrieved.

There are different types of characters in the novel that makes the novel interesting ground for antagonist rivalry among the people of the town and, Silas. Life of Silas moves around the fate constructed by Dunsey Cass, a son of "Squire Cass's younger and reckless son" (6). He is a reckless person, as witnessed from his act of not paying back the rent money that Godfrey, one of the townsmen has given him. In turn, Dunsey takes a different approach to justify his act of not paying Silas with the money.

Dunsey threatens that if Godfrey does not pay the money himself, then he will reveal his dark secret that he is married to a drunk named Molly Farren.

A society is a combination of different characters with varying intention and nature. These different characters make a society vibrant with pros and cons, and set background for struggle for existence. It is here that an individual finds cause to live his life. And there is hardly anyone without a cause to survive. Godfrey is another interesting character who has a dark secret and has lived with it for years. The absurdity of relationship is such that they cannot expose it to the general public; however, a baby girl is born from the relationship. This little girl later is “adapted by Silas” (31).

In face-saving attempt, Godfrey is forced to sale his beloved horse, Wildfire to make sure that his secret is maintained from the hands of Dunsey. He does not want his secret to be revealed by Dunsey, so he allows Dunsey to sale the horse and keep the profit for self – a decision he makes against his better judgment. He would rather pay the money than have Dunsey expose his marriage to their father, for he wants to win Nancy Lammeter’s love. News of his marriage would surely jeopardize any chance of marrying Nancy.

There are several antagonist characters in every society. They set the tempo for good person to struggle for their existence. In this regards, Silas becomes the victim of Dunsey’s ill intention. Silas, an innocent person does not know the ill intention of his so-called friend, Dunsey who is no friend to anyone. For Silas, Dunsey is a humble and trustworthy friend. His real identity is something, as:

It had seemed to the unsuspecting Silas that the friendship had suffered no chill even from his formation of another attachment of a closer kind. For some months, he had been engaged to a young servant-woman,

waiting only for a little increase to their mutual savings in order to their marriage; and it was a great delight to him. (85)

When in one hand, Silas is humble and loyal to his friend, Dunsey; it is the opposite with Dunsey. This is one of the most interesting features in human life, as one cannot know who to believe and, who not to.

The condition of modern man is absurd. S/he is in an attempt to achieve each and every thing that comes to the sight, and hence is ruining life. Nietzsche too has termed the modern man's desire as absurd, like that of Sisyphus. He used the term saying that Christianity was irrational and even absurd for the human beings, as it virtually ends the hope of men to the path of knowledge. Later, Nietzsche's idea appeared in literature as 'Literature of the Absurd.' After that this term/phrase began to be applied to refer to a number of works in drama and prose fiction that have commonly the theme/sense that the human condition is essentially absurd. After the Second World War, it emerged as a revolt against strong belief and values of traditional culture and literature.

In *Silas Marner*, Eliot combines humor, jealousy and rich symbolism with a historically precise setting to create an extraordinary tale of love and hope. This novel explores the issues of redemptive love, the notion of community, the role of religion, and the status of the gentry and family. While religion and religious devotion play a strong part in this text, Eliot concerns herself, as always, with matters of ethics, and it is clear that for her, ethics exist apart from religion. Perhaps the most prominent theme in existentialist writing is that of choice. Humanity's primary distinction, in the view of most struggles is for freedom to choose. The constant notion of struggle and antagonism have held that human beings do not have a fixed nature, or essence, as other animals and plants do; each human being makes choices that create his or her own nature.

*Silas Marner*, on the surface, the book has a strong moral tract; the bad characters like Dunstan Cass get their just deserts, while the good, pitiable characters like Silas Marner are ultimately richly rewarded. Although it seems like a simple moral story with a happy ending, the fiction is the face of coming of age of industrialization and its impact on modern humans. George Eliot's text includes several pointed criticisms of organized honor, the role of the gentry, and the negative impacts of industrialization. It was written during the industrial revolution and may be a reaction to it.

