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***The Three Sisters: A Dramatic Journey from Existential Suffering
to Social Salvation***

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Letter of Approval

The thesis titled, ***The Three Sisters: A Dramatic Journey from Existential Suffering to Social Salvation*** by **Yubaraj Subedi** submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee:

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Abstract

The present dissertation titled "*The Three Sisters: A Dramatic Journey from Existential Suffering to Social Salvation*" focuses on the characters existential suffering and their view on it (suffering). In every moment of their lives, they encounter meaninglessness which adds more suffering to their existence. Despite their flagrant failure of dream and subsequent loss of the ultimate meanings of life they have optimistic view that sacrificing their present happiness they help disclose the mysteries of suffering and meaninglessness of life. So no future generation would suffer from those all things. They take their suffering as an emancipator of upcoming generation from suffering itself. To rescue people from the mysteries of suffering they realize inevitability of sacrificing their own happiness.

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Introduction

The present study takes Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's famous and most successful play *The Three Sisters* for the study. The characters' situations in the play are thoroughly observed. Almost all major characters of the play are found to be involved in search of authentic existence. They are dissatisfied with the present existence. To meet the proposed goal as proposed in the title the study has taken the hypothesis that overstepping the boundary of existential angst and anomie Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* delves into a dramatic journey from existential suffering to social salvation. Characters in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* suffer from problem in their ambition to accomplish goal of a meaningful happy and successful lives. Every characters in the play possess at least one dream and involve their effort to get fulfilled them but reality turns out to be disappointing. The three sisters share a similar dream that is to leave the provincial town and go to Moscow while their only one brother chooses to be a professor but fails to grasp it. Other characters of the play also have their respective dream but are getting far from these dreams as the play moves forward. Versinin is quite dissatisfied with the marital life since his wife regularly attempted suicide. Tuzenbach has loved Irina one side for five years. Chebutykin- a sixty years old doctor in the army suffers an existential crisis etc makes them to explore the meaning of their lives. To achieve the meaningful existence they have only one option left that is to have faith and they conclude that their suffering will turn into joy for those who come after them, there will be peace and happiness upon earth and those who live now will be remembered kindly and blessed.

Existence becomes the main concern for most of the characters. If possible they want a meaningful happy and all admiring existence as they have dreamed to accomplish and authentic existence. If not possible they make a compromise up to

their goal of an existence which sustains a hope of future improvement. They don't want to lose their lives. For the study of existence the researcher will take help of existentialism as a theoretical insight in this research work. Existentialism, philosophy as such emphasizes human existence, man's vital experience in intimate relation with his body, the world and the society. Man is the central theme of the existentialism. German philosopher Martin Heidegger in his writing focuses on the question of being. His philosophy focuses on existence than on essence, on being than on beings consequences of choices and mode of being. For Albert Camus, this world is absurd yet man has to face it or accept it as his destiny. This concept is applicable to talk on the theme since futility and absurdity are the underscoring themes of the play. Jean Paul Sartre also believes that we are makers of our destiny. We can make our future choosing it as we are condemned and free to choose. So human being is responsible for what he is.

The Three Sisters is one of the acclaimed and most popular Russian plays by Anton Chekhov. He was born into a family of a small shopkeeper, in a small provincial town called Taganrog Russia on January 17, 1860. He was the third child of Pavel and Yevgenia Chekhov and had two elder brother and a younger sister and two brothers. The Chekhov have found it difficult to make both ends meet with a family of six children and the father's preference for the arts which made him neglect his business. Their upbringing was harsh. Sometimes Pavel Chekhov used to mistreat the family members Chekhov also had such bitter experiences and he has written: "I could never forgive my father for having whipped me when I was quite small." Such early impressions inspire the subject matter of many of Chekhov's short stories and is often expressed by characters in his plays. The fabric of the Russian society was permanently altered when Chekhov was only one year old: on February 19, 1861.

Russian's serfs were freed. Chekhov was the grandson of a serf. This overturning of the older social order plays a central role in many of his writing. When Anton was 16, his father went bankrupt and had to leave Taganrog secretly with rest of the family except Anton to Moscow. Anton supported himself by coaching younger boys. He rapidly improved school work and also became the editor of the school magazine called *The Stutterer* which contributed him to pursue literary career. In August 1879 Anton came to live with his family in Moscow and entered the medical faculty of the Moscow University. At Moscow his father had an inferior post as a salesman in a store so the responsibility of winning bread for the family had to be taken by Anton. He wrote sketches and short stories for literary weeklies and by the money he earned supported the whole family. During the four years of his studentship he worked extremely hard. He contributed many stories, sketches and article which were short and humorous for the magazine *The Sprinters*. He was not satisfied with his creation; he says:

Behind me there are mountains of mistakes tons of paper covered with writing, an Academy prize and a life of sudden success, yet in spite of all this I don't believe there is a single line I've written that has real literary value. I long to hide somewhere for five years or so and do a piece of painstaking serious work. I must study, learn everything from the beginning for as a writer I am completely Ignorant" (16).

A sort of inferiority complex or divine discontent ever remained characteristic of Chekhov until the end of his life. Dissatisfaction was always with him.

Chekhov carried two careers simultaneously. He earned his doctor in 1884 and started working as a doctor and also developed literary career. He equally emphasized

both of the careers and said if medicine is my legal spouse while literature is my mistress. When I get tired of one, I go to sleep with the other.

The young doctor writer was a untiring worker who lead a life of ceaseless activities both among his patient and on his writing desk. Success began to overtake the young author rapidly. After publication of his first collection of stories in 1887 he got motivation for further writings. Then Chekhov started to write four acts play *Ivanov* is the result of the effort. The play culminates in the suicide of a Youngman nearer to the author's own age. It got its first performance at Korsh's theater but badly received. *The Wood Demon* published in 1888 is a long winded and ineptly facetious four acts play which later converted-largely by cutting into *Uncle Vanya*, one of his greatest stage masterpieces. The period between the conception of *The Wood Demon*, in 1888 and the publication of *Uncle Vanya* in 1897 had seen major changes in Chekhov's life. He made adventurous journey during the time. He also bought a country estate in the village of Melikhove and settle there for about six years. This period was the most creatively effective of his life. *The Seagull* was also written in the periods. It was first performed in St Petersburg and badly received. Chekhov was greatly distressed and left the auditorium. A discouraged Chekhov vowed never to write for the stage again. Two years later, However, the play was reviewed by the newly created Moscow Art Theatre enjoying considerable success and helping to establish Chekhov as a dramatist. *The Seagull* is a study of the clash between the older and younger generation as it affects two actors and two writers. After its success Chekhov was sufficiently encouraged to plan a new play to be directed and performed by Stavislavsky's Company. In March 1897 Chekhov suffered a lung hemorrhage and was forced to spend most of his time in the Crimea for his health. Chekhov built a

villa in Yalta. He spent most of the winter there being cut off from the intellectual life of Moscow and St Petersburg. He married in 1901 a young actress Olga Knipper, who was appearing in his plays. Chekhov's Yalta period saw a decline in the production of short stories and a greater emphasis on drama. The last two plays- *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* were both written for the Moscow Art Theatre. As Chekhov was able to witness the rehearsals and performance of his plays, he remains totally dissatisfied with it and insisted that his mature drama were comedy rather than tragedy. *The Cherry Orchard* was the last play by Chekhov. He offered in this last play a poignant picture of the Russian land owning class in decline portraying characters who remains comic despite their very poignancy. It was first performed in Moscow on Jan 17, 1904 and enjoyed a grand success. He died of tuberculosis while revisiting Germany with his wife on July 14 1904 at the age of forty four.

Though a celebrated figure in Russia at the time of his death, Chekhov, remained rather unknown internationally until the years after World War I, when his works were translated into English. Chekhov was very much concerned about theatre. He wanted to change the trend in theatrical world. He blended comic and tragic elements together in his plays. This trend developed by him became an important contribution not only to theatre but also to 20th century literature in general. He is also known for the emphasis he places on dialogue and off stage action. Chekhov considered his mature plays to be a kind of comic satire, pointing out unhappy nature of existence in turn of the century Russia. He has presented bad and dreary lives of the then Russians in his plays. There is no villain in his plays but characters have their real antagonism with existential problem rather than with human beings.

Anton Chekhov's writing became influential because of simplicity and its realistic sketching capability. Encyclopedia Americana says about his writing:

The dream of 'a new life' is one of the main themes not only of Chekhov's later short stories but also of his plays. His early dramas are mainly plays of direct action in which the dramatic action takes place in view of audience. His brilliant plays are with indirect action. In these, the main dramatic action takes place of –stage attention being concentrated entirely on the reaction of the characters to the dramatic events of their lives. (361)

Chekhov is remembered for his unique dramatic technique. Though he is not among us today, he has left many valuable souvenirs to us.

The Three Sisters is a naturalistic play about the decay of the privileged class in Russia and the search for meaning in the modern world. It describes the lives and aspirations of the Prozorov family, the three sisters (Olga, Masha and Irina) and their brother Andrey. They are a family who are dissatisfied and frustrated with their present existence. The sisters are refined and cultured young women who grew up in urban Moscow; however for the past eleven years they have been living in a small provincial town. Moscow is a major part of the plot: the sisters are always dreaming of it and constantly express that they will go back. Moscow is the place where they were happiest and to them it represents perfection. However as the play develops they seem to move further away from their dream.

Critical Response to *The Three Sisters*

The Three Sisters is the first play Anton Chekhov wrote especially for the Moscow Art Theater, which received its premiere in January, 1901. Although, it was

immediately unsuccessful with the critics, the play has become the most frequently performed of the Chekhov canon. *The Three Sisters* is a realistic play. Chekhov himself advocated that the play should be realistic and he wanted to depict ‘real life’ as it is lived by ordinary people.

‘A play should be written in which people arrive, go away, have dinner talk about the weather and play cards. Life must be exactly as it is and people as they are.... Not on stilts Let everything on the stage be just as complicated and at the same time just as simple as it is in life’.

