

## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Individual Identity and *The Mill on the Floss*

Mary Ann Evans, the daughter of Robert Evans and Christina Evans, was born in the English Midlands, Warwickshire, on Nov. 22, 1819. Later on she chose to call herself Marian Evans. She took George Eliot as her pen name. Her childhood was not particularly happy and she felt herself to be neglected in her school life. She longed terribly for someone to love. But this hunger was doomed to remain unsatisfied until G.H. Lewes entered her life.

Afterwards, she started working as translator and began to have doubts about the existence of God. Later she began to work as an assistant editor on an important philosophical journal, the *Westminster Review* (1856). In the course of her professional work, she met some eminent figures such as Herbert Spencer, Francis Newman, G.H. Lewes and others. She met George Henry Lewes in 1854 for the first time and became a friend and a companion for the next twenty-four years. In spite of the fact that Lewes could not get divorced from his wife, Eliot courageously agreed to live with him in unmarried union. She was further encouraged by Lewes to write novels, and to do translation and criticism. She started her fictional journey in 1858 with the publication of *Scene of Clerical Life* (1859). Then she wrote many volumes of fiction. Her important fictional works are- *Adam Bede*(1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1863), *Felix Holt, the Radical*(1866), *Middlemarch* (1871), *Daniel Deronda* (1876) etc.

Her childhood experience, country life and the difficulties of adapting to a foreign environment were the subjects of her novels, and she was influenced by Romanticism. The England of 1819 in which Eliot was born, and where her characters in *The Mill on the Floss* are brought up, was still predominantly a rural country. English society continued to be stratified along the social divides. The titled aristocracy enjoyed the highest esteem and income. At the same time, their position of eminence was gradually being challenged by an emerging middle class. The milieu that Eliot entered in London was more forward working and was to produce the leaders engaged in the gradual establishment of an anti-aristocratic counter culture.

*Scene of the Clerical Life* (1859), a collection of three stories, had appeared as a volume in 1858 and been widely acclaimed, but it was the publication of *Adam Bede*, her first full-length novel, that firmly established George Eliot's reputation as a leading writer. *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) was Eliot's third attempt at fiction, and like *Adam Bede*, it is also set among the farming and trading families of the Midlands. After the success of the *Mill on the Floss*, Eliot's fame as a novelist was assured. In 1861, she published *Silas Marner*, a moral fable about the nemesis of character, and the regenerative influence of a child on man and society. This was followed by *Romola* in 1863. *Felix Holt, the Radical* was published in 1866. This is a political novel in which Eliot interprets radicalism to mean a criticism of tradition; yet it is a criticism which takes care to conserve that which is good in it, i.e. the importance of the past and the need to cherish its memory. In 1869 Eliot began

writing *Middlemarch* of which the first book was published in 1871 and *Remainder* in 1872. A panoramic study of English provincial life, *Middlemarch* is usually regarded as her masterpiece. It addresses itself, among other things, to the question of women's role in a patriarchal society to seek their real existence. The heroine, Dorothea Brooke, much like Maggie, the heroine of *The Mill on the Floss*, fails to achieve her noble ideals not so much because of an inherent failure of character but because of the uncongenial social conditions in which she is fated to live and strive.

Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876) is set in the mid 1870s. It is contemporaneous with her own times, and unlike her other novels, which are set in the past, this novel widens Eliot's social scope to include the English gentry, the fashionable watering-places of Europe, and the European-moneyed classes from London to Frankfurt and Genoa. Her aim, here, was to widen the English vision by rousing the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow men who are most different from them in their customs and beliefs. She does this by stressing the fellowship between Christians and Jews, particularly in the realms of their shared religious and cultural heritage. In 1879, Eliot published a collection of didactic essays entitled *Impressions of Theophrastus*. Her death the next year brought her career as a novelist to a close.

It is said that George Eliot's style of writing deals with much realism. Eliot herself meant by a "realist" to be "an artist who values the truth of observation above the imaginative fancies of writers of romance or fashionable

melodramatic fiction” (qtd. in Ashton 19). Eliot’s books are notable for their realistic portrayal of pre-industrial English society, her interest in scandal and gossip, and her emphasis on political and social reform. They often feature female protagonists who struggle against social convention, but who, in the end must accept it or be ostracized by their families and friends. Eliot, being a Victorian novelist, has the sense of reflecting the material affluence, political consciousness, educational progress, and reform, democratic and social reform, industrial and mechanical progress, scientific advancement and social unrest of the Victorian era. It was an age of rapid social and educational reforms. The Victorians laid emphasis on order, decorum and decency.

The matters of paramount significance in this connection are the literary features of the Victorian Age. The hall-marks of Victorian literature are the abundance of output, socialistic or utilitarian outlook, interest in the past, fusion of romanticism and idealism, predominant melancholic or pessimistic note and fusion of farce and pathos, or realism and fantasy and not of individuality.

Victorian novels are distinct from other novels on certain grounds. Victorian novels demanded sentiments and reticence. They followed the convention of middle class society in morality and in vocabulary by sketching a picture of provincial life. The moralists continued to attack the social disorder of the time through satire and presented the description with pathos and humour. The description to convey the message to the hard hearted generation through the novels also played a vital role. In drawing the real picture of

society, they tended to write autobiographical novels, but some of them dealt with historical and political matters whereas others created a passionate world through novels.

All of Eliot's fictions are, in some sense, autobiographical. Her novels are imaginatively- wrought creations through which she attempts to exemplify her beliefs. However, no work is more straightforwardly derived from her own early experiences than *The Mill on the Floss*. Most critics and biographers believe that its heroine, Maggie Tulliver, bears a much closer relationship to the author than do other characters in her novel; and that it is this relationship which accounts for the novel's characteristic warmth. Preeti Singh in a introduction to *The Mill on the Floss* contends, “that, as a detailed rendering of growth of a young girl to womanhood, a girl marked by intellectual distinction, a generously ardent nature, and a strong capacity for feeling, the characterization of Maggie is the finest thing in Eliot’s fiction”. He further adds:

*The Mill on the Floss* is justly more famous for the evolving way in which Eliot has described the early years of Tom and Maggie. In the first two volumes, she richly evokes the social context and the economic and cultural compulsions within which Tom and Maggie have to live. One of Eliot's major themes is how larger forces act upon individual lives. In the very first chapter, Eliot Signals the reader that the small social unit should be seen in relation to the large: the ‘trimely kept’ dwelling house in relation

to the town of St. Ogg's and St. Ogg's itself in relation to distant sources of coal, and oil-bearing seed. The community in *The Mill on the Floss* is a community in the process of change, where the ships of commerce are to be seen in relation to the pastures of a disappearing agrarian society. However, if this community is shown in the process of change, equally strong are the defenses it constructs to keep this change in check. (qtd. in Singh 7)

It is worthwhile to discuss the *Mill on the Floss* in this Victorian framework. Being a story of the life and suffering of Maggie Tulliver, this novel is also an elaborate and comprehensive picture of contemporary English provincial life. The society of St. Ogg's reflects the Victorian materialism. The novel further reveals the Victorian respectability, believing in appearance, affectation and artificiality of manners. The education system of the contemporary society can also be viewed very clearly in this novel. The life of mill owners and the mill workers shows the economic condition of Victorian people. It further shows the poor religions and social shape of the society. Similarly, it shows the real status of the Victorian women. It is full of humour, satire and sentimentality.

## 1.2 Review of Literature

Since Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* is a widely read novel, critics have evaluated it differently. Many studies have been done about it by various critics, for instance, as a tragedy, as an autobiographical novel, a humanistic novel, a novel with child psychology, as a feminist novel etc. Although *The*

*Mill on the Floss* has been studied in different point of view, very few critics have analysed it as existential novel. So, this study is aimed for seeking the support to the existential perspective.

Passing a value judgment on *The Mill on the Floss* and relating it with provincial life Henry Auster says, “The focus of attention which had been centered in Maggie growth in a domestic and narrowly social context is shifted almost entirely to the inner life of her mind and feelings” (140).

Here, *The Mill on the Floss* has been analysed on the grounds of regionalism and psychological perspective. Auster says that George Eliot concentrates on Maggie's growth in a domestic or local and small social context. It also reflects the author's inner mind and feeling. In other words, as she was an inhabitant of a small rural area, her mind also reflects the same.