Critics and scholars did not very much welcome the concept of a lowly hero who does nothing to defy the claims against him but leaves the place to avoid it. However, in the long run, this very realistic depiction of struggle of Marner established *Silas Marner* as one of the good novels of Eliot. Narrating this concern, Michael Mason comments:

*Silas Marner* revolves around the hardship faced by Silas, the protagonist, against the orthodox society during the mid-nineteenth-century. In the struggle against these societal odds, Eliot surprisingly takes Marner as the hero who does not defy the false accusation against him but takes shelter in escaping them. However, this chance earned her as one of the rare feminist writers of the era. (125)

The depiction of the hero as a lowly character, in fact associated her with the issue of struggle of individuals of the then society that was largely antagonistic to individual's will to independent choice. It was still a puritan society where individuals who were in against this notion were termed rebels and, often secluded from the routine of societal ways. This is one what Silas fears, in addition to his sincere behaviors that make him remain silent when the accusation is made against him.

Despite his antisocial behavior, however, Silas is at heart a deeply kind and honest person. At no point in the novel does Silas do or say anything remotely malicious and, strangely for a miser, he is not even particularly selfish. Silas's love of money is merely the product of spiritual desolation, and his hidden capacity for love and sacrifice manifests itself when he takes in and raises Eppie.

Silas's outsider status makes him the focal point for the themes of community, religion, and family that Eliot explores in the novel. As an outcast who eventually becomes Raveloe's most exemplary citizen, Silas serves as a study in the relationship between the individual and the community. His loss and subsequent rediscovery of faith demonstrate both the difficulty and the solace that religious belief can bring. Additionally, the unlikely domestic life that Silas creates with Eppie presents an unconventional but powerful portrait of family and the home.

Though Silas is the title character of the novel, he is by and large passive, acted upon rather than acting on others. Almost all of the major events in the novel demonstrate this passivity. Silas is framed for theft in his old town and, instead of proclaiming his innocence, puts his trust in God to clear his name. Similarly, Dunsey's theft of Silas's gold and Eppie's appearance on Silas's doorstep — rather than any actions Silas takes of his own accord — are the major events that drive the narrative forward. Silas significantly diverges from this pattern of passivity when he decides to keep Eppie, thereby becoming an agent of his eventual salvation.

In this regards, Martin Esslin says that life can be taken as a new combination of a number of ancient, even archaic traditions of literature and drama. The ancient tradition has been brought together in a new form in the *Theater of the Absurd* where he has roots in the mimics of Greece of Rome. There was the tradition of miming and clowning. Similarly, renaissance Italy also became a component of the movement

known as the theatre of the absurd. Likewise, popular forms of theatre are The Pantomime, The Musical Hall in Britain, continued with the idea of fluctuation of societal values and norms.

The ancient convention of nonsense poetry also supported it to rise. In Greece and Rome, there was the tradition of dream and nightmare literature which gave rise to the new type of theater. Moreover, the allegorical and symbolic dramas of the medieval period known as the morality plays provided this movement with plenty of nourishment. It has also developed from the Spanish auto Sacramental. In the same way, this anti-theatre movement has originated from the ancient tradition of fools and mad scenes in dreams of Shakespeare and other playwrights. Further, the more tradition of ritual drama also contributed to the theatre.

The beginning of twentieth century introduced several new aspects to the modern world. People were having abundance of choices, as such, choice became the central theme to human existence, and it is inescapable; even the refusal to choose is a choice. Freedom of choice entails commitment and responsibility. Because individuals are free to choose their own path, existentialists have argued, they must accept the risk and responsibility of following their commitment wherever it leads. This has led to the downfall of religious concerns and values, as Christine Korsgaard holds its spiritually crucial to recognize that one experiences not only a fear of specific objects but also a feeling of general apprehension, which he called dread.

The entire idea of choice gave rise to unprecedented level of conflict among the society and individual. For different philosophers, the idea of multiple choices available in the society was associated and equivalent to existential living of human. The term is synonymous with varieties of words, as can be noted in the following passage of Christine Korsgaard in *The Sources of Normativity*, as:

Existentialism is God's way of calling each individual to make a commitment to a personally valid way of life. He terms existential term as *anxiety* that has a crucial role in the work of the 20th-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger; anxiety leads to the individual's confrontation with nothingness and with the impossibility of finding ultimate justification for the choices he or she must make. For Sartre, it is nausea that is used for the individual's recognition of the pure contingency of the universe, and the word anguish is used for the recognition of the total freedom of choice that confronts the individual at every moment. (98)

So, the term struggle for living in different forms and versions carries almost similar meanings. Nevertheless, it has to do with choice people are to make in the process of living their life.