Supporting the idea as advocated by Chekhov critic Henry, Joyce E views the play ‘*The Three Sisters*’ as a cleverly crafted realistic play which could meet the goal of realistic portrayal. He says:

‘*The Three Sisters* is a cleverly crafted, realistic play with neither heroes nor villains and without any startling theatrical effects (both the fire and the dual occur offstage). Chekhov has created a group of ordinary people, existing in a particular time and place, whose dreams of a better life are shared by all in any time and place (37).

Setting has an important role in a play. Selecting a suitable setting identical with the feelings and emotions of the characters helps audience to enter into the play’s mood. It even helps to communicate the unsaid (abstracts) things. Henry, Joyce E. considered *The Three Sisters* to be a perfect masterpiece in terms of its setting. For him Chekhov could meet the demand of story selecting the setting as demanded. To quote him again.

The external action of the play concerns the Prozorov sisters’ gradual Physical dispossession at the hands of Natasha. Chekhov’s descriptions

of the settings, the seasons of the year and the times of day contribute to this development. Irina's pleasant name day party of the first act occurs on the fifth of May: Spring and hope are in the atmosphere [. . .] the second act occurs on a winter evening. The same setting is now darkened and constricted by the presence of Natasha and her vulgar state. In the third act, Natasha has successfully even usurped more space and has consigned Olga and Irina to a small bedroom. In the fourth Act autumn has arrived, the cranes are migrating and the leaves falling, creating a sense of farewell and resignation (64).

Characterization and the plot are the remarkable aspects of a play. The success and the failure of it in some extent depend on these two aspects. The play *The Three Sisters* is frequently talked for its characters and plot development. The selection of characters (from everyday life, as we are) and plot development is so impressive to convince the audience that they are in front of the real happening not in a theatre. Desmond MacCarthy compares the characters and plot of George Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House* to *The Three Sisters*, he says:

What does Bernard Shaw know about heartbreak? -gay, courageous, resilient, handy pugnacious, indispensable man that he is? I reflected as I walked slowly away from the Court Theatre, where the Art Theatre company had been acting Chekhov's play *The Three Sisters*. For I had been sitting three hours (or was it months?) in real *Heartbreak House*, Not in a Heartbreak House, of which the roof, as in the case of one London music-hall, was sometime rolled back, releasing all the stuffy

used-up air, leaving the entices of humanity bare to the speculation of the stars: not in a house of which. . . . (676).

Chekhov was ever conscious and paid attention to the limitation of performers acting. He always stood against and discouraged the overacting and insisted that over acting destroys the mood of the play and doesn't convey the intended meaning. F.D. Dupee, in the following piece of critical evaluation, examines the stylistics and thematic limitations of Chekhov work and the special demands that *The Three Sisters* places upon the performers. Dupee remarks:

The profundity of Chekhov's works is inexhaustible to the actors Stanislavski said. But under present theater conditions Chekhov profundity like Shakespeare's can involve liabilities, for audience and actors alike. Perhaps it was so even in the patriarchal days of the archetypal Moscow Art Theatre, Chekhov's shrine. There is evidence that things did not always go well there, although the playwright himself was at hand, or at least in Yalta, for consultation. He once complained that the officers' uniforms in *The Three Sisters* were too smart. The Russian . . . (84).

Discussing the various dimensions of theme and characterization in *The Three Sisters* critics have attempted to define elements in Chekhov dramatic technique that link him with Beckett, Pinter, and other contemporary playwrights. In this regard Clayton A. Hubbs remarks:

In recent years we have seen a new appreciation of Chekhov's plays on the part of general audiences as well as student of drama. Directors have emphasized Chekhov's contemporary quality, and critics have

attempted to define elements in his dramatic technique that link him with Beckett, Pinter, and other contemporary playwrights. In this updating of Chekhov the nature of his dramatic realism has been a subject of increasingly enlightened debate. Bernard Beckerman, in a recent article in modern drama on *The Artifice of 'Reality' in Chekhov and Pinter*, “begins with a summery of the two main sources of reality’ in the drama as starting point for a . . . (357)

Similarly, Karl D. Kramer examines the role of love in *The Three Sisters* and the characters reactions to their romantic entanglement:

“For all tack about *The Three Sisters*, it is still extraordinarily deficient to determine exactly what the play is about. One prominent school places the emphasis on the sisters as inevitably ruined creatures. Beverly Hahn, For instance, speaks of the “inbuilt momentum towards destruction” in the sitters’ world. Another commentator claims that we cannot avoid contrasting the success of Natasha and protocol with the failure of the sisters. We might do well to examine just what the first two do achieve. A house, an affair, and a . . . (91).

Chekhov’s use of sound effects is particularly notable. Various sounds echo through the play create an atmosphere and comment ironically on the characters situation. For example in the final moments the band plays more and, more softly, as the brigade leaves town and the Prozorov’s new life begins. Similarly in the last act someone plays “The Maiden’s Prayer” On the piano as the hope of Irina’s marries dies. Thomas R. Whitaker another critic compares the musical elements of *The Three Sisters* with Bernard Shaw’s *Heartbreak House* and Paul Claude’s *Break of Noon*. He says:

You seem wide awake tonight as you settle into your seats and begin to scan the program but you must be dreaming – For what director in his right mind would dare to run these three talky plays together in repertory? Yet there they are, spelled out in black on green: *The Three Sisters*, *Heartbreak House*, and *Break of Noon*. “Why?” You ask her. “What can be on his mind?”

“May be the music,” She says, without looking up. But what music could link the whistle . . . (79)

Pessimism widely governed the life of Chekhov. The death of his sympathetic brother from tuberculosis, his ill health and dissatisfaction in literary career contributed a lot to develop pessimistic view to him. But though written in that phase this famous play *The Three Sisters* is often viewed as an optimistic play. The most influential critic Robert Cohen finds optimistic elements in the play. In this regard he goes as:

The 1940 performance was different. The yearning for better life ‘gave it a deep rooted touch of optimism in the eyes of the Soviet people who had achieved this better life [. . .]. They are genuine inner effort to subdue the anguish, to make a show of courage. They are real poetry, in which Chekhov merges’ with Shakespeare in which the produney real blends with the romantic. With time says Olga devoutly, “Our suffering will turn into joy for those who come after us,” thee will be peace and happiness upon earth and those who live now will be remembered kindly, and blessed. . . . We shall live! . . . [364]

After observing all those critical responses from different scholars, it has become more relevant to make research on the issue of existence. Many critics have paid tribute to this writer for the use of unique, unconventional tone and structure in this play. None of the critics have focused on the existential issues, existential problem of characters their desire to accomplish meaningful existence and their present existential suffering and a hope of evolution of the future generation. The characters' frequent failure to grasp the intended dream contributes more suffering to them. They are tired of waiting for the better future so they accept the reality developing positive attitude that their sorrow and suffering will bring happiness to the people coming after them. Now, at this time they are not only concerned about themselves but more concerned on the social emancipation. So Irina decides to spend her whole remaining life serving those who may need her. They are in belief that at the cost of the present future will be better. One of the characters in the play Vershinin believes that the present generation sacrifices happiness now so that future generations can be happy. For them such altruism is the meaning of life.

The existential suffering caused by constant failure in achieving dream and emancipating the upcoming generation through sacrificing present happiness is the central issue often talked in the play. Pain, failure, frustration, unrequited love, subtle hope etc Prevail in the characters. The Prozorovs, ambitious characters of the play are compelled to give up their ambition and live a life of failure which caused frustration and pain to them. Versinin is frustrated due to unsuccessful marital life. Tuzenbakh and Chebutykin suffer unrequited love. Despite of all these, the characters have subtle hope of evolution, hope of approaching meaning in life. The theme of suffering of the present generation and an optimistic view regarding the happiness and meaningful existence is dominant in the play. The suffering is the existential because the

characters target is to achieve a meaningful existence, in the absurd and futile world but they fail. So, the researcher of the present research will focus on the characters existential struggle and suffering caused by constant failure and how they take it (suffering), what is their view on suffering etc are widely discussed. Some question can be raised- why do the Prozorov sisters want to leave the provincial town and go to Moscow? Why does Irina agree to marry Tuzenbach though she is not interested to him? Why Vershinin and Masha are drawn to each other despite their marital relation to someone? Why does Olga accept the teaching profession despite her reluctance? Why did the three sisters offer things to the fire victim despite their own sufferings? Is Irina's decision to spend her whole life serving those who need her not suggestive of emancipating the people from suffering sorrow and darkness of the absurd world? Such questions still remain unanswered even though the text has been received many interpretations from various critics. This research will focus on the play as a dramatic journey from existential suffering to social salvation involving effort to answer the above raised questions.

The next chapter is the study of existentialism, which will be the theoretical insight for analyzing the existential suffering of characters and their view regarding on it (suffering).

II Existentialism

Background:

Existentialism is rooted from the word 'existence' which is derived from Latin. Where ex= out + sistere = to stand. Thus, the meaning of existence is to stand in the world that is incomprehensible. Existentialism is a school of thought devoted to the interpretation of human existence. It takes human being as an isolated existence. It takes human being as an isolated existence into an alien universe. It is the modern system of belief that opposes the doctrine that human being is a manifestation of absolute truth. Especially existentialism flourished after the world wars. The great wars separated mankind from their relatives and nearer ones. That separation brought feeling of alienation and loneliness which further spread anguish, despair forlornness, frustration and so on. They could not believe in traditional concepts like unity, rationality, morality, value and even Christianity. The thinkers and writers found the world totally absurd, incoherent and disintegrated and could not escape the situation. They captured the human loneliness, meaninglessness of actions in their works. Problematic condition of the modern world became the focal point. The feeling of alienation and existence without justification became dominant aspects of literary texts. The concept of 'death of God' and the holocaust of the first and the Second World War obviously brought the sense of alienation. In this regard, Richard Tarnas comments:

The anguish and alienation of twentieth century life were brought to full articulation as the existentialists addressed, the fundamental naked concerns of human existence-suffering and death, loneliness and dread, guilt, conflict spiritual emptiness and ontological insecurity the void of absolute values or universal contexts, the sense of cosmic absurdity, the frailty of human reason, the tragic impasse of the human condition. (389)

The spiritual void, sense of insecurity and cosmic absurdity were captured by the writers. Man was just given existence without essence. He was entrapped by morality, fear, uncertainty. No 'supreme being or transcendent absolute' was there to fulfill the human life.