*The Mill on the Floss* has also been evaluated as a treatment of the narrow mindedness of the middle class. Michael wheeler says, “George Eliot generally attends most closely to the realities of the common place in her treatment of the little varieties and narrow mindedness of the middle class” (124). Here the lines designate that George Eliot is inclined towards the revelation of the facts of common people in her description. Since she has certain prejudices towards the middle class people, she disclosed their short-sighted visions and weakness.

Connecting the novel with child's vision and its autobiographical aspects F.R. Leavis says: “The fresh directness of child’s vision that we have there in the autobiographical part is something very different from the afternoon light

of reminiscence” (38). That is to say the novel is an autobiographical one and it has given stress on the childhood experiences of the characters in light of the life of the novelist. Her childhood autobiography reflects very clearly in the novel but the last part of the novel is not successful in reflecting her life. In the early phase, Maggie exactly represents George Eliot but later on she differs from her on the some ground. He further denotes:

But of course the most striking quality of *The Mill on the Floss* is that which goes with the strong autobiographical element. It strikes us as an emotional tone, We feel an urgency, a resonance, a personal vibration, adverting us of the poignantly immediate presence of the author. (39)

It reveals that the autobiographical element found in the novel is important in a sense that we can read the early life of George Eliot through it. The novel is full of emotional tone, which attracts our feeling. In the course of reading the novel we hurry to know what happens later and we cannot help judging it personally. Our positive and negative attitudes go together. In judging the novel and the characters we happen to judge the author because of its autobiographical element.

The novel is also analysed with the feminine perspective. In this regard, F.R. Leavis contends:

That the presentment of Stephen Guest is unmistakably feminine no one only will be disposed to deny, but not is the assumption of general incapacity refuted by a whole gallery of triumphs,

Stephen himself is sufficiently 'there' to give the drama a convincing force. Animas against him for his success with Maggie and exasperation with George Eliot for allowing it shouldn't lead us to dispute that plain fact- they don't really amount to a judgment of his unreality. (40)

This is Stephen Guest's presence in the novel that gives way for feminine perspective. Although he is not strong enough to his point and belief yet plays a convincing role in the novel as to give it a definite shape to it. But towards the end George Eliot might be under estimating him in that he is successful. So that she has a jealousy of him. His way to behave is far away from being natural. Therefore, he has been blamed for not being real to life.

*The Mill on the Floss* is the reflection of the society. In this context, Jerome Thale says: "*The Mill on the Floss* is as I have said a presentation of the interaction of characters, manners and morals in a particular society" (41). *The Mill on the Floss* shows the interaction of certain people of a particular society, i.e. St. Oggs.

The novel is shown as the transformation of pathetic into an immature tragedy, Jennette King presents: "The form of the novel is consequently molded by the tragic vision and, here the pathetic is transformed into unqualified tragedy" (King 78). As the novel ends with tragic vision it draws reader's sympathy. Tragic vision makes it form. Its ending is very much pathetic one which changed into immature tragedy. Pathos plays great role to form a tragedy in the end.

In the novel, Maggie is the counterpart of George Eliot who by nature, is rebellious against patriarchal society of Victorian Era. Although the novel is widely viewed in feminist perspective by showing the events as the struggle against patriarchal society to establish the stand of female status. George Eliot being a female figure needed to discard the dominating norms and values of the contemporary society to search her own identity which determines the standard of her life. As a result, she created the autobiographical novel presenting Maggie as the real character.

## Chapter II

### Existentialism

#### 2.1 The Concept

In literature, the term, existentialism, came into prominence particularly in Germany and France as a philosophical movement or tendency after the World Wars. The World Wars gave rise to widespread feelings of despair and separation from the established order and gave rise to the term absurd. These feelings led to the idea that people have to create their own values in a world in which traditional values no longer reign. Existentialism insists that choices have to be made arbitrarily by individuals, who thus create themselves, because there are no objective standards to determine choice. It emphasizes on the existence of human being, the lack of meaning and purpose in life, and the solitude of human existence. It stresses the concreteness and problematic character of human existence. Existentialism draws attention to the risk, the voidness of human reality and admits that the human being is thrown into the world in which pain, frustration, sickness, contempt, malaise and death dominate. It was during the second World War, when Europe found itself in a crisis and faced with death and destruction, the existentialist movement began to flourish. Existentialism as a contemporary philosophical trend reached its zenith in the years following the war, the time when Europe was in a despairing mood, perhaps not without the hope of social reconstruction but pessimistic and morbid enough to accept the existentialist outlook of lack of design and intention in the universe and the nausea of human existence and its

frustration. The dark portrait of such sickness could be found even in the optimistic and confident nineteenth century works of authors as diverse as Karl Marx, Soren Kierkegaard, and Fredrich Nietzsche.

“Existentialism is a set of philosophical ideals that stress the existence of the human being, the anxiety and depression which pervade each human life”, (Lavin 322). Existentialism is less of an- ‘ism’ than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of positions associated with Existentialism, no single strict definition is possible; however, it suggests one major theme: the stress on concrete individual human existence and, consequently on subjectivity, individual freedom, and choice. Ryan gives an explanation of Existentialism:

Hence, there is no single existentialist philosophy, and no single definition of the word can be given. However, it may be said that with the existentialists the problem of man is central and that they stress man's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom, and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. (639)

Hence, Ryan, too emphasizes man's centrality in the study of existential issues. He also denotes concrete existence through revolt. It is a revolt against traditional European philosophy which takes philosophy and science. Traditional philosophers produced knowledge that would be objective, universally true and certain. The existentialists do not go with the traditional attempt to get the ultimate nature of the world in abstract systems of thought.

Instead they search for what it is like to be an 'individual' human being in the world. They point out the fact that every individual even the philosopher seeking absolute knowledge is only a limited human being. So, every individual has to take up important and difficult decisions with only limited knowledge and time in which to make these decisions. This human condition resides at the core of the existentialists. They find human life as being basically a series of decisions that should be made with no way of knowing conclusively what the correct choices are. The individual must continually decide what is true from false; what is right from wrong; which beliefs to accept and which to reject; what to do and what not to do. "Yet, there are no objective standards or rules to which a person can turn for answers to problems of choice because different standards supply conflicting advice," includes the Encyclopedia American (437). Therefore, the individual must decide which standards to accept and which ones to reject.

Thus, the existentialists conclude that human choice is subjective, because individuals finally must make their own choices without help from such external standards as laws, ethical rules, or traditions. Because individuals make their own choices, they are free, but as they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choices. Macintyre says, "Even if I do not choose, I have chosen not to chose" (149). The existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Furthermore, since individuals are forced to choose for themselves, they have their freedom- and

therefore their responsibility- thrust upon them. As Sartre says they are “condemned to be free” (qtd. in Skirbekk and Gilje 443).

Existentialism places the emphasis on the lack of meaning and purpose in life and the solitude of human existence. Existentialism maintains that existence precedes essence. This implies that the human being has no essence, no essential self, and is no more than what he is. He is only the sum of life in so far that he has created and achieved for himself. We may use the following illustration to clarify Sartre's view:

We are like actors who suddenly find themselves on stage in the middle of a performance, but without having a script, without knowing the name of the play or what role they are playing, without knowing what to do or say – yes, without even knowing whether the play has an author at all– Whether it is serious or a farce. We must personally make a decision, to be something or other – a villain or a hero, ridiculous or tragic. Or we can simply exist, immediately. But that is also choosing a role– and that choice too is made without our ever knowing what the performance was about. (qtd. in Skirbekk and Gilje 444)

This is how we are plunged into existence. We exist, we find ourselves here free, because there are no prescriptions– and we must decide for ourselves, define ourselves as the kind of person we are going to be. The essence thus follows existence.

The fundamental problem of existentialism is concerned with ontology, the study of being. The human being's existence is the first and basic fact; the human being has no essence that comes before his existence. The human being as a being is nothing. This nothingness and the non-existence is the central source of the freedom the human being faces in each and every moment. The human being has liberty in view of his situation, in decisions which make him serve this problem and live in the world.

The human being is condemned to be free because he is thrown into the world. The human being must take this freedom of being and the responsibility and guilt of his actions. Each action negates the other possible courses of action and their consequences; so the human being must be accountable without excuse. The human being must not slip away from the responsibilities. The human being must take decisions, assumes responsibilities. There is no significance in this world. They cannot find any purpose in life: his existence is only a contingent fact. His being does not emerge from necessity. If a human being rejects the false pretensions, the illusions of his existence having a meaning, he encounters the absurdity, the futility of life. The human being's role in the world is not predetermined or fixed; every person is compelled to make a choice. Choice is one thing the human being must take. The trouble is that most often the human being refuses to choose. Hence, he cannot realize his freedom and the futility of his existence. Ryan summarizes this concept thus:

Man is free and responsible, but he is responsible only to himself.

