

**-Bishnu Prasad Khanal, 2008**

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Existential Struggle in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day***

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**By**

**Bishnu Prasad Khanal**

**University Campus**

**Kirtipur**

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**Existential Struggle in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day***

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**

**Central Department of English**

**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled "**Existential Struggle in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day***" submitted to the Central Department of English Tribhuvan University by Mr. Bishnu Prasad Khanal has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

Members of Research Committee

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Internal Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Head

Central Department of English

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Date:-----

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## Abstract

Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* that explores the protagonist's struggle for existence. Here, we can find slingshot loaded with "higher consciousness", the "human essence" "the importance of one's own depths". Here we can see that most of the characters are in 'ego' which is taken as the symbol of existence. Tommy Wilhelm, the protagonist, has struggled with different situation of the society. Tommy, seems as failed character (but not in reality), who becomes victimized by his own father, wife, close friend, and Hollywood. But he does not accept his defeat. He invests his a few remained money in stock market but it is also in vain; whatever he does only for his pride (pride itself is existence), name, fame and prestige. At last, when he weeps very bitterly in the funeral ceremony of a strange man, he realizes his existence in another way. Though Tommy Wilhelm faces different problems as above but he never tires and surrenders, and never feels tired rather he faces these problems one after another that is his existential struggle for creating meaning in his life.

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## I. Introduction

The research paper deals with existential problems of most of the characters, such as Tommy Wilhelm, Dr. Adler and Margaret in Saul Bellows *Seize the Day*. Bellow has depicted the “Higher consciousness”, “the human essence” and “the importance, of one’s own depths”.

The plot of *Seize the Day* is complex one. Tommy Wilhelm is 44 years old, unemployed, broke and desperate. He is living in the same cavernous upper west side residence hotel as his rich elderly father, a tightfisted retired doctor who refuses to throw his son the slenderest financial line. Wilhelm quits his well-paying job as salesman after his boss first reneged on a promise to promote him and then gave half of Wilhelm’s territory to a son-in-law. Before that, Wilhelm had dropped out of college to become an actor in Hollywood but never made it because he had the wrong angles in front of a camera. He looked like a lumbering bear. Tommy is on the brink of disaster. He is exasperated by the canny way his father fends off requests for cash. Tommy tries to make it on his own—a psychologist friend seems to make money in the stock market. He is separated from his wife Margaret and two sons (Tommy and Paulie). Despite his lack of sufficient funds Margaret is pressing him for money; the fact that he can no longer send. And he has lost the women he loved/loves because Margaret, who detests him, won’t give him a divorce Tommy tries his best to convince her by saying, “Can you be the woman I lived with? He started to say: “Have you forgotten that we slept so long together? Must you now deal with me like this, and have no mercy?” He again says, “Margaret, I want to reconsider about work. You have that degree now. Why did I pay for your tuition?” (113).

But Margaret does not agree with him and presses him to give her money however she wants. Wilhelm entrusts his last few hundred dollars to a super-seeductive and unable con man named Tamkin, who has promised to invest it in commodities and make Wilhelm solvent again. In truth, Tamkin is as broke as Wilhelm and manipulates his prey into financing his own speculation though his (Tommy's) father was warning him saying that Tamkin was cheater as well as cunning. By the way market disappoints, Wilhelm loses every thing and Tamkin vanishes without paying back an additional \$200 that Wilhelm had loaned him. As novel ends, Wilhelm is sinking toward breakdown. Bereft of money, love, friends and hope, Wilhelm wanders into a stranger's funeral where "the heavy sea-like music came up to his ears," stops before the open coffin and begins weeping uncontrollably, "deeper than sorrow, through torn sobs and cries toward the consummation of his heart's ultimate need". He sobs very bitterly. Tommy reviews his past mistakes and spiritual malaise and at the end of the day is left weeping alone in a church at a stranger's funeral, "Oh, father, what do I ask of you? What will I do about the kids Tommy, Paulie? My children, and Olive (his beloved)? My dear! Why, why, why, - you must protect me against that devil who wants my life. If you want it, then kill me. Take it, take it, take it from me". (116)

The novel seems to pick us and drop us, as Ernest Hemingway has shown nature's cruelty upon 'Santiago', the protagonist of '*An Old Man And The Sea*' and comparison side by side.

### **Saul Bellow and His Works**

Saul Bellow (1915-2005) is a brilliant novelist of post-war period. He was born of Russian-Jewish parents in Canada, but has lived most of his life in Chicago, a city which features in many of his novels. His work shows characters struggling to

understand themselves, and searching for identity in an often irrational world. He dominated post-war twentieth century American literature. He won the noble prize in literature in 1976. The second noble prize winner after Steinbeck. He has been a visiting lecturer at the universities of Princeton and New York and associated professor at the university of Minnesota. He has lived in Paris and traveled extensively in Europe. He was the member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and was elected the third Neil Gunn fellow by Scottish Arts council in 1976. The Royal Swedish Academy which makes the award, singled out *Seize the Day* for special praise as one of the classic works of our time. In 1977 Saul Bellow won the Gold Medal for the novel, which is awarded every sixth year by the American academy and institute of Arts and Letters.

Saul Bellow has contributed stories and reviews to many leading American magazines and quarterlies. Most of his books were published by Penguin. He has written some books such as *Dangling Man* (1944), *The Victim* (1948), *The adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Herzog* (1964), *Seize the Day* (1956), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Mr. Samler's Planet* (1970), which won the National Book Award, *The Dean's December* (1984), and so on.

*Seize the Day* is taken as one of the finest novels in American Literature. It is a dark comedy where a fading charmer Tommy Wilhelm has reached his day of reckoning. In his forties, he still is retaining a boyish impetuosity that has brought him in the brink of chaos. He is separated from his wife and children, at odds with his vain. He is failed in his acting career (a Hollywood agent once placed him as the type that loses the girl') and in a financial mess. In the course of one climactic day, he reviews his past mistakes and spiritual malaise, until a mysterious, philosophizing con man grants him a glorious, illuminating moment of truth and understanding, and offers him one last hope.



It was cleared that he was on to something few moderns would wish to believe in. The human head as characterological map. But such a premise is not a retreat or a regression to an archaic psychology.

An exploiter of self castigation, Tamkin goes on mesmerizing Wilhelm with the keenest social and psychological truths that he mines from Wilhelm's doubts and fear, and wields against him. His advice to 'Seize the day" clinches Wilhelm's decision to invest, and it is perverse. Wilhelm is the only character in the novel who really has seized the day. Bellow always seized the feeling: He dropped out of stifing college to search for a larger life; he left a rotting marriage to try to love again; he quit his job because his dignity had been crushed. What he never learned to deal with was the yellowing brick road of banana peels fate has in store for people who follow their hearts without first calculating the loss or gain in social power.

Tamkin, on the other hand, never seizes the day. What he seizes is Wilhelm, like an object. Tamkin invests after all, in commodities, in futures. For Bellow to sue carpe diem in this novel's world without bitter irony would be like Dante inscribing "Our Customers Come First" over the gates of hell. Even more ironically, Tamkin has Wilhelm investing most of his money in lard. Wilhelm is speculating in a purely animal substance, the very element in human relations that is crippling him because he can't bring himself to bite and scratch like everyone he comes in contact with. Money, as Balzac and Simmel knew, rationalizes bestiality into an accountant's headache. Bellow tells us twice that Tamkin has "deadly" brown eyes.

### **Literature Review**

Being one of the finest novels in the world, different critics have argued different views about this novel. Different critics have opened many new ideas on *Seize the Day*.