Similarly, it also brings back the consciousness in man in order to face the harsh realities of life. Life is like a theatre of absurd to which all individuals are emotionally and psychologically attach to. In regards, Esslin opines:

. . . aware of the ultimate realities of the condition. It also attempts to put but again in man the lost sense of cosmic wonder, to take him out of an existence which has become mechanical, trite (dull), complacent and deprived of dignity. It is a part of the ceaseless endeavor of artists of their time to destroy the wall of complacency and automatism. It also makes an attempt to re-establish consciousness of man's own situation when he is confronted with the ultimate reality of his conditions. So it fulfills a dual purpose and presents a twofold absurdity in which individuals are marred. (400)



This obviously shows that it tries to make man aware of ultimate realities of his condition by breaking the wall of complacency and automatism.

In this regards, Martin Esslin says that our life is like the theatre of the absurd that talks about the stylistics aspect of plays without emphasizing the philosophical side (genus). He states: “Perhaps the most serious critical limitations of Mr. Esslin’s otherwise excellent work, the Theatre of the Absurd is precisely this tendency to focus too quietly and exclusively on the stylistic breed worth stressing the philosophical genus” (3).

He opines that many of absurd plays from the beginning have circular structure and ending. The absurdist playwrights also say that it is impossible to motivate all human behavior. So, the audience in the absurd plays faces such actions or incident which has no motivation, such characters that are constantly moving and mostly such events which are irrational. Similarly, what’s going to happen next cannot be predicted in such plays because like in traditional plays the action doesn’t go logically and chronologically, rather it slowly develops complex patterns of the poetic image. It indicates that it is not possible to motivate all human nature. So, they present unmotivated characters and irrational actions which create a pattern of poetic images.

Similarly, he also talks about the poetic image which is “complex, ambiguous, multidimensional, and multi-meaningful. He believes words are meaningless and all communication among human being is impossible” (128). So, interpretation is useless because we can’t give the exact meaning. That’s why it consists of the theme of incomprehensibility of a life’s experience. As a result, “it dramatizes the futility and failure of human existence” (151). He opposes the elegant, logical construction of the well-made play, rather he demands for intensity, the gradual growth of psychological

tension. To bring this about the author does not have to follow rules or restrictions. In this way, he is against the standard of traditional play.

Antagonistic feature of human society is something that creates the value of life and living meaningless. It shows the public with a picture of a disordered world that has lost its meaning and purpose called an absurd world. For Esslin, individual and society are at the loggers end because:

The madness of the human condition enables the audience in a theatre to see his situation of grimness and despair. So, it works as a therapy to the audience. Then, he will be out of illusion, fears and anxieties. As a result, the individual will be able to face the harsh realities of world consciously. (414)

As such, Esslin's comparison of human life with that of the audience in the theatre is justified. In real life; however, the difference is an individual cannot differentiate between the good and bad; but in theatre, one can. So, a society can get its lesson from the theatre. Martin Esslin says that absurdist playwrights regard themselves as lonely outsiders who being cut off and isolated from society live in their own personal world. Each of them deal with both subject matter and form in individual manner. All of them also discuss over own roots, sources and background in their personal ways.

When Silas returns home, he finds that his gold is stolen. Devastated and horrified, Silas is shocked at the thought that someone had robbed him and runs to town to report the robbery, although he does not wish for anyone to be punished. Silas runs into the Rainbow and tells the townspeople there about the robbery. After Silas accuses Jem Rodney of stealing his gold, the villagers demand that Silas tell them how he found the gold missing. Because Silas is so distraught and serious, the villagers believe his story to be true. The next day, Godfrey goes to the Stone-pits area, as with other

villagers, to discuss the robbery. Nearby Silas's cottage, they find a tinderbox, which makes a townsman recall that a peddler who'd come to town recently carried a tinderbox. The townspeople are divided on the subject of Silas's stolen gold. However, Dunsey's name does not come up as a suspect because he is known to disappear for a long period of time. When Godfrey learns that Dunsey has killed the horse, he realizes that he must tell their father about the missing rent money and the horse. Squire Cass is enraged about the money and tells Godfrey that he is as spineless and weak-minded as his mother was.

