

I: Introduction

Buck's Life and Her Works

Pearl S. Buck, one of the well known novelists, has occupied a special position in the history of American literature. Her biography is one of the most unusual and varied. As a daughter of a missionary her life is a much checkered one. She becomes a Nobel Laureate and a millionaire one. She was born in 1892 at Hillsboro, was taken to China at the age of three months and lived there most of the next forty years. During her childhood, Buck was bright inquisitive child and an excellent student. Later Buck developed a keen interest in the work of Theodore Dresser and Sinclair Lewis. She mainly delighted in their detailed factual presentation.

After completion of her schooling in China, Buck returned to United States. There she attended Randolph-Macon women's college in Lynchburg, Virginia. She earned good grade and measure of acceptance from her classmate. Then, she received her Bachelor's degree in 1914, but she was called back to China to nurse her mother, where her life was changed dramatically. She met John Loosing. Buck, a Cornell graduate and an American agricultural specialist in Kuling. In 1917 Pearl and Loosing were married and they spent the next seven years in Nanhsuchou, in rural Anhwei Province, where she intimately acquainted herself with natives. She also taught there English Literature and gave literature courses at two other Chinese Universities.

Pearl gave birth to a daughter in 1921, whom she named Carol. At the same time, her mother Carie died. She and Loosing spent the winter of 1924-25 at Cornell, where Loosing completed the course of Ph.D. and Pearl earned an M.A. in English. From 1923, Pearl began to write articles in Atlantic Monthly, Trans Pacific, Living age and The Nation.

Then they returned to China. The country was gripped by widespread civil war. Sun Yat Sen had died in 1925 and Chiang Kai-Shek emerged as Sun's successor but he was opposed throughout the country. In March 1927, the battle reached Nanking, Buck's house was looted; as a result, they fled to Shanghai in the American gunboat and moved to Japan. Therefore, she gradually devoted herself to writing. In the first half of 1920's she had published a couple of stories and essays. Later she was encouraged to move on other realm of literature. In 1930 her first novel *East Wind, West Wind* was published, which consisted of two short stories. The first story focuses on young Chinese married couple who is caught in the conflict between traditional custom and the new fashionable western belief. In the second story, Kewi-Lan's Brother, studying in the United States marries an American girl against his family wishes. At the end, the baby of the new couple unites the two different worlds east and west.

Buck's literary career was underway but within a few month of publishing her first novel, her father Absalom died. Buck then decided that she would move permanently back to United States with Janice. She wanted to be closer to her daughter Carol and further away from Loosing.

Her second book *The Good Earth* appeared in 1931. The main appeal of the novel is achieved by the characterization of Wang Lung and his wife, Olan. Wang Lung is the personification of human nature in all its vagaries. He bears his burden with pragmatic stoicism and opportunistically snatches fortune's favor. Olan, a slave, knows the pain and suffering of human life-she requires only a husband and family to care for.

Her novel *The Good Earth* its simple but eventful plot incorporates the eternal verities; birth, marriage, success, failure, death, regeneration etc. A universal hunger

increases up to the extent of cannibalism and infanticide, Wang Lung flees to south by facing insurmountable obstacles. There he finds a work of pulling rickshaw. He becomes a human beast of burden by destroying his body for a few pennies a day. The blind chance documents Wang Lung's increasing prosperity, a rising affluence effects the underground resistance movement. The Japanese are depicted as behaving barbarously and this constant denunciation is strongly pronounced. The novel appears almost to have been written at the behest of the Chinese government and it became immensely effective propaganda. Immediately after that Buck wrote *The Promise* in 1943, which focuses Chinese efforts to assist their British allies in Burma. Although the novel is a blatant propaganda, designed to aid the Chinese effort and to demonstrate the predicament of being caught between the Japanese on two fronts, the strength or its point of view has reinforced documentary accounts of this phase of World War II. The novel is a living history.

Buck's prolific pen began to overwhelm her publishers. She was writing more books than could be profitably marketed at one time. If she had her way, she would be turning out two or three books a year. To solve this problem, her publisher suggested a pen name-John Sedges was born and *The Townsman* the first five novels published under this pseudonym appeared in 1945. The hero of *The Townsman* is a schoolteacher in the early American West. Much of the materials were based on Richard Walsh's relatives. The Sedge Series began with *The Townsman*, which remained better than average work that ranks high among American local color studies.

The remaining John Sedges novels-*The Angry Wife* (1947), *The Long Love* (1949), *Bright Procession* (1952) and *Voices in the House* (1953) are undistinguished journeyman writings, worthy neither of contempt nor of particular praise. They preach

civilized honorable behavior, put a strong emphasis on romance, and stereotypes, lacking flesh and blood dimensions. The books read smoothly and quickly that are immediately forgotten. But in Sedge's books also, Buck has not ignored the Chinese topic for instance, *Pavilion of Women* (1946). It caused the bestseller book of this series. That reaches a symbolic climax when he buys 'The Great House' of Hwang family and moves into it with sons and grandchildren. Tired of Olan he purchases a young girl named Lotus and installs her in a separate apartment in his house. His aunt is another female character who helps him to bring Lotus. Then, death of Wang Lung's father, uncle, servant and wife gradually takes place. On the contrary, there was the birth of his grandchildren. Finally, he faces many upheavals and regains prosperity though it was not permanent.

After the success of *The Good Earth* Buck decided to proceed with sequel describing the fortunes of Wang Lung's family. She presents another phase of Chinese life by writing *Sons* in 1932. The three offspring of Wang Lung are; pleasure loving decadent landlord, a shady merchant and a former military officer turned warlord. The major focus is given to third son called Wang, the Tiger. Similarly another novel, *A House Divided* the last segment of what came to be called the *House of Earth Trilogy* appeared with the main character Yuan. He moves from farm to the city and from China to the United States and back to China because of the quarrels with his father.

Before the third volume of the *House of Earth Trilogy* was published, one of Buck's most memorable novels *The Mother* (1934) appeared. In this novel, she has attempted to draw a portrait of the eternal, universal mother, a saga mingling joy and sorrow birth and death, despair and hope.

The year 1936 was distinguished by the publication of two of Buck's finest books; *The Exile* the biography of her mother and *Fighting Angel* a biography of her

father. In these two novels, the portraits of Buck's parents emerge clearly and fully. Buck settled permanently in the United States in 1934. Her marriage had collapsed due to misunderstanding. She met Richard Welsh, publisher and editor of John Day Company and soon he became her Chief literary advisor and close friend. Within a few years the relationship deepened; Pearl and Richard became lover. In 1935, Pearl and Richard get married on the same day that divorces were made official. Buck enjoyed great commercial success through 1930. She now began to write on American topics as well as continuing to use Chinese subject matter. In 1938, Buck won the Noble Prize for literature and became the first American women to win the Noble Prize. When she was awarded the Noble Prize, the citation of Noble committee read; "Rich and generous epic description of Chinese peasant life and masterpiece of biography..." (Urgar115). In the same year, she published *The Proud Heart*, using an American setting. In the story Susan Gaylord, the protagonist is admittedly based on author.