Elizabeth Frank argues that *Seize the Day* is full of gloom of failed father-son relations. Tommy Wilhelm and Dr. Adler play out their cruel and pathetic endgame in the dining room of the hotel Gloriana. The following statements reflect his argument:

Here the adult son, who has made an almost complete man of his job, his marriage and his wife affair, who owes his wife money and suspects that he is about to be wiped out in the market, begs his father for help, and the old man promptly and vigorously refuses, "I'm still alive, not dead. I'm still here life is not over yet" and I want nobody at my back. Get Off! And I give you some advice. (13)

Wilhelm's failure to achieve material success becomes subject in father son relation. Mr. Adler wants materially independent son but his capitalist ideology contrasts with Wilhelm's failure. He suggests Wilhelm to be independent (it itself is existence) like his father. So he advises him not to burden for carrying nobody on his back, he does not financially support Wilhelm. This bitter relation of these two persons causes Wilhelm to exist and to struggle in absurd society.

Similarly Cynthia Ozick in her introduction of Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* comments on Wilhelm. She says that Wilhelm has a passion of nihilistic self seeing or embracing his blunders. He defines himself through misjudgement and miscalculation.

[. . .][T] he making of mistakes expressed the very purpose of his life and the essence of his being here. May be he was supposed to make them and suffer from them on this earth. And though he has raised himself above Mr. Perls and his father because they love money, still they are called to act energetically and this was better than to yell and cry, pray, and beg, Poke and blunder, and go by fits and starts and fall

upon the thorns of life, and finally sink beneath that watery floor-

would that be tough luck, or novella would it be good radiance.(5)

The novella portrays Wilhelm as a man who is drowning in financial crisis. He is sinking in vast materialistic dreamy society of American. Therefore, he prays and begs to god for help. He wants to do better in materialistic absurd society. His father Mr. Adler and his friend Mr. Perls have materialistic money minded ideology and its existence but Wilhelm contrasts with these ideas.

Another critic Lee Siegel argues his view against the argument of Cynthia Ozick, who has given her valuable views about *Seize the Day* saying: Ozick is wrong in claiming that the novel is 'one of the last expression of the 'higher consciousness' and the 'human essence' in the western world'.

Likewise, another critic L.H. Goldman, in his essay "Saul Bellow And The Philosophy of Judaism" says, "life is viewed as a network of continuity whereby the present is inexorably bound to the past" (56). So, here Goldman focuses on human life which has relation with past and present. He mixes life with religion, i.e. Judaism. He sees life as network of past and present because past determines the present. In religious sense, religious doctrine chains present life with past context. In one sense, it shows established relationship between God and man.

Thus, this novella has drawn attention of many critics, who have interpreted it focusing on different themes such as gloom, nihilistic self, the psychological depression and reading of Jewish belief. But it would be better to see this text from 'existential' point of view. The world of this novella is running behind money. It is said that 'money is nothing but something'. Here is the question of existence of every character such as Tommy Wilhelm who has been facing the crisis of good relation between him and his father, the relation of husband and wife, and his career where he has been failing as in becoming actor in Hollywood as well as investing money in

finance company. An individual's inability to fit in absurd society creates the sense of existent.

All characters are bold in their existence. Dr Adler, the father of Tommy, wants to bring Tommy in his profession. He is retired doctor. So, he is very much afraid whether his profession is going to end. In the same way Margaret, the wife of Tommy is also in the line of existence, the existence of ego. Although Tommy requested her to be reunited but she does not agree to come in the same house which she has already left. The main character Tommy has faced the difficulties of existence from very beginning to the end of this novella. He wants to be famous actor of Hollywood for his existence, he wants to invest a few money for the existence of life secure. Although various critics have given their valuable views on different topic but no one has said any word about existence and existential struggle.

Divided into four chapters, the first chapter is general introduction to the area of this study. In order to provide cause of existence, which is responsible for producing Wilhelm's existence. The second chapter will outline, in brief, the existential perspective of alienation from past to present applying existential ideas prominent existence, aesthetic existence and specially Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. This study is based on the assumption that Tommy Wilhelm's existence is the result of absurdity, which compels him to battle against this same society. The third chapter will deal with 'existential struggle' of protagonist. It is also the result of absurd society. The final chapter will present and illustrate the finding of this research in brief.

## II. Existentialism A Theoretical Modality

### Meaning of Existentialism

The term 'existence' is derived from the Latin root ex “out” + sistere from stare “to stand”. Thus, existence means to stand out in the universe that is against us, and existentialism means “pertaining to existence”. Now existentialism is used to describe “a vision of the condition and existence of man his/her place and function in the world, and his/her relation or lack of it with God”. It is a ‘very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood’ (Ellmann and Feidenson 803). Jean Paul Sartre defines existentialism as an attempt to continue life by creating a system in which one realizes human loneliness and “human subjectivity” (Existentialism 10). In this way the focus of existentialism is on “being” and subjectivity as opposed to logical reasoning and “objectivity”. It is based on individual experience rather than abstract thought and knowledge which is foregrounded in this philosophy. In the context, the world book of Encyclopedia describes, “Existentialism is a set of philosophical beliefs that stress the existence of the human being, the anxiety and depression which pervade each human life”. Thus, Existentialism is less of an ‘ism’ than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of position associated with existentialism, no, signal strict definition is possible. However, it suggests a major theme that is stress on concrete individual human existence. Regarding its subjectivity, individual freedom and choice, Nietzsche explains thus:

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

freedom, and his/her consequent responsibility for what he/she does and makes himself/herself to be. (817)

Really, existentialists concern to the problem of human being. They focus on human's concrete existence, human's personal freedom and their responsibility for choice.

Existentialism is a revolt against traditional European philosophy which takes philosophy as science. Traditional philosopher procured knowledge that would be implied that the human begins has no essence, no essential self, and has no more than what he/she is only the sum of life in so far that he has created and achieved for himself. We may use the following extract to clarify Sartre's view:

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

This is how we are plunged into existence. We exist. We find ourselves here free, because there are not prescriptions and we must decide for ourselves, define ourselves as the kind of person we are going to be. The essence thus follows existence.

Many people have used the term "Existentialism" in their writings on various themes. It does not denote one particular philosophy or a school of thought but has developed in various situations in various parts of the world. According to Sartre, it has develop into two major trends; theistic and atheistic: "There are two kinds of

existentialists, first, those who are Christian, among them I would include Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, both catholic; and on the other hand the atheistic existentialists, among whom I class Heidegger and then the French existentialists and myself” (13).

Though both these groups try to speak of human existence in a subjective sense, the relationship with God differs. One of them negates the existence of god and his relations with people and the world. This group says that human kind is God. All his function depend upon his choice. “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself” (15). But another group, which conceives of god as the source of inspiration and as the guiding principle, gives god the highest position in the world.

In the same way existence is of two types-authentic and inauthentic forms of existence. The authentic being is rarely attained by human still it is what human must strive to gain. The inauthentic (being-in-itself) is characteristically distinctive of things; it is what the human being is diseased with for failure to act as a free agent and this importance is to reject bad faith. Things are only what they are, but human being is what we can be things are determined, fixed and rigid whereas, human begins is free because he can add essence in the course of his life, and he is in a constant state of flux and able to comprehend his situation. The human being does not live in a predetermined world; the human being is free to realize his aims and his dreams. Hence, he has only the destiny he forges for himself because in this world nothing happens out of necessity.

An existentialist is always stranger than others and certainly going to have no patience with conventions. The isolation produced by existentialist value decision also explains why few existentialists are self identified as such. Calling someone an 'Existentialist' imposes an essence on them, telling them what they are. This violates their absolute autonomy and freedom and makes it sound like they actually have

something important in common. This is intolerable for them. If we live our lives just because of the completely free and autonomous decision we make, this creates nothing that is common with others. If we adopt something that comes from someone else, which could give us a common basis to make a connected existence. As we make new decisions, the probability of our connection with others is going to decline. As far as we know there are two forms of existentialism: Theistic Existentialism and Atheistic Existentialism.

### **Theistic Existentialism**

The word 'Theistic' means a group of people who believe upon God or upon Christianity. This group includes the group of people such as Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel. They believe in religious mysticism. According to them, the anxiety of modern man can be entertained when one submits oneself to the will of God without the intervention of Christian doctrine and celestial Church. They believe on God and his existence and say that God exists first, and then the man exists.