Victorian era was a time marred with distrust, all around. It was the period of transition between the new and the old ideologies. In literature too, it was the time for testing new trends, and *Silas Marner* is one of the works that reflects similar trend. Eliot decided to come across the novel, which later paid her off, as one of the earliest existential writings. There were two major trends of novel writing that emerged in the literary trend during the era. According to Michael Mason, these trends of novels in Europe were concerned with either social manners or with chronicling of events. Mason opines:

Two major classes of novels developed – novels of manners and chronicle novels. Works such as *Emma* (1816) by English writer Jane Austen, *Madame Bovary* (1857) by French writer Gustave Flaubert, and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) by English writer George Eliot are novels of manners. These complex observations of individuals and society, set in the provincial countryside, focus in great detail on the lives of a few individuals. (124)

These novels displayed the hardships being borne by the people of the society of the day. However, George's characterization of her characters were based on larger scope,

making the novel an all-purpose literary and cultural experience: a source of historical information, a study of manners and morals, a course in contemporary political and ethical ideas, and an investigation of wealth and poverty, respectability and crime, in the literary trend of the time.

Despite all these challenges of ups and downs and share of difficulties, there were people in the rural life who displayed humane feelings to the people. For Silas, things were tough after the accusation; however, there were people who wanted to give her a fair share in social life. Dolly Winthrop visits Silas and begs him to join the church festivities on Christmas Day. She tries to make him see the connection between the town church ceremonies and the Christmas holidays, but Silas fails to recognize that the church is associated with Christmas. The Lantern Yard services he learned are not the same as the Raveloe customs. However, Silas spends the holidays by himself, as he had every year for the past fifteen years.

The Christmas and New Year's holidays are spent with joyous festivities for the townspeople. Squire Cass throws a lavish New Year's party for Raveloe high society. Nancy Lammeter is chagrined that Godfrey still wants her for his wife for she has made it clear that she does not want to marry. The villagers remark at how wonderful Godfrey and Nancy look as a couple. Nancy is cold to Godfrey when he asks for her forgiveness.

On her way to the Squire's party, a drunken Molly Farren, Godfrey's wife, walks with their baby girl in her arms. She plans to crash the party and reveal that she is Godfrey's wife so that she can avenge Godfrey's desertion. Before she can make it to the Squire's, Molly falls asleep from the opium and falls onto the snow, the little girl escaping Molly's arms. The child follows the path of a bright light, all the way to Silas Marner's cottage and through the open door. Silas does not see the child enter because he has an unconscious fit. When he regains consciousness, he sees something gold on

the floor and thinks that his gold has returned to him. However, he finds that the gold on his floor is not money, but the golden hair of a sleeping child. Silas manages to think beyond the beautiful sight of the little girl to go outside and see the dead body of Molly Farren.

Silas brings the child with him to Squire Cass's house to fetch the doctor. Godfrey recognizes the child in Silas's arms as his own. He fears that Molly is alive, but when he and the doctor rush to Silas's cottage and finds Molly's body, he sees that the woman Silas had found is indeed his wife, and that she is dead.

The villagers are surprised by Silas's statement that he wants to keep the child, but they feel warmer toward him. Dolly Winthrop gives Silas old clothes of her youngest son Aaron and advises him on how to care for the little girl. Vowing that he will make sure that she is taken care of, Godfrey is happy to see that his child is content with Silas, and gives Silas money for the girl.

Silas cannot get a break after falsely being accused of a crime, and he relocates to another village, where he focuses on working and earning money, living an isolated, antisocial existence. He loves his money. In fact, that was all he loved in his life because it was a proof of his honesty and decency to the general public of the county. Then someone robs him, taking every last coin, and thus, it sets an example that it is the good people who are being robbed to test their endurance towards the dignity of life and living.

However, life has to go on. Silas moves to a new town, and here, he earns his living as a weaver, and lives a miserly existence. He had no other purpose in life but to earn and save money. Silas life "had reduced itself to the mere functions of weaving and hoarding, without any contemplation of an end towards which the functions tended" (21). His only pleasure, all he looked forward to, was taking the money out every night,

counting it, stacking it, sorting it, and handling it. Until one night, it was gone. And thus, starts the journey of a new way to find solace against the contemplation being imposed on him by the unjust society.