After writing *The Proud Heart*, Buck realized that she was not yet prepared to deal effectively with contemporary styles. She once again used China as her subject matter and wrote *The Patron*, one of the best books. This novel is a historically accurate portrayal of the late 1920's and 1930's. I -want the chief character is like so many other young Chinese, filled with enthusiasm for Chiang Kai-Shek's new revolutionary movement. But it is soon apparent that Chiang will compromise his ideals and that few efforts will be made to bring about greater freedom and social and economic improvement. Many youthful enthusiasts are hunted down as danger to the state. I-want flies to Japan marry Japanese girls and observe Japanese military activity against Manchuria and China. So, this novel is the well conceived portrait of two countries caught in a crucial moment in the history. In her next work of fiction, *Other*

Gods: An American Legend (1940), Buck takes up an American topic. Later pursuing her 1930's and early 1940's policy of veering back and forth between Chinese and American topics, Buck chose as her area of inquiry the Japanese union of China and the Chinese resistance against this Atrocity. *Dragon Seeds* published in 1942, has vividly depicted the horrors of Japanese air raids. Similarly, *The Time is Noon* (1967), one of Buck's most unusual novels, had been written much earlier in about 1938. In the novel John Richards, the protagonist, has many affinities with Buck. She has large boned heavy figure and she is facially attractive. *The Goddess Abides* (1972) is another novel in which Buck is personally involved. Here, the forty two year old heroine Chard man is loved by two men: a twenty four year old scientist and a seventy six year philosopher. Both of them call her "The White Goddess!"

Some of the short stories published posthumously are *Mandala*, *The New Year*, *All Under Heave*' (1973), and *Secrets of Heart* (1976) etc. In the late 1960s, when she was in her seventies, Buck formed a relationship with younger man, Theodore Harris, a dance instructor with Arter Murray Studio, who became director of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation and her constant companion. The relationship, which became the subject of extensive public gossip, put a considerable strain on Buck's other family connection. Eventually she moved out of Green Hills Farm and lived her last years with Harris in a small town in Vermont. She died there in March 1973, just two months before her eighty first birthdays and was buried at Greed Hills Farm. Her non-fictional works published in this phase include, 'My Several Worlds', 'A Bridge for Passing', 'Children for Adoption', 'To My Daughter', 'China Past and Present', 'China As I See It', 'Essay on Myself', etc.

Thus, Buck's life was uncommonly eventful. She lived half her lifetime in Asia and half in the West. She began in poverty and ended her life as millionaire,

along the way winning the most coveted literary prize in the world. She took part in warfare and twentieth century struggles for human rights and she established herself as one of the most powerful women of the century.

During the same phase, Buck has written short fiction. This best short fiction pieces are on Chinese subjects. *The Rainy Day* (1925) is about a Chinese character who has been educated in an American University. *The first Wife* also contains similar subjects, the Chinese scene is again handled specially in *The Angel* (1937) in which the focus on the character Miss Bony, a lonely American Missionary. *Enough for Lifetime* also focuses on the missionary spinster in China. Short fictions by Buck like *The Lover and Miranda* published posthumously in 1977.

Review of Literature

Buck's *The Good Earth*, a Noble prize winning fiction, has elicited a number of criticisms and responses from the critics positioning their interpretations of the novel in relation to theories of realism, feminism, post colonialism and Marxism. Francis L.K. has discusses the realism and internationalism of the novel. For him, Wang Lung, the protagonist, is not only a Chinese but a universal character:

I have read one of two reviews of Mrs. Buck's book, which spoke of it as transcending national and racial boundaries. There is a sense in which that is true. In that sense, Wang Lung is not Chinese, but a farmer, a man of soil whose, but as farmer a man of soil whose lot happens to be cast in China...But there is another sense in which this is emphatically a Chinese tale. There have been a good many novels whose locale was laid in China, but never on which looked more deeply and understandingly into actually Chinese life. (286)

Not only the critics, but also Buck herself accepts the realistic concept in the novel. A Chinese critic, Kiang King Hu criticized the novel as being for less true to Chinese life. Buck's answer to this critic, as indicated in the Introduction of *The Good Earth* is:

... I write because it is my nature so to do, and I can write only what I know and I know nothing but China, having always lived there I have few friends of my own race, almost non-intimate, and so, I write about the people I do know. They are the people in China I love best to live among the everyday people, who care nothing for official buttons.

Similarly, *The Good Earth* is discussed as a novel of peasant life. Wang Lung, Olan and other rural characters are presented in a rural setting. Sherman Paul writes:

...it is her competence to describe china, there can be no question as she has spent all her life there, except when at college in United States, and she now teaches at the government university in Nanking. With a reservation made necessary on an account of many other realistic pages, one may name the book an intimate and accurate picture of Chinese peasant life and customs. (qtd.in Belseco248)

Moreover, Malcolm Cowley, emphasizing the novel having a story of a poor farmer, opines thus:

"... It is a story of Wang Lung a poor farmer who becomes wealthy landlord, but it is also a parable of the life of man in his relation to the soil that sustains him. The plot deliberately common place, is given a sort of legendary weight and dignity by placed in an unfamiliar setting" (qtd. in Belseco 246).

The book undoubtedly contains depiction of Oriental life style. Some of Buck's critics have analyzed it from this perspective as well. It is the first novel about Oriental life by an Occidental writer. Eda Lou Walton exclaims:

Such a novel as 'The Good Earth' calls at once for comparison with other novels of the same general design novels of the soil in the one hand and novel concerning Oriental life on the other. Any such comparison brings out the fact that despite Mrs. Buck's very good narrative style, despite her familiarity with her material, her work has a certain flatness of emotional tone...Mrs. Buck is undoubtedly one of the best Occidental writers to treat Chinese life...(230-31)

Similarly, Mary Yoshihara comments about the novel in Marxist point of view," the growing class stratification in the area and the prevalence of bribery overflowing

wealth and opium addiction in the house of Wang reveals the corruption of the dominant class..."(154).

Subsequently, Nathaniel Peffer, praises Buck for using unique materials. He says, "She is entitled to be counted as a first-rate novelist without qualification for the exotic and unique material in which she works... This is the elemental struggle of men with the soil" (qtd. in Buck372).