For Kierkegaard, 'God is truth'. To him, God is infinitive subjectivity and subjectivity is truth. For him, the individual is unique in nature and cannot properly be known or understood in general term. Marcel tries to make a distinction between a mystery and a problem, and he says that both hope and love can exist only on the basis of faith. He distinguishes between having and being, linking greater consequence to being and to having. Having signifies ownership, which is a burden and an obstacle. Being means freedom from obstacle.

Jaspers speaks of the exposition or revelation of existence, he takes self and freedom as mere illusion. He knows his own self and will as creative, free and original. The existential self is thus associated with consciousness. Jaspers considers



that the individual cannot become human by himself. Self being is only real in communication with another self being. Buber also emphasizes the importance of the relation between self and other.

### **God's Existence**

The word 'existence' means a way of living or staying especially when it is difficult or boring. The theistic philosophers believe on the existence of god, after that the existence of human being. Soren Kierkegaard, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish philosopher and religious thinker Kierkegaard, the first writer who calls himself an existentialist reacted against the tradition by insisting that the highest good for the individual is to find his or her own unique vocation.

By choosing inward and personal character, one makes a leap of faith in God. Which he regards as an "ethico religious" choice (Individual" 809). Thus there are two options for the individual to choose: either he has to choose god and get redemption from the angst, an "ethico-religious" choice ("Choice 828.34) or he has to reject God and go the perdition. But paradoxically enough, the choice is, according to Kierkegaard, criterion less and it is the individual himself who has to fix criteria by making choice . The Christian doctrine and its quest for objective truth have nothing to do with.

Kierkegaard believes in subjective truth. Search for objective truth is meaningless for him. There cannot be any truth that is universal, rather it is individual. Instead of one single truth; there are many truths which are personal. Jostein Gaarder comments on the point and says:

According, to Kierkegaard, rather than searching for the Truth with a 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'. (379)

Kierkegaard's concept of "subjective truth" has influenced the twentieth century existentialists, who always emphasized on subjectivity. Real existence, for him, therefore, is possible only when one becomes aware of the paradoxical presence of God, Christianity and man. Suffering, observes Kierkegaard born peacefully and happily.

The main theme of Kierkegaard's writing is "Truth is subjectivity". All existentialist have followed him in stressing the importance of passionate individual action in deciding question of both morality and truth.

### **Transcendence**

Karl Jasper is a prominent founder of modern existentialism. He is in exploring of truth and reality which can speak even in despair, in suicide, in the passion towards darkness, in every form of negative determination. Like other existentialists he discarded the self sufficiency of science and empirical observation, and speculation of individual from the communication with other beings (Will 864-67). One cannot live fully if there is not another being to communicate with, and men are, held Jasper; very much attached all things around him. Jaspers writes:

We can not have objective possession of truth that is the eternal truth, and because being. There is possible only with other being there, and existence can come into its own only with other existence, communication is the form in which truth revealed in time. (The Will" 866)

He wants to create a balance between rational and Irrational movement of self. The truth is that it possesses a perpetual question without which we turn back into the more or less dirty stereotype of self-satisfaction, which is inadequately thought. The possible truth and reality can sheath in despair, anxiety, suicide, and dark passion. The existential root is not destructive will but a salvation from nihilism because it preserves confidence through its movement.

### **Mystery**

Marcel was a French philosopher, dramatist and critic. He tried to fill the abyss between subject and object, between what is in use and what is before us. He comments: "he did not agree with the empiricist and analytical conception of philosophy which he thought was too narrow" (256). Marcel said that the method of Philosophy depends upon recognition of mystery of being or upon the impossibility of discovering being through objective and rational analysis. He emphasizes upon the faith of God which helps man to overcome out from anxiety and despair.

According to the theistic opinion of Marcel, in faith there is not only the existence of other selves but beyond that we can realize the highest kind of existence that is called God. He writes:

The existence of other selves also is accepted on faith. In these several ways, we realize some presence going beyond the immediate here and now. Ultimately, in the highest kind of faith we realize the Supermen transcendence which is called god. Neither the existence of external object nor that of other selves of God is rationally demonstrable. (437)

God is not demonstrable but it is revealed by the direct participation. In other words, god is which we can not show others but can perceive him by some effort.

In short, the religious existentialists recommend us to go to the shelter of god to transcendence to ensure the faithful existence. Mysticism is their reliable route to be happy. Like atheistic existentialist, they accept that angst or dread is inevitable part for modern man because of his absurd condition. Thus, the dread with faith can become the pathfinder for their existence, according to religious existentialist.

### **Atheistic Existentialism**

When the science developed fully and human being started to think themselves as supreme, the concept of 'Atheistic Existentialism' came. People tried to search their existence without the help of God or Christianity. In the same period Atheistic thinkers became superior along with Nietzsche's advocacy as *Death of God*.

Sartre has divided existentialist thinker into two groups: theistic and atheistic. He says, "First, those who are Christian, among them I would include Jaspers, and Gabriel Marcel, both catholic; and on the other hand the atheistic existentialists among who I class Heidegger, and then the French existentialists and myself" (13) Surely, Nietzsche is the forerunner and chief source of inspiration for them. Who doesn't believe in the existence of God and who believes in the existence of God. Atheistic existentialists repudiate the concept of god as an authentic shelter. Atheistic existentialists continue to create a system in which the individual is paradoxically free and condemned to choose the rugged path in life. In Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* Tommy Wilhelm also creates a system in which the individual is paradoxically choose the path in life:

It states that if god does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept, and that his being is man, or, as Heidegger

says, human reality, what is men here by saying that existence precedes essence? It means that, first of all man exists, turns up, appears on the scene and, only afterwards, defines himself. (15)

Thus, according to Sartre, we don't have any essence at birth, rather we are free. Non-Human things instead, having essence, for example, a watch is to be made, has/had its essence before its existence. But in the case of human beings, we create our own essence choosing and freely acting on our choices.

### **Death of God**

Nietzsche, one of the most influential philosopher of Germany, made a critique on western philosophy. He advocates against traditional Christian thinking that is *Death of God* 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 ideas" (455). He stresses on world of ideas. Bertrand Russell divides Nietzsche's ethics into two categories: The first about Nietzsche's contempt for women, and the second about his sharp critique on religion, espelled Christianity as "Slave morality" and held that religion provides no truth because God is dead and Christianity has become the shelter of weak and disabled people that he hated. In his famous book (essay) *The Death of God and Antichrist*, he says:

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

Instead of following the tradition of Christianity, Nietzsche rather does not believe in the existence of God. He proclaimed the death of god as a world shattering event. For him, God is not here and there also, there means in heaven. Even if he was there, he is dead now. That is why, there is no authority or god to determine our existence.

Individual freedom is another focal point to him. He highly valued it. An individual for him is never made to accept any imposition from any power, rather is master of himself to decide for himself.

Nietzsche emphasized upon the subjective intentions and activities of individual and repudiated objective knowledge and thought. If a man troubles his mind on what other will think about him, he will be no more a man but an instrument an object. This is the view of Nietzsche and writes:

The objective man is an instrument, a precious, easily injured, easily clouded instrument for taking measurements. As a mirror he is a work of art, to be handled carefully and honored. But he is not an aim, not a way out nor a way up, not a complementary human being through whom the rest of existence is justified, not a conclusion \_\_\_\_\_ or content, a "self – less man. (*Subjective Will* 817)

In this way, Nietzsche's insists upon the irrational and upon the individual who confronts existence heroically, without hypocrisy. If we live our life as a part of the 'herd' we don't develop our own beliefs or create our own values but simply adopt the prevailing belief and values of society. So, we must take our own choice which leads us towards freedom and good action.