Hardships of Silas does not get a break after falsely being accused of a crime he relocates to another village, where he focuses on working and earning money, living an isolated, antisocial existence. He loves his money. In fact, that's all he loves. Then someone robs him, taking every last coin. Moving to a new town, he earns his living as a weaver, and lives a miserly existence. He had no other purpose in life but to earn and save money. Eliot presents Silas's life as, "His life had reduced itself to the mere functions of weaving and hoarding, without any contemplation of an end towards which the functions tended" (34). His only pleasure, all he looked forward to, was taking the money out every night, counting it, stacking it, sorting it, and handling it. Until one night, it was gone.

And as suddenly as the money disappeared from his home, a little girl appeared. Silas found the mother frozen by the road near his home. Without hesitation, Silas took on the task of raising her as his own, finding the fulfillment he had been missing all those years: "Now something had come to replace his hoard which gave a growing purpose to the earnings, drawing his hope and joy continually onward beyond the money."

As the mystery of the missing money and the unknown parentage of Eppie, Silas's adopted daughter, come together, the story comes together in a clash of class and family that, while perhaps bordering on melodrama, is nevertheless moving and satisfying. When Godfrey, Eppie's biological father and a nobleman, comes to Silas and Eppie, the reader takes heart in Silas and Eppie's love for one another. On a personal note, the thoughts of Nancy, Godfrey's wife, on adoption were interesting. After they

lost a baby and weren't able to conceive again, she had resisted Godfrey's wishes to adopt a child. "To adopt a child, because children of your own had been denied you, was to try and choose your lot in spite of Providence: the adopted child, she was convinced, would never turn out well, and would be a curse to those who had willingly and rebelliously sought what it was clear that, for some high reason, they were better off without." I wonder how widespread this attitude was then, or even today.

Certainly Silas's adoption of Eppie contradicts Nancy's view; Eliot clearly strikes a positive note for adoption here. As one might expect from a novel of the mid-19th century, many passages seem overly wordy and unnecessary. But even the dialogue and action that seems irrelevant to the story, like the men chatting in the pub, and the girls chatting as they are getting dressed for a formal dinner, add to the ambience by giving a realistic portrayal of the culture and language of the time.

Martin Esslin discusses about absurdity and absurdist playwrights in parallel structure to general public our society. He says:

Absurdist playwrights believe that our existence is absurd because we are born without asking to be born; we die without seeking death and live between birth and death trapped with our body and reason. We have our senses, will and reason but can never perceive anything completely on our own. (47)

Esslin states that all our creations are doomed to decay as we ourselves are destined to die. We create in order to see ourselves in some form of eternity but our creations become autonomous because of repetition. However, we can't find out it. So, the more we make efforts at definition and permanent distinction, the more we feel absurd. So, the only truth we have to accept is that we don't understand our life completely. Our sense of power, permanence and distinction is achieved when we give up reason. It is

impossible for us to act efficiently, perceive accurately, and create anything definitely and permanently. It is impossible for us to stop acting as long as we live in the world. This is the very condition of human being called absurd.

Dunsey whose target always was to make easy money, blackmails Godfrey and, for the same he has the horse, Wildfire. However, as he is taking the horse for sale, he accidentally kills the horse when he enters the “horse hunt and jumps over a stake, stabbing the horse” (8). Dunsey manages to sneak away without anyone seeing him and walks home. However, when he is near to Silas’s house, he remembers his bankruptcy and the money present in Silas house. The money suddenly entices his lust, as he approaches Marner’s cottage, he thinks about the money problem and “remembers that Silas supposedly has a pile of gold stocked in his home” (5). Without a conscience in his soul, Dunsey sneaks into Silas’s home, finds the gold in its hiding place, and runs off into the night. Thus, it paves ways to invites hardships to Silas’s life.

Hardships are something that determines the course of action of an individual. It is something similar to Martin Esslin’s notion of life is like a theatre of absurd. Though life seems to beautiful, it appears to be grotesque, frivolous and irreverent, it performs the original and religious function of the theatre since it deals with the ultimate realities of the human condition, fundamental problems of life and death and breakdown of communication.

Here, Esslin thinks that absurdity is a symbolic religion that deals with man’s fundamental problems of life. The central idea of the absurdity is that if we break traditional views by abandoning logic and meaning, we can know the truth of the mystic world. Here Silas’s action of taking a different path is justified, as he moves on less traveled path. Unlike the traditional method of lodging complaints and allegations, Silas prefers to remain silent against the claim on him.