Existentialists believe that an individual is free to choose and create truth for himself to exist up to the moment the maker's choices. The personal experience and acting on one's own connections are essential in arriving at the truth. One creates truth from choice and freedom of choice. Thus, the understanding of a situation by someone involved in that situation is superior to that of a detached, objective observer. Thus, existentialism focuses on freedom, individual existence and the choice. But this emphasis on freedom is not new with the existentialist. Renaissance humanists also focused on freedom. They celebrated freedom in the sense that they could enjoy immense human potentiality. Thus, for them freedom was born. But unlike the Renaissance thinkers who took freedom positively, the existentialists take freedom as a curse as Sartre says: "We are condemned to be free" (56). However both of them talk about freedom and human beings not about God and cosmos.

As a school of thought, existentialism is devoted to the interpretation of human existence. It lays emphasis on concrete individual existence, freedom and the choice. John Ryan explains:

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

Existentialist philosophers sought at least to reduce if not alleviate the present condition of modern man. Their attempt is to define and interpret anxiety, absurdity and uncertainties of human existence and arose consciousness in the present situation (world) where they dwell.

History of Existentialism

Despite its prominence in the post war years the elements of existentialism can be found in the classical philosophy, especially in the philosophy of Socrates, Protogoras, St. Augustine and others. Protogoras expresses the idea of subjective truth as Gaarder says: “Man is measure of all things” (62). Socrates laid emphasis on human existence. Before Socrates, philosophers were concerned with the issue of cosmos. They tried to understand the origin and functioning of the cosmos. But Socrates was the first man to dare to shift the issue from nature to man. Human being, individuality and existence were the concerns of him. For Socrates self is prior to everything. To understand the self was the primary need to know other things. He believes that the real joy springs from the heart, not from external circumstances that is reputation. Power and wealth Socrates asked people to understand the need of the self. So, “know thyself was his motto. Commenting, on Socrates, Richard Tarnas in *The Passion of the Western Mind* says:

In Socrates view, any attempt to foster true success and excellence in human life had to take account of the innermost reality of a human being, his soul and psyche. Perhaps on the basis of this own highly developed sense of individual self-hood and self control, Socrates brought to the Greek mind a new awareness of the central significance of the soul, establishing it for the first time as the seat of the individual waking consciousness and of the moral and intellectual character. He

affirmed the Delphic motto "know thyself" for he believed that it was only through self-knowledge, through an understanding of one's own psyche and its proper condition, that could find genuine happiness. (33).

In this way, Tarnas has pointed out Socrates' concept of individuality, subjectivity and self supportive of existentialism though the term was not coined then.

Although the medieval age was highly dominated by religions and belief in God. Everything was seen through the eyes of God. Man was expected to surrender before God for salvation. In such a time too Augustine talked about self-awareness and believed that truth should be searched from within. He asked man not to go outside himself in quest of truth. He affirmed the existence of human ego in the soul. Individual self was important for him too. Richard Tarnas also accepts that Augustine embodied some existential elements when he says:

Augustine was the most modern of the ancients: he possessed an existentialist's self-awareness with his highly developed capacity for introspection and self-confrontation, his concern with memory and consciousness and time. His psychological perspicacity, his doubt and remorse his sense of solitary alienation of human self without God, his intensity of inner conflict, his intellectual of skepticism and sophistication (143-4).

In this way, the seed of existentialism was growing in medieval ages too since the thinkers of the time gave importance to the individual self and subjectivity.

The end of the medieval age was the birth of Renaissance. Existentialism continued in the Renaissance periods too. The writers of the time showed their concern to the human being not to the God. Renaissance artists tended to believe that

everything is as the viewer views it. For the first time, they gave importance to the perspective that is subjectivity. Human potentialities were emphasized and man was placed at the center of everything. It was believed that human being exists through choice and freedom but not through and predetermined essence. The existential trace can be found in the works of French essayist Montaigne as well. He explored the self and talked about it frankly and openly.

He did not hide anything. In this context, Charles Van Doren, in *A History of Knowledge* Remarks:

Montaigne, at least, could speak for himself. He could say what he was, what he wanted, what he feared, what hurt him, what amused and pleased him, what struck him as vain and foolish in other men. Thus he placed himself at the centre of things, believing that even if this attention might seem self-centered to some people, nothing would prove more interesting. (145)

Having seen the line of development up to Montaigne, we can draw a conclusion that existentialism did not arise in the literary world dramatically and accidentally rather its development begun right from the classical time though it did not get same title or name.

Modern Existentialism:

Modern existentialism is very much indebted by the works of the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. Self or subjectivism is the primary concern for it. There is no single truth according to this philosophy but many truths those are determined by how one appears with them. Husserl talks about phenomenology in this way:

Phenomenology itself learns its proper function of transparently human “living” from and entire relationship to ‘self [. . .] phenomenology is not less than man’s whole occupation with himself in the service of the universal reason. (15)

The phenomenology of Husserl focuses on the internal role and activities of the individual in the production of emotion or belief rather than external world. The doctrine of intentionality holds that everything depends upon the consciousness of an individual who perceives thing other than himself as objects. Making others as ‘internal objects’ in phenomenological terms, does signify that other people in the perceptions of individual appears different from what they think of themselves. So, the existential notion of individuality can be considered as the systematic growth of phenomenological concept of intentionality. Defining phenomenology Raman Selden states, “a modern philosophical tendency which stresses the perceiver’s central role in determining meaning is known as phenomenology” (48).

Having observed them, we came to the conclusion that phenomenology studies the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. How we perceived the object outside or understand the thing with our conscious mind is the main quest of phenomenology. So, all understanding and perceptions are subjective. An individual plays a central role in perception.

The existentialists are mainly influenced by the idea of subjectivism and individuality. They challenge the traditional notion of absolute being. Existentialism was developed at the hand of Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and many others, focusing on human existence.

Existentialism has become one of the prominent theories at present and is applied in many literary texts. Although they have many similar ideas they can be divided into two groups: (a) Theistic existentialists who believe in God and view that anxiety of modern man can be relieved when one submits oneself to the will of God. This branch of existentialism includes Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, and Gabriel Marcel. (b) Atheistic existentialists deny accepting the existence of God. Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus belong to this group of existentialists. They opine that there is nobody to support human being. He is free and supportless creature. So, one is free to choose.

As it is not possible to include and discuss all the existentialists, some prominent existential philosophers and their concept of existentialism will be discussed in the following chapter which will derive the supportive idea to discuss the play. *The Three Sisters*.

Theistic Existentialists:

Soren Kierkegaard:

The 19th century Danish philosopher and a religious thinker Kierkegaard is the first writer to call himself existentialist. He developed his philosophy as a reaction against Hegelian philosophy which stressed on rationalism which according to Kierkegaard, “both the idealism of Romantics and Hegel’s historicism and obscured the individual responsibility for his own life” (377). Therefore, Kierkegaard thought Hegel as Romantics were “tarred with the same bush”. He discussed man’s essence with the existential predicaments and limitations: hope, despair, anxiety, and so on. Kierkegaard takes human being as God’s creatures and offers many possibilities of being without reason of heart or mind, Kierkegaard can get to God by a leap of faith. Kierkegaard thought of personal choices and

responsibility which count a lot. Objective truth has nothing to do with human life search for objective truth is meaningless. He advocates that individual existence is prior to everything. Supporting this view, Jostin Gaarder in *Sophie's world* comments: "Kierkegaard had a sharp eye for the significance of the individual. We are more than children of our time. And moreover every single one of us is unique individual who only lives once" (377). Gaarder further comments on Kierkegaard's determination about individuality. He says:

According to Kierkegaard, rather than searching for the truth with capital 'T' it is more important to find the kind of truths that are meaningful to the individual's life. It is important to find the truth for me. He thus sets the individual, or each and every man, up against the 'system.'

As other existential philosophers, Kierkegaard also emphasizes on individual choice freedom and personal decisions. He thinks that man makes free decisions and choices to project himself. Commenting on the issue, Ellmann and Feidelson remark:

By choosing, even by choosing wrongly in that is done with earnestness and struggles, we become new selves that could not have existed until the choice was made. [Choice in relation to God] Beyond ethical choice religions choice in the use of freedom to surrender it back to divine giver. (805).

Thus, one cannot remain without making decisions. On making decision he goes on establishing his existence. There are two options for the individual to choose either he has to choose god and get redemption from the angst, an ethicoreligious choice or he has to respect God and go to prediction and atheistic choice.

Similarly, Kierkegaard believes that truth is subjective. There cannot be any truth which is objective and universal. Instead of one single truth, there are many truths which are personal. The concept of 'subjective truth' has influenced the twentieth century existentialist. Now they emphasize on individuality, i.e. subjectivity. The Christian doctrine and its quest for objective truth has nothing to do with Kierkegaardian concept of Christianity. He believes only in the existence of God and not in any doctrine. He argues: "Christianity is therefore not a doctrine, but fact that god has existed (857).

To sum up; Kierkegaard believes that one is free to make choice. And one exists up to the point of making choice. The concept of 'subjective truth' is dominant in his writings. Instead of single truth, there are many truths which are personal. What is right and what is wrong depend upon one's own decisions and thoughts.

Karl Jaspers:

Karl Jaspers, one of the prominent theistic founders of modern existentialism, also centered his ideas on the self and choice or decision. He believes that to live a true and a perfect life something is to be gained and that is possible only through individual choices not through rationality. Mautner comments on him by saying:

He saw the task of philosophy to consists not primary in the discovery of theoretical truth, but in assisting the individual in the process of self discovery and insight [. . .] the authentic way of living in something, to be achieved. Ultimately, it is reached by ones own free decision.