### **Being and Existence**

Another German thinker, Heidegger, who publicly praised Hitler and Nazism, is another leading figure of atheistic existentialism, though he himself rejected to be

classified as an existentialist. He made a distinction between 'being' and 'Being'. Heidegger took the German word "Dasein" to interpret the question of being. The ontological question can be best received with the proper explication of 'Dasein', to exist is to ontologize. We all have an engagement with 'Dasein' all the time. We already live in an understanding of being. It is the essential feature of the world and is inseparable from it. It relies on another entities. Dasein's being is existence. The oblivion of Being (Individual) into the beings (group) has made us lost in unreal existence ("Recollection" 879). To get back the lost being, Heidegger suggests us to return back into the ground of metaphysics, and find the roots of our existence (Ellmann and Feidelson 808). To consider individual only the representation of mass is the recurrent mistake of metaphysics, according to Heidegger. He held the belief that man should face explicitly the problem of Being; he has to determine his own existence, create his own possibilities and make choices and commitment. The feeling of dread due to the awareness of death, may incite us to flee away from the problems of being, accepting a way of life set by others instead of coming face to face with it but if we take the dread of death as an opportunity, we may construct our life unique, and our own. On the necessity of being responsible to the true experience of life, Heidegger writes, "The thinking which is posited by beings as such, therefore representational and illuminating in that way, must be supplanted by a different kind of thinking which is brought to pass by Being itself and, therefore, responsible to Being (Recollection" 880)

Heidegger accepts that one cannot escape the historical context because he is always bounded by conditions and outlooks inherited from the past. He considers human existence as tried by temporal dimension, which is the existential time (Grene). The Heideggerian concept of time moves not from past through present to future but from future through past to present. We experienced past in guilt and we

anticipate future in dread. The time is my own time because I myself experience it and it is finite because my death is certain (Greene). Thus, my destiny is surrounded by a temporal context from which I cannot run away but can confront it with a full conscience.

### **The Question of Existence Precedes Essence**

As already mentioned, the word 'existence' is the state or fact of being real or living (437). In his famous essay "Why Write?" also Sartre, a French philosopher, says book "exists" by its dark dead letters and it comes to life when a reader comes and leads towards essence that is existence of black letters as a book he says that, we write or writers want to exist in the form of book, he readers precede them towards the essence that is existence. For him, writing is as an enacting of freedom. Sartre was the leading advocate of existentialism. He was the first man to coin the word 'existentialism' and define it. Along with Albert Camus and Samuel Beckett, he developed the existential philosophy to its farthest point. As already stated, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger are the chief influences upon these three great philosopher and writers. Sartre puts himself in the category of 'Atheistic' existentialists who ignore the absolute power of gods and goddesses. Disclosing atheistic existentialism, Sartre writes:

Sartre defines his ontology in terms of the opposition of being-in-itself' and being-for itself. In the course of inquiring into the meaning of being, he makes such distinction. It is consciousness that distinguishes these two realities. Human beings, being conscious of oneself are 'for-itself' where as other things since they are not conscious of themselves, are 'in-itself' Sartre himself clarifies the distinction in his way:



Whatever exists and is conscious-not only conscious of other things but also of itself-is for-itself. Whatever is real but is not conscious in-itself. Basically, human beings are for – itself, but it is more complicated, [. . .] elements of our bodies, that are in – itself, even though we are for – itself in so far as we are conscious. (23)

Existence and Freedom are very closely related for Sartre. He can not imagine the existence without Freedom of thought and actions. It is the choice of one's action that makes who one is. Our freedom of action is the ability to choose one action and to act on our choice as he figures.

Sartre also associates freedom and responsibility by saying that they go hand in hand in existentialists theory. In this regard he writes: 'because we are free and create our own individual essence through our actions, we are also responsible for who we actually become (44).

In this way, Sartre, like other existentialists, stresses open freedom of choice and action, personal responsibility, subjectivity, anguish and so on, giving rise to the view of existence precedes essence.

### **Meaning of Absurdity and Revolts**

Camus believes on fraternity and humanism rather than in nihilism. As an atheistic existentialist, he is basically known for his view on absurdity of life, choice and meaningless work without accomplishing goal. Absurdity of life is his major concept. Camus sees the condition of modern man similar to that of Corinthian king Sisyphus, Sisyphus is the martyr and teacher to all modern men who, because of his disobedience to god and his passion for life, suffers eternal torture heroically. The condition of man is absurd and his search for any purpose is meaningless and fruitless.

In his famous book 'Rebel' also, Camus has said that man must rebel, but rebellion must respect the limits that it discovers in itself-limits where minds meet, and in meeting, begin to exist. Rebellion is the common ground on which every man bases his first values. We rebel therefore we exist. By protesting, we established the existence of the master against whom the rebelled. Camus believes that revolt is one of the essential dimensions of mankind. It is useless to deny its historical reality- rather we must seek in it a principle of existence. But the nature of revolt of has changed radically in our times. It is no longer the revolt of the slave against the master, nor even the revolt of the poor against the rich; rather it is a metaphysical revolt, the revolt of man against the condition of life, against creation itself.

According to Camus, when the absurd man becomes aware of his futile living, he is naturally filled with anxiety and hopelessness but he does not surrender himself in the mouth of death, that is the meaning of existence. The cocksureness of science for absolute reality and clarity has made the world more complex and clarity has made the world more complex and inexplicable, terminating itself to a mere hypothesis. The only predicable truth is that the world is absurd and unintelligible. As M.H. Abrams Comments:

Albert Camus, views a human being as an isolated existence who is cast not an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent truth, value, or meaning and to represent human life - in its fruitless search for purpose and meaning, as it moves, from nothingness when it comes toward the nothingness where it must be end as an existence which is both an gushed and absurd. (1)

The only truth is that the world is absurd and unintelligible. But suicide cannot be the solution to the discomfort of absurd man if he is conscious of human pride which

always negates the nihilists attitude of life. Sisyphus continuously rolls the boulder up the hill that makes him happy because he is fully aware of his absurd task. Camus makes this explicit and comments: "Suicide is a repudiation the absurd man can only drain everything to bitter end, and deplete himself. The absurd is his extreme tension which he maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day to day revolt he gives proof of his only truth which is defiance" (*Absurd Freedom* 846).

While thinking about the common condition of men Camus was also considering about human rights. The revolt against the injustice done upon man was relevant as he revealed against the absurd condition Sisyphus maintained at one and the same time revolt.

Camus's concept of absurdity and the absurd has a lot to do with existentialism. Along with him, Sartre and other existentialists regard absurdity as a central feature of human life. Since the world does not possess any meaning, value or truth, the condition of modern man is also absurd; yet one has to continue it without feeling any sense of defeat and surrender. For Camus, absurdity lies in the irrationality and chaos of the universe especially in the way that death brings these in human life.

In *Seize the Day*, the protagonist Tommy Wilhelm and others, not all (some), are suffering from the existential struggles such as alienation, meaninglessness, loneliness, nothingness, emptiness, failure (Economically), frustration, absurdity and so on. This text is going to be analyzed with the perspective of 'Existential point of view:

## Existence and Struggle

Existence and struggle are related terms (with each other). To exist in this world, there must be continuous struggle in daily life of every living being. For Wilhelm, the protagonist of *Seize the Day*, also does the struggle for itself. It does not have much to do with victory or defeat. Struggle itself gives meaning to life Wilhelm believes that meaning of life is life itself. No matter how appalling truth turns out to be. He expects no reward and no vindication for the suffering, he is forced to undergo. There is a small percentage of those who want to live. That's the only significant thing in the whole world of today. Tommas Wilhelm also seems very optimistic at the beginning in his life. He says: "People are dropping like flies. I am trying to stay alive and work too hard at it. That is what is turning my brains. This working hard defeats its own end. At what point should I start over? Let me go back and try once more" (99).