Eliot, decidedly not a believer, has little good to say about the church in *Silas Marner*. But Christians do not have to try very hard to resonate with the moral lesson of the novel. The joy and rewards of life can be measured not by how much we save of what we earn, but by how much we give ourselves away in the service of others. George says pure religion is looking after orphans; Silas certainly embraced that call through his action of adopting Eppie, an orphan girl and thus, turns his notion of life to a different level.

Things take a different turn, when the Stone-pits are drained. Dunsey's skeleton is found with the gold he had stolen from Silas Marner. Godfrey finally confesses to Nancy that he had been married and that Eppie is his child. When he learns that Dunsey's body has been found, he knows the truth will always reveal itself eventually. A disappointed Nancy, fearful that she has been a horrid wife, tells him that he should have told her earlier, so that they might have had a child to rear. They agree to ask Eppie if she would like to live with them as their daughter.

Silas who by now have a reason to struggle against the rivalry of the world in the form of this young girl is determined to rear her. He names the girl Hephzibah, after his mother and sister, and calls her Eppie for short. Raising Eppie brings Silas more joy and happiness than he could ever imagine. For the first time, Silas feels a reciprocated love, a love that is deeper and more affectionate than his love for gold. This indicates towards the process of socialization of Silas. Through the innocent love of Eppie, Silas learns that there is goodness in this world, and he could not have been happier than he is now, the writer presents his sense of solace, as:

It was a bright autumn Sunday, sixteen years after Silas Marner had found his new treasure on the hearth. The bells of the old Raveloe church were ringing the cheerful peel which told that the morning services was

ended; and out of the arched doorway in the tower came slowly, retarded by friendly greetings and questions, the eligible parishioners who had chosen this bright Sunday morning for Silas being eligible for church going. (119)

So, kind Silas starts to feel the coming of warmth in his life. This is because life has its own way of bestowing an individual with the oddities that he has to go through. The society and the church were ready to welcome him with open arms. In fact life cannot be all antagonistic with individuals, and if there are moments of hardships, there is also a share in the good happenings. However, there were other aggressive forces that were firmly established in the then societies.

The novel then shifts to second part, and sixteen years have passed since Eppie entered Silas's life. Eppie is now a beautiful, sweet girl, who loves nature and animals. She and Silas have a very happy life together in Raveloe; Eppie has loved Silas as her father and cannot bear the thought of being separated from him. Eppie tells her father that she would like to marry Aaron Winthrop, who has proposed to her, but only if Silas lives with them as well. Also watching Eppie's welfare is Godfrey Cass, who is now married to Nancy Lammeter. He and Nancy are childless; their one child died in infancy. Godfrey is especially giving and considerate to Eppie and Silas. Godfrey had suggested adopting Eppie before, but Nancy had refused, on her belief that adopting would be against Providence.

Godfrey and Nancy visit Silas's cottage, where they ask Eppie if she wants to become their daughter, learn how to be a lady, and live with them at the Red House. Godfrey intends to save Eppie from the hard life as a working-class girl, but Eppie replies that she does not want to be rich and that she would rather remain in the countryside. When Godfrey angrily tells Eppie and Silas that Eppie is his daughter, both

Eppie and Silas declare to Godfrey that Eppie's true paternity does not change the fact that Godfrey did not acknowledge her as his daughter sixteen years ago. Repeating firmly that she wants to marry a workingman and that she will not part from Silas, Eppie refuses the Casses' proposal to Godfrey, who, when thinking about Eppie's refusal, decides sadly that it is punishment for deserting her. He decides to do all that he can for Eppie and, decides to return to Lantern Yard, his home and county he had quit, almost sixteen years ago.

In Lantern Yard, Silas tries to see the minister and try to clear his name from the list of the accused. However, things have changed a lot in the years he was away from the community. There are several things that have gone drastic changes in the society, he once used to remain. With the shift of English economy from farming to industrialization, shift in the English society has been dominated by energy related industries. When Silas lands to Lantern Yard with Eppie accompanying him, he finds "a horrid, grim-looking town in place of the Lantern Yard" (104), he knew.