(218)

Anxiety and disgrace are taken as the essential consequence of free will by Jaspers.

Rejecting the declared religions dogmas he takes the authority of churches. He says

that we connected ourselves merely with other objects and consult with the objective world and communication in the way to achieve truth in all its forms. Individual freedom is again emphasized by Jaspers Martin Bubber, Gabriel Marcel and other theistic existentialist also emphasize upon the faith in god which help man to overcome anxiety and despair. They believe that no separate existence of human being is possible since God is absolute and our existence is always, attached with other man, nature and God. For them, the highest kind of existence is called God.

Atheistic Existentialists:

Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, is known as the critic of Western Philosophical tradition and Christianity. For him, both western philosophical tradition and Christianity were corrupt, since they taught abstraction. Commenting on this, Jostin Gaarder remarks, "according to Nietzsche, both Christianity and traditional philosophy had turned away from the real world and pointed towards heaven or the world of ideals" (455). Western education system is corrupt, since it attempts to prepare historically educated man. Knowledge does not do anything except making him live in abstraction. The historical knowledge does not serve life. For him life should be the centre of everything. In his essay, "On the Use and Abused of History", Nietzsche states 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. We wish to use historical only so far it serves living" (152).

His critic of Christianity or God is sharp. He does not believe in existence of God. There is no authority or God to determine our existence. He proclaims the "God is dead" and rejects the entire Judio-Christian moral tradition and speaks in favor of a heroic pagan ideas. 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. In his famous essay, "The Death of God and the Anti-Christ", he writes:

The Christian conception of God- God as God of the sick, God as a spider, God as a spirit is one of the most corrupt conceptions of the divine as ever attained on earth. It may even represent the low water mark in the descending development of divine types. God degenerated into contradiction of life. Instead of being its transfiguration and eternal yes! God as the declaration of war against life, against nature and against will to life! (91)

With this idea of 'Death of God' existentialism got a new mode where human existence is perceived with a new conception. Nietzsche advocated for authentic living' and insisted that individual must make his decision entirely on his own. He places superman in the place of God who is free to do what he wants and what he likes. He is authentic.

Nietzsche is quite positive towards suicide. He seems aware of the fact that suicide can be one of the choices that a person makes. He opines that suicide can also be solution somewhere. In his "Beyond Good and Evil" he states, "The thought of suicide is a great comfort: it is a good way of getting through many a bad night" (qtd. in hill 348). Suicide is not surrender it is a means to achieve some goal. An individual may use it as a weapon to win something.

Individual freedom is highly supported by Nietzsche. He does not accept any sort of imposition laid on an individual. An individual must have authority to master oneself. He supports master morality against the slave morality. Like

other, individuality is the focal point for Nietzsche too. For the concept of freedom and individuality, he is considered one of the major existentialists in the history of existentialism.

Jean Paul Sartre/ Existence, Essence and Freedom of Choice

Jean Paul Sartre was the leading advocate of existentialism and French philosopher who was offered the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964 but refused to accept it. He made existential philosophy popular even among laymen. His main idea is of freedom of human consciousness, freedom to act, freedom to value and freedom to make ourselves. Sartre associates existentialism to humanism since it takes human undertaking as the point of departure. Establishing existentialism as the humanistic philosophy he states, “by existentialism we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and in addition, declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity” (Existentialism and human emotion 10) Then existentialism gives respect to man. It accounts human action. In this sense, it is quite an optimistic philosophy.

For Sartre “existence precedes essence” is the central idea of existentialism which many others also have talked. Sartre takes the concept of individual conscious existence from Heidegger and concept of death of God from Nietzsche. According to him, we first exist, appear on the scene, make choices and create ourselves. We make what we are only after we exist. It is through our choices that we create meaning in our life. For him, there is no predetermined essence to govern our existence. He even does not believe in the existence of God or at least the existence of God is not important for the existence of human beings. For him, God’s role in shaping human existence is zero. He believes human beings are makers of their own destiny. Commenting on the existence of God he says, "existentialism is not so atheistic that it

wears itself out showing that god does not exist. Rather, it declares that if God did exist, that would change nothing."

His view towards freedom is not positive though he frequently talks about freedom. He does not take freedom as blessing but as curse. For him man is condemned to be free. It is because as one is free to choose the course of life, he is completely responsible for his actions in life. The choice made by the individual shapes the life. Sartre says:

To choose between this or that is at the same time to affirm the values of that which is chosen: For we are unable ever to choose the worse what we choose is always the better; and nothing can be better for unless it is better for all [. . .] our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed. (835)

Authenticity of life demands it to make a free choice. Sartre also emphasizes upon the subjectivity of individual. Personal experience and acting on one's own connections are essential in arriving at the truth. Authentic and inauthentic livings are the two divisions that Sartre made and in these two decisions authentic living is emphasized by him and says that one must choose and make commitment to exist. Sartre's primary focus lies on existence. For him, freedom and existence are the two sides of the same coin. In this context, he says, "Freedom is existence and in it existence precedes essence" (66). To live authentically or truly freedom of choice is important and he believes that one can't be without choice. Even when we don't choose anything, we choose not to choose. Then choice is something which an individual keeps on making. This choice may even lead to suicide. Like Nietzsche, Sartre also treats suicide positively and says, "passive, in the world, to refuse to act upon thing and upon others is still to choose, and suicide isn't more among others of being in the world" (57).

Thus, as most of the existentialists, Sartre also stresses upon freedom of choice, personal responsibility and subjectivity to create one's own essence.

Albert Camus / Absurdism

Albert Camus, a journalist and a philosopher, is basically known for his view on absurdity of human life. He believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe and the condition of a man is absurd; whatever he searches for life with any purpose is meaningless and fruitless. The world does not possess any inherent truth, value or meaning. In this regard M. H. Abrams Remarks:

Albert Camus views a human being as an isolated existence who is cast into an alien universe, to convince the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value, meaning and to represent human life – in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning as it moves from nothingness when it came toward the nothingness where it must end as an existence which is both anguished and absurd. (1)

For Camus, this world is absurd yet man has to face it or accept it as his destiny. This idea of Camus has been presented in his most influential essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). He also believes that man makes himself from his own choices. Such choices lead human being towards repetition as there is no meaning in the universe but man always aspires to achieve it. Man makes his own fate from his own plan or choice. Creation of knowledge comments the idea as: “Like Sisyphus, Camus tells us, human make their own fate, their own choices and to that extent are in control of their own destinies” (67).

Camus supports choices. Man's freedom of choice and his own responsibilities to shape life is portrayed in the essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*,

Sisyphus, a Corinthian king makes choice and does not surrender to God rather choose the toilsome task, yet he exists through this choice. He chooses to face punishment, rather than bow before God. Camus' essay is the meditation on suicide. However, he does not take suicide as solution. He believes that one has to take the challenge, but not commit suicide. The repetitive task of rolling up the rock constitutes the feeling of absurdity. But we can't say that he is unhappy. Camus also believes that joy comes out of that absurdity. In this point Camus says:

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. The 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 towards the height is enough to fill a master's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

To conclude Camus advocates freedom, individuality, choices and consequently the human existence. His philosophy isn't pessimistic and anti-humanistic but optimistic and humanistic.

Martin Heidegger / Dasain / Anxiety and Dread

Primarily a phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger is regarded as an existentialist thinker though he personally never accepted it. He is often called the darkest of the existentialist school. For him the universe is alien to us and we would face explicitly the problem of being as we have to create our own existence making choices. He developed a theory of "Dasein," a particular way of existing. For Heidegger, there is only a basic question in philosophy "the question of being." His philosophy focuses

on existence than on essence, on Being than on beings. Consequences of choices and mode of being. Dasein is a different from other ordinary existence of things in the sense that they are determinant and they have their distinctive properties. As quoted in *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, showing difference between Dasein and other beings Heidegger says:

The sort of being that I manifest is not that of a thing with properties. It is a range of possible ways to be. I define the individual I become by projecting myself into these possibilities which I choose [. . .] who I become is a matter of how I act in the contexts in which I find myself. My existence is always an issue for me, and I determine by my actions what it will be. (183-4)

As other existentialists believe that there is no any predetermining forces to affect human existence, Heidegger too in this point shows his closeness with existentialism by ignoring the idea of predetermining forces.

For Heidegger, we human beings are thrown into a world and Dasein is our consciousness of their thrown quality between concepts that form the reality of the present and the concern for the safety into future. Being comes into existence at a limit of the throwness of everyday existence between past and future. He analyzes Dasein in its temporal or historical character. Man is aware of his death and this awareness of and about his being is Dasein. Death is a certainty among innumerable uncertainties. Death becomes goal of a man's existence. It is primordial reality. Sinha says "man's being is for death" (388). In the same issue Stumpf adds, "He (Heidegger) emphasizes element of time in human existence. We know time, he says, because we know we are going to die. Man existence therefore is temporal." (471)

Though the death is the certainty among innumerable uncertainties, man does not want to die. He wants to live longer as he thinks new possibilities may improve his daily existence. He lives waiting for new possibilities to choose. Man keeps choosing and gets new possibilities to face, or present is outcome of our own choices. Our own choices determine our every moment. Man is free and acts in accordance with the demands of historic situation that gives more possibilities. But man is not totally free. In the point Jadunath Sinha comments: "I can free myself from particular preoccupation but not from some preoccupations: so I can free myself from dependence upon some persons but not from all relations. I am in the world in the sense that I am an existence not chosen, but having to be chosen" (381). Out of possibilities man is not only free to choose, he is also condemned to be free.

Heidegger believes that the ways individual exists vary some engage with the world in awareness of mortality. They live in a way that is genuinely self – determining and self –revising. Their existence is more authentic. On the other hand, there are those who lead a life of superficiality and their lives to be determined by social convention and conformism. Their existence is inauthentic. People tend toward inauthentic rather than authentic. It is because they want to avoid dread and anxiety.