In the text, we find promethean defiance and Sisyphusian despair. In both cases, the protagonist, giving prominence to life, challenges the theological authority and sacrifices his-self for the greater purpose of humanity. Prometheus renders his service to men giving them fire, and Sisyphus justifies man's existence undertaking the absurd task of rolling the rock up the hill. All that Wilhelm is also the same. He wants to live more not by dropping flies into the lamp. Bellow's hero loses war in struggling, but he does not surrender and does not despair. Here, N. Mukharji comments:

Rebelling against the tyranny of time, the absurdity of his lot, the ignominy of death, as victim achieves no culminating moment of transfiguration or redemption. Despite his victimized state he is "rebel" in that like Orestes in "The flies", he has no further as for the gods. In

the archetypal struggle against necessity, he is bound to lose, but it is this very knowledge that leads him to rebel against his fate. (8)

Whatever man does is meaningless because life itself is meaningless. Man tries to give meaning to life engaging oneself in different activities. Tommy Wilhelm involves himself in the activity he likes most, that is, try to be actor of Hollywood without understanding his ability, and whether it gives him fruit or not. He is so enthusiastic to take risks going too far Hollywood scope. It is his art of living. To him becoming Hollywood actor and investing money in finance is meaningful and his pride because it is his profession. It is always man who fights against the darkness, meaninglessness and nothingness. The struggle is the tension between life and death. Tommy reveals equal struggle: Struggle between Tommy and contemporary system in the microcosm, and between the humaning and indifferent nature. There must be adventure in struggle.

Adventure always brings life and death together. The contrast between life and death makes the sense of living. That is the completion of birth. It is perfect in itself. When a person's 'self' is liberated, he is free from the worldly affairs. He becomes the noble one since his self is elevated. He is at a higher state of life.

Bellow's characters face defeat or death though they are not harassed. They are not compromiser or cowards. When they confront defeat, they realize that the stand they take and their stoic endurance means a kind of victory. If they are not defeated upon their own terms, some of them have been courted their defeat.

Tommy, who bears his suffering as it comes is almost a classical symbol of he dignity of human being. Tamkin says to Tommy, "I am optimistic in your case, and I have seen a world of maladjustment. There is hope for you. You don't really want to destroy yourself" (99). After that Tommy enhances the existential feelings. That's why

Hemingway had said in 'An Old Man And The Sea' "Man is not to be defeated. A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (105). It is the culmination of humanism and existentialist.

### III. Existential Struggle in Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day*: A Textual Analysis

In this novella, Saul Bellow has tried his best to create a real unsuccessful hero, his real way of struggle, a real Hollywood market, and real financial crisis in the life of Tommy Wilhelm. The struggle between Tommy Wilhelm and Hollywood market, and his cruel wife Margaret, is not only for survival because he can live in his previous property but it is the question of existence name and fame, struggle for pride and the struggle for humanity. The story is swiftly and smoothly folded and the conflict is resolved into a struggle between a man and a force. Wilhelm's struggle with Hollywood is a struggle of human being with the change of time and 'will' because it is 21<sup>st</sup> century where human beings want to change their desires with the flow of time otherwise his father is famous doctor of that area but Tommy wanted to be an actor of Hollywood. Saul Bellow's novel can be interpreted as his efforts to produce a great work of art.

There are different themes of existential struggle. Among these 'Alienation' or 'estrangement' is most important theme. The existentialists are of the opinion that-all of our personal human relationships are poisoned by feeling of alienation from any other. Saul Bellow's hero, Tommy, is also alienated, stays alone in a hotel separated from his father, Dr. Adler, and his wife, Margaret. He wants to make close relationship with his father and wife. In Stead of encouraging his son, Tommy, Dr. Adler always discourages him which brings a type of alienation in the way of Tommy. He talks himself: "Dad never was a pal to me when I was young, he reflected. He was at office or the hospital or lecturing" (14).

Alienation is the theme which Hegel Started for the modern world on many levels and in many subtle forms. The alienation that exists in society reflects upon the alienation of individual human beings who look for their society. Alienated from the

society or social system, they do not know that their desires are system determined and system determining. In fact, alienation, lies on those who do not identify with the institutions of their own society, as Tommy is totally alienated even with his own family members, because they find their society empty, meaninglessness and nothingness.

'Existence' is the another theme of existential struggle Sartre who is known as leading figure of existentialism believes that existence precedes essence. Existence has the primacy over essence which is the basic existentialist stand point. Alike Sartre, Compton's encyclopedia defines existentialism as:

Flower, animals and stones all exist. But people exist in a different way. Individuals are unique-able to think about themselves and the whole world in which they find themselves and make choices. They can choose because they are free, and the choices they make establish the future into which they project themselves. (371)

It shows that human being is conscious subject rather than a thing to be predicted or manipulated; they exist as conscious being, and not in accordance with any definition, essence, generalization or system. Existentialists say we are nothing else but our own conscious existence.

We can measure, Saul's hero, in the same existentialist parameter. Wilhelm is conscious individual, unique in his decision and totally committed in his choice. He shows courage in being the actor of Hollywood and stoicism in not being the actor. We can find his true subjectivity, dignity and pride when we come across these line, "I'm optimistic in your case, and I have seen a world of maladjustment. 'There is hope for, you don't really want to destroyed yourself you're trying hard to keep your feeling open, Wilhelm' (99). Here Wilhelm is nothing but his own existence is main point. He



himself, and even his friend, Tamkin, is optimistic that is existence. He never disappoints, never tires in doing different work. He says "I am trying to stay alive and work too hard at it. That's what's turning my brain. This working hard defeats its own end . . . let me go back away and try once more" (99). It is the nature of human beings who prefer to die rather than surrendering oneself before others.

'Anxiety' is another theme of existential struggle. It is the sense of anguish, a generalized uneasiness, a fear or dread which is not directed to any specific object. It is the underlying, all pervasive universal condition of human existence. When there anxiety comes in life, than human beings start to search the existence.

Wilhelm, like Christian existentialists; who have been included in Theistic existentialists, thinks about the hopelessness condition and bad luck for investing the money in stock market. In the crisis of his struggle he becomes anxious but he never gives up hope and confidence that saves him from nihilism and mysterious religious belief. It is found in the activity of Wilhelm, he says "Oh, God" he prayed. "Let me out of my trouble let me out of my thought, and let me do something better with myself. For all the time I have wasted I am very sorry. Let me out of this clutch and into a different life. For I am all balled up. Have mercy" (26). Here, Wilhelm seems anxious with his unsucess in every step of life these are failed in being actor of Hollywood, bad relation with family members, cheating of close friend, and so on.

'Identity' is another theme of existential struggle. People can identify themselves in the basis of their gender, ethnicity and nationality. Man makes himself different from others and asks the questions: who am I? What is my relation with physical and social world? According to Sartre, there seems something problematic in the relationship between individual and community. The question of identity is central: basically who am I? Sartre thought that we are free to define our identity.

There is no script for our roles. There is no essence that tells us who we are and what we thought to be, we all are free to identify ourselves. As Wilhelm says: "Yes, but my name is Tommy Wilhelm" And the doctor would say, "My son and I use different monickers. I uphold tradition. He's for the new" (14). Here Tommy Wilhelm does not want to introduce himself with Adler rather with 'Tommy' because he wants to live with his own identity but he does not want to say that he was Dr. Adler's Son, though Dr. Adler was famous Doctor as well as lecturer.

Here, Hegel, the famous philosopher of Germany, views the question of identity as a question of the relationship between human subject when two subject meet, a struggle for recognition arises, a struggle to determine how they mutually view themselves as well as each other. Still, for Hegel, it was a struggle of life and death. The question of who we are in relation to each other is the vital for us.

Saul Bellow himself has made his identity as a writer of existence in 1940s and 50s. by his distinct subject mater of love, death and struggle against meaninglessness and by his unique, deceptively simple style. Like Sartre, his hero or protagonists, Wilhelm struggles with absurdities and meaningless of the universe: the indifferent Hollywood, stock market and broken relation with his family members. Because of such unique, distinct and different struggle Wilhelm has made his existence in literary field.