As with Nietzsche, man creates moral values. Besides being free,

man is a finite and contingent being, existing in a world that is devoid of purpose. The pessimism resulting from this position is like wise expressed by Camus doctrine of 'the absurd'. Absurdity or contradiction arises from the clash between human hopes and desires and the meaningless universe into which man has been thrown. (639)

Basically existence is of two types: authentic and inauthentic. The authentic being is only rarely attained by humans still it is what humans must strive to gain. The inauthentic (being-in-itself) is characteristically distinctive of things; it is what human being is diseased with his failure to act as a free agent and his impotency to reject bad faith. Things are only what they are. But human being is what he can be. Things are determined, fixed and rigid where as the human being is free because he can add essence in the course of his life, and he is in a constant state of flux and able to comprehend his situation. The human being doesnot live in a predetermined world; the human being is free to realise his aims and his dreams. Hence, he has only the destiny he forges for himself because in this world nothing happens out of necessity.

The human being disguises himself from freedom by self-deception, acting like a thing, as if he is a passive subject, instead of realizing the authentic being for the human being; this is bad faith. In bad faith, the human being shelters himself from responsibility by not noticing the dimensions of alternative courses of action facing him. The human being behaves as others demand of him by conforming to the standards of accepted values and by

adapting roles designed for him. The human being loses the autonomy of his moral will, his freedom to decide. In bad faith, the human being imprisons himself within inauthenticity for he has refused to take the challenge of responsibility and the anxiety that comes along with his freedom. So, he makes a desperate attempt by taking resort in an anxiety.

Anxiety ascends from the human being's realization that destiny is not fixed but is open to an undetermined future of infinite possibilities and limitless scope. The void of future destiny must be filled by making choices for which he alone will assume responsibility and blame. Anxiety is present at every moment of the human being's existence and it is part and parcel of authentic existence. Anxiety leads the human being to take decisions and to be committed. The human being tries to avoid this anguish through bad faith. But the free authentic human being must be involved in his own actions, responsibility and his being which is his own.

Existentialist thinkers like Martin Heidegger (1889-1979), Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Frenz Brento (1838-1917) are of the opinion that the metaphysical explanation of existence as given by traditional existence as given by traditional schools of philosophy fail to produce satisfactory results. 'Being' contrasts not only with 'knowing' but also with abstract concepts, which cannot fully capture what is individual and specific. They also maintain that the problem of being ought to take precedence in all philosophical inquiry. Existence is always particular, unique and individual. Existence is essential and fundamental Being cannot be made a topic of objective study. Being is

revealed to and felt by the human being through his own experience and his situation. So, it is maintained existence which is the first and central problem.

## 2.2 History of Existentialism

Though the history of existentialism especially begins with 19<sup>th</sup> century as a distinct philosophical and literary movement, the elements of existentialism can be found in the thought of Socrates, in the Bible, and in the work of many premodern philosophers and writers. In fact, Existentialism goes back to man's pre-philosophical attempts to attain self-awareness and understanding of existence, the world around us. The connection of being and thinking was Greek insight and it is this very insight that the modern existentialists are trying to re-establish. The ancient Greek thought was revolutionized by Socrates who shifted the attention of the study of philosophy from nature to man-man as the center of existence. The problem of what man is in himself can be perceived in the Socratic imperative "know thyself" (New Encyclopedia 612), as well as in the work of Montaigne and Pascal, religious philosophers and mathematician. The main ideas of existentialist theory were already common to religious thought when existentialism was first introduced, i.e. the idea of man being responsible for his own actions, and so on. Existentialist roots have been traced back to Pascal and St. Augustine. The subjectivism of theologian St. Augustine during 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries exhorted man not to go outside himself in the question for truth, for it is within him that truth abides.

Existentialism is often seen as a revolt against traditionalist philosophy. It contradicts Descartes' views in that man is open to the world and the objects in it without intermediary stratum of ideas or sensations. It means man is not dependent in any external things and he is free. Also, there is no distinct realm of consciousness on which one might infer, project, or doubt the existence of external objects. Existentialists are more concerned with being rather than with knowing; this is a rejection of Cartesian dualism that human being is conscious and this consciousness makes their existence.

Existentialism, as a distinct philosophy, began with the Danish Christian thinker, Kierkegaard in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was critical of Hegel's philosophical system which analyzed being or existence in an abstract and impersonal way. Kierkegaard attacked the Hegelian philosophy and the Lutheran church of Denmark, both of which gave importance to the rationality and collective spirit, Hegel maintained the philosophy of reconciliation and synthesis, which Kierkegaard called "both/and" system as opposed to his existential dialectic, "either/or" (Mautner 224) which emphasizes upon personal choices and responsibilities rather than overall rationality. He supports the idea that self-realization of the individual comes when he takes full responsibility for his life like other existential philosophers.

Religious life is characterized by faith, which is always a dreadful certainty for latter existentialist thinkers. Kierkegaard takes human being as god's creatures and offers many possibilities of being. Truth is far away for the individual if he doesn't create it himself in his actions. Christianity alone is

capable of providing a rule of guidance because it alone is capable of teaching man what is his real and fundamental nature of making him understand his relation to eternity. Without reasons of heart or mind, Kierkegaard can only get to God by a leap of faith. This is the equivalent to the act of will in the classic existentialists. A leap of faith-attains no reasons to what it does and so the position of faith remains irrational. A position of faith brings certain responsibilities. He further asserts that beliefs in a real god is going to bring with its law, as moral teaching of one's religions cannot be ignored.

The Christian doctrine and its quest for objective truth have nothing to do with the Kierkegaardian concept of Christianity. Kierkegaard believes only in the existence of God, and not in any other doctrine. He argues: "Christianity is therefore not a doctrine, but the fact that God has existed" (Faith 857).

Kierkegaardian faith is paradoxical. When we believe in God, we believe both in his finite and infinite existence. The finite is related to the outward form or existence of God, where as the infinite is concerned with the inward faith or non-existence. Kierkegaard sees the whole world as a corporation of ambiguities and paradoxes. On the difficulty of existing in such paradoxical condition Kierkegaard writes:

Existing is ordinarily regarded as no very complex matter, much less an art, since we all exist; but abstract thinking takes rank as an accomplishment. But really to exist, so as to interpenetrate one's existence with consciousness, at one and the same time eternal and as if far removed from existence, and yet also present

in existence and in the process of becoming: that is truly difficult.

(814)

Therefore, for him, real existence is possible only when one becomes aware of the paradoxical presence of God, Christianity and man.

The development of modern existentialism was preceded by the works of the German phenomenologist Frenz Brento (1838-1917), and Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). They were immediately followed by the modern existentialists. In this century, German existentialism was represented by Martin Heidegger (1889-1979) and Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), French existentialism by Jose Ortego Gasset (1883-1955), and Italian existentialism by Nicola Abbagnano (1910-...). The most forceful voice of existentialist thought were the works of the French existentialists. Sartre, Simon de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus (1913-60). No one has contributed more to the popularization of existentialism of this philosophical trend than Sartre. In literary influence, the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-81) and Austrian Jewish writer Franz Kafka (1883-1924) contributed significantly. Dostoyevsky in his novels presented the defeat of man in the face of choices and the result of their consequence's and finally in the enigmas of himself. Kafka in his novels like *The Castle* (1926) and *The Trail* (1925) presented isolated men confronting vast, elusive, menacing bureaucracies. New Encyclopedia defines existentialism in the art: "The analogues of Existentialism may be considered to be surrealism; Expressionism and in general, those schools that view the role of art not as reflection of objective and external reality to man but as the free

projection of the human being” (613). An important aspect of the existentialist movement was its popularization due to the ramification of existentialist philosophy in literature, psychology, religion, politics, and culture.

Existentialism made its entrance into psychopathology through Karl Jaspers' *Allgemeine psychopathology*, which was inspired by the need to understand the world in which the mental patient lives, by means of a sympathetic participation in his experience. Christian existentialism, inspired by Kierkegaard, is a creed of its own kind. Camus' semi-philosophical essays won sympathizers.

Although the classic forms of existentialism are characteristic of post-world war-II philosophy, literature, and art, we have already seen with Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) that Existentialist-like ideas were anticipated long before. Dostoyevsky, although articulating the ideas, did not believe them; but there were real existentialists before their time. The most important was certainly Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). There are at least three ways in which Nietzsche qualifies as a classic existentialist, all of which we can see in what may have been his magnum opus, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1885). Nietzsche focused precisely on the non-existence of God as implying the non-existence of all value in one of the most famous sayings in the history of philosophy, God is dead. He proclaimed the “death of God” and went on to reject the entire Judeo-Christian moral tradition in favor of a heroic pagan ideal (Russell 732). He called Christianity a “slave morality” and held that religion provides no truth because God is dead and Christianity has become the

shelter of weak and disabled people that he hated. In his famous essay *The Death of God and the Antichrist*, Nietzsche writes:

The Christian conception of God- God as God of the sick, God as a spider, God as Spirit is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low-water mark in the descending development of divine types. God degenerated into the contradiction of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal yes! God as the declaration of war against life, against nature, against the will to live! (912)

He proposes, in the absence of God, the concept of the superman and the will-to-power. The superman is the higher man above the herd and is free from any restrictions imposed by society. Nietzsche also rejects the concern for the welfare of the crowd and establishment of common good or herd-desire. The man who is in search of a general truth acceptable by the culture and society is an objective man- a mirror. He is no more than a self-less object that waits other's recognition and evaluation. He thought that the man of action is an inevitable force for the human existence.

The development of modern existentialism also led by the works of German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl and martin Heidegger. Phenomenology and Ontology have had remarkable influences on existentialism. Sartre and Heidegger were disciples of the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl and Sartre himself, somewhat younger, was

then influenced by Heidegger. Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define phenomenology in this way:

Phenomenology aims to describe the everyday items that we use, as they appear to us: the pencil with which I am now writing is described as it is in this context. Phenomenology attacks the view that the pencil is only a collection of atoms. In this sense, we can say that this school aims to reconstruct the universe in all of its diversity and fullness, with all of its qualities, as opposed to one dimensional standardization based on scientific philosophy. (440)

Phenomenology and Existentialism, though combined together by Heidegger and Sartre, have their own independent identity and are the two branches of continental philosophy. The 'Life-World' (Lebenswelt) concept, "the world in which we live with its everyday articles and its ideas as they appear to the users of Husserl", is the idea of immediacy (Skirbekk and Gilje 441). It is an idiosyncratic world, directly experienced with the ego at the centre. Husserl laid emphasis on 'immediacy of experience' and encouraged the tradition of making a direct analysis of the intrinsic structure existence, pure data of consciousness and ignored of existence, pure data of consciousness and ignored metaphysical or scientific assumptions.

Martin Heidegger, who like Sartre was the disciple of Husserl, studied existentialism and his influence actually grew after the war in France, with celebrated philosopher Jacques Derrida. Heidegger applied existentialism in Nazism while Sartre applied in Marxism. So, in Twentieth century

existentialism appeared in politics too. Further shaping and elaborating of this movement was made by Martin Heidegger, one of the main exponents of 20<sup>th</sup> century Existentialism and a leading German Ontologist who notably tried to disclose the ways of being in his most famous and controversial book *Sein and Zeit* (1927). In this book, Heidegger discusses what it means for a man to be or how it is to be. It leads to a fundamental question, 'What is the meaning of Being?' And through Speculation and interpretation, he is tried to reach the final truth of Existence, the situation of being. In his another book *Was Ist Metaphysik?* (1929). Heidegger has elaborated das Nichts (nothing), that is to say, the no-thing and given a phenomenological approach to the situation of human existence.

Existential philosophy, which has radical significance all over the world in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, has its roots back in history through Kierkegaard and even way back to Socrates. Jean Paul Sartre was the most important existential philosopher and propounder of modern existentialism in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Sartre finds valuable philosophical materials in Descartes subjectivism, Husserl's analysis of consciousness, Heidegger's existentialist concepts and themes and also in the two major forerunners of existentialism, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. From Kierkegaard, Sartre takes the emphasis upon individual conscious existence; from Nietzsche, he takes the concept of the death of God. Sartre's originality lies in his reinterpreting, revising, and reworking of these materials into a bold new integration which became the center of French existentialism.

Sartre always tries to contrast the divine viewpoint of the world with human nature. It is supposed that god created everything and gave existence to the essence. But Sartre, who was the atheist unlike Kierkegaard, claimed that existence is prior to essence because of the absence of god, since there is no god there is no purpose, no value, and no meaning in the world. This is the fundamental proposition for existentialism. For Sartre, the essence is whatever we decide it is going to be. "A world without purpose, value, or meaning is literally senseless, worthless, meaningless, empty, and hopeless" (Rose 2). So, the world is absurd for the existentialists. Now as existentialism is popular, many people think of the world as absurd and behaviours without limitations, everything in the absurd world actually is empty and pointless.

Sartre's main tenet is that 'existence precedes essence'. This means that there is no such thing as human nature, no Platonic form of humankind for each individual to be measured against. "Each man is a blank slate on which he will, by his actions, come to define his own being" (Willey 152). Sartre was only involved in philosophy but also in politics. He wrote *The Critic of Dialectical Reason* (1960) that discusses Marxism with Existentialism.

Sartre divides existentialist thinkers into two groups; theistic and atheistic. The theistic group includes Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel who are supposed to believe in Christian faith. In the second atheistic group, Sartre puts himself with Heidegger, Nietzsche and other French existentialists who do not believe in the existence of God. The atheistic existentialists discard the concept of God as an authentic shelter. They regarded

human being as optimistically forlorn, free, and supportless creatures. The absence of God implies the loss of value.

Sartre intellectually associates with Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86) as his life-long companion to the philosophical outlook. She is very close to Sartre in the sense that her - thoughts are a mere duplication of Sartre would be a mistake. She gives an original and independent interpretation of existentialism, thought not radically different from Sartre's. Unlike him, she chooses to concentrate on the personal and moral aspects of life. She attempted to apply existentialism to feminism. Sartre, it should be remembered, failed to produce his promised work on ethics. Beauvoir treats existentialism from very much a feminist point of view. In her book *The second sex* (1949), she takes the position that the history of attitudes of women has determined her own views. Audi says:

Her feminist masterpiece, *The second sex*, relies heavily on the distinction, part existentialist and part Hegelian in inspiration, between a life of immanence, or passive acceptance of the role into which one has been socialized, and one of transcendence, actively and freely testing one's possibilities with a view to redefining one's future. Historically, women have been consigned to the sphere of immanence, says de Beauvoir, but in fact a woman in the traditional sense is not something that one is made, without appeal, but rather something that one becomes. (256)

Beauvoir denied the existence of a basic female nature or male nature. It has been generally claimed that man has a transcending (achieving) nature so he will seek meaning and direction outside the home. Woman is 'immanent' which means she wishes to be where she is. She will therefore nurture her family, care for the environment and more homely things. For that, Beauvoir did not agree with the way we perceive the sexes.

The absurdity of human existence is a central principle in Albert Camus' (1913-60) works. He is another proponent of French Existentialism. He himself doesn't claim to be an existentialist. Existentialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century reflects the loss of certainties in the post-modern world. If there are no clear philosophical answers to the question of existence, then each individual has to design their own life as a project. The choice and responsibility of that project falls entirely on them. Camus was concerned with the freedom and responsibility of the individual, the alienation of the individual, the alienation of the individual from society, and the difficulty of facing life without the comfort of believing in God or in absolute moral standards. The work of Camus is usually associated with Existentialism because of the prominence in it of such themes as the apparent absurdity and futility of life, the indifference of the universe, and the necessity of engagement in a just cause.

Camus thought that human existence is absurd. The modern existence is full of injustice; millions work in repetitive exploitative jobs. He thought that we should rebel against these absurdities by refusing to participate in them. In the *Myth of Sisyphus* (1943), Camus asserts that by a refusal to surrender,

Sisyphus, the representative of modern man, can create meaning through a free act of affirmation in which he gives meaning to a situation which until then had gone. Camus says in *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

To get liberation from the anxiety of the absurd world, one may go to the rules of God or he may submit himself to the hand of death. But either of these choices is ridiculous and bad for the absurd man. The living of the absurd man depends upon the maximum struggle against this absurdity. The world is full of absurdity, but Sisyphus teaches revolt through action that offers freedom and justification for continuing life.