According to Heidegger, anxiety ultimately has its origin in our very mode of being (197). A person knows limitation and temporality his existence and when he sees transparently what and who he is, anxiety intrudes. Anxiety reveals the presence of nothingness in our being. Dread is the experience of nothing. In his essay what is metaphysics? He talks about nothing. Nothing, for him, can be experienced and its experience is an experience of nakedness and being devoid of all meanings. Man always experiences that nothing exists with anxiety. Heidegger agrees with Hegel's logic that "pure being and pure nothing are the same". He further says, "being and

nothing do belong together, not because both form the point of view of Hegelian concept of thought rather because being itself is essentially finite and reveals itself only in the transcendence of Dasein which is held out into the nothing" (8).

The doctrine existence precedes essence became pivotal idea of existentialism. Heidegger makes a sharp distinction between 'essences' and 'existence'. In his view when we ask a thing we are actually asking about its essence. The essence of Dasein lies in its existence.

To sum up, Heideggerian existentialism stresses on existence, boredom, choice and freedom. Freedom to choose leads to angst and dread. He does not believe to be predetermining force to govern a man. For him, man himself is responsible to create his own essence.

Based on the study of above mentioned existentialist thinkers, we come to the conclusion that existentialism is a movement with varied characteristics. The common elements found in existential philosophy are existence, alienation, freedom of choice, individuality, humanism, absurdity, boredom or anxiety, identity and protest.

Existence is one of the major themes of existentialism. 'Being alive' does not mean to be in existence. One exists only when one is conscious of one's existence. Most of the existentialists believe that existence precedes essence. People are what they make themselves.

Freedom and choice are the other theme of existentialism. Man is essentially free; therefore, free to choose the way of the life he wants to lead. Freedom is not celebrated by existentialist. Sartre takes the freedom as curse and says, "men are condemned to be free." The freedom is also the freedom of choice that determines an individual. So, an individual is totally responsible for what s/he is.

Alienation is another important theme of existentialism. Human beings feel alienated from the alien universe for many reasons. Man is basically alone. He cannot assimilate with the norms and values of society because he finds the society empty and meaningless. The sense of alienation poisons the human relationship.

Humanism is also a basic theme of this philosophy that it centers on human being and their welfare with their own actions. There is no place for God in this philosophy.

Protest is another theme of existentialism. An individual protests the social system to affirm one's existence. The society always imposes the restriction on the human beings. It expects human being to act within those social restrictions. If man surrenders to those retractions, he becomes stereotypical. But if he defines them he becomes an existentialist. He is not governed by the laws formulated by that society. He makes laws for himself and asserts his existence.

Issue of **absurdity** is integral to the existential philosophy. Camus, Beauvoir, and Sartre – all regard absurdity as a central feature of human life. For Camus, absurdity lies in irrationality and chaos of the universe, especially in the way that death brings these on in human life. The universe does not possess any inherent truth, value or meaning and it is for Camus, absurd to seek meaning into the world like this. They believe that there is nothing in the world.

Angst, anxiety and dread are also the essential parts of the existentialism. These are the product of one's consciousness about one's existence. Angst arises when one become aware of the fact that he exists and the framework he has taken for granted is not given once for all. Dread is also a state of mind. It arises when a person comes

to realize that he can use his freedom but the path he has chosen is not understood and yet exercises and attraction.

Subjectivity, individuality, authenticity, despaired etc. are the important concepts of existentialism. Subjectivity explores and reveals how the objects, people and events we perceived are colored by our own subjective patterns. Existentialism also believes that individuals make their own choices so individuality matters a lot for them.

Now, if we go through *The Three Sisters* these elements can be found from the beginning to the end. The characters determine their own existence through their own choices. They use their freedom here. They have to suffer a lot. There is a feeling of alienation in them. They feel themselves to be thrown in the world (Provincial town) where their dreams never fulfilled. They are anxious to death too. But despite frustration, meaninglessness and suffering they want to go on living for the happiness of future generation sacrificing their own happiness. They are optimistic that future generation would not suffer from the mysteries of suffering since it would be disclosed. They speak for the emancipation of the whole race from suffering and meaninglessness.

The next chapter will study about the characters existential suffering and their view on it (suffering).

Existential Suffering and Social Salvation in *The Three Sister*

Anton Chekhov, one of the nineteenth centuries famous Russian playwrights, has repeatedly emphasized the dull, pathetic and meaningless life of characters in his plays. Chekhov dramatizes the issues of life, which are not obvious or exciting in the theatrical sense. He has dramatized his characters rather than plot; the characters direct the scenic development of the issues. Going through the play, we get majority of the characters facing harshness in their issues of lives. The characters like, Andrey, Olga, Masha, Irina Vershinin have been surviving lives with existential crises and are hopeful to achieve a successful, meaningful existence with admiration from others in future. Olga, a spinster and the eldest of the three sisters draws our attention to think for her problematic existence when she says "I'm always having headache and the things that run through my mind-why-I might be an old woman already (172). She bemoans her boredom and dissatisfaction with her life as she hopes it will be solved after getting to Moscow. At the end of act 2 Olga, in despairing way confesses that she is dissatisfied for being unwed and would have married any man even an old if he had asked. If she got married and able to get to Moscow her life would suddenly have a meaning and purpose. Now, she views her life as pointless and deathlike since any desire and hope possessed by her did not get fulfilled. Desperate Olga to cure herself reluctantly takes the role of headmistress permanently to sustain life.

Andrey, the brother of the three sisters, is the most tragic character in the play. He suffers an existential crises due to his own ambitious nature. The sisters have pinned their hope on their brother Andrey who was studying to become a professor. But his dream never comes true. After being married to Natasha, Andrey lost any ambition he had ever had and starts spending much of the time gambling, trying to

forget how ill-breed, rude and selfish his wife (Natasha) was. He feels alienated from rest of the being since he thinks his own sisters are against of him. In act three he asks his sisters: what have you all got against me, eh? Natasha treats him as a worthless things and play with his sentiments. She even entertains her lover before his eyes. Such and such condition and incidents occurring in his life help explore his existential suffering, frustration meaninglessness etc.

Chekhov's another character, Irina, the youngest sister of Prozorov, is most suffered character among all. Her only desire is to go back to Moscow, which they left eleven years before the play begins. She believes she will find her true love at Moscow, but when it becomes clear they are not going to Moscow. She agrees to marry the Baron Tuzenbakh, whom she does not love. She gets her teaching degree and plans to leave with the Baron, but he is shot by Solyony in a pointless duel. Every time she is struggling to achieve a meaningful life but her expectation ever turn into opposite. She gets the reality harsh, full of suffering, and meaninglessness. She is dissatisfied with her existence. Her dissatisfaction and frustration get expressed in Act three when she says: I'm desperate. Why am I still alive, why haven't I done away with myself? I don't know (217).

Masha- 21 in the beginning of the play, is also in quest of meaning in life. She married her husband, Kulygin, when she was 18. She is dissatisfied with her marital life. When she realized that her husband was not intelligent as she thought she starts making gap between them. Later she falls in love with Vershinin and they begin an affair. She tried to search happiness but fails when Vershinin is transferred away she is crushed, but returns to life with her husband. She too struggles hard to achieve a meaningful existence but in reality it never turned.

Ivan Romanovitch Chebutykin: Sixty years and a doctor in the army also suffers a existential crises. He loved the mother of the sisters but was married to colonel prozorov. He vows not to get married throughout and suffers loneliness. He tries to win the love of sisters, especially Irina's offering expensive gifts but it embarrasses both her and her sisters. Irina is the principal object of Chebutykin's lavishness and her refusal to respond to his gift in the way he expects precipitates sudden hurt to him. To avoid loneliness and absurdity of life he turns to drink. He registers his own professional futility. Being a doctor he confesses that he cannot doctor at all. He says" they think I'm a doctor and can cure disease, but I know nothing absolutely nothing. (...) perhaps I'm not a human being, perhaps I only pretend to have arms and legs and a head, perhaps I don't even exist at all, and only Imagine I walk about and eat and sleep [weeps] oh how nice not to exist (Act III 211). He suffers frustration and meaninglessness. Absurdity is integrated in his life as he thought.

Similarly other remaining characters in the play also are found in quest of meaning and happiness in life. Tuzenbakh struggles to find a life of meaning and purpose and it would, as he thinks if he got Irina's love and a satisfying job. Solyony also finds life not worth-living. It is so because he too is not satisfied with the present existence and struggles hard to achieve a meaningful and admiring life. The ambitious, yet bitterly unsuccessful and meaningless lives of the characters impressed me to go through their problematic existence and look at their suffering and views on it (suffering). To facilitate my study I deal with characters sufferings and its causes and consequences, with the idea of existential philosopher. The following is the application of existential elements in the characters life.

Chekhov's plays are realistic in nature. The characters in *The Three Sisters* seems to be similar to the human being of our society. Almost all of them have awareness of their situation in which they are living. According to Heidegger, human beings are thrown into the world. The consciousness of this thrown quality in the temporality of present is denoted by Heidegger with the word-Dasein. Dasein is the quality of human beings which helps us to distinguish them from things. In between reality of past and hope of future, there lies the temporality of present, on which point of time we live with consciousness of our thrown quality. Certainly for Heidegger, Dasein is awareness, consciousness of our being. The characters in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* too seem with proper awareness of their thrownness. They all are conscious about their present and are enduring with ambition of a bright future. They are completely conscious of their present situation and accordingly proceed and maintain relations with other. Being's existence is tied up by his relation with other beings and things. Characters hope, desire to fulfill them and inability to grasp them are helping agencies to arise awareness in them. In the act one Masha says the following. Masha: Knowing three languages is a useless luxury in this town. It's not even a luxury, but a sort of unwanted appendages like having a sixth finger. We know much too much (Act I 182).

By these lines we get Masha is very much conscious about her present, about her life and career and is not satisfied with it. She knows that Moscow is better for her career for her being, yet she has been thrown in a provincial town where her intelligence is not counted. She has been brought up by such parents who are well aware of importance of education and imparted their children with it which will be supportive in any difficulties, but Masha felt just opposite of it. Similarly, Irina is also conscious (aware) of her present existence. In the following lines she says:

Irina: I must find another job because this one doesn't suit me. The things I'd hoped for and wanted so much-they're just what it doesn't give me. It's sheer drudery with nothing romantic or intellectual about it ... (Act II 195).

Irina had decided what she needed for happiness was work. She had a desire to labour hard at something. But she could not find work to suit her she thinks that the job in the telegraph office is not her prefer and does not meet her intellectual capacity. Her knowledge and intelligence is more than just satisfying with the job provided in the provincial town. So, she is totally aware that her intellectual (capacity) potentiality is more and can do better at any good field. She proudly says that she must find another job because what she is doing does not suit her intelligence. Her goal is not the job of post office but more than this at Moscow.

Andrey aims at being a professor, and to realize his intended aim he must initiate something but he doesn't. He is well aware that his dream of being a professor never comes true and his happiness also beyond his reach and laments over his past glorious life. In the following lines Andrey says:

Andrey: Where is my past life, oh what has become of it. When I was young, happy and intelligent, when I had such glorious thoughts and vision, and my present and future seemed so bright and promising? (...) or ever has. We've never produced a single scholar or artist or anyone else with a touch of originality to make us envy him (...) (Act IV 231).

In these lines he reminisces his past life when he was young, happy and intelligent. But now he accepts that such glorious thoughts have been gone from his mind. He comes from dream to reality, from Imaginative world to the day to day living world.

He is conscious that his life is futile and absurd. He address not only to him but the whole society and blames that they have never produced a single scholar or artist.

Olga, the Matriarchal figure of the Prozorov family, too is properly aware about her existence. She is a teacher at the high school where she frequently fills in for the oft-absent headmistress. She is not satisfied with the profession she has taken and also conscious that the very profession will be obstacle in her ways to meet the real dream. After realizing that her dream of going Moscow and getting better career is never fulfilled. She reluctantly accepts the position of headmistress permanently.

Olga. Yes, yes of course, set your mind at rest. (pause) Tomorrow there won't be a single soldier left in town. We shall stay behind with our memories, and of course things will be very different for us now. Nothing ever works out as we want it. I never wanted to be a headmistress, but I am one. So, it's obvious I'll never get to Moscow now. (Act IV 223)

Olga faces the reality. Though she is aware, she cannot devoid herself from the problematic existence. She is ambitious and unsatisfied with the present living. Her problematic existence is more problematized after accepting the position of headmistress reluctantly. She is sure that the profession is not the solution to avoid frustration and meaninglessness of her life but is huge obstacle to meet the real dream.

Another character in the play Tuzenbakh, is also conscious and aware of his existence. He serves the army as a lieutenant. He like, Irina, emphasizes works for happiness. But his job in army doesn't give him satisfaction and decides to quit the army and join brick work. He feels being thrown in the world where he never be satisfied.

Tuzenbakh- I'm resigning, my commission and that's the end of that. I've been thinking of doing it for five years and at last I've taken the plunge. I'm going to get a job (Act II 202). He is aware that the very job in army never can satisfy his dream. His laborious nature and desire to worship work would never be satisfied in that job.

Existentialist inherited the concept of alienation from the nineteenth century philosophers Hegel and Marx, but they converted it into a more personal sense of feeling separated and alone. Existential alienation is felt in at least three ways: as alienation from nature, alienation from others and alienation from the continuance of life. Alienation is existential loneliness. Alienation in this sense is not only a feeling but it is a way of being as the existentialists say that all of the personal human relationships are poisoned by feeling of alienation from other.

A person often feels alienated when one does not get friendly and sympathetic behavior from the people around him. If a person is in trouble and the world is not friendly then one feels oneself alienated. One's alienation bears the constant notion of having the feeling of strange or an outsider. Andrey, the most tragic character of the play feels alienated from the rest of the being. He says: There is no one else I can really talk to. (Act IV- 228). He married Natasha, for love and company but she never loved him instead she engaged herself in romantic affair with Protopopov, the president of the country council where Andrey is only a member. We are alone into this alien universe as a man is basically alone. In the same way Andrey finds himself alone among his family members and relatives. He frequently asks his sister: What have they all got against him, Ah?

Andrey: Well, it's been quite a fire, hasn't it? It is dying down now.

(...) why don't you speak, Olga? Isn't it time you stopped being so

silly, there's nothing to suck about. You're here, Masha, and Irina's here. Well, that's fine. We can clear the air once and for all. What have you all got against me, eh? (Act III 219).

Thus, he finds himself alienated here because his own (family members) wife and sister are against him. They never sympathies him rather tease him for his failure to grasp the dream.

Other characters in the play also equally feel alienated and cheated from other regarding marital life and unrequited love.

Vershinin feels alienated because of unsuccessful marital life. He married a woman who regularly attempts suicide. He completely feels alone in the universe and beg love to Masha but the affair does not last long since the battery is transferred away. In the following lines Vershinin explains his present lonesome situation.

Vershinin: why is he fed up with his children and fed up with his wife?

Why are his wife and children fed up with him?

Masha: You're in rather a bad mood toady.

Vershinin: Perhaps I am. I missed lunch, had nothing to eat since breakfast. (...) we started quarreling at seven o'clock, and at nine I walked out and slammed the door (...) we started quarreling at seven o'clock, and at nine I walked out and slammed the door (Don't be angry with me. Apart from you I have no one no one in the world) (Act II 194).

In the dialogues shared by Vershinin and Masha we come to know that Vershinin feels alienated since his marital life in unsuccessful. Almost every day he quarrels with his wife and she regularly attempts suicide. Whom he thinks own is never his and whom he must treat as own he never it is the bitter reality occurred in Vershinin's life and the cause of his loneliness.

Masha, another character in the play also is not satisfied with her present life. She married her husband, Kulygin, whom she once thought the cleverest of men but later she considered him as the kindest of men. This finding creates a short of gap between husband and wife. Masha has exchanged some sentences with Vershinin that she is afraid with her husband the way he is. The gap and dissatisfaction create loneliness in both of them (husband and wife) Kulygin.

If any one expresses his/her love to someone, he expects in return. Tuzenbakh has loved Irina for five years and begs to love him but she clearly says she can not love him. In the following dialogue spoken by Irina:

Irina: I can't help that. I'll be your wife, I'll honor and obey you but I don't love you and I can't help it. I've never been in love, never. Oh! I've longed for love, dreamed about it so much day and night, but my heart is like a wonderful grand piano that can't be used because it's locked up and the key's lost. You look worried (Act IV 230).

The way Irina presents herself to Tuzenbakh, causes more dissatisfaction and lonely to him. Tuzenbakh is the person who thinks life would be meaningful if he got Irina's love. She agrees to be his wife but not a love one. What a man feels if one's own wife does not love? And company for a man is must to sustain life happily. One feels one's life meaningful if his every desire gets addressed. Tuzenbakh is the person who heartily praises Irina and loves her.

Tuzenbakh: I'll be back in an hour, back with you again. Darling It's five years since I fell in love with you and I still can't get used to it. (...) I'll take you away tomorrow, we'll work, we'll be rich and all my dreams will come true. And you'll be happy. There is just one thing wrong though. You don't love me (Act IV 229).

In the lines the importance of love and company gets revealed. How frightful one's life is even though he has everything but not the love and affection. Tuzenbakh waits for years to get love back from the person who he has loved but later he is disillusioned that he is beyond of it.

The most important alienation can be found in the life of Prozorov family. They are cultured, well educated, refined young people who grew up in urban Moscow. However for the past eleven years they have been living in a small provincial town. They all collectively think that they are being thrown in the world where no person they found worth speaking. They feel outsider and strange there in the town and are always dreaming of Moscow and constantly express that they will go back. In the following dialogue shared by Olga and Irina their dream of going Moscow is revealed

Irina: To go Moscow, to sell the house, have done with everything here and go to Moscow.

Olga: Yes, to Moscow: as soon as possible.

They never consider the town as their own and worth living but outsider. In the first act Olga says: I felt so happy and excited, I felt I just had to go back home to Moscow. Home for them is Moscow. Home refers to the place where one can be happy and secure. Only Moscow is their home for them. Not to be in affectionate and secure place adds more feeling of alienation to them. During their stay in the town they have got Army friends, but it is reported that the battery is going to be transferred soon which adds more suffering to the Prozorov. Irina says: The town will be half dead now. (Act IV 229) They feel more alienation since there will not be any man to speak, and sharing pain and suffering.

Solyony's feeling of alienation is also worth mentioning. He is a captain in the army and social mishap. He is in love with Irina and tries to put down the Baron to make himself look better, but Irina finds him crude and unappealing. He expresses his love in the lines (Act II 205).

Solyony: I can't live without you. It's the first time I've ever told you how I love you, and I feel like a being on another planet. Oh, what does it matter anyway? I can't make you love me of course....

Solyony feels alienated and even considers himself to be a being on another planet. Nobody pays attention to his feelings rather tease him for what he is. He loves Irina by heart and even confesses that he can not live without her but she never notices his love, what adds more feeling of alienation to him.

Though the characters in the play are not physically alone but mentally they feel alienated. The sisters are always in company of each other but their failure to get the intended aim and meaninglessness causes existential alienation and frustration to them. Other characters in the play also feel existential alienation due to unrequited love and other things. Chebutikin a sixty years old doctor in the army also suffer existential crisis and alienation. He repeatedly expresses that there is no body except the Prozorov but they do not response in positive way.

When an individual feels oneself helpless and alienated, the sense of frustration and anxiety enter the mind. The temporal nature of Dasein and characters' desire, hope and struggle for an authentic existence become the problem for them against which they have to fight. Both of these elements develop a feeling of anxiety in them. They possess dream for authentic existence and are living inauthentic lives. While searching for authentic existence, they are totally aware about temporality of the existence. They aware the fact that their lives are time bound and going to die.

Yes, each moment they are approaching death. Heidegger says-anxiety ultimately has its origin in our own mode of being. Being's existence has inevitability of death. It is, more over, only when a man really understands himself as a being existing for his own death that he can obtain 'freedom'- a freedom which springs from his recognition of himself as an existent abandoned in the world in order to die there. Anxiety intrudes as he knows he is going to die soon. Being fears death because it is the end of his existence. This psychological level of fear is anxiety.

Dread for Satre is also dread of nothing and 'nothing' here means man's own 'nihilation.' Dread appears only when man questions the meaning of his existence as a whole.

Being fears to be lonely for that he erases authentic existence (self) and wants to go to inauthentic (group) because of this anxiety he prefers inauthentic existence. Though there intrudes anxiety while they exist their authentic existence, majority of characters in *The Three Sisters* are struggling for authenticity. While struggling for their authentic existence, they realize their approaching death. Every time they are haunted with the feeling of approaching death. Their fear of the death can be seen in the very beginning the play as Olga says: It's exactly a year ago today since father died. (Act I 171). The memory of father's death is still fresh in their mind. It is fresh in the mind because they are aware with the truth that the same death will take them too and one day they must die. Their life is for death and it is the certain truth. Again in the play Masha and Vershinin talk about life and death like this:

Masha: Do you know, I'm already beginning to forget her face? Not that anyone will remember us either. We'll be forgotten too.

Vershinin. Yes, we'll be forgotten too. Such is our fate and we can't do anything about it. And the things that strike us as so very serious and

important they'll all be forgotten one day or won't seem to matter. . . .

(Act I 179).

Here, Masha and Vershinin both have the feeling of Anxiety. They are anxious because death will end their existence and will be forgotten forever. Man wants to live longer because he hopes remaining life may give new possibilities to him from which he can achieve an authentic existence. But death never let a person to be in the world forever. The feeling of being forgotten has hunted their mind.

In Act II Masha again shows her anxiety towards death. She says: I'm going to have a little glass of something. Eat, drink and be merry-after all, we only live once. She is clearly aware that once gone life never returns so, whatever we want or desire must be fulfilled within the period of our life. She does not believe in life after death.

The dialogues shared in Act II by Tuzenbakh and Vershinin replete with the feeling of anxiety and dread. In the dialogue they accept the inevitability of death.

Vershinin: Let me see, well, for instance lets try and imagine life after we're dead and buried, in two or three hundred years. Say.

Tuzenbakh: very well then when we're dead people will fly around in balloons, there will be a new style in means jackets and a sixth sense may be discovered and full of mystery and happiness as it is now. (...) what's more, they'll still be a scared of death as they are now. And as keep on avoiding it. (Act two 196).

Here, both the characters are anxious to death. They accept the truth that they will die and after their death too the world will continue its existence and many changes of living style of men takes place. And they feel bitter for not being able to participate in that world. At the finale of Tuzenbakh's dialogue it is clearly noticed that man still be feared the death as they're now. And they would make grand effort to avoid them. But

it would be beyond their reach. Other remaining characters in the play also are anxious to the death. Almost all of them are conscious to the temporality of the life. They accept the life to be time bounded. Fedotkin, too shows his awareness to the approaching death. Though he directly does not show the anxiety for death, his lines with awareness of death seem suggestive with it (anxiety) In Act four when he says – we'll never see each other again (222). It clearly shows that he is anxious to death.

Certainly, death is certain among innumerable uncertainties of human life. Though, it would be better not to fear death, we fear death as it makes the full stop of our existence in the world. It ends our relation to the world. While observing the play *The Three Sisters*, we get feeling of anxiety in the characters. Anxiety resides in the mind of characters due to temporality of Dasein. When they aware that their life on the earth is for limit anxiety intrudes their mind.

The characters in the play *The Three Sisters* are running after their career, love, marriage and meaning in the lives latter surrender to their empty existence when they get failure while struggling to achieve the essence. Their compromise with existence is a evidence to prove the saying existence precedes essence. Heidegger has advocated that Being's essence lies in its existence. For that reason the characters quest is for existence. Man first wants existence than only he is concerned with his essence. Existence is the element which differentiate human beings from things. Things need whatness, the essence; I.e. their qualities. They are measured or weighed in terms of their qualities. Animals and inanimate things should possess qualities whereas being need existence. For human being existence is primary and essence is secondary. Career and meaning are essence of life. Characters in the play like Olga, Masha, Irina and Andrey prefer their existence to their love, career and happiness.

Irina is an ambitious girl of 20 in the play. She has only a dream of going back to Moscow and getting her love and career. But after making sure herself that she never could get there decides to marry the Baron Tuzenbakh though she does not love him.

Irina: No, 'We've sent for her. You can't imagine what a bore I find it living here (...) But I have made up my mind. If I can't go to Moscow, well, I can't and that's that. It's just the way things have turned out. It can't be helped, It's all Gods' will and that's the truth. Nicholas asked me to marry him. Well, I thought it over and decide to say yes... (Act IV 226).

By these lines it can be said that Irina prioritizes existence over the essence. Later she accepts the truth that career and love are the secondary things and the existence is primary. If she could maintain her existence essence can be hoped. What is the worth of essence if existence (life) is not there? So, assimilating the role of existence she decides to marry Tuzenbakh to sustain life.

Similarly, Olga another character of Chekhov also prefers existence over essence. She too like her sisters and brother is ambitious and hates to be in provincial town where her dream can never be realized. But she agrees to take the responsibilities of headmistress reluctantly. Despite knowing the position is an obstacle to meet the intended dream, she accepts it because she prioritizes existence over essence. Her such a decision can be observed in the following lines; Nothing ever works out as we want it. I never wanted to be a headmistress, but I am one. So, it's obvious I'll never get to Moscow now (Act IV 213).

As revealed in the lines, Olga prefers existence to career and dream. Getting to Moscow and realize the dream would certainly make her existence happier but if it

becomes difficult to get there she sacrifices her dream for her existence. It is because she thinks existence more important than essence itself.

Likewise, Masha is another character who too loves her existence to anything else. Masha is also an ambitious girl married her husband Kulygin at the age of 18. She is dissatisfied with her husband since she found him a dull and not cleaver as she thought. Though already married, she falls in love with Vershinin and they begin an affair. When Vershinin is transferred away, she returns to life with her husband. She too here sacrifices her love (essence) for existence. Her such a decision can be found in the following conversation with Olga;

Marsha: I'm going crazy. A green oak by curving shore.

Olga- There, there, Masha calm yourself. Get some water.

Masha. I've stopped crying now (Act IV 234).

She convinces her heart herself and returns to the normal life. She simply thought that life is to be lived. She too prefers existence over essence.

Andrey, a young man and most sympathetic character of the play, is on the fast track of being a professor in Moscow but fails to grasp it. Placing his dream at a side, he accepts a job as secretary to the country council of which Protopopov, his wife's lover is president. In the following lines Andrey says

Andrey: I'll say what's on my mind and go (...) I'll say what's on my mind and go. I'm not a professor and don't do academic work. But I happen to work for the country council. I'm a country councilor and I consider the work every bit as honorable and worth while as any academic job I'm on the country council and proud of it, in case you're interested (Act III 220).

Assimilating his failure to get his dream fulfilled. He takes the job of country council. It is done because he prefers existence over essence. To be a professor at Moscow and get a happy and meaningful life is the essence. His acceptance of a membership of country council is for existence. Here, in the life of Andrey too, existence precedes essence. Despite people's laugh and mock he takes the job proudly and insists that he is happy.

The characters prefer their existence even if it is without meaning, without success or without happiness: i.e. essence. Though there is failure, suffering and frustration in their present lives they still want to live longer. They prefer even a sorrowful existence to death. The sisters and Andrey all prefer existence to career meaning, and happiness.

They choose their existence to any other possibilities. No any characters in the play offers themselves to death tired with life rather by any means they want to live longer. If not anything at least they can hope for future happiness (essence) if they are able to sustain their life.

Sartre believes that existence involves twofold of freedom: Freedom of thought and freedom of action. Freedom of thought is most manifest in way each individual is free to interpret himself and his actions. Freedom of action is the ability to choose an action and act on our choice. These two aspects of freedom are closely connected in Sartre's existentialism because our self-consciousness is not only awareness of who I am but also of who I shall be. Man chooses and makes his destiny himself. He is free and create his own individual essence through his actions, he is also responsible for who he actually become. Freedom and responsibility go hand in hand in existentialist theory. Man gets new possibilities in his daily living and he keeps on choosing and getting the more new possibilities. He has the responsibility to

create a life for himself he must also create his self. To create a self, through many choices, is a continuous task that never be final. So, one's present is outcome of a consequence of the choice he must make everyday. His presents, his being, his Dasien is his own choice. While observing at The Three Sisters all characters are in a fixed situation or standpoints which are product of their continuous choices, For their existence, expecting meaningful existence they continuously are keeping on choosing new possibilities they choose a possibility and take themselves to a situation they preferred. But their some mistakes in choices and other consequences take them rather toward their harsh problematic situations. The lives the characters are undergoing are the product of their own choices. Their problematic existence is the derivative of their own choices. In the play, Andrey chooses to be a professor among many possibilities though his father served as an army officer he desired to adopt the profession of professor. About Andrey's choice Irina says: He's the clever one of the family. He's bound to become a professor. Father was a soldier, but his son's chosen an academic career (Act I 180).

Andrey is an ambitious young man. He aims to be a professor but later fails to grasp it which causes more frustration and the frustration furthermore gives him feeling of absurdity and alienation. If he was not so ambitious and choose the career of professorship perhaps he would not suffer those all things in a single life. Existentialists say man keeps on choosing new possibility to sustain a life. As the saying Andrey again chooses Natasha as his wife despite knowing her affair with Protopopov. He proposes her like this;

Andrey: Oh, how young you are, Natasha, how marvelously, speedily, young! My dearest, my darling, don't be so upset. Believe me, trust me. I feel so wonderful, my heart is full of love and joy (...) my dear,

innocent darling, I want you to be my wife. I love you, I love you. I've never loved anyone like this before (Act I 189).

This choice of Andrey leads him to the present existence. Natasha never treats him as husband rather plays with his sentiments. She even entertains her lover before his own eyes. It is Natasha who has great role to ruin Andrey's life yet she is his own choice. Natasha is a woman having access hunger of status, income, possessions and property. So, she manipulates him as she wishes.

Similarly, Olga's choice not to be wed leads her to more problematic existence. Later when she realizes the difficulties of making journey of life alone and wishes to get married any person even an old man nobody approaches her. She regrets her past choices and wants to correct it but no any man seems to come further. Her such an idea gets expressed in this way: That's what I think anyway, and I'd marry without love. I'd marry the first man who came along provided it was some one honest and decent. I'd even marry an old man (Act II 217).

Now, Olga thinks that she missed something in life or at least fails to fulfill the duty. She thinks marriage is only a matter of doing one's duty. It is the consequence of her own past choice. She herself is responsible to shape her present existence.

Another character Tuzenbakh is most suffered character in the play. He chooses to be busy and hardworking man and resign from the army. His choice doesn't bring satisfaction and meaning in his life rather more problematizes his existence. Another choice he makes choosing Irina's love who never loves him in return. He, in agony shares his problematic existence with Irina. To quote him here. Tuzenbakh: I couldn't sleep last night. Not that there's anything alarming or particularly frightening in my life, but the thought of that lost key torments me and keeps me awake. Say something to me [pause] say something.

He is in pain and suffering. His choice his love Irina has clearly said to him that she can't love him. Lost key here symbolizes the love which torments him. Not only Tuzenbakh is deprived of love but also lost his life due to love itself. He is killed in a duel by Solyony, a suitor of Irina. It is his choice what causes rivalry between them and ultimately causes his own extinctions.

Irina also like other characters in the play suffers her present existence. It is the consequence of her past choices. She is an ambitious girl who ever dreams a career and love at Moscow. Due to her ambitious nature she is dissatisfied with whatever she gets at present. She keeps on choosing one after other possibilities, like a job at post office, town council etc. But no any her choices give her mental peace rather she enters in the whirl of problem. In the following lines her choices and its consequence are shown:

Irina: Oh, I'm so miserable. I can't, I won't, and I will not work. I've had enough. I used to be at the post office and now I work for the town council, and I loathe and despise everything they give me to do. I'm twenty-three, I've been working all this time and my brain's shriveled up (Act III 217).

She is not satisfied with the choices she made in her post life. And again she chooses to be wife of Tuzenbakh, but not beloved. Her that very choice, also never fulfilled. Before getting married he has been killed in a dual. Somehow she herself is responsible to get failure in the marital life too. Other remaining characters in the play also makes one after another choices to future their life. They too try to find new possibilities among several possibilities. Being dissatisfied with marital life, Masha, falls in love and began affair with Vershinin. But the affair does not last long and again she chooses Kulygin's affection and company to sustain the life. Chebutikin

chooses a woman as beloved but fails to marry her, in agony he again chooses to remain unwed throughout the life. But later being unable to overcome the loneliness he regrets his past choices. In Act II, in conversation with Andrey, Chebutykin says: you can argue about it as much as you like, my boy, but loneliness is a terrible thing. He regrets his past choice.

To sum up, characters in the play have chosen something from their many possibilities and have created their present. Who they are and what they have at present are products of their own choices which they had made in the past in quest of meaning and purpose in life.

Chekhov's characters, even in times of deepest personal grief find the strength to raise themselves to the level of dreams about the future happiness of humanity. They are found suffering from existential problems but have optimistic view on their suffering. Vershinin believes that the present generation sacrifices happiness now so that future generations can be happy- in deed, that such altruism in the meaning of life. They are not only concerned about themselves but equally concerned on the social emancipation. So, Olga sacrifices her dream and ambition to teach the children at the schools. She is in belief that education can emancipate the people from the illusion and the darkness of the world. When the fire destroys part of the town they all help the fire victim actively. Olga gives most of her clothes to the victims. It also reveals that they are not only concerned to themselves but to the whole human beings. Placing their suffering at a side they participate in the rescue programme. To help the needy is the real purpose of life what they believe. Despite their failure to get a happy life they are optimistic that the future generation would be benefited and their suffering would turn out to be purposeful. In act four Olga says the following.

Olga: Listen to the band what a splendid rousing tune, it puts new hearts into you doesn't it? (...) our faces will be forgotten and our voices and how many of us there were. But our suffering will bring happiness to those who come after us, peace and joy will reign on earth, and these will be kind words and kind thoughts of us and our times. We still have our lives ahead of us my dears, so let's make most of them (Act IV 207).

As revealed Olga believes that their present suffering will bring happiness to those who come after them. So, she appeals others not to get worried thinking their lives were not meaningful and happy but have faith that their suffering will emancipate the upcoming generation from the sorrow and suffering of the world.

Similarly, Irina too decides to offer her remaining life serving those who may need her. She at the finale of the act IV says:

Irina: What is all this for? Why all suffering? The answer will be known one day and then there will be no more mysteries left but till then life must go on, we must work and work and think of nothing else. I'll go off again tomorrow to teach at school and spend whole life serving those who may need me (Act IV 237).

Irina desires to continue her life since she believes that their living gives the answer of mysteries of the suffering and no upcoming generation should suffer from all those things. So, the idea of salvation deeply rooted in her mind too.

The desire to exist even the sorrowful existence by compromising with the present is the central issue in *The Three Sisters*. Almost all the characters are with hope, ambition or goal to be accomplished. To almost all the characters are with hope, ambition or goal to be accomplished. To achieve success in their ambition, they engage themselves in different things. Yet they have got the result of failure

and frustration. Whether that is the sisters' hope to get Moscow, or Andrey's aspiration to become a professor or Tuzenbakh's brick works or Irina's love all these go in vain. Failure in their ambition for career and to achieve requited love takes them to frustration. Though deserted by such hopes and ambition, they are not escaping the situation.

Piles of problem and failure found on their path of existence have asked struggles from the characters. But the struggles remain unyielding to them which further caused pain and suffering. The suffering is not the physical but the existential. When a man suffers existential crisis, he starts asking himself different questions like "who am I? "What is my relation to the social and physical world? There seems' to be something problem in the relationship between individual and community. Characters in the play also ask themselves who they are? Why all this suffering? As Irina asked at the finale of the play. At first glance the struggle seems to be for their career and requited love but after a thorough observation we can say the struggle seems for existence. They prefer existence to career love or death. Irina decides to marry Tuzenbakh though she does not love him. Olga accepts the position of headmistress reluctantly. Andrew works as a secretary of country council placing his dream of a professor at a side. Masha returns to her husband leaving her love behind. Other remaining characters also prefer existence over essence. Without doubt the play is existential. The pathetic condition of the characters and their wish to sustain their existence can be a perfect proof for it. Moreover, the play also deals with the theme of human emancipation from sorrow and suffering. Despite their own suffering they still aim to release the upcoming generation from the mysteries of the suffering. Overstepping the boundary of existential angst and anomie they engage themselves to salvage the society. They even are ready to sacrifice their own happiness for the happiness of the future generation.

Conclusion

The Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov emphasizes human suffering, meaningless and absurdity of life. Almost all of the characters have some problems in their existence which cause meaninglessness in their life. They are in quest of the authentic existence, i.e. meaningful and purposeful existence. But their efforts to get it go vain and meaninglessness hunts them again. The meaninglessness and frustration add more suffering to them. To alleviate the present suffering they have optimistic view and translate it into a redemptive power of emancipating people from the wave of mysteries of suffering. The manifold problems make their suffering life long. The sisters have a collective dream of leaving the provincial town and go to Moscow. Throughout the play their suffering is due to failure to meet the dream. Despite their failure they go on living having optimistic view that their suffering will turn into joy for upcoming generation. They live not just for themselves but for those who come after them. Like sisters other characters in the play are wrestling with problems of their lives for their existence. To observe their existential suffering in this dissertation I have taken help of different existential philosopher like Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre and others.

Primarily a phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger is regarded as an existentialist thinker though he personally never accepted it. He developed a theory of Dasein, a particular way of existing. For Heidegger, we human beings are thrown into a world and Dasein is our consciousness of the thrown quality. Almost all the characters in the play are conscious of their thrown quality. As the Prozorovs found themselves to be thrown into the world (provincial town) where their dreams can never be realized. They also are totally aware about their temporally bounded existence, i.e. inevitability

of death. This awareness produces feeling of anxiety in them. They are anxious because of death and their future.

For Sartre, existence precedes essences and freedoms of choice are the central ideas of existentialism. According to him, we first exist, appear on the scene, make choices and create ourselves. We make what we are only after we exist. It is through our choice that we create meaning in our life. The characters in the play like Olga, Masha, Irina and Andrey prefer their existence to their love, career and happiness. Freedom of choice is closely connected in Sartre' existentialism. He believes man chooses and makes the destiny himself and is also responsible for who he actually is. While observing the play from this standpoint, we find them to have used their freedom of choice and their present is the consequence of their past choice. Their present is full of suffering yet they do not escape from their situation rather have optimistic view that the very suffering is the pivotal means of emancipating people from the mysteries of suffering. At first priority, they place the authentic existence and struggle hard for that and if they become unsuccessful they continue their struggle at least for existence, which can also be inauthentic one. They choose life with suffering for the betterment of future generation. This shows the title of this study has been appropriate. They are in belief that their suffering help disclose the mysteries of it (suffering) and no future generation should face it. They are living with hope and faith not just for themselves but for other people too. No doubt the play is an account of journey from existential suffering to social salvation.

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