The another leading theme of existential struggle is 'Death'. It is the final nothingness that hangs over like a sword of Damocles at each and every moment of life. Man has filled with anxiety at times when he permits oneself to be aware of this. Death is taken as inevitable part of every living beings. According to Heidegger, the whole of being seems to drift away into nothing. He says that his death is his most authentic, significant moment, his personal potentiality, which he alone must suffer.

Death is total non existence. Death is as absurd as birth. Death is merely another witness to the absurdity of human existence.

Death is the recurring and most important theme in Saul Bellow's novels. For him, death is the ultimate end. Bellow is of the opinion that all the stories end in death. He wanted to put his life face to face with danger and death, and take enjoyment with it. The scene of struggle and killing often occur in his novels. Wilhelm laments in the death of his father. He says: Oh, father, what do I ask of you? What'll I do about the kids - Tommy, Paul? My dear! Why, why, why - you must protect me against that devil (death) who wants my life. If you want it, then kill me. Take, take it, take it from me" (117). Bellow says death is ultimate end of human being but we must confront it heroically and stoically but not cowardly. Wilhelm also makes commitment to fight with absurd society until he dies.

The sixth basic existential struggle's theme is 'absurdity': to exist as a human being is inexplicable and wholly absurd. According Albert Camus and Franz Kafka this world is totally absurd. We have been thrown here but why now? Why here? The most important thing for 'Sartre' is not so much the distinction between essence and existence but the absence of God. For existentialists as Sartre, the absence of God has a much larger significance than the metaphysics of creation. The world has not value, purpose and no meaning without God. The world without purpose, value or meaning is literally senseless, worthless, hopeless, empty and meaninglessness.

Wilhelm is aware of the absurdity and meaningless of world but he struggles against it because he knows the human predicament in this Godless universe. He invests his valuable time in every sector as (Hollywood, stock-market to please the family and so on) but all are valueless and there is not worth. After long patience he become able to invest a few money by the help to invest a few money by the help of

Tamkin but stock-market losses the share and Tommy sneaks, and remains empty again. His meaning becomes meaningless and stock-market becomes absurd. He gets nothing except pain, suffering and broken feeling.

Saul Bellow's *Seize the Day* presents the existential struggle of protagonist, Tommy Wilhelm, with different situations of the plot as; with Tamkin in financial sector, with Margaret in daily life; and with Dr. Adler in last situation. The continuous struggle of Tommy Wilhelm with patience and courage is not only for survival rather it is existential struggle. Protagonist did not think himself less talented than other. The continuous endeavour against nothingness has been described in the very first paragraph of the novel:

When it came to concealing his troubles, Tommy Wilhelm was not less capable than the next fellow. So at least he thought, and there was a certain amount of evidence to back him up. He had once been an actor—no, not quite, an extra – and he knew what acting should be. (3)

These lines clearly show the continuous effort of the main character in the defeating mind emptiness and nothingness. The character is in trouble but he does not think himself less capable than another one. He does not give up his struggle in order to create his existence. He never gives up his effort or attempt. He wants to be known with his own name rather than his father's name though he was well-known doctor as well as professor. So he says: There was a matter of the different names, which, in hotel, came up frequently. "Are you doctor Adler's son?" yes, but my name is Tommy Wilhelm". And the doctor would say, "My son and I use different monickers. I uphold tradition. He's for the new" The Tommy was Wilhelm's own invention (14).

Here, it seems that Tommy does not want to introduce himself with other as Dr. Adlor's son but with Tommy Wilhelm which is new one. His Zeal and enthusiasm

leads him to fight with old tradition despite the economic crisis. Physically he is weak and tired but mentally he is not ready to accept the defeat in his life. His strong determination in his action creates his existence.

Tommy Wilhelm, what counts is the struggle itself, it doesn't have much to do with victory and defeat. Struggle itself gives meaning to life. Wilhelm believes that meaning of life is life itself. No matter how appalling truth turns out to be. He expects no reward and vindication for the suffering. He is forced to under go:

For the last few weeks Wilhelm played gin almost nightly, but yesterday he had felt that he couldn't afford to lose any more. He had never won. Not once and while the losses were small the were not gains, were they were losses. He was tired of losing, and tired also of the company, and so he had gone by himself to the movies. (7)

Here we observe struggle is more important than life and death.

In the text, we can find Promethean defiance as well as Sisyphusian despair. In both cases, the protagonist, giving prominence to life, challenges the theological authority and scarifies his 'self' for the greater purpose of humanity. Prometheus renders his service to men giving them fire and Sisyphus justifies man's existence undertaking the absurd task of rolling the rock up the hill. In the same way Tommy Wilhelm, the hero of Saul Bellow may lose in the fighting but does not surrender. So, he says "people lose because they are greedy and can't get out when it starts to go up. They gamble, but I do it scientifically" (9).

Whatever man does is meaningless because life itself is meaningless. Man tries to give meaning to life engaging oneself in different activities. Saul Bellow's hero Tommy Wilhelm involves himself in the activities he likes most, that is try to be an actor of Hollywood without caring whether it gives him fruit or not. He is so

enthusiastic to take risks going too far in Hollywood giving up a well paying job a salesman. To him being good Hollywood actor is meaningful and his pride because it is his ambition. It is man who always fights against the darkness, meaninglessness and nothingness. The struggle is the tension between life and death. Wilhelm reveals his human greatness in the unequal struggle: struggle between within himself, the struggle of Tommy with his father's conservative thinking, the struggle with his wife and her arrogant behavior, and struggle with Tamkin and with his cheating behaviour. Tommy says, "Whereas I got taken" "My wife refused to sign a joint return. One fairly good year and I got into the thirty-two-percent bracket and was stripped bare. What of all my bad years?" (10) For him man is most capable to endure the pain of different situation. Tommy holds tight against pain and keeps his grace under pressure. He wants to change his father's thinking. So he says: "people are bound to change, they have hard thing to think about. They must think to prepare for where they are going. They can't live by the old schedule any longer and all their perspective change, and other people become alike, kin and acquaintances" (11). Camus further remarks, "The revolt of the modern tragic hero against the oppressive sense of absurd represents an expression of his freedom to affirm his life" (17). Hopeful action leads man towards the affirmation of life.

Adventure always brings life (meaning of life) and death (symbol of destruction). The contrast between life and death makes the sense of living. That is the completion of birth. It is perfect in itself. Of course it is truth that if Tommy would have enough money with him, if he would not be cheated by his friend's if his wife would be with him, and his father would help him in every crisis he (Tommy) could not experience the state of identity crisis. He would not feel the meaning of life. He would think that life is relax in stead of troubles and problem. So, it is perfect in itself. When a person's 'self' is liberated, he is free from the worldly affairs. He becomes the

noble one since his self is elevated. He is at a higher state of life then, he is not an ordinary man but "a strange young man". Here Cynthia Ozick says:

Wilhelm may seem even to himself to be a fool, but there are no outright fools in Bellow's varied worlds: all his clowns are idiosyncratic seers. Wilhelm sees that his father is mesmerized by old age as death's vestibule, in capable of compassion beyond these margins: a confined Soul, disappointed in his son, Dr. Adler, though affluent enough, refuses him help. "He does not forget death for one single second, and that is what makes him like this," he thinks, "And not only is death on his mind but through money he forces me to think about it, too. It gives power over me". Wilhelm may be a hallow flounderer in all other respects – work, wife, sons, father, lover, past, future, all lost – but he can see and he sees the glimmering in his investing money through Tamkin. (xix)

Though Tommy has dissolved his relations or faced a type of defect- but not harassed, and they are not compromisers or cowards rather they see the glimmering future. They realize that the stand they take and their stoic endurance means a kind of victory.

Saul Bellow's characters are crushed by hostile activities of other member, nevertheless the fact remains that they flourish positive value which prevents from nihilism. In their life or world nothing is certain but death is certain. Death mockeries of all values. In such a universe only moral values, the individual creates, are left behind. His struggles and action are not purposeless because he is conscious of what he is doing though he rarely gets success and meaning. Dignity in facing certain defeat is an essential element of Bellow codes.

## **The Struggle of Protagonist with Margaret and Dr. Adler**

The plot of this novel rounds in the periphery of Margaret, Dr. Adler and Tommy Wilhelm himself. Wilhelm loves or respects all the characters of this novel though he is cheated and mistreated by them. He wants the return of his wife because he loves them (wife and sons) very much but Margaret ignores his love. In the same way Tommy Wilhelm wants to be near his father but father always discourages him and ignores. As he continues his struggle, he respects Margaret and Dr. Adler for the greatness and the dignity of their profession. He always consoles her and says "Can you be the woman I lived with? He started to say. Have you forgotten that we slept so long to gather? Must you now deal with me like this, and have no mercy? (113) He wants to prove the endurance power and purpose of man. He realizes that she is killing him. "You must realize you're killing me. You can't be as blind as all that. Thou shall not kill? Don't you remember that?" (112) He expresses his sense of isolation from Margaret. His thoughts are full of pain. The cause of pain is his lack of academic qualification and material success in capitalistic selfish society. "Margaret, I want you please to reconsider about work. You have that degree now. Why did I pay your tuition?" (113)

Here, Tommy is unsuccessful in every sector of life such as in relation. (with father, wife as well as with sons), in economic sector because he has to pay some debt to his friend on the one hand and there is no return from the investment where he has invested, and in profession because he has left a job of salesman to be actor of Hollywood but without success. So, he gets unsuccessful:

Here, Cynthia Ozick has quoted the lines where Tommy said, "Oh, God, "Wilhelm prayed. "Let me out of my trouble. Let me out of my thoughts, and let me do something better with myself. For all the time I



have wasted I am very sorry. Let me out of this clutch and into a different life. I am all balled up. Have mercy". (XIX)

The pathetic hero as Sisyphus of Albert Camus, wants to change his life in another way. He apologizes himself and with God to be out of this clutch and into a different life, and he wants to do something better than this. Here this means he wants to exist or he wants to make space in the society in another identity. Jean Paul Sartre has also said the same:

Man in action not for pessimistic description of man there is no doctrine more optimistic, since man's destiny is within himself; nor for an attempt to discourage man from acting, since it tells him that action is only thing that enables a man to live. Consequently, we are dealing here with an ethics of action and involvement. (35-36)

Wilhelm's pursuit becomes a quest: a quest for the union with the transcendental that he has ever seen or ever been able to see. The pursuer and perused have become one. Temporality has united with eternity. But Wilhelm a human being belongs to the temporal order of time. He has to done and for what he got. His tragic flaw is that he intends to go far out to where no be better where no earthly being is permitted to enter. He has overstepped the boundary of man's finite and limited nature. The act can be interpreted more as hubris than as a sin. Indeed the man has gone "every where" is partly the responsible for the money, desire and compulsion that has towed life-boat and Tommy towards the heart of the problems. According to Sartre we have freedom to choose, but there is commitment and responsibility. He gave birth to sons but did not take total responsibility that he was father so that he is condemned to be the father. To be father is his occupation though he can't bear it. But just the same, he has to pay the price for the glory. Tommy is reminded of his actual predicament. He lives

in time and the goal of time is destruction and death. He is now forced to learn the reality of human existence. He says: "It simplifies much everything. People are dropping like flies. I am trying to stay alive and work too hard at it. That's what's turning my brains. This working hard defeats its own end" (99).

Tommy is not defeated despite the fact that he has been beaten. He said that nothing beat him really and his only fault was that he couldn't understand the nature of Margaret, Dr. Adler and time. It is because he has learnt by suffering and he knows the truth that the penalty of his weakness is the loss of his supreme identity in an eternal order. He returns to real life taking only the huge desire of realizing the self. While dying Kurtz had pronounced a judgement upon the "horror" to the abyss of human existence, that Marlow says he is a victor. Similarly, Tommy has learned much through suffering and he is now able to pronounce a judgement upon the inscrutable human existence and man's destiny: he has gone "too far out". His failure has thus turned out to be his victory.

### **The Struggle with Dr. Adler and Tamkin**

The father of Tommy Dr. Adler, who is in the age of eighties, wants to bring him in his own profession because he has earned prestige and money through this profession but Tommy sees his existence and future in being the actor of Hollywood, and in investing his a few money in market. So, there is contradiction between Tommy and Dr. Adler. Both are right because on the one hand, Dr. Adler wants to give continuity, in another sense existence, of his profession and on the other hand Tommy wants to be a well-known man throughout the world by adopting or by being an actor of Hollywood.

Tommy is jobless man because he has left the well paying job as sales man in the process of being an actor of Hollywood. He knows it is very difficult to live

without money in this materialistic expensive society. They are treated badly even the close member of same family as by father, mother, wife and even by children. Here, Tommy Wilhelm also faces the same problem due to less income. He is mocked by his father and says "My son is a sales executive. He didn't have the patience to finish school. But he does all right for himself. His income is up in the five figures somewhere" (13).

Tommy is never appreciated by his family rather he is always discouraged by even father. But Tommy does not become pessimistic in his way. He wants to make his own identity. And he sees his identity in his own desire which he wanted to be. He does not want to be recognized with the name of his father. As some one says "Are you Dr. Adler's son" Yes, but my name is Tommy Wilhelm. And the doctor would say, "My son and I use different monickers. I uphold tradition but he is for the new" (14). The Tommy was his own invention. He dropped the Adler and adopted Tommy when he went to Hollywood. He wants to be courageous and wants to struggle in new sector not being a coward but being courageous. Here, Jean Paul Sartre says:

What the existentialist says is that the coward makes himself cowardly, that the hero makes himself heroic. There's always a possibility for cowardly, that the hero makes himself heroic. There's always a possibility for the coward not to be cowardly any more and for the hero to stop being heroic. (35)

Even his friend Tamkin seems positive towards his life, though Tamkin cheats Wilhelm at last. He said,

I'm optimistic in your case, and I have seen a world of maladjustment. There is hope for you. You don't really want to destroy yourself. You're trying hard to keep your feelings open, Wilhelm. I can see it.

Seven percent of this country is committing suicide by alcohol. Another three percent, may be, narcotics. Another sixty just fading away into dust by boredom. Twenty more who have sold their souls to the Devil. Then there is a small percentage of these who want to live. There is the only significant thing in the whole world of today. Those are the only two classes of people there are. Some want to live, but the great don't". (99)

Of course, the calculation of Bellow according to concept is right. Here, the hero Wilhelm also wants to be alive in this vast cruel world. In the same way Sartre says, "The existentialist will never consider man as end because he is always in the making . . ." (50).

Tommy Wilhelm is struggling against chaos. His influence is based on reality, there is no question that Saul Bellows' greatness and affirmation is in the struggle against. Chaos and clutter of too much of everything, toward life and the freedom to live. Bellow's hero moves into society, with a desperate hope that the human dilemma will be solved in community recognition and action.

The struggle of Tommy with his friend Tamkin is also crucial point in this novel. Tommy is simple as well as honest man. He at once believes upon everyone as the cause he remorse later due to earlier mistake. He says "A man is only as good as what he loves" (10). But it doesn't become same from both side. In this sense his father Dr. Adler is conscious because he is too old and experienced man about different troubles of life. He asks to be conscious to Tommy "Wilky, perhaps you listen too much to this Tamkin. He's interesting to talk to. I don't' doubt it. I think he's pretty common but he's a persuasive man. However, I don't' know how reliable he may be" (10). In this sense Tommy seems a little bit unexperienced a swell as

childish. But he believes on true always believes on the true. He believes that the true always leads towards the real existence. He is in the favour of change. He struggled however to be fair. According to him "Old people are bound to change. They have hard things to think about. They must prepare for where they are going. They can't live by old schedule any longer and all their perspectives change, and other people become alike, kin and acquaintances. Wilhelm is in the favours of new change. He does not want to live in old schedule any more. He wants to make new existence, the existence of financially successful man in the materialistic society. His choice is this. Here Jean Paul Sartre says the same:

Man makes himself. He isn't ready made at the start. In choosing his ethics, he makes himself, and force of circumstances is such that he can not abstain from choosing one. We define man only in relationship to involvement. It is therefore absurd to charge us with arbitrariness of choice. (43-44)

Of course, it is our right to choose anything so that it may be false ideology. But Wilhelm seems very much weak and ignorant in front of Tamkin. Wilhelm is totally innocent at Tamkin is going to cheat Wilhelm and his life also. Here Sartre also says Existentialism is nothing else than attempt to draw all the consequences of a coherent atheistic position. It is not trying to plunge man into despair at all. But if one calls every attitude of unbelief despair, like Christian, then the world is not being used in its original sense. Existentialism isn't so atheistic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn't exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing.

Heidegger declares that the individual has to face the absolute problem of being, that is, none has to decide one's own existence creates one's potentiality and

makes cliché and premises. Sartre praises the freedom of the individual human being. He describes existentialism as a means of confronting the result of world war and issue of world that wants an absolute power like God. He focuses on freedom of choice, commitment and responsibility. Sartre claims that there is no absolute reality at all but an action.

Sartre says that 'existentialism is humanism'. By that he meant that the existentialists start from nothing but humanity itself. The father becomes happy in the trouble of son. "I can't" give you any money. There would be no end to it if, I started . . ." (55). He almost enjoys in the economic crisis of his son. In the same way however Tommy fully believes in Tamkin, a cheater, but Tamkin invests a few money in the market, and drowns Tommy in the debt and sneaks from there Tommy faces great crisis and sobs in the name of existence. Man is only living creature that is conscious of its own existence. "Sartre said that man's existence takes priority over whatever he might otherwise be. The fact is that I exist taken priority over what I am 'existence takes priority over essence" (456).

Of course, existence takes priority over essence. Here the essence is existence of Tommy. But Tommy accuses on luck "SO! It's bad luck, now. One minute ago it was stupidity". Certainly Tommy had done mistake, that is believing in everybody, but in the name of existence.

### **Tommy Wilhelm as Existential Hero**

The meaning of the very word 'Hero' is a male character who is admired for great or noble deed. Though Tommy Wilhelm had not done any great work for admirable but he was never tired and became lazy to work in different sector one by one. Though he does not succeed in any sector of the life. He leaves the school due to his unwillingness. Then he ignores well paying job as sales executive, to be an actor

of Hollywood but he does not succeed in this line also. Then he faces different critical situation such as not supporting of rich father to him, no help from life partner (wife) Margaret. Instead of help in trouble by Margaret, she demands great amount of money to give divorce also. At last he invests a few money in the market believing in Tamkin, a cheater, but Tamkin tricks him and sneaks from there without giving any information to Tommy. At the end of this novella Tommy sobs and realizes his mistake and determines to improve in front of the funeral of a stranger.

Though Wilhelm faced many troubles in his life one after another to get successful life in future but in vain. Wilhelm is not defeated by anyone in his life. He struggles, struggles, and struggles, however, in *An Old Man And The Sea* Santiago says "I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures" (64) here Tommy's enduring power is also great. He dose not escape form the trouble rather he faces different trouble or difficulties one after another. He wants to stay in this world defeating its end. He says, "People are dropping like flies. I am trying to stay alive and work too hard at it. That's what's turning my brains. At what point should I start over? Lets me go back a ways and try once more (99).

We know that struggle is the tension between life and death. Tommy is also struggling between tension and death. He reveals his human greatness in the unequal struggle. According to him human being can't defeat the death but they can postpone it. An actual human being can't be destroyed by any troubles. As Ernest Hemingway in his novel *An Old Man And The Sea* says "Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (105). Of course, here, in '*Seize the Day* also, Wilhelm is being destroyed by family relationship, financial way as well as professional establishment. It is true. But he is not being defeated by any crisis. It is the culmination of humanism and existentialism.

Tommy Wilhelm does different work again and again. Still he is hopeful that he will get success in coming future. Sometimes he says himself as bad luck man. But he is very much optimistic, as Sisyphus, a famous hero of 'Myth of Sisyphus' by Albert Camus. However Sisyphus carries the stone on the top of the mountain but it rolls down again and again. But he carries to be success in one day. So, the philosophy of Camus is not pessimistic and at humanistic but optimistic and humanistic. In the same way the hero of Saul Bellow's '*Seize the Day*', Tommy Wilhelm is also optimistic and humanistic where optimistic feeling itself is existence in one sense.



#### IV. Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to trace out existential struggle of the protagonist Tommy Wilhelm and the other characters around him. A small piece of literary composition requires no explanation, it stands on its own worth as it reveals the human condition. In this novel also, we find the same thing. Characters struggling in the crowded selfish as well as competitive society with patience and courage where pain, suffering, meaninglessness and nothingness prevail. The angst of existence can lead to nihilism. But Tommy Wilhelm goes away from it and takes shelter in optimism where he gets himself in improved condition, tries to be reunited with his departed family members as with wife and sons, and tries to get rid of his difficulties.

Humanism was Bellow's aim, but it was hard to forge in the face of disjunctive modern experience. Bellow's desire in this novel is to link the history of individual with the larger process of society, but those individual are also seen as alienated, victimized, dislocated, economically bankrupt (solvent) and always in trouble. Wilhelm also faces all above problems from the very beginning of this novel to end. He is alienated from his family, he has been victimized in the ego of father and wife, he has been dislocated in terms of relation and instability, and he is in the brink of economic solvent. Though he faces all these problems but he never surrenders rather he gives the continuity to his struggle till the end. He never thinks himself inferior than other rather he weeps in alone to make his soul light. He

In *Seize the Day* Tommy Wilhelm, the protagonist has a bitter sense of society, as endless rising and falling, a scene of victimization. What ever he wants, a number of people are after too. No one knows his reality. Luck and chance, too, play a great role to determine human destiny.

Wilhelm places himself in dangerous circumstance, and makes an effort to be alert to his optimistic life he hates self destruction and hopelessness and becomes the heir of Sisyphus, who is happy even after punishment. Tommy Wilhelm is beaten as well as cheated by the activities of capitalistic forms of society, his moral sense of duty and his belief in humanity. He is still hopeful for meaning for order, for his profession, and for his future. So Tommy is not nihilist but existentialist. He invests body, mind and money in every sector of life. He wanted to be a famous actor of Hollywood. He did not take satisfaction in the property of his father rather she searched his own identity in that selfish society. But nihilism can not over come the reality of nothingness, void and absurdity of human existence. Nihilism cannot over come the reality of nothingness, void and absurdity of human existence.

Bellow has depicted the theme of isolated individual who must struggle until his death to create meaning in a hostile and indifferent universe. Tommy Wilhelm appears to be a strong willed man of action having extra-ordinary quality like Nietzschean superman. The supermen are people of restless energy who enjoy living the life of adventure and have contempt for meekness and humility. Tommy Wilhelm stands as a rebel, a protester of the selfish and indifferent world like Nietzsche who challenged what contemporary religious world by declaring that God is dead.

Loneliness, alienation, hopelessness and betrayal are some of the instances of the protagonists' existential problem. He, in the novel, understands the connection between individual responsibility and human dignity. Tommy, who goes Hollywood to become an actor but not succeed is a mental torture as well as the big question mark in his existence. Humanity is always Saul Bellow's prime concern and morality he keeps in his mind.

In this way, we can say that the whole novel is basically about struggle for existence amid all meaninglessness, nothingness, emptiness failure, frustration, alienation and absurdity.

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