When Existentialism was popular, people began to think the world as absurd and behavior without limitations. But Existentialism tried to experiment on the true consequences of such as absurd world, and everything else in it, is actually empty and pointless. There is no reason to do anything, even to continue living. Existentialist thinkers begin from the human situation in the world; the modes of existence, the condition of despair, the human being's

tendency to avoid authentic existence, his relation to things or his own body or to other beings with whom, he cannot come into genuine communication, and the suffering of life. Starting from the study of being, Existentialist thinkers originate their own doctrines, with their own emphasis on particular aspects. Very often their view points are conflicting and sometimes contradictory; yet this philosophical attitude of being, as a whole, can be described as the existentialist movement, which stresses upon the 'being' of the human being.

## Chapter III

### Existential Approach to Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*

#### 3.1 Idea of Superiority and Inferiority

The characters who seek their identity or own 'being' generally suffer with a sense of inferiority in the society. They do not like to uphold the prevailing tradition of upper class society. Rather such characters try to unveil the illusion and face the reality frankly.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Tulliver's family and Dodsons and Wakem's families represent entirely to different social levels. One is a bankrupted and others are prosperous and successful families. Being a family member of a bankrupted family, Maggie is criticized and thought her to be inferior to her cousin Lucy. Even Tom favors Lucy rather than his own sister, Maggie. To keep herself in the superiority, Maggie, in anger pushes Lucy into the cow-trodden mud.

Maggie, who wants to keep herself in the superiority in the family as well as society, is struggling to seek her identity. She is an extremely intelligent and energetic girl who by nature is perpetually at odds with the narrow-minded, conservative and restrictive culture she lives in. Even as a child, she does not fit the model of the proper girl. She is untidy, disobedient, hot-tempered and highly intelligent. There is really no place for her. Her mother is embarrassed by her and despairs of ever getting her to behave like other girls. And as Mr. Tulliver makes clear, most men want to Marry a woman who is, if not exactly stupid, at least not intelligent enough to challenge them. Both her

parents regard her somewhat unnatural because of her unusual traits. Even Mr. Tulliver believes that his daughter should walk only as his wish. So, being unsatisfied with her hair, he says- “‘cut it off-cut it off short’” (10).

Maggie's brother Tom is the personification of the family and social values Maggie struggle against. She tries to reconcile her own personal freedom and inner nature with Tom's narrow and controlling ideas about what is right for her and her family. Unlike her brother she is interested in books and learning and is sensitive to music and art. However, these interests are not much encouraged by her family and others. She wants to show her superiority before Tom thinking herself an intelligent girl. It can be quoted:

I'll help you now, Tom said Maggie, with a little air of patronizing consolation. I'm come to stay ever so long, if Mrs. Stelling asks me. I've brought my box and my pinafore, haven't I father? 'I know what Latin is very well', said Maggie, confidently. Latin's a language. There are Latin words in the Dictionary. There's bonus, a gift. (129)

When Maggie visits Tom's school, she asks Reverend Stelling if she could study Geometry and Latin, as Tom is doing. Although it is obvious to the reader that she has a natural gift for learning and is much more intelligent than Tom. Mr. Stelling thinks that Maggie is a member of women race who are only externally clever and are not successful internally from his comment, Tom thinks himself more successful than Maggie as they are shown:

‘They can pick up a little of everything, I dare say,’ said Mr. Stelling, ‘They have a great deal of superficial cleverness, but they could not go far into anything’. They are quick and shallow. Tom, delighted with this verdict, telegraphed his triumph by wagging his head at Maggie behind Mr. Stelling's chair. As for Maggie, she had hardly ever been so mortified. She had been so proud to be called ‘quick’ all her little life, and now it appeared that this quickness was the brand of inferiority. It would have been better to be slow, like Tom. (134)

Maggie is crushed by this comment, and Tom is triumphant. Maggie is also confused because she has been called “quick” all her life and has thought this quickness desirable and now, because of Stelling's remark thinks that this quickness is simply a mark of her female shallowness and inferiority of mind. She is doomed never to succeed. Eliot writes: “Maggie was so oppressed by this dreadful destiny that she had no spirit for a retort” (135).

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie represents the women of Victorian Era who had to accept all the difficulties silently. The society assumes that she has to face the problems without any complain which has no way of solution for her.

### 3.2 Quest for Love and Affection

Maggie, the chief character of the novel, is totally different from other characters in her attitude as well as her behavior. She wants to be praised, and loved. But instead of getting love, appreciation, and affection, she is criticized,

undermined and suppressed by her family as well as relatives. She is in search of her being through love and affection.

Maggie gets into trouble or she is frustrated because of her deep desire to love and to be loved. No one in her family, least of all, Tom truly understands her and loves her unconditionally, So, she is deeply gratified by the attention Philip and Stephen give her. The emblem of the unconditional hatred of Tom towards Maggie is shown in his behaviour. He shows it when she reveals the truth of death of the rabbits. He says:

You forgot to feed 'em, then and Harry forgot? I'll pitch into Harry— I'll have him turned away. And I' don't love you, Maggie. You shan't go fishing with me tomorrow. I told you to go and see the rabbit every day. (31)

Certainly, the novel contains a portrait of someone dependent on the need of being loved, and upon the potency of memory. After confessing to Tom about the death of his rabbits and he brother's brusque response, the heroine feels the need of being loved, the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature. Maggie is also thirsty for all knowledge, and these aspirations militate against her wholehearted acceptance of the life and culture of St. Oggs.

Although Tom love Maggie much, it cannot be long lasting. Minor matters disturb him and takes actions against her. Maggie has responsibility to feed the rabbits after Tom leaves for Mr. Stellings. She cannot give regularity for long to her duties. So, she first faces the hatred of her brother.

Maggie feels upset with the attitude and behavior of Tom towards her. Lucy, cousin of Tom and Maggie, has also become the main agent of Tom's hatred towards Maggie. Maggie is compared with her cousin, Lucy by her uncles and aunts. Lucy is categorized as the simple, clean and good-mannered girl but Maggie is taken as untidy, impolite girl. So, she is perpetually commented and discouraged by these members. Maggie is jealous of Lucy when Tom has no notice of her. To express her jealousy, she pushes Lucy on the mud. Then, giving slaps, he scolds- "Now get away Maggie; there's no room for you on the grass here. No body asked you to come" (89).

The presence of Lucy has become intolerable for Maggie. She herself would have thought a little while ago that she could never be cross with pretty little Lucy. Lucy's arrival has become a happy moment for Maggie "Oh Lucy", She burst out, after kissing her, "you'll stay with Tom and me, won't you? Oh, kiss her, Tom" (53). But now she is upset with the relationship or friendship between Tom and Lucy. Tom has always been quite indifferent to Maggie.

Not only Tom but also their parents, uncles and aunts make her seek a respectable and favourable place to her. The Dodsons are a handsome family and Mrs. Glegg is not the least handsome of the sisters. They are the agents to depreciate the manner of Maggie. She gets criticism of her hair and manner. She expects love and affection from her aunts and her parents, but she is unable to get it from them. After the regular comment for her hair and her behavior by the aunts, and Tom's rising hatred for Maggie, she struggles against that society. And to get rather love and respect, she goes to the gypsies.

When Mrs. Tulliver suggests Maggie to go and get her hair brushed, she cuts off the hair with a pair of scissors. Thereafter, she was reproached by comparing her appearance with the gypsies. The lines in *The Mill on the Floss* contain:

‘Fie, for shame!’ said aunt Glegg, in her loudest, severest tone of reproof. ‘Little gells as cut their own hair should be whipped and feed on bread-and water not come and sit down with their aunts and uncles.’ ‘Ay, ay’ said uncle Glegg, meaning to give a playful turn to this denunciation, ‘She must sent to goal, I think, and they’ll cut the rest of her hair off there, and make it all even’

‘she’s more like a gypsy nor ever,’ said aunt pullet, in a pitying tone; ‘it’s very bad luck, sister, as the gell should be so brown—the body’s fair enough. I doubt it’ll stand in her way i’ life to be so brown. (59)

We can find an element of self-idealization within Maggie. The criticism sharpens itself with the self-idealization there goes an element of self-pity. Maggie is never happy. She thinks that gypsies are very simple and ignorant women from whom she can get full respect and can be self-satisfied there. But her aims and ambitions as a member of good society with arduous and national life are kept beyond the circumstance. She cannot live there longer and cannot get what she has wished. In the field of gypsies she is astonished and terrified by their threatening behavior, however, and is retrieved by her father. “‘Pooh, Pooh’”, said Mr. Tulliver, Soothingly, “‘you mustn’t think of running away

from father. What'ud father do without his little wench?" (101) She is unable to find her 'being' even in the field of gypsies and unwillingly returns with her father.

Thinking that marriage is the next step of successful life, Maggie has kept herself in touch with Philip Wakem. But the family relation and the physical deformity of him have made Maggie oblige to struggle against the family and society to get her will and dream of setting herself free from her family. Maggie and Philip have a great desire to get unity to live together for forever. Their true love is seen when they express as:

‘Can you bear to think of me as your lover, Maggie? Do you love me?’ ‘I could hardly love anyone better: there is nothing but what I love you for. But it will be better for us not to say any more about it– won't it, dear Philip?’ (300)

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Georg Eliot presents Maggie as an existential hero, who wants to identify herself in the family and society. Her will to search her own identity has made her struggle in the society to exist. She thought that Philip is the ultimate source of love and affection; and the source of existence in the society. So, she tries to make the relationship with him. She always meets him in the Red Deeps.

Though Tom has come in the middle of Maggie and Philip to break their relationship, Philip expresses the truth which supports Maggie to expand her real will for the relationship with Philip. Having known the fact that Maggie has a secret meeting with Philip in the Red Deeps, Tom once led Maggie over

there and met Philip. Being accused for trifling with the respectability of his family by Tom, Philip boldly assumes:

I deny that, interrupted Philip impetuously. I could never trifle with anything that affected your sister's happiness. She is dearer to me than she is to you; I honour her more than you can ever honour her, I would give up my life to her. (309)

These lines contrast with the following lines uttered by Maggie in the same contrast. While Tom orders Philip not to meet Maggie anymore, Philip says that he will do so if Maggie wants the same. Then she speaks: “‘It was for my father’s sake’, Philip said Maggie, imploringly. ‘Tom threatens to tell my father and he could not bear it. I have promised, I have vowed solemnly, that we will not have any intercourse without my brother's knowledge’” (310).

Through Maggie, as the mouthpiece, wants to say that she loves Philip as he does. But, being afraid of brother and being unable to use the full range of language, she promised not to meet Philip for the sake of her father. But at the meantime, Philip, though having measurable body, states that he loves her. He goes on stating to the extent that Maggie is dearer to him than she is to Tom and he can honour her more than Tom can. This statement is a revelation that existential characters can't say what they always want to express. One might argue that this is a cultural case on the round that Philip is also afraid of the prevailing situation.

Although Tom has become the obstruction in the relationship between Maggie and Philip, she again wants to meet him secretly. She has promised

Tom not to see Philip again. But she thinks that she needs to meet him for the survival of her life. Maggie goes to Lucy's house where Lucy has invited Philip. Lucy along with Stephen Guest wants to call Philip over there, with a view for reuniting Philip and Maggie. Maggie also, though does not show outwardly, likes this advice. Since she had already promised that she would not see Philip without Tom's permission. So, she could not decide this matter alone. She then goes to her home to ask for Tom's consent in this way:

‘I want you to absolve me from my promise about Philip Wakem or rather, I promised you not to see him without telling you. I am came to tell you that I wish to see him’. Nor for myself dear Tom Don’t be angry. I should not have asked it only that Philip, you know, is a friend of Lucy's and she wishes him to come. (350)

Maggie, in a roundabout way, says that she wants Tom to declare her freedom from her promise about Philip Wakem. The eagerness to see Philip even being in the long and strong chain of Tom, shows that Maggie is in deep love with Philip Wakem. She says, ““Oh, Philip, Philip, I wish we were together again so quietly- in the Red Deeps”” (365).

Desire for Maggie is without limit and needs to be checked by responsibility. Her love for Stephen Guest seems to be divorced from the context of her past and family ties, so that only the desire related to memory are endorsed fully by the novel *The Mill on the Floss*. Her sexual desire seems to be felt as dangerous and disturbing. Maggie's relationship with Tom is of course prior to sexual awakening, and it is to this desire that she ultimately

returns. The dominant sense, Maggie has, is one of exile from her own idealised past. Eliot's fascination with moral choice and indecision, however, means that Maggie cannot fully choose between different sides of her own nature between Tom and Philip or Tom and Stephen, just as she first batters her doll fetish against the wall and then gives it a make believe.

Maggie can never fulfill her desire. She needs some connection with anyone either as true lover or to quench the thirst of the love with anyone else. The relationship with Stephen is only for physical intercourse.

We can have many instances of erotic desire in *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie – Stephen interaction and Eliot's judgement on it while they had gone to Mudport is important one. It can be presented in this way:

‘Do take my arm’, he said, in a low tone as if it were a secret.

There is something strangely winning to most women in that offer of the firm arm: the help is not wanted physically at that moment, but the sense of help– the presence of strength that is outside them and yet theirs – meets a continual wants of the imagination. Either on that ground or some other, Maggie took the arm. And they walked together round the grass plot. (365)

Suddenly Stephen and Maggie happened to go far away from their locality. They reached at Mudport. Both of them felt themselves fallen in love. As a sign of love, Stephen requested Maggie to take his arm. He did it in such a way that they were doing it secretly. Once women hold their lover's hands they imagine something pleasant. On the other hand, Stephen loves Lucy much. So even

while walking with Maggie, he begins to regret for the relationship with Maggie. "He wished he had never seen this Maggie Tulliver, to be thrown into a fever by her in this way?" (366). There were not any grounds other than the feeling of erotic desire which Maggie could hold Stephen's hand.

This kind of oscillation is at the heart of her nature, and it operates clearly in her simultaneously desired renunciation of her pleasure clandestine meetings in the Red Deeps, and most momentarily in her relationship with Stephen Guest. The patterning of the novel is founded in this pendulum movement between passion and its denial fulfillment, and renunciation. Maggie's conversation in the Red Deeps represents an alternative to the local community and culture, and yet they clash with her earliest ties and duties.

### 3.3 Failure and Frustration

*The Mill on the Floss* is the study of Maggie Tulliver's and to some extent George Eliot's attempt to accommodate to the demands of women and Maggie's Spectacular failure. Maggie never learns to compromise, but continually seeks a whole life for herself either in the full range of her passions and interests or in full renunciation of self interest. She achieves none of them, but her struggle does delineate the difference between the female person and the roles offered her. Maggie always wants imaginary world i.e. she is not satisfied with herself. As Lucy is praised, so wants Maggie, and she herself compares with Lucy:

Maggie always looked at Lucy with delight. She was fond of Fungying a world where the people never got any larger than

children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like Lucy, with a little crown on her head, and a little sceptre in her hand' ..... only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form' (53).

Maggie is very much delighted in the arrival of Lucy thinking that she will be good company of her. But the circumstance, she finds, is adverse. Owing to the sharp criticism of her uncles and aunts, even her mother cannot support her and compares her with Lucy who is thought to be a gentle girl.

Maggie fails in her expectation. She always assumes that she should be highly appreciated but in apposition she is victimised woman in the patriarchal society who cannot recognize herself who she is. She never shows the inner happiness, because she is frustrated by the society presented in the life of Victorian Era.

In her adolescence, unlike Lucy, high ideal Maggie could never change herself. Her destination is always uncertain. She is devoted to her life to find out her being. She keeps on struggling. But she herself accepts to access to the summit of her aim and ambition is quite difficult. The erotic relationship with Stephen Guest is the moral degradation for Maggie. She is alienated from the family as well as the society. The relationship with Philip has transformed to Stephen Guest. Stephen tries to persuade her to elope with him but she refuses because of her ties with Philip and Lucy, she returns alone to St. Ogg's. But her moral character cannot be accepted by her brother Tom, and disowns her:

‘I can’t believe in you anymore,’ said Tom gradually passing from the tremulous excitement of the first moment to cold inflexibility. ‘you have been carrying on a clandestine relation with Stephen Guest – as you did before with another, He went to see you at my aunt Moss’s; you walked alone with him in the lanes; you must have behaved as no modest girl would have done to her cousin’s lover, else that could never have happened. The people at Luckreth saw you pass– you passed all the other places; you knew what you were doing. you have been using Philip Wakem as a screen to deceive Lucy – the kindest friend you ever had.’ (434)

Her interest of making multi-relationship with different people proves her a failure character in every pace and proves herself to be a coquette. And she accepts her crimes unhesitatingly and repents for it: “‘What ever I have done, I repent it, bitterly. I want to make amends. I will endure anything. I want to be kept from doing wrong again’” (435). But he blames her that she only struggles with her feelings which are the sources of her frustration.

What George Eliot attempts in the *Mill on the Floss* is an analysis of a girl living and growing in the patriarchal society of Mid-Victorian England. Accorded a frivolous education, Maggie attempts to resolve some of her disappointments through her cult of her self-renunciation, but this is coolly shown by the narrator to be willful suppression of vital sources of her energy and identity. If Maggie cannot have peace being herself in the world, she seeks

to obliterate that self. Her success in this endeavor is as spotty as her attempts as a child were to be good:

She threw some exaggeration and willfulness, some pride and impetuosity, even into her self-renunciation: her own life was still a drama for her, in which she demanded of herself that her part should be played with intensity. And so, it came to pass that she often lost the spirit of humility by being expressive in the outward act;... (262)

Philip Wakem's arguments against Maggie's self-renunciation reflect feminist sentiment on the one hand and reveal gender blindness to Maggie's circumstances on the other. As Albert Camus, in the *Myth of Sisyphus* shows that the life is absurd. It is like a rolling stone which can never be pushed to the top of the hill. Philip clarifies the life as absurd which frustrates Maggie:

But nothing could make life worth the purchase-money of pain to me, but some faculty that would lift me above the dead level of provincial existence. 'Ye – there is one thing: a passion answers as well as a faculty'. I understand what you means'. She said, 'though I know so much less than you do. I used to think I could never bear life if it kept on being the same every day, and I must always be doing anything greater. But, dear Philip, I think we are only like children, that someone who is wiser is taking care of. It not right to resign ourselves entirely, whatever may be denied us?

I have found great peace in that for the last two or three years – ever joy in subduing my own will (294).

Throughout the novel Maggie is prey to her own ‘hungry nature’. She as well as Philip is in the hope of union, but their attempt never gets progress. They start their affair but it can never be led to the marriage. So, the life for them is unchangeable.

The regular Tyranny of Tom has frustrated Maggie in her life. As Lucy Manages the time for the reconciliation of Philip and Maggie, she disagrees with it:

‘Oh Lucy, I can’t see him,’ said Maggie, turning pale. At least, I couldnot see him without Tom’s leave. ‘I promised Tom very solemnly – before to Philip without his knowledge and consent. And I have a great dread of opening the subject with Tom– of getting into a quarrel with him again.’ (346)

The family dispute and the loss of lawsuit is thought to be the fall of Mr. Tulliver. So, Tom warns her not to be in touch with Philip. Tom had promised his father to take care of Maggie until the death comes to them. After Maggie requested Tom to release her from her promise to see Philip, she is conditionally permitted and says – “‘I told my brother I wished to see you, Philip –I asked him to release me from my promise, and he consented. ‘will not your father object?’” (369) Maggie is not only afraid of her brother, Tom, but of Mr. Wakem as well.

Maggie spent her whole life in search of her own real position but she never gets success. So, she is taken as the failed character of Victorian era. After Tom disowns her, Mrs. Tulliver accompanies her to go to Bob's house. She thinks it a suitable place and says- ““Let us go to Bob Jakin’s, mother : his wife will have room for us if they have no other lodger.”” (436). Miss Tulliver was left in the degraded and outcast condition and supports for some unnecessary rumour in St. Ogg’s. ““Miss Tulliver’s conduct had been of the most aggravated kind”” (440). She is fed up of her life. She always feels anxious with the world. It can be shown:

Maggie, all this while, was too entirely filled with a more agonizing anxiety to spend any thought on the view that was being taken of her conduct by the world of St. Ogg’s’: anxiety about Stephen Lucy – Philip – bet on – her poor heart in a hard, driving, ceaseless storm of mingled love, remorse and pity. If she had thought of rejection and injustice at all, it would have seemed to her that they had done their worst – that she could hardly feel any stroke from them intolerable since the word she had heard from her brother's lips. (441)

To control Maggie from her mischieves is Tom's responsibility for what he had promised his father. Maggie's wish for self-dependent and Tom's power to control her have supported her to prove herself a failed character in her life. Everything whatever she thinks and plans has stood in front of the wall of

hindrance. The realisation and recollection of the past activities has at last brought frustration within her.

### 3.4 Humiliation and Reaction

Maggie's greatest happiness is Tom's affection, and his disapproval creates dramatic despair in Maggie, whose view of the world, as all children's, lacks perspective. Maggie, in *The Mill on the Floss* lives in a more restricted world than George Eliot herself used to be. Maggie expects higher existence. Her early experience of struggle, of conflict is between her inward impulse and outward fact, which is the lot of every imagination and passionate nature. To reconcile the imagination and reality, she has been hindered by the patriarchal society prevailing in the novel. She never gives up her attempt to enter into the imaginative world, though she is undermined. Her intellectuality and self-command is not evaluated by her own brother, Tom. So, "Her lot was beginning to have a still, sad monotony which threw her more than ever on her inward self" (248). Maggie feels particularly lonely and neglected, but gains spiritual strength from reading of Thomas a Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*. This leads her into a life of self-denial and acceptance of pain. Eliot presents:

With all the hurry of an imagination that could never rest in the present, she sat in the deepening twilight forming plans of self-humiliation and entire devotedness': and, in the ardour of first discovery, renunciation seemed to her the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so-long been craving in vain. She had not perceived— how could she until she have lived longer? — the

inmost truth of the old monk's outpourings, that renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly. Maggie was still panting for happiness and was in ecstasy because she had found the key to it. She knew nothing of doctrines and systems – of mysticism or quietism? (261)

Reading the *Imitation of Christ*, at first flashed through her like the suddenly apprehended solution of a problem, that all the miseries of her young life have been changed into pleasure. As she sees the possibility of shifting the position through which she looks at the gratification of her own desires to her life as an insignificant part of a divinely– guided whole, she feels self humiliation.

In most of Eliot's novels, tragedy of heroines begins in their disabilities as women, particularly their lack of education. Although Eliot creates Maggie as an educated and highly intelligent girl in *The Mill on the Floss*, her qualities are thought to be inferior and are ignored. But Eliot has produced a wealth of elaborations on these early gender analysis of Maggie's plight. To agree on Maggie's inevitable defeat, and its comment on conditions for Victorian Women, is contrary to whether she goes to her destiny kicking or quiescent. Maggie's plight concerns to expose and protest female victimization, stresses on Maggie's systematic disempowerment and resignation to her plight. Whereas it can be concurred that Maggie is a heroine of renunciation in contrast to the rebellious. *The Mill on the Floss* offers a special reading for female self- sacrifice to search existence as one of the many patriarchal social ordeals. To identify Maggie's position with what seems to be choices against

her but can be explained according to Eliot's distinctly female Victorian morality. Eliot is tempted to redeem Maggie's fate. Although Maggie has difficulties to sustain her real identity. She never surrenders in front of the society. Maggie is not only weak but rather she has power to terrorize: Maggie kills rabbits, spills wine, crushes cake, mutilates dolls, drops books, dashes card houses, and hangs on Tom in a strangling fashion. Maggie has to move as the wish of her parents as well as brother, Tom. She doesn't want to be compared with anyone else, but wants to make her own identity. Mrs. Tulliver wants Maggie to get a row of curls round her head as Lucy does. Maggie defies all forms of attributes designed to limit female as beautiful, even her mother's attempts to tame her:

Maggie threw off her bonnet, painfully confirmed her mother's accusation. Mrs. Tulliver, desiring her daughter to have a curled crows, 'like other folk's children', and had it cut too short in front to be pushed behind the ear; and as it was usually straight and hour after it had been taken out of paper, Maggie lads increasingly tossing her head to keep the dark heavy locks out of her gleaming eyes and action which gave her very much the air of a small shetland pony. (11)

Maggie's determination against her mother, whose actions come to serve to propagate bourgeois male ideology – that beauty is the virtue of woman, is seen in chapter four as well where Maggie decides to protest her mother's call to smother her hair:

It was heavy disappointment to Maggie that she was not allowed to be with her father in the gig when they want to fetch Tom home from the academy, but the morning was too wet, Mr. Tulliver said, for little girls to go out in her best bonnet. Maggie took the opposite view very strongly, and it was a direct consequence of this difference of opinion that when her mother was in the act of brushing out the reluctant black cerocrop, Maggie suddenly rushed from under her hands and dipped her head in basin of water standing near in the vindictive determination that there should be no more chance of curls that day. (23)

Maggie's actions explore the complex tension between resignation and defiance in Eliot's work. They did this in part by looking less at Maggie as a character and more at authorial strategies. The citation is a prominent examples which decline to romanticize Maggie's fate but look elsewhere in the text for struggle and desire. Maggie's disobedience coexists with oppositional effects. Maggie is dominated at every turn— denying, however, that all disobedience is curbed or that subordination can be rescued for a new ethical scheme.

The relationship with different people and realisation of wrong way commitment have brought self humiliation within Maggie. June Skye Szirotny commented: “Eliot explores the conflict between self-realization and acceptance that makes for the ambivalence at the heart of all her fiction – ambivalence that she will set herself to resolve in the rest of her fiction” (qtd.

Winters 4). She has devoted her life to struggle against the agents, which have made her pendulum figure. Maggie has to follow what Tom says but he fails to understand her intention and problem. She does not want to live under domination but to be released from it. She needs to struggle against these factors whatever comes before her. Sometimes her unsuccessful attempt to fight against them brings humiliation but she keeps on striving.

Though Maggie had promised with Tom not to see Philip again, the circumstance has been created to make them together in Lucy's house. So, Maggie tries to make Tom “absolve” (35) her from her promise about Philip Wakem. He readily does not agree with it but tries to remind her past philosophical history which humiliates her, and then immediately reacts as:

I can't make you think better of me, Tom, by anything I can say.  
 But I am not so shut out from all your feelings as you believe me to be. I see as well as you do, that from our position with regard to Philip's father – not on other grounds – it would be unreasonable – it would be wrong for us to entertain the idea of marriage; and I have given up thinking of him as a lover ..... of I am telling you the truth and you have no right to disbelieve me.  
 (352)

It was different for her to untie the relationship with Philip. Tom's knowledge about the frequent meeting of Philip and Maggie makes him disbelieve her. Not only Tom used to insult her for every work keeping her in the limited boundary but “Stephen thought more lightly of her than he did of Lucy” (395).

He shows the erotic desire with Maggie. Maggie disappears from St. Ogg's with Stephen spreading rumour that she has eloped with him. But later, the “retrospect of her own weakness” (433) humiliates her.

## Chapter IV

### Conclusion

#### 4.1 Identity Crisis

The struggle to exist is the central issue in this novel. Maggie is an existential character, who has been taken as second sex. Maggie struggles in the family and society, where pain, domination, failure, frustration and humiliation prevail. She plays the role of a problematic character and the problematic self has to face identity crisis. Although she is living in the middle of different people, she is unable to find out her own identity. She is only in the course of searching her own existence i.e. 'being'. She wants to have an exalted status. Her wish to be superior has made her a problematic character, and that is the driving force in the novel.

*The Mill on the Floss* records the events of Maggie and Tom Tulliver's lives from childhood to young adulthood. In the early stage of Maggie's life, her impulsive temperament and her dependence on Tom are presented. Eliot recounts several episodes of sequence of actions, which dramatizes Maggie's hunger for Tom's love, the frustration of that hunger, her rebellion and the pleasure she receives from reconciliation. When the Tulliver family becomes impoverished, Maggie grows increasingly estranged from her father and brother. She becomes involved with the son of the man who bankrupted his father, and is also attracted to another man who is engaged to marry her cousin. On learning of these relationships, Tom turns Maggie out of his house and

refuses to speak to her. Maggie's subsequent life is spent in service as a governess and in struggle with temptation and self-renunciation.

Maggie's need for love and acceptance is her underlying motivation throughout *The Mill on the Floss*, and the conflicts that arise in the novel often stem from her frustrated attempts at gaining this acceptance.

*The Mill on the Floss* is the clear reflection of Victorian society.

Maggie, being a female character of patriarchal society, has many obstacles to revolt against the massive domination of women in the Victorian era. Maggie from the beginning to the end struggles against the male suppression. She raises questions against patriarchy Maggie's argument that she would have studied every things better than Tom could if she had been taught Tom is really a challenging criticism to male order. Similarly, Maggie blames the relatives for their non co-operation at the time of their bankruptcy which is never expected from the male's side. Likewise, even in the climax of her life, she goes to the mill inspite of the terrible flood towards the end. All these points supports her that she wants to be superior but the wish has made her a failed character because her struggle is never realised. As the existential characters search for the identity of their own, they only find the absurd life and accept their bare existence.

The heroine of *The Mill on the Floss*, idealistic, intelligent, passionate Maggie Tulliver, resembles Eliot herself as a young woman. Both experience difficulty expressing themselves in callous society environment and both face painful decisions in love. Marked by humour and sadness, the novel analyses

the full scope of Maggie's imperfect humanity while presenting a sharp yet understanding view of society. It is thought that women are inferior to men in physicality which also contributes to mental inferiority. This reflects very clearly in *The Mill on the Floss*. As an example, we can say that the author in her life and Maggie in the novel always seek guidance. The love relationship with Philip and the erotic relationship with Stephen Guest show that she cannot survive within herself.

### Works Cited

- Ashton, Rosemary. *George Eliot*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. New York: CUP, 1995.
- Auster, Henry. ed. "Local Habitation". *Regionalism in the Early Novels of George Eliot*. Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1970. 138-42.
- Camus, Albert. "The Myth of Sisyphus." *Essays on: The Creation of Knowledge*. ed. Shreedhar P. Lohani, Rameshwar P. Adhikari, and Abhi N. Subedi. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak, 1996. 66-70.
- Draper, R.P. ed. *The Mill on the Floss and Silas Marner*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Macmillan, 1993.
- Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. (1860). Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Edition Limited, 1993.
- Fraiman, Susan. *The Mill on the Floss; The Critics, and the Bildungsroman*. *PMLA* 108.1 (January, 1993): 136-150.
- Kierkegaard, Soren. "Concrete Existence and Abstract System." *The Modern Tradition: Background of Modern Literature*. Ed. Ellmann and Feidelson. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. 811-14.
- . "Faith by Virtue of the Absurd." *The Modern Tradition: Background of Modern Literature*. Ed. Ellmann and Feidelson. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. 855-63.
- King, Jeannette. *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel*. London: CUP, 1978.

Lavine, T.Z. *From Socrates To Satre: The Philosophical Quest*. New York: Bantam, 1989.

Leavis, F.R. *The Great Tradition*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1955.

Macintyre, Alasdair. "Existentialism." *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Paul Edwards. New York: Macmillan. 1967. 145-51.

Mautner, Thomas. *A Dictionary of Philosophy*. Cowley: Blackwell. 1996.

*The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropedia*. "Philosophical Schools and Doctrines. 16<sup>th</sup> ed. 1998.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Death of God and the Antichrist". *The Modern Tradition: Background of Modern Literature*. Ed. Ellmann and Feidelson. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. 905-12.

---. "Subjective Will and Objective Truth". *The Modern Tradition: Background of Modern Literature*. Ed. Ellmann and Feidelson. New York: Oxford UP, 1965. 816-22.

Rose, Kelley L. "Existentialism". Copyright 2005, 5 June, 2006.

<<http://www.friesian.com./ross>>.

Russell, Bertrand. *History of Western Philosophy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 1995.

Ryan, John K. "Existentialism." *Encyclopedia American*. New York: Macmillan. 1966.

Singh, Preeti. "Introduction." *The Mill on the Floss*. By George Eliot. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1992.

Skirbekk, Gunnar, and Nils Gilje. *A History of Western Thought: From Ancient Greece to the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Thale, Jeromy. *The Novels of George Eliot*, New York: Columbia UP, 1959.

Wheeler, Michael, *English Fiction of Victorian Period*. London: Longman, 1985.

Willey, Basil. ed. "Jean Paul Sartre." *Twentieth Century Drama*. London: Hutchinson University Library. 1963. 152-58

Winters, Kelly. *Critical Essay on the Mill on The Floss, in Novels for Students*. The Gale Group, 2003.