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Existential Predicament in Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

The present research is an inquiry into the existential predicaments of Artur Sammler, the protagonist of Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. He suffers from the severe sense of alienation because of his personal experience of the Holocaust atrocities during the Second World War. Alienated and bored, Sammler finds himself in existential crisis. To be out from such condition and live a meaningful life, he reads western literature, philosophy, religious theories, and history. It helps him create an imaginative planet of his own with Jewish moral and cultural values and also accept the changing attitude of young generation towards culture and customs. With this realization, he returns to human relationship from isolation.

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I. Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* and the Holocaust

The present research is an inquiry into the existential predicaments of Artur Sammler, the protagonist of Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. Artur Sammler suffers through alienation because of his experiences of the Holocaust atrocities in the Nazi concentration camp during the World War II and the repercussions of those experiences in his later life. Though clubbed, blinded in one eye, shot at, and buried in a ditch with the corpses of his wife and hundreds of other dead or dying Jews, Sammler escapes death miraculously but only to face the horror of degrading civilization and cold relationships. Alienated and bored, he finds himself in existential crisis. To overcome such condition and live a meaningful life, he reads western literature, philosophy, religious theories, and history. It helps him create an imaginative planet of his own with Jewish moral and cultural values and also accept the young generation's changing attitude towards culture and customs. With this realization, he returns to human relationship from isolation.

I have studied this transformation from alienation to acceptance in Mr. Sammler's life in four chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the present research, and it presents the hypothesis, a general introduction to the author and the novel against the backdrop of the history, and different critics' commentaries on the novel. The second chapter elaborates the methodology employed to study the text. The principal theoretical tool used in this study is existentialism with special focus on alienation as human predicament. The third chapter presents a detailed textual analysis with textual citations so as to show how the novel documents instances of existential predicaments. This chapter presents the analysis how the protagonist of the novel suffers during and after the war and sees the world meaningless, then creates a meaning for himself constructing an imaginary

planet. The final chapter concludes the study with a brief recounting observation of the work affirming that the hypothesis.

Holocaust and Jewish Literature

The word "Holocaust" is derived from the Greek word *holokauston*, meaning 'a completely (holos) burnt (kaustos) sacrificial offering' to a god. In the 17th century the meaning of "Holocaust" broadened to "something totally consumed by fire", and the word eventually was applied to fires of extreme destructiveness. Since the late 19th century Holocaust has primarily been used to refer to disasters or catastrophes. Holocaust has taken on a variety of figurative meanings, summarizing the effects of war, rioting, storms, epidemic diseases, and even economic failures. Most of these usages arose after World War II. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the word was first used to describe Hitler's treatment of the Jews from as early as 1942, though did not become a standard reference until the 1950s. By the late 1970s, however the conventional meaning of the word became the Nazi genocide. The term is used by many in a narrower sense to refer specifically to the unprecedented destruction of European Jews in particular.

The holocaust was geographically widespread and methodically conducted in virtually all areas of Nazi-occupied territory, where Jews and other victims were targeted in what are now 35 separate European nations, and sent to labor camps in some nations or extermination camps in others. The mass killing was at its worst in Central and Eastern Europe, in Germany, Poland, the Soviet Union, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Yugoslavia, and Greece.

Documented evidence suggests that the Nazis planned to carry out their 'final solution' in Britain, North America, and Palestine, if these regions were conquered. The extermination continued in different parts of Nazi-controlled territory until the end of World

War II, only completely ended when the Allies entered Germany itself and forced the Nazis to surrender in May 1945.

Much of the killing took place in concentration camps, such as Auschwitz and Dachau. The commonly used figure for the number of Jewish victims is six million, so much so that the phrase 'six million' is now almost universally interpreted as referring to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, though estimates by historians using, among other sources, records from the Nazi regime itself, range from five million to seven million.