It is already said that Pearl Buck is a humanitarian writer. Such humanitarian attitude is revealed in her novel, *The Good Earth*. A critic Roberto Boston, focusing this aspect writes:

China, its lure, its customs, and experience which link Chinese with all humanity, forms the exotic background for this outstanding character novel... The point and meaning of the story don't lie on the surface for anyone to pick up idly. It is a beautiful and impressive tale made all the richer because of the opportunity it gives readers to study characters.

(230-34)

Another interpretation of the novel is on the influence of romance. Showing the possibility of romance, Young Hill Kang states:

...By placing the emphasis on romantic love, all Confucian society is reduced to a laughable pandemonium. We have the picture of a man taking on ugly wife so she will be a virgin, finding his own son rival in his concubine's chamber placating his uncle's son who attempts to violate one of the daughters of the house before the father's eyes and finally introducing the youngest slaves of his own household into his bed, under the jealous and hating eye of his youngest son. Every one of these acts is in Confucian society, an offense so horrible that there is

hardly a name for it. Consider a man's taking his own slave into his bed. The pressure of opinion was so great on this point that disgrace would overtake the whole clan for centuries to come; indeed, the sons might well commit suicide if such a fact became known about their father. And a woman is always a virgin when she is married in China. Women's yes, even slave, are terribly touchy on this subject. If their chastity is even once questioned, they may commit suicide....(185-86)

Some critics have commented on characters by showing their nature. Edgar Snow, about a character Wang Lung, expresses his views. He argues, "...Wang Lung can be gauche and timid, stubborn and resolute, servile, snobbish and heartless, idle and restless delicate and industrious ..." (qtd in Belsey 242).

With reference to these critical responses from various critics that reflect their own perceptions, it is worthwhile to explore the protagonist's existential predicaments and their struggle for meaningful life. And it is the issue which is vehemently different from other perspectives.

II: What Is Existentialism?

Introduction

Existentialism is a philosophical school whose proponents maintain that existence precedes essence. Existentialists concern themselves with human being, with its perpetual, anguished struggle to exist. They presume that individuals have free will and are thus entirely responsible for their actions. Even existentialists reject deterministic systems of fate or predestination. They also reject the notions that immutable or absolute value systems exist to guide humanity and that humanity and reason can adequately explain the universe. Instead existentialists assert that individuals freely construct or use their own value systems, forming their own sense of being and creating meaning in the process. As Jean Paul Satre argued "man makes himself". However, the attempt to create meaning and morality in a world without defined guideposts and rules, combined with the belief that freedom and responsibility rest squarely with individuals, generates a particularly trenchant anxiety for the individual. Thus, although existentialism holds out the possibility of an improved existence by positing the individual as the engine of change, it also runs the risk of fostering despair, hopelessness and nihilism.

Existentialism draws attention to the risk, the void of human reality and admits that the human being is thrown into the world in which pain suffering, frustration, alienation, sickness, contempt, malaise and death dominates. The widespread feeling of despair and of separation from leading to the ideas, that people have to create own values in the world where traditional values no longer reign.

Especially, after the devastating effects of the two World Wars, many thinkers started to oppose the doctrines that viewed human beings as manifestation of an absolute value. Thrown into an incoherent, disordered and chaotic universe in which

individual's destinies were obstructed and turned apart by the Second World War, they didn't believe in traditional concepts like rationality, morality, unity, value and even in Christianity, many thinkers and writers found the world totally absurd, incoherent, disintegrated, chaotic and disordered, not directed by the laws of God, but by pure chance and contingency. This feeling of an existence without justification becomes the main proposition of the twentieth century.

Meaning of Existentialism

The term 'existence' is derived from the Latin root *ex* 'out' + *sistere* from *stare* 'to stand' (Cuddon 316). 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 conditions and existence of man, his/her place and function in the world, and his relationship or lack of it with God'. It is a very intense philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood. Jean-Paul Sartre defines "existentialism as an attempt to continue life by creating a system in which one realizes human loneliness and human subjectivity" (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. Existentialism is less of an 'ism' than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of positions associated with existentialism, no single strict definition is possible. However, it suggests a major theme that is the stress on concrete individual human existence.

Existentialists really concern to the problem of man. They focus on man's concrete existence, his personal freedom and his responsibility for his choice. Existentialism is a revolt against traditional European philosophy which takes

philosophy as a science. Traditional philosophers produced knowledge that would be objective, universally true, and certain. The existentialists do not go with traditional attempts to get the ultimate nature of the world in an abstract system of thought.

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

In this way, the existentialists conclude that human choice is 'subjective', because the individual must take their own choices finally without help from such external standards as laws, ethical rules, or traditions. Because individuals make their own choice because they are to choose anything freely; they are completely responsible for their choices. In this regard, Macintyre argues, "Even if I do not choose, I have chosen not to choose" (149). The existentialists emphasize the freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Furthermore, since individuals are forced to choose for themselves, they have their own freedom-and therefore their responsibility-thrust upon them. Sartre says that "they are condemned to be free".

Existentialism focuses on the lack of meaning and purpose in life, and solitude of human existence. Existentialism maintains that existence precedes essence. This implies that the human being has no essence, no essential self, and is no more than what he is. He is only the sum of life in so far that he has created and achieved for himself. We may use the following 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 the name of the play or what role they are playing, without knowing what to do or say-yes, without even knowing whether the play has an author at all whether it is serious or a farce. We must personally make a decision to be something or other-a villain or a hero, ridiculous or tragic. Or we can simply exist, immediately. But that is also choosing a role- and that choice, too is made without our ever knowing that the performance was about. (Skirbek and Gilje 444)

This is how we are plunged into existence. We exist, we find ourselves here free, because there are no prescriptions, and we must decide for ourselves, define ourselves as the kind of person we are going to be. The essence thus follows existence. The study of being which is concerned with ontology is the fundamental problem of existentialism.

The existence of human being is the basic fact, and it has no essence, which comes before his existence. In this way human being as a being is nothing. This nothingness and the non-existence of an essence is the central source of the freedom that the human being faces in each and every moment. He has liberty in view of his situation and in decisions that make him solve his problems and live in the world happily.

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

Man is free and responsible only to himself. As with Nietzsche, man creates moral values. Besides being free, man is a finite and contingent being, existing in a world that is devoid of purpose. The pessimism resulting from this position is likewise expressed by Camus' doctrine of 'the absurd'. Absurdity or contradiction arises from the clash between human hopes and desires and the meaningless universe into which man has been thrown. (639)

In this way, Rayan focuses on the freedom of choice and responsibility that is for him only. Moreover, he finds man as a finite being and shows the human limitation too.

Basically, existence is of two types: authentic and inauthentic forms of existence. The authentic being is only rarely attained by human being since 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 his impotency to reject bad faith. Things are only what they are, but human being is what can be. Things are determined, fixed and right whereas, human being is free because he can add the essence in 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.

The human being disguises himself from freedom by self-deception, acting like a thing, as if he is passive subject, instead of realizing the independent being as a pure human being, which is an illusive faith. In such faith, human being shelters himself from responsibility by not noticing the dimensions of alternative courses of action. The human being behaves as others demand of him by confronting to the standards of accepted values and by adopting roles designed for him. If so, the human being loses the autonomy of his moral will and his freedom to decide. In bad faith, the human being imprisons himself within inauthenticity and unreal for he has refused to take the challenge of responsibility and the anxiety that comes along with his freedom.

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

own actions, responsibility and his being which is his own. Thus, the human being must be committed.

Existentialist philosophers are of the opinion that the metaphysical explanation of existence as given by traditional school of philosophy failed to produce satisfactory result. Being contrasts not only with knowing, but also with abstract concepts, which cannot fully capture what is individual and specific. They also maintain that the problem of being ought to take precedence in all philosophical inquiry. Existence is always particular, unique and individual. It is essential and fundamental. Being cannot be made a topic of objective study. Being is revealed and felt by the human being through his own experience and his situation. So it is maintained that existence is the first and central problem.

History of Existentialism

Existentialism as a distinct philosophical and literary movement or trend belongs to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The elements of existentialism can also be found in the thought of Socrates, in the *Bible*, somewhere in Shakespeare's dramas and in the work of many pre-modern philosophers and writers. In fact, existentialism goes back to men's pre-philosophical attempts to attain self awareness and understanding of existence of the world around us. The connection of being and thinking was Greek insight and it is this very insight that the modern existentialist are trying to reestablish. The ancient Greek thought was revolutionized by Socrates who shifted the attention of the study of philosophy from nature to man, man as the centre of existence. The problem of what man is in him can be perceived in the Socratic imperative "know thyself", as well as in the work of Montaigne and Pascal, a religious philosopher and mathematician (New Encyclopedia 612). The main idea of existentialist theory were already common to religious thought like the idea of man

being responsible for his own actions when existentialism was first introduced. Most religious thought itself can be perceived as the existentialist one by its definition. Existentialist root has been traced back to Pascal and St. Augustine. The subjectivism of theologian St. Augustine during 4th-5th century exhorted man not to go outside himself in the quest for truth, for it is within him that truth abides (612). Like Socrates, he also declared that truth is with in man that is why his going out to search truth is in vain.

Existentialism is often seen as a revolt against traditionalist philosophy. It contradicts Descartes' view that man is open to the world and its objects without intermediary stratum of ideas or sensation. Also there is no distinct realm of consciousness on with one might infer, project, or doubt the existence of external objects. Existentialists are more concerned with being rather than with knowing, which is a rejection of Cartesian dualism.

Existentialism as a distinct philosophy began with the Danish Christian thinker. Kierkegaard in the first half of the 19th century was critical of Hegel's philosophical system which analyzed being or existence in an abstract and impersonal way. He swerved the study of philosophy to the subjective, emotional and living aspect of human existence as against Hegel's objective and abstract academization of reality. Kierkegaard advocated that the irrational is the real against Hegelianism. He discussed man's essence with the existential predicaments and limitations hope, despair, anxiety and so on. Gaarder in *Sophie's world* acknowledge that "he thought that both the idealism of the romanticist and Hegel's historicism and obscured the individual's responsibility for his own life" (377). Therefore, it is obvious that existentialism is opposite of idealism, abstract thinking and objectivity.

The development of modern existentialism was preceded by the works of the German phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl (1859-1838). He was immediately followed by the modern existentialists. German existentialism was represented by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), French existentialism by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80) and Italian by Nicola Abbagnano (b. 1910). The most forceful voices of existentialist thought were the works of the French existentialists: Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. No one has contributed more to the popularization of existentialism of this philosophical trend than Sartre. In literary influence, the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-81) and Austrian Jewish writer Franz Kafka (1883-1924) contributed significantly. Dostoevsky in his novels presented the defeat of man in the face of choices and the result of their consequences and finally in the enigmas of himself. Kafka in his novels like *The Castle* (1929) and *The Trial* (1925) presented isolated men confronting vast, elusive and menacing bureaucracies. In the art, the analogues of existentialism may be considered to be Surrealism, Expressionism and those schools that view the role of art not as reflection of objective and external reality to man but as the free projection of human being. (New Encyclopedia 613). An important aspect of the existentialist movement was its popularization due to the ramification of existentialist philosophy in literature, psychology, religion, politics, and culture. Existentialism made its entrance into psychopathology through Karl Jaspers' *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1913), which was inspired by the need to understand the world in which the mental patient lived, by means of a sympathetic participation in his experience (613). Christian Existentialism, inspired by Kierkegaard, is a creed of its own kind. Similarly, Camus' semi-philosophical essays won sympathizers in this area.

Although the classic forms of existentialism are characteristics of post World War II philosophy, literature and art, we have already seen with Dostoevsky, reflect that existentialist-like ideas were anticipated long before. The most important was certainly Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). There are at least three ways in which Nietzsche qualifies as a classic existentialist, all of which we can see in what may have been magnum opus, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1885). Nietzsche focused precisely on the non existence of God as implying the non existence of all value in one of the most famous saying in the history of philosophy, "God is dead". Nietzsche's replacement of God is the *Urbmensch*. This was originally translated "superman". It is the Latin interpretation word where "super" means 'over' as does German 'Uber'. When Nietzsche says man (*Mensch*), he means someone egotistical, brawling, aggressive, arrogant, and insensitive. The superman is not vulnerable to taming and domesticity. The second most important thing is that the superman is free because all his own values flow from his own will. Value is a matter of decision and matter of will. Because the superman, in whom we find the triumphant 'will to power' is free, he takes what he wants and does what he likes. He is authentic, the third point, which is advanced as the greatest teaching of Zarathustra, does the same job as Satre's redefinition of "responsibility". This is the "Eternal Recurrence". Since every point where a time like the present has happened, or will happen, itself also an eternity of time before it, than what is happening now has already happened an infinite number of times and will happen an infinite number of times again. Though actions to Nietzsche are no longer good or evil, they still do not mean that they are right or wrong after all. It simply means that before you do something, you must determine that you really want to do it.

Phenomenology and Ontology have had remarkable influences on existentialism. Sartre and Heidegger were disciples of the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl. Sartre himself, somewhat younger, was then influenced by Heidegger. Regarding their existential insight, Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define the term Phenomenology as:

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

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

Martin Heidegger, one of the main exponents of 20th century existentialism and a leading German Ontologist further shaped and elaborated this movement. He notably tried to disclose the ways of Being in his most famous and controversial book *Sein Und Zeit* (1927). In this book Heidegger discusses what it means for a man to be

or how it is to be. It leads to a fundamental question like what the meaning of being is. And through speculation and interpretation, he has tried to reach the final truth of existence, the situation of Being. His another book *Was Ist Metaphysik?* (1929) where Heidegger has elaborated dass Nichts (nothing) which means, the no-thing and given a phenomenological approach to the situation of human existence.

Mainly existentialism is a movement of the 40's and 50's literary and artistic as well as philosophical with Sartre himself as the most famous representative. Sartre is also a convenient representative because for a time he actually acknowledged being an existentialist and offered a definition for the world. It was unusual for existentialists to identify themselves as it was less defined to give the sense what it was all about, so Sartre is convenient place to begin.

Sartre finds valuable philosophical materials in Descartes' subjectivism, Husserl's analysis of consciousness, Heidegger's existentialist concepts and themes and also in the two major forerunner of existentialism, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (Lavine 341). From Kierkegaard, Sartre takes the emphasis upon individual conscious existence and from, Nietzsche he takes the concept of the death of God (341). Sartre's originality lies in his reinterpreting revision, and reworking of these materials into a bold new integration which became the centre of French Existentialism (341).

Sartre divides existentialist thinkers into two groups: theistic and atheistic. The theistic group includes Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel who are supposed to believe in Christian faith. In the second atheistic group, Sartre puts himself with Heidegger, Nietzsche and other French existentialists who do not believe in the existence of God. The atheistic existentialists discard the concept of the God as an authentic shelter. They regard human being as optimistically forlorn, free and support less creature. The absence of God implies the loss of value.

Kierkegaard is an existentialist because he accepts the absurdity of the world as fully as Sartre or Camus. But he does not begin with the postulate of the non existence of God with the principle that nothing in the world, nothing available to sense or reason, provides any knowledge or reason to believe in God. While traditional Christian theologians, like St. Thomas Aquinas saw the world as providing evidence of God's existence, and also thought that rational arguments could establish the existence of God. Kierkegaard does not think that this is the case. But Kierkegaard's conclusion about this could just as easily be derived from Sartre's premises. After all, if the world is absurd, and everything we do is absurd, why not to do the most absurd thing imaginable. They also trust that what could be more absurd, than to believe in God? The atheists do not have any reason to believe in any thing else, or really even to disbelieve in that, so we may all well go for it. Without reasons of heart or mind, Kierkegaard can only get to God by a leap of faith.

Kierkegaard's moral and religious seriousness offered a more promising basis for the development of existentialist rather than the basically nihilistic, egocentric, and hopeless approach of Nazism, Sartre, Camus, and the others. Philosophers who make their own leap of faith to Marxism of Sartre or Nazism of Heidegger have really discredited their own source of inspiration. Thus, while Sartre achieved for a time a higher profile in the fashionable literacy world, theistic existentialists continued. Kierkegaard's work was also gone on with updated approaches to traditional religions. Atheistic existentialism exhausted itself really. The effort of will required for Sisyphus to maintain his enthusiasm is really beyond most human capacity, and better the solace of traditional religion than the vicious pseudo-religious of communism or fascism.

Standing very close to the philosophical outlook of Sartre is his life-long companion and intellectual associate Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86). She was close to Sartre and it would be a mistake to say that her thoughts are mere duplication of Sartre. She gives an original and independent interpretation of existentialism, though not radically different from Sartre's. Unlike him, she chooses to concentrate on the personal and moral aspect of life. She attempted to apply existentialism to feminism. Beauvoir treats existentialism from feminist point of view in her book, *The Second Sex* (1949). She takes the position that the history of attitude of women has determined her own views. In the regard Audi states:

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

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

Another prominent French existentialist, was Albert Camus (1913-60) who himself laid no claims to be an existentialist. Existentialism, in the 20th century reflects the loss of certainties in the post-modern world. If there are no clear philosophical answers to the question of existence, then each individual has to design their own life as a project. The choice and responsibility of the individual, the alienation of the individual from society, and difficulty of facing life without the comfort of believing in God or in absolute moral standards. The work of Camus is usually associated with existentialism because of the prominence of such themes in it as the apparent absurdity and futility of life. It also includes the indifference of the universe, and the necessity of engagement in a just cause.

Camus is of the opinion that human existence is absurd. The modern world is full of injustice and million works in repetitive exploitative jobs. He thinks that we should rebel against these absurdities by refusing to participate in them. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1943), Camus asserts that by refusing to surrender, Sisyphus, the representative of modern man, can create meaning through a free act of affirmation in which he gives meaning to a situation which until then had none. In *The Myth of Sisyphus* 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 goods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

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

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

The concept of the key existentialists like Satre, Camus and Nietzsche will be useful in analyzing the text. According to Satre, there is no fixed human nature or essence and so the individual has to choose his/ her being. This choice brings with it responsibility. Satre himself belongs to the group of anti-religious existentialists and describes existentialism as a means of facing the consequence of the world what is devoid of any absolute power like God. By the phrase "existence precedes essence", Satre means that there is no cosmic designer, and there is no design or essence of human nature. Human existence on being differs from the beings of objects in that human being is self conscious. This self-consciousness gives the human subject, the opportunity to define it and create his/ her self by making self directed choice. Satre also emphasizes upon the subjectivity of the individual, but the individual is not free

from other beings. Human being lives totally not by any single action or commitment but by the whole actions that he chooses to carry out in his life. The authenticity of life demands it to make free choice, regardless of pre-established social values. Satre is being conscious of a system that seems more powerful than the total freedom of any individual. He creates another system of human existence by negating the common social system, as people understand it.

Another existentialist, Camus believes in fraternity and humanism rather than in nihilism. Camus sees the conditions of modern man similar to that of Corinthian king Sisyphus. Sisyphus is the martyr and teacher of all modern man who because of his disobedience to God and his passion for life suffers eternal torture heroically. 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. Instead he acknowledges the consciousness of absurdity as a reliable guidance to revolt against it. He is of the opinion that no one has the right to take life of another being. Thus, living absurd man depends upon the maximum struggle against this absurdity. Thus, Camus' philosophy is not pessimistic and anti-humanistic but optimistic and humanistic. He focuses on struggle against absurdity for humanism and optimism.

German philosopher, Nietzsche advocates radically individual Christianity. He stresses on this world but not heaven or the world of ideas. He proclaims the death of God and goes on to reject the entire Judeo-Christian moral tradition in favor of a heroic pagan ideal. He calls Christianity a slave morality and holds that the religions provides no truth because God is dead and Christianity has become shelter of weak and disabled people. Nietzsche emphasizes upon the subjective intentions and activities of individual and repudiates objective knowledge and truth. Thus, Nietzsche

stresses upon the irrational and open individual who confronts existence heroically without hypocrisy and give meaning to it- his own meaning is crucial to the shaping of the doctrine of twentieth century existentialist.

III: An Attempt to Survive: Existential Predicaments in *The Good Earth*

Introduction

In *The Good Earth* Buck tries to create real protagonists, Wang Lung and Olan and their real way of struggle with nature and political system. The struggle between Wang Lung and natural disasters like flood, famine and drought is not only for survival but struggle for existence, struggle for pride and struggle for humanity. The story is swiftly and smoothly folded and the conflict is resolved into a struggle between man and natural and societal forces. Wang Lung's struggle with natural forces and social system which he vanquishes and defeats. Buck's novels can also be interpreted as her efforts to produce great works of art since she is the winner of novel prize for literature in 1938.

Buck's *The Good Earth* presents the existential predicaments of human life through the protagonists ceaselessly struggling to live a meaningful life even among the adversities. The continuous struggle of protagonists with passion and courage is not only for survival rather it is existential struggle. In the novel it is the famine that challenges Wang Lung and his family because he begins his battle from the field:

The young rice beds which Wang Lung sowed of first were square of Jade upon the brown earth. He carried water to them after day after he had given up the wheat, the heavy wooden buckets slung upon a bamboo pole across his shoulders. But though a furrow grew upon his flesh and callus formed there as large as bowl, no rain came. (67)

These lines explicitly show the continuous efforts of the man in the midst of defeat, emptiness and nothingness. Though the man knows that it is very impossible to get victory over drought yet he does not give up his struggle to create his existence.

Like mythical heroes, Wang Lung faces temporary weakness in the battle which later leads him towards victory:

...they started across the field a dreary small procession moving slowly that it seemed they would never be to the wall of the town. The girl Wang Lung carried in his bosom until he saw the old man would fall and then he gave the child to Olan and stopping under his father and he lifted him on his back and carried him, staggering under the old man's dry wind light frame. (89)

This separation caused many troubles to him. He faced many excruciating ordeals in this phase. He thought "that another day of walking like this one and they would be dead by night..." (92). There was still lack of food, "when he entered there, he found Olan had for her days begging received forty small cash which is less than five pence, and of the boys, the elder had eight cash and the younger thirteen..." (104). The hero in the south where he goes to get victory over famine and drought, the major enemies for him. In the south, he takes up the job of pulling a rickshaw. Tired of being the beast of burden, he joins a group of looters. Many people get hardships and troubles in their lives due to political injustices and natural disasters. Actually there is vast gap between poor and rich. Every official is corrupted and misguided by feudal social system.

Struggle for Existence

For Wang Lung, what counts is the struggle itself; it does not have much to do with victory or defeat. Struggle itself gives meaning of life. Wang Lung believes that the meaning of life is life itself. No matter how appalling truth turns out to be. He expects no reward and no vindication for suffering, he is forced to undergo. Wang Lung says:

There have been worse days-there have been worse days. Once I saw men and women eating children. There will never be such thing in my house. In the town the dogs are eaten and everywhere the horses and the fowls of every sorts. Here we have eaten the beast and ploughed our fields and the grass and the bark of trees. What now remains for food? (78)

Here we observe struggle is more important than life and death. In the text, we can find Promethean defiance as well as Sisyphean despair both cases, the protagonists and giving prominence to life, challenge 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 to the hill. All that Wang Lung can do about his trapped condition is shout about and say all things. Buck's hero may lose in the fighting but he does not surrender as Charles Glickberg quotes:

Rebelling against the tyranny of time the absurdity of his lot, the ignominy of death the modern hero as victims achieves no culminating moment of transfiguration or redemption. Despite his victimized state, he is a 'rebel' in that like Orestes in the flies, he has no further use for, for the gods. In the archetypal struggle against necessity, he is bound to lose, but it sees this very knowledge that leads him to rebel against fate. Neither villain nor saint, he looks upon himself as a victim who has chosen to revolt. He exists, therefore he rebels: that is the mark of humanity. (8)

While ignoring the matters in the modern world, man is close to self. Despite the meaninglessness of life, the hero incessantly moves from one stance to another

making sense of living heroically. Without the rebellion spirit, the life is incomplete; the spirit of change is a natural process. Every new action gives new experience since the world is changing and time is changing, and thus everything is changing. It is rephrased in the in Glickberg's words.

In the Rebel Camus declares that metaphysical rebellion is a justified protest against the incompleteness of human life. Man is incomplete without motion and action, so he becomes complete with certain attitudes that are meaningful.

Wang Lung totally depends upon the action rather than thoughts, God and society, "Oh, if I had an instant strength in this hand of mine. I would set fire to the gates and to those houses and courts within even though I burned the fire thousand curse towards that bore the children, of Hwang."(90)

Whatever man does is meaningless because life is itself meaningless. Man tries to give meaning to life engaging oneself in different activities. Wang Lung and Olan involve themselves in the activity that they are compelled to do. They have to take risks going to far to south and fighting with social system and natural as well. They go for south in order to save their children, and old father and themselves from the tragic famine and drought. It is always man who fights against the darkness, meaningless and motionless. The struggle is the tension between life and death. Olan says that "unless you give, good sir, good lady, this child dies, -we starve we starve." (101). For her, man is the most capable of enduring the pain since adventure makes sense of tension. Olan holds tight against the pain of starvation and keeps her effort under pressure. Glickberg remarks, "the revolt of the modern tragic hero against the oppressive sense of his freedom of affirming his life. Hopeful action leads man towards the affecting motion of life" (74).

Adventure always brings life and death together. The contrast between life and death makes the sense by living. That is the complete of birth. It is perfect in itself. When a person's self is liberated, he is free one since his self is elevated. He is at a higher state of life. Then, he is not an ordinary man but a 'strange man'. The protagonists Wang Lung and Olan make an adventurous and risky journey from north to south for their existence. This is obvious due to man's love for life. Jonathan Nelson in this regard observes:

The world is full of great equalizers that affect the poor and rich alike. There are events that happen that will cause the rich alike to struggle for their lives. If you happen to be one of the rich during this time, you will become the target of the poor. Money is of the great corruption. As Wang Lung gained more wealth, he was no longer satisfied with this good life with a loyal wife and many children. With more money, Wang Lung wanted more extras in his life. In the end, he realizes that happiness can't be bought. Life was best when it was at its basics, Wang Lung and the land. (31)

Wang Lung, who bears his suffering as if it comes it almost a classical symbol of the dignity of human being. He says "I will have no death in my house and I can pay the silver" (256). He further enhances the existentialist feeling: "man is not made for defeats". It is the culmination of humanism and existentialism. Buck intensifies the concept of fortitude and courage in the Good Earth where Wang Lung and Olan after their tiresome deeds to get success to produce a large amount of wheat, rice with great difficulty. At last, they also succeed to buy some more pieces of land even in the midst of adversities. Bearing cruel misfortunes with great patience and courage, they get back to their own land where they possess other meaningful lives.

In deed, Buck's characters are crushed by hostile circumstances. Nevertheless the fact remains that they flourish positive value which prevents them from nihilism. In the world, nothing is certain but death. Death makes mockery of all values. In such a universe only moral values the individual created 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 human life. A man must play the game of life according to his rules even though the rules of the universe are unfavorable. Regarding the affirmation of life, below Macfee says:

Mrs. Buck's people are born to customers utterly strange to us, to ignorance, almost fantastic, to a poverty in famine years that is remote as the middle ages from our experiences. Yet they behave in these and other circumstances very much like our first conscious-struggling, enduring, puzzling over the meaning of things, seizing what they can of the common prizes of existence- enjoying some of them mightily and finding others empty or bitter or elusive to the grasp. (37)

They focus on the compulsion of life's fundamental struggle. Though, the fight is between a human being and great natural forces, there is uncertainty of reward and its safety, the message is hopeful.

Choice Commitment and Responsibility

Regarding his choice, Wang Lung speaks "I have my old father and these three small mouths. We must go to south "come women we will go south" (79)

The existentialists say that one is condemned to choose, even not to choose is to choose. Wang Lung and Olan choose going to south though they have difficulties. To revolt against the meaningless world with patience to choose knowingly and unknowingly he is always making a choice. According to Kierkegaard one is free to choose yet he doesn't like to go perdition, he must make an ethics-religious choice and, the only way of enduring the anxiety of existing problem is to submit oneself in the realm of God. He says that one chooses absolutely when he has not chosen to choose this or that but the absolute and this absolute is "I myself in my eternal validity "choice"(831).

This is the same reason why "at the hour of death most people choose the right thing" by remembering the God. Many atheists like Wang Lung skeptically choose the name of God, while they are in danger and critical situation with our real expectation. In this context Wang Lung says "I am not religious, actually the hearts of these rich are hard like the hearts of the Gods" (90). This shows Wang Lung's paradoxical nature but in reality he does not expect God's help.

According to Satre, man is what he will to be. Our anguish basically lies in making commitment through choice. The realization of responsibility while deciding for oneself and for the whole mankind produces in us. Such anguish which leads us to action. Satre writes that the anguish of decision making felt by the leaders give in access to the actions instead of preventing from it because "it is the very condition of their action for the action presupposes that there is plurality of possibilities and in choosing one of them. They realize that it has value only because it is

chosen."(Choice 836).The very ground of Wang Lung and Olan's success lies in their commitments and determination. Olan says to Wangling that "an ox is but an ox and this one grew old. Eat, for there will be another one day of and for better than this one. (73). In spite of love, Olan kills the ox because it is her compulsion to rescue her children and old father in- law.

Olan and Wang Lung make a choice but whether they make an authentic choice of being for it. They choose a life of farmer, life of full struggle with different forms with natural forces. They struggle against the meaningless and futile nature. They continue their works even though they have to face drought, flood and social indifference. Wang Lung is totally committed in his choice. He depends on action rather than thought and keeps total faith in God. Regarding such dependence upon oneself, Waldmeir says, "a man must depend upon himself alone in order to assert his manhood, and the assertion of his manhood in the face of insuperable obstacles, is the complete end and justification of his existence" (146). Although he thinks the companionship of boy and help of God but totally he depends himself and fully committed in his work.

Wang Lung takes total responsibility of his physical defeat. He realizes his difficult choice that one has to pay the right choice. Wang Lung thinks only of land and he wants more pieces of land and he says to his neighbor Ching, "sell me the little pieces of land that you have and leave your lonely house and come into my house and help me with my land" (159).

Wang Lung and Ching both are totally responsible in their choice and come into conclusion. Ching accepts Wang Lung because he could not maintain his family without Wang Lung. But Wang Lung shows his commitment to his vocation by requesting or taking help from Ching.

Wang Lung and Olan in the course of their works, wish the companionship of Ching so that they can share something with him. Wang Lung found him isolated after not having any land visible. It was his choice and he had to face consequences. He says, "his choices had been to staying the isolated farm far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. My choice was to go to there to find him beyond all people. Now we are joined together and have been since noon" (161).

Ching chooses to stay alone but Wang Lung chooses to get together for the betterment of his family and the farm.

Anguish Forlornness and Loneliness

She (Ruth) stood in tears amid alien corn,
The same that oft-times hath;
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn

(Keats "Ode on Nightingale" 67-70)

As Ruth is forlorn, alienated and full of tears in the dangerous situation so is the condition of modern man in the war ridden world. The 20th century war time period million was very dangerous and the war-torn world is alien to the modern man. Nobody could rescue modern man from the danger as he does not believe in the existence of God. The world is exact replica of this bitter truth. In this world either God had dead as the world of Satre on Nietzsche has been remote and uncaring like the God of Thomas Hardy. Buck's characters struggle for their existence. They are independent to what ever they prefer. In order to avoid suffering and grief they develop their own canon of bearing the cruel blow of fate stoically.

Theistic existentialists believe in religious mysticism and rebirth, they argue that the anxiety of modern man can be entertained when one submits oneself to the

will of God. On the other hand, Sartre declares that man is anguish. The individual who feels total responsibility for himself and for all men cannot escape "anguish", it is an unavoidable sense of total responsibility for one's own choice and deeds. The individual who tries to run away from commitment feels anguish. In anguish, the individual relationship with the world seems to be mysterious and crucial, though the existence requires that the situations to be faced through commitment to the decision that brings him face to face with it. On the same issue, Wang Lung says, "Well, and every man has his troubles and I must make shift to live with mine as I can and my uncle is older than I and he will die, and three years must pass as they can with my son and I shall not kill myself." (237)

Here, Wang Lung clearly states that he is extremely anguished and tortured by the famine, drought and social indifference. Due to such problems, Wang Lung feels so lonely and anguished that he cannot continue his daily works. He rather devotes from his routine life.

According to Jaspers the individual cannot live fully because there is not other being to communicate with him. Realizing the need and help for his family, Wang Lung says, "If I had anything to sell I would sell it and go back to the land" (118) Wang Lung and Olan actually are thrown into a great despair. They are longing to get back their own land. Like struggle and revolt against meaninglessness, loneliness also is unavoidable for human being. No one should be alone in their old age. But it is unavoidable, Olan unconsciously utters, "well I know I am ugly and cannot be loved", Olan wants togetherness but she is compelled to lead her life alone without sympathy and affection of her husband.

Absurdities

According to M.H. Abrams "the human condition is essentially and ineradicably absurd, and that this condition can be adequately represented only in works of literature that are themselves absurd" (1). Kierkegaard and French existentialists believe that human existence is basically absurd. We cannot explain why things are as they are and why not otherwise, this weakness is inherent in the nature of things of which human beings are no exception. His idea, along with Jasper's idea of contradiction leads to the philosophy of the absurd of Camus. Camus's thought about the absurdity of human existence influenced many writers of his time including Sartre, Beckett etc. According to Camus, Sisyphus, the archetype of the "absurd hero" represents human condition as a whole making everything absurd in the world. God ran away as the universe is godless everything is permitted. But the ultimate emergence of the absurdity in each attempt of rolling the boulder up the hill necessarily cause "nausea" in us. The condition of Olan is very much similar to Sisyphus. In this regard, Olan says:

I bore haughty looks all during my youth in the great house and her running into kitchen score of times a day and crying out, 'now tea the lord'---'now food for the lord'---and it was always this is too hot and that is too cold, and that is badly cooked; and I was too ugly and too slow and too this and too that ... (204)

Though Olan did not get anything from her struggle in her life yet she continues her absurd works. She works for husband, sons and other family members, but she cannot be given any significance. At last she has to serve second wife, Lotus, of Wang Lung. Every time, Olan has been given the role of servant slave, the absurdist believes that for a life of reasonable expectation one must think that it is essential to have

cognizance of absurdity. Without this reorganization we will be prone to spend our life in dogma and illusion. Ellmann and Fiedelson note that Camus sees the affirmation of individuals worth only through the acceptance of absurdity, repudiating the illusion of hope and ultimate meaning that enables the individual to recognize the peculiar meaning of his very condition"(106). In a hopeless and meaningless state, the individual is liberated to make a commitment but his liberation only affirms the continual revolt against absurdity like Sisyphus (806). To transcend this absurdity, Kierkegaard believes in God whereas Camus trusts in the defiance of any such divine power.

In the face of the absurdity, we have to create our existence. Buck realizes the absurd world actively with patience and courage. She revolts against the meaninglessness of the world, though the chance of getting rewards is uncertain. It is difficult to win the game for the absurd hero like Sisyphus and Wang Lung but they are rather happy in losing it. The whole universe is absurd because the torture of men does not end even after death. According to Satre there is existence of this human absurdity; what can be said about the futility of human existence is that the great mistake of man is to be born in the absurd universe with keen conscious of it. Wang Lung and Olan accept and at the same time revolt against the absurd world by providing everything finally worthless, meaningless and emptiness.

IV: Conclusion

This dissertation attempts to trace out existential predicaments of human life, through the protagonists, who ceaselessly struggle to live a meaningful life, even among adversities in *The Good Earth*. However, a piece of literary composition requires no explanation, it stands its own worth as it reveals the human conditions. The characters, not plot become the driving force, Olan and Wang Lung struggle in the field with patience and courage where pain, suffering, meaninglessness and nothingness prevail. They show courage in the fight and stoicism in defeat. This signifies their authentic existence.

The angst of existence can lead to nihilism. But Wang Lung and Olan escape from it and take shelter in optimism. The dread of death, the consciousness of nada, nothingness, absurdities, and the feeling of loneliness can be said to be the source of human anxiety. The protagonists, Wang Lung and Olan are condemned to choose and suffer because of their difficult choice. They go too far Southern province for their better survival and existence. They stay there patiently in that true place in vain that reveals the absurdity of human existence. They show their total commitment in their ways of life. Wang Lung pulls rickshaw whereas, Olan and their sons beg alms in the street. In the chaos of existence, one is destined to experience the knowledge of absurdity and at the same time, he should wear the veil of illusion to give continuity to life. Modern man finds himself torn between those opposite aspects of existence, though tragedy lies in balancing these two aspects. Modern man accepts destruction rather than defeat. Wang Lung and Olan place themselves in dangerous circumstances, and try their best being alert to their optimistic lives. They hate self destruction and hopelessness and become the heir of Sisyphus, who is happy even after the eternal punishment. Wang Lung is also bitten by the terrible attack of nature

and social injustice. He is still hopeful for meaning, for order, for profession, for tomorrow future. So, Wang Lung is not nihilist but existentialist. Nihilism can not overcome the reality of nothingness, void and absurdity of human existence.

Buck has depicted the theme of individual; Wang Lung must struggle until he is dead to create meaning in a hostile and indifferent universe. Wang Lung appears to strong-willed action having extraordinary quality, strange man, comparable to Nietzschean Superman. The supermen are people of restless energy, who enjoy living dangerously, have contempt for meekness and humanity. Wang Lung stands as a rebel, protestor of mechanized and indifferent world like Nietzsche, who challenged the contemporary religious world by declaring that god is dead.

Buck's emphasis on the individual as a rebel against conventions, against nada, against absurdity and presenting the hero as distinct, a lonely man is her existential root in the novel. His loneliness represents Heidegger's doctrine of alienation and loneliness. Heidegger finds his life meaningless and gets no way to human happiness as Buck's protagonists, Wang Lung and Olan do. They are surrounded by difficult situations far out from which they can't run away but confront it with a full conscience, patience and courage. Wang Lung, though accompanied by Olan, finds himself lonely to achieve the goal of his choice. He sometimes can't live fully while there is not another being to communicate with according to Jasper's philosophy. Buck's heroes have overtones of Nietzschean Superman and reveal the triumph of Dionysus over Apollo. Wang Lung doesn't fear to struggle with nature and social system through his action on Sartrean philosophical level. Wang Lung feels pride and dignity in his profession. He sometimes does not grow good crops due to natural disasters but to maintain his pride in his profession, he continues working as a farmer. According to Sartre, only man exists other beings do not. This concept of

humanitarian expression is manifested when Wang Lung says that "he would show what a man can work and tolerate."

The existence of novel also lies in the perception of all the senses of the individual. Vision at once is the dominant sensory system for a human being which Wang Lung and Olan use at their best. Their perception of nature and colour are of prime importance. Nature's cruelty and compassion are reflected in their eyes. It is the objective correlative of natural order. The sensory details symbols, the image of Earth, ox, sun, stars, moon etc. and similes, animation, personification and foreshadowing of danger as well as emphatic style contribute to the artistic make up of the novel.

The existential struggle is foregrounded prominently in this novel. Farming and visit to South for Wang Lung is not only daily entertainment but compulsion. Similarly, for him war with natural disasters and social system is not a game but compulsorily imposed incident. In order to create existence, man has to enter into dangerous struggle and never retreats from it until and unless the goal is achieved. With its existentialist emphasis on courage and perseverance in the face of inevitable defeat and death, one has to perform courage in fight and stoicism in defeat. The entire novel is basically filled with existential predicaments in which protagonists struggle for existence amid all meaninglessness, nothingness, emptiness, failure, frustration, alienation and absurdity.

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