To his horror, "in place of the chapel is a factory, and no one knows what happened to the chapel or the minister" (104). He sees the new antagonistic force in the form of industries, and hardly can come to comprise with this new force in the rise. The ages old farming system has slowly taken a side role and the new factories with smoke and smell are all over the Lantern Yard. He cannot believe his eye to the rapid changes that has engulfed is old community. His disgust is narrated, as:

He continued the action which had been arrested, and closed his door, unaware of the chasm in his consciousness, unaware of any intermediate change, except that the light had grown dim, and that he was chilled and faint. He thought he had been too long standing at the door and looking out. (95)

Thus, things have changed drastically and it is not surprising that the industrialization is one of the latest enemies of human kind. Today, it is an established fact that our society was quiet a safe place to live than, after its industrialization.

These disappointments of loss of farm land and the growth of machines is further seen in Silas's disappointment of not having an easy access to the chapel. The place which should accompany and welcome all the people from common man to all has been under the surveillance of the Ministers. And the minister fears that Silas's dark past might never be cleared, and hence his visit to the chapel is uncertain.

However, Silas has not lost his hope. He agrees with Dolly in that there is goodness and right in this world, as long as he trusts. This has something to do with the antagonism invited by the trends of industrialization in Europe as even the thoughts of human being are slowly being controlled and regulated by the new laws of the machine society. The idea is there is conflict in the society, and now, the face and nature of conflict has changes from the traditional one to that of industrial nature. Now, the agriculture based economy has changed itself to industrial; thereby resulting in a new type of conflict.

The rise of industries has invited further increased absurdities in human life. Moreover, the absurd is constant encounter between man and his own obscurity. The absurd makes everything really free. In search for freedom, man creates different things that confine his own life. So, being free he is not really free. The absurd enlightens him because he knows there is no future for man and it gives inner freedom to him. It also indicates that he takes the absurd positively and opines that it helps us lead a real life. By accepting death, the absurd man feels released from everything outside. Death and the absurd are principles of the only reasonable freedom which a human heart can experience and live. So, what is important is not the best thing but the most living. The

absurd and the extra life do not depend on man's will but on its death. So, death is the source of absurdity.

As such, even in the present time, *Silas Marner* is a story that finds relevance in the life of its people because it narrates the tale of aggression and hatred in a different manner, and shows benevolence as an effective way to reduce rivalry among people in a community. One of the surest ways of reducing antagonism among people and society is forgiveness, the Silas undertakes. It is often found that people are indulged in moral and social dilemma in the modern time, like that of Silas. As such, Eliot's story is timeless saga of struggle of individual and society.

### III. Fall of Moralistic Values

The present research on George Eliot's *Silas Marner* is equally applicable in today's people life. The hardships imposed on its protagonist and his way of struggle against the opponents of life is exposed in almost parallel to modern man. Silas Marner, the central protagonist, is a humble man living in a village in England during the latter years of nineteenth century. However, things take a drastic change when the humble Silas is falsely accused of stealing gold that is a community treasure.

Life is rather difficult to those who are humble, meek and weak. They are often tested by the oddity of Silas then moves on an exile and exclude self from almost all the social and religious gatherings in the village. However, he soon finds a way of living in the form of an orphan girl – Eppie. The society turns antagonist towards him, but then there is a cause for him to smile. Despite being an innocent person, he lives almost for sixteen years under a mental torture of being culprit of the crime he had never committed.

This is a strange justice of being a societal being. One cannot escape from the norms and ethics set by the society; however, they often turn antagonistic to its residents. This is something which individual cannot avoid, and hence comes the notion of 'human life as an absurd entity.' Then there is another factor that takes its toll on the life of the rural people, slowly and steadily. The villages have turned into towns and the church is no more visible, after sixteen years due to the industrialization. The growing tendency of industries and people being involved in factory works have made them machine like. Hence, it is monetary factor that has its toll on the feelings and sentiments of the people rather than humane feelings.

Dunsey Cass is one such character who shows early sign of entering of monetary value that guides the mentality of the people of the modern time. He steals the money

and, Silas is falsely accused. The contrast of the modern and ancient man is depicted in the form of these characters that represent the changing pattern of human life and its values from that of the ancient to the modern.

However, the novel depicts a humane side that still prevails in human society, despite the fall of values and ethics. Silas rears the orphan girl – Eppie as his own child which indicates that humanity still has not lost its charm. As such, in a struggle of an individual against the oppositions imposed on him by the society and its ways, goodness still prevails over the evil. Thus, the essence of struggle for existential meaning of life in modern time is associated with fall of moral values and ethics. In fact, the rise of industries is one of the prime causes of decline of societal ethics and values.

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