The Jews of Europe were the main victims of the Holocaust in what the Nazis called "Final solution of the Jewish Question" (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 425). The Holocaust was carried out without any mercy or reprieve even for children or babies, and victims were often made to suffer before finally being killed. Nazis carried out cruel and 'deadly medical and eugenic experiment on prisoners, including children. Many of these experiments were intended to produce 'radically pure' babies. The Nazis killed Jews by putting them under tanks and dropping gas on them for short periods of time. Many of these prisoners did not survive. Day-to-day life in the concentration camp was brutal, with the guards regularly carrying to beatings and acts of torture.

These maltreatments had an adverse effect on those who survived the Holocaust. They had seen the world destroyed in front of their own eyes, and they had felt their lives being devastated. This made them pessimistic about their own ability to stave off disaster a second time. As a result they led a very traumatic, alienated and frustrated life. Thus, the Holocaust survivors heavily suffered from mental as well as physical problems throughout their later life.

After 1960s, the Jewish American writers very powerfully grabbed these problems. Since the World War II, they had joined the mainstream of American fiction. It was a good

time for Jewish American writers Irving Howe claimed in 1977 that “Jewish fiction has probably moved past its high point, in so far as it is dependent on the immigrant experience” (16). As per Leslie Fielder, “Jewish-American Literature’s dominant themes of marginality, alienation, and victimization which become associated in western literature with the Jews, has peaked” (qtd. in Kremer 177–178).

Saul Bellow and *Mr. Sammler’s Planet*

Saul Bellow became America’s preeminent writer of fiction in the period after World War II. He was born in Quebec in 1915 and moved to Chicago with his family when he was nine years old. He was born of Russian-Jewish parents in Canada. He attended the University of Chicago and received his bachelor’s degree from Northwestern with honors in sociology and anthropology. He produced many novels, stories, novellas and essays since early 1940s through to 2000. And he passed away on April 5, 2005, surrounded by loving family and friends. Mr. Bellow has won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, three National Book Awards, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for distinguished contribution to English Literature.

The son of immigrant parents from Russia, Saul Bellow grew up in a Jewish ghetto of Montreal, Canada, where he learned Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and French employed for a brief period with the Works Progress Administration Writers Project, he led bohemian life until World War II, whereupon he served in the Merchant Marine. After the war, he taught at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis and other schools, traveled in Europe, and lived in Paris for a period of time. Since 1963 he has been a professor at the University of Chicago in America.

Saul Bellow tried to accommodate the Jewish heritage into the contemporary American culture. He traced the Jewish consciousness of the self in three Jewish novels of

the first quarter century after World War II: *The Victim* (1947), *Herzog* (1964), and *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970). Bellow's first novel *The Dangling Man* (1944) depicts intellectual and spiritual vacillations of a young man waiting to be drafted and *The Adventures of Angie March* (1953) portrays a picaresque story of a poor Jewish youth in his quest for self-understanding and place.

Bellow's dark comedy in *Seize the Day* (1956) depicts the day of reckoning in the life of Tommy Wilhelm, 'a loser' who is spiritually reborn at the very end of the work. *Henderson the Rain King* (1956) is the story of an eccentric, energetic millionaire whose journey to the heart of Africa and experiences fantastic adventures. *The Dean's December* (1982), confronts more directly than any of Bellow's other novels political and social problems: Bellow contrasts the near anarchy of the slums of Chicago with the authoritarianism of the communist world and sees a 'moral crisis' in both West and East. *Revelstein* (2000) is a meditative and autobiographical novel that explores a variety of subjects but focuses on friendship, memory, and death.

Bellow has also written short stories, some of which are collected in *Mosby's Memories and other stories* and *Him with His Foot in His Mouth and Other Stories*, a non-fiction book on Israel, *To Jerusalem and Back*, several plays, and number of essays, some of which are collected in *It All Adds Up*.

Mr. Sammler's Planet has remained a prominent novel in Jewish fiction. Critics have seen Sammler like an Old Testament Prophet and equated the wicked sexual mores of the age with the collapse of civilization. Susan Glickman sees lust rather than brotherhood and prosperity:

Throughout the novel Sammler reflects on the shattered ideals of love and brotherhood, made such a mockery of by the glandular enthusiasms of the

sixties. How could love have any meaning in a world where women are all into prestige, manipulation, power-lust, sex-lust, sex-dominance, neurosis? or where women like Sammler's niece Angela with her "[sexed]-out" eyes and "white vital heat in the flesh of her through", talk their lover into playing switch with another couple? (212)

Sammler thinks that it is not love and brotherhood but power and perversity that are leading the modern American society backwards slowly and rhythmically. He creates the imaginary world full of order and authenticity but he sees the world totally different from what he imagines.

Many critics assumed that the protagonist Artur Sammler as well as other characters is devoid of psychological conflict. The critics have concluded that Sammler's active consciousness as solely or narrowly intellectual. In this regard Ellen Pifer argues that:

The ceaseless dialectic of Sammler's consciousness, the urgent unfolding of his internal self-argument is profoundly psychological in the root sense of the term. It is his psyche, not just his mind, which is divided on most issue, nor are these issues mere abstractions. The rift in Sammler's psyche is dramatically manifested in his emotional relationships with others, in the things that happen to him and in the actions he takes. (225)

Likewise, L. H. Goldman focuses upon the immoral mentality pitted against a Jewish humanism in the novel:

Artur Sammler, in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, is a survivor of the Holocaust. Through Artur Sammler, Bellow confronts the immoral mentality that gave rise to the century's greatest crime and pots this mentality against his own

humanistic perception embodied in those values that he has previously clearly defined as Jewish. (62–63)

Peter B. High views the novel as “the saddest novel in which the protagonist, Mr. Sammler’s experience in a Nazi concentration camp make him lose his belief in God” (182).

Ada Aharoni sees the novel as depiction of the degradation and suffering of female characters. He argues, “In *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* the three main female characters portrayed – Shula Sammler, Angela Gruner, and Margotte, Arkin – are examples of hypochondria, sexual activity, and distortion of values [. . .] as a result they suffered from loss of femininity and self-esteem” (106).

As a well-educated man has smelled the molten breath and felt the bloody teeth of European Fascism, Mr. Sammler is obsessed with understanding what makes of breaks a society, what causes a civilization to embrace ruthlessness as the best way to realize its ambitions and handle its fears. In this regard Stanly Couch writes:

Veteran of World War II, Mr. Sammler has seen killing and he has done it himself, which makes him a man for whom none of his questions exist in a speculative air unfolded by the odor of murder. His intellectual ponderings are thereby part of drama in which he has seen the lowest the western world has to offer. This lack of innocence makes him a hero and a thinker who is haunted by his past and startled to uneasiness by the present. Oh, yes; Artur Sammler knows firsthand how quickly the metamorphosis from the refined to the smugly savage can take place. “Like many people who had seen the world collapse once, Mr. Sammler entertained the possibility it might collapse twice. (VIII)

Similarly, Dorothy Seidman Bilik describes Mr. Sammler as an alienated Diaspora. To Sammler past memories chronicle towards the world of frustration where individual life is shattered very much:

Sammler is a man without a real home who has lined as a Jew, as a European intellectual, as a victim of the holocaust, and as an American. His mental world may be seen as a metaphoric Diaspora where in he attempts to see possible relationships between universal and particular, past and present, god and man, in order to find tentative answers as to how one should prepare for death, of conversely, how one should live. (138)

The analysis of the different criticisms on the novel reveals that *Mr. Sammler's Planet* by Bellow is criticized by different critics focusing on different themes. However, studying the text from existential perspective will help the better understanding of the characters and their conditions.

I. Existentialism

Existentialism is the philosophical movement which is devoted to an interpretation of human existence. It was started with opposing the doctrine that viewed human beings as manifestation of an absolute value. As a mode of thought it became prominent in the second of twentieth century after two world wars. After the shock in the Second World War, people in the West began to think that human rationality didn't work. The world found the traditional values shattered and gave rise to the feeling of despair and split from the established order. Holocaust, alienation, anxiety, absurdity, and uncertainty ruled the fragmented world. The writer saw the world incoherent, disintegrated, chaotic, and disordered because the concept like unity, rationality and even Christianity stopped working. This led to the idea that the human beings have to create their own values in the world. This situation of the mankind is known as "existentialism" which was long before perceived but coined in the twentieth century by Jean-Paul Sartre. The feeling of existence without justification became the main proposition of twentieth century.

Existentialism draws attention to the risk, the void of the human reality and admits that the human being is thrown into the world in which pain, suffering, frustration, alienation, isolation, sickness, contempt, malaise and death dominates. So, as a self-conscious movement it is primarily a 20th century phenomenon, embracing Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but its characteristic features occur earlier, especially in the 19th century thinkers Friedrich Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard. People are free to choose and they exist up to the moment they make choices and existentialism gives stress on concrete individual existence, freedom and choice.

Existence means to stand out in the universe that is against us, and existentialism means 'pertaining to existence'. Now the term existentialism is used to describe a version of the condition and existence of man, his/her place and function in the world and his/her relationship or lack of it with God. It is a "very intense and philosophically specialized form of quest for selfhood" (Ellmann and Feidelson 803). Sartre defines existentialism as an attempt to continue life by creating a system in which one realizes human loneliness and "human subjectivity" (*Existentialism* 10). The focus of existentialism is on 'being' and 'subjectivity' as opposed to logical reasoning and 'objectivity' which is based on individual experience rather than abstract thought and knowledge is foregrounded in this philosophy. Existentialism is a set of ideals that stress the existence of the human being, the anxiety and depression which pervade each human life. Existentialism is a less of an 'ism' than an attitude that expresses itself in a variety of ways. Because of the diversity of positions associated with existentialism, not single strict definition is possible. However, it suggests a major theme that is the stress on concrete individual human existence. According to Ryan, 'subjectivity, individual freedom and choice' are:

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 man's concrete existence, his contingent nature, his personal freedom, and his consequent responsibility for what he does and makes himself to be. (639)

Therefore, existentialists really mention the problems of man. They focus on man's concrete existence and his personal freedom of choice.

There is no single definition of existentialism for its principal theorist did not adhere to common body of doctrines. As a doctrine emerged world wide, the existentialist thinkers

also differs emerged worldwide, the existentialist thinkers also differed greatly in a various ways. Because, during the Second World War the Europe was threatened by materialism and she faced spiritual decay. So, the negative aspects of human existence such as pain, frustration, sickness and death become for existentialist the essential features of human reality. Existentialism has had an enormous influence outside philosophy, on, for example psychology, and although it is compatible with atheism, as well as Christianity, similarly on theology. Existentialism as such entails no particular political doctrines, but its stress on responsibility and its aversion to conformism and to whatever impairs human freedom can be conducive to political activism (Sartre). Although most existentialists have disregarded Kierkegaard's exclusive recommendation of 'indirect communication', the importance of specific situations and autonomous choices implies that existential truths can be conveyed in drama and fiction as well as in direct philosophical discourse. The concerns of the movement have inspired a large body of imaginative literature (Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir). In addition, the philosophy has provided a means of articulating and interpreting these same themes as discerned in works of literature from all periods for example Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, Faulkner and others.

Existentialism is often seen as a revolt against traditionalist philosophy. It contradicts 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 which 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.

Søren Kierkegaard, Danish Christian philosopher began for existentialism as a distinct philosophy in the first half of the 19th century. In contrasting philosophy from Plato to Hegel with authentic Christianity, Kierkegaard emphasizes the concept of individual, of

choice, of dread, and of paradox. He swerved the study of the philosophy to the subjective, emotional and abstract of human existence as against Hegel's philosophical system analyzed being or existence in an abstract and impersonal way. But Kierkegaard discusses that man's essence consists by the existential predicaments and limitations such as on hope, despair, anxiety and so on. In *Sophie's World* by Jostein Gaarder acknowledges that "he thought that both the idealism of the Romantacist and Hegel's Historicism had obscured the individual's responsibility for his own life" (377). Therefore, obviously, existentialism is opposite of idealism, abstract thinking and objectivity.

The development of modern tradition of existentialism was preceded by the works of the German Phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1979). 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 (1905-1980). The most forceful voices of existentialist thought were the works of the French existentialists: Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Camus. In literary influence the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-81) and Austrian Jewish writer Franz Kafka (1883-1924) contributed significantly.

Existentialism has its root in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger who focuses on the internal role and attitudes of the individual in the production of emotion or belief rather than the external world. So, the existential notion of individual can be considered as the systematic growth of the phenomenological concept of intentionality. In this regard Skirbekk and Nils Gilje define the term phenomenology as:

Phenomenology aims to describe the everyday items that we use, as they appear to us: the pencil with which I am now writing is described as it is in this context. Phenomenology attacks the view that this school aims to

reconstruct the universe in all of its diversity and fullness, with all of these qualities, as opposed to one-dimensional standardization based on scientific philosophy. (440)

Martin Heidegger likewise is considered to be the central figure in contemporary existentialist work. His central concern is the analysis of the way in which human beings, as distinct from things, exist, which he calls 'Dasein'. According to him, "man exists in an already existing world which is his world, which could no more exist without it. He exists only as a particular 'he'" (Wiener 193). Heidegger talks of the fact that man is born into a world which he did not make and which, hence, sets limit for him. His another book was first *Metaphysik?* (1929) where Heidegger has elaborated das Nichts (nothing) which means, the no-thing and given phenomenological approach to the situation of human existence.

Another prominent French existentialist was Albert Camus (1913-60). He himself laid no claims to be an existentialist. Camus was concerned with the freedom, 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. Camus opines that human existence is absurd. The modern world is full of injustice and millions work in repetitive exploitive jobs. He thought that men should rebel against these absurdities by refusing to participate in them. In *Myth of Sisyphus* (1943) Camus asserts that by refusing to surrender, Sisyphus, the representative of modern man can create meaning through a free act for affirmation in which he gives meaning to a situation which until then had none:

I leave Sisyphus at the foot of mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and rises from his 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 towards the heights is enough to fill man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (70)

An existentialist is always stranger than other 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. If we could give us a common basis to make a connection with them, that is inauthentic existence. If it just happens by chance, that our own decision produce something that inatches those of someone else, well then we have a connection, but is likely to be volatile. As we make new decisions, the probability of our connection with other is going to decline. We are isolated by our own autonomy. The values and decision of other, whether authentic or inauthentic, will be foreign or irritation.

Camus believes that anxiety, despair and crime have emerged from World Wars I and II. The external supports in which the public belief rested in the past were religious in character. Camus, like many other existentialists, believes that the decline of religious belief in modern period forces people to realize the dilemma of Sisyphus.

Likewise, Heidegger declares that the individual has to face the absolute problem of being, that is , one has to decide one's own existence create one's potentiality and make cliché and promises. Sartre praises the freedom of the individual human being. He describes existentialism as a means of confronting the result of World Wars and issue of world that wants on absolute power like God. He focuses on freedom of choice, commitment and responsibility. Sartre claims that there is no absolute reality at all but in action.

Heidegger is known as the leading existentialist thinker despite denying having anything to do with existentialism. Although he claimed he was not an existentialist, his influence on Sartre and the existentialist movement is unavoidable.

He distinguished between 'being' and 'Being'. The oblivion of 'Being' (individual) into the beings (group) has made us lost in unreal existence. To get back the lost Being, Heidegger suggests us to return back into the ground of metaphysics and find the roots of our existence. According to Heidegger, to consider individual only the representation of mass is the recurrent mistake of metaphysics.

Heidegger was interested in the 'question of being'. For him being is not realized in normal situation. It does not occur all the time. It is realized in the state of boredom, anxiety or ill-at-ease. So he states in *What is Metaphysics?* "It irrupts when one is bored, profound boredom drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence, like a muffling fog, removes all things and men and oneself along with it into a remarkable indifference. This boredom reveals being as a whole" (4).

Heidegger was the critique of western metaphysics. For him, western philosophy was obsessed with the problem of knowledge and it was less concerned with the issue of existence. Like other existentialists, he was interested in the study of 'Dasein' who believed that we have been living in an incomprehensible, indifferent world. The universe is alien to us. We have to choose a goal, with the awareness of certainty of death and meaninglessness of one's life.

For Heidegger, the principal object or investigation is the search for the being (skin) and more particularly man's being (Dasein). Thomas Maunter explains:

Dasein, this particular way of existing is different from the ordinary existence of things in the world around us. The thing is that things are determinate and have their distinctive properties. That is their kind of being. But the sort of being that I manifest is not that of a thing with properties. It is a range of possible ways to be. (183)

Heidegger considers human existence as tied by temporal dimension, which is the existential time. He accepts that one cannot escape the historical context because he always bounded by conditions and outlooks inherited from the past.

To sum up, Heideggerian existentialism stress on existence, boredom, goal, choice and freedom. But in freedom there is dread and anxiety (angst) that compels the human being to select and take charge of his being. Anxiety shows the light of dynamic existence.

French novelist, playwright, and exponent of Existentialism, 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). He emphasizes subjectivity but says that is not free from others. “The other is” as Sartre states, “indispensable to my existence and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself” (18). As Sartre said, “Man is a useless passion”. He identified this idea of perfectly self-sufficient beings who are the cause of their own existence as the traditional idea of God. He says each of us wants to become God, and God cannot possibly exist. In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1964), Sartre presented his political and sociological theories, which he considered to be a form of Marxism. In his first novel, *Nausea* (1938), he described the horror and mystery which a man experiences when he considers the unexplainable fact of a things’ existence.

In his chief philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre investigated the nature and forms of ‘existence’ or ‘being’. He claimed that human existence, which he called ‘being-for-itself’, is radically different from the existence of such in inanimate objects as a table, which he called ‘being-in-itself’. Sartre opines that only human existence is conscious of itself and of other things. He argues that a person is not a coward, for example, in the same simple way that a table is only a table. A person is a coward only by choice.

Sartre says that a person, unlike a table, has no fixed character of “essence” that has been assigned. Primarily, people ‘exist’ as beings who must ‘choose’ their own character or ‘essence’. Thus, in his essay *Existentialism and Humanism* (1946), he defined existentialism as the doctrine that for humankind, “existence precedes essence” (19).

Sartre believes that people are completely free but are afraid to recognize this freedom and to accept full responsibility for their behaviour, which such freedom implies. Thus, people tend to deceive themselves about their true situation. Throughout his philosophical and literary works, Sartre examined and analyzed the varied and subtle forms of self-deception.

Sartre was the leading advocate of Existentialism and French philosopher who was offered the Nobel Prize for literature in 1964, but he made the Existentialist choice of refusing it. Though there are no perfect causes, he believed, the human being must support the cause least undesirable in order to act. Sartre thought that there was no fixed human nature or essence and so the individual has to choose his/her being. This choice brings with it responsibility. Those who do not choose, but base their lives on pre-arranged moral and philosophical systems are said to be acting in bad faith.

Sartre first gave the term ‘Existentialism’ general currency by using it for his own philosophy. He declared Marxism is the only contemporary philosophy; so Marxism must come to recognize the human being’s existentialist freedom. He, however, never joined the communist party and denounced Soviet intervention in Hungary. For him, political commitment meant taking the side of the proletariat and calling for authentic and free values.

Sartre made a contrast to a divine viewpoint on the world and on human nature with a human viewpoint where there is no divine element. When God thought about creating the

world, he conceived it first-he had in mind what the world was going to be and what human nature was going to be. These were the 'essences' of the world and of humanity, the things that will make them what they are. Then God created everything and gave existence to the essences. Thus, to God, 'essence precedes existence'. Now, Sartre did not believe in God, so there was no place for the essence of humanity to be before human existence. To us, existence comes first. The essence comes later.

Indeed, the essence is what ever we decide it is going to be. So, from our point of view things are just the opposite of what they would be for people who believed in God. Unlike Kierkegaard, Sartre was an atheist. As God does not exist, there are no 'essences'. By essence, Sartre is talking about a pre-defined human nature. By the phrase 'existence precedes essence' Sartre meant - if there is no cosmic designer, then there is no design or essence of human nature. Human existence of being differs from the being of objects in that human being is self-conscious. This self-consciousness also gives the human subject the opportunity to define it. The individual creates his/her self by making self-directed choices.

As human existence is self-conscious with being pre-defined, we, as autonomous being, are 'condemned to be free' - compelled to make future directed choices. These choices induce anxiety and uncertainty into our psyches. If we, as individuals, simply follow custom or social expectations in order to escape this angst, we have escaped the responsibility of making our own choices, of creating our own essence. This is the acting in bad faith. To act authentically, we must take responsibility for our future. A man cannot choose what gender, class, or country he was born into, but he can choose what he makes of them. We are free to create our own interpretation of ourselves in relation to the world, to create a project of possibilities, of authentic actions as the expression of freedom. Thomas Mautner mentions the nature of existence in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*:

The structure of *Being and Nothingness* is clearly Cartesian, despite the strong influence of Heidegger at the time. On the one hand, there is consciousness ('being-for-itself' or *pour soi*) and on the other, the existence of mere things ('being-in-itself' or *en-soi*). (379)

En-soi is the being of an object that is fixed and static. *Pour soi* is the being of the human being that is fluid and free. It is open towards the future. The human being is nothing at birth and in life he is just the sum of life. To refuse in bad faith is to despair freedom. The human being, Sartre declares, is the maker of his destiny and is condemned to make his own decision. The human being exists but is only a contingent matter of fact, as there is no more reason for non-existence. Yet, in this hopeless world, the human being can develop his own essence; for the human being is what he projects himself in actuality. Hence, the human being is responsible for what he is. The human being uses his freedom to create and to be committed. The psychological problems of life are portrayed with an incomparable literary brilliance, creativity, and imagination on Sartre's philosophical essays, novels, short stories and plays.

Sartre's philosophy is explicitly atheistic and he declared that human beings require a rational basis for their lives but are unable to achieve one, and thus human life is a 'futile passion'. Sartre nevertheless insisted that his Existentialism is a form of humanism, and he strongly emphasized human freedom, choice, and responsibility.

Albert Camus was a journalist, novelist and a philosopher for whom the absurdity of life is the first concept. Fredrick Olafson genuinely remarks that "Camus believes in fraternity and humanism rather than in nihilism" (12). Camus sees the condition of modern man similar to that of Corinthian king Sisyphus. Sisyphus is the master and teacher of all modern man who because of his disobedience to God and this passion for life suffers eternal

torture heroically. "This universe," states Camus, "henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile" (852). Camus reached to the conclusion to declare the condition of man absurd when he realized that the speculative system of past provided no reliable guidance for life or guaranteed any foundation of human values. 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 reality and clarity has made the world more complex and inexplicable, terminating itself to a mere hypothesis. The only predictable truth is that the world is absurd and unintelligible. But suicide can not be the solution to the discomfort of absurd man if he is conscious of human pride which always negates the nihilistic 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 thus:

Suicide is repudiation. The absurd man can only drain everything to the 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. (824)

While thinking on the common condition of men Camus was also considering about human rights. The revolt against the injustice done upon man was as relevant as the revolt against the absurd condition. Sisyphus maintained at one and the same time the revolts. The injustice done upon him by God has made him conscious of his absurd task. Camus was careful about the unjust practices being carried out by the totalitarian political system such as Fascism and Nazism. He was of the opinion that no one has the right to take life of

another being. Political revolt is violent revolt, as much unwanted as the metaphysical revolt of Nietzsche and others. The metaphysical revolt, according to Camus, anticipates either a suicide or demonic desire to destroy the world (Olafson, Camus). Camus hated the destruction of the world and mankind as carried out in World War I and II to get liberation from the anxiety of the absurd world, one may go to the rules of God or he may submit himself to the hand of death. But either of these choices is ridiculous and bad for the absurd man. The living absurd man depends upon the maximum struggle against this absurdity. Thus, Camus's philosophy is not pessimistic and anti humanistic but optimistic and humanistic. As Ellmann and Fiedelson note, he sees man "arriving, through admission of absurdity, at an affirmation of his own worth" (806). He focuses on struggle against absurdity for humanism and optimism.

Alienation

Alienation in the existential philosophy occupies a significant place. Gwynn Nettler defines "Alienation is a certain psychological state of a normal person, and as alienated person is one who has been estranged from, made unfriendly towards his society and the culture it carries" (672). Alienation bears the constant notion of having the feeling of being a strange or an outside.

It is in exile - exile from the milieu one lives, from one's products and even from oneself. Eric and Mary Josepson comment that "alienation is an individual feeling or state of dissociations from self, from others and from the world at large" (13). Thus, sense of alienation engages an individual in conflict within himself and with the 'herd' as well. Alienation, in the simplest understanding, refers to the arrangement of individuals from one another and from a specific situation. The term is applied as the summation of the individual emotions and it comprises (1) meaninglessness, when the individual believes his activity

will fail to yield the result he seeks, (2) isolation, that is, estrangement, of the individual from values of his society, (3) self-estrangement, which is the individual's estrangement from the self, the feeling that his own self and its abilities are something strange.

The existentialists point out that all of our personal human relations are poisoned by feelings of alienation. Alienation, arise within the family between parents and children, between the husband and the wife between the child. Alienation affects relation and most cruelly, it dominates the relationship of love.

Existentialist are obsessed with the meaning of life. They focus exclusively on the individual. Though life is very difficult and does not have any objective or universally known value, yet, existentialism attempts to find happiness and meaning in a modern world characterized by alienation, isolation, loneliness, frustration, inauthenticity, and absurdity. Existentialism deals with man's disillusionment and despair. Existentialism maintains that man is full of anxiety with no meaning in life, just simply exists, until he makes a decisive choice because he creates his self by making self-directed choices. Man's autonomy, assertion of his subjective self, his denial of traditional values, institution and philosophy, his exercise of choice and freedom, and his experience of the absurdity and the meaninglessness of life are some of the existential theme as which are reflected in the writings of the exponents of existentialism.

Existential Predicament

Existential predicaments mean the dichotomy between real experience and logical apprehension of the world. It is the recollection of past, evaluation in present mental activity. The novel presents through the consciousness of the narrator and narrator's ability to interpret existential experience. There are two problems: What happens to the character and what is the attitude of the narrator toward what happens. The first problem is insoluble if by

what happens in the real experience of the other human. The right tracks if by what happen means the narrator think happens. For the solution of the first problem it must investigate the mental process of the narrator.

Narrator thinks speculate in terms of opposite and narrator's ability to recognizing person as a human being is the second characteristic. The narrator fails to recognize essential identity of another human being. So, narrator lays claim to a superior in perception and arouses tension within himself if other disagree with him. The narrator may have deductive thinking, she/he makes law and categories human being and wants to include to all within it. The narrator's perception of the world is real or not but he is the soul reporter who can't distinguish between real experience and logical apprehension. Reality for the narrator is ideational or does not experience ideal feelings. She/He sees human relationship as a parallel to mental process and confusion to choose the world. Therefore, she fails to distinguish between experience and logic.

The attitude of the narrator toward what happens evaluates the narrative technique and to what extend does she/he understand his/her predicaments. She/He does not understand the world, and moral issues secured by the society or the personal affairs to the world. The narrator just, equates intellectual activities with creativity which is the emotional life. The narrator concludes mistakenly that the superior perception and highly developed consciousness caused by the predicaments. The consciousness is the knowledge and awareness of the narrator's own existence, sensation and cognition. In this regard Henry James clarifies in his essay that:

Closely allied with this lack of understand is his attitude toward perception and consciousness. On the one hand, he apotheosizes them; on the other

hand, he realizes that concomitant with the increasing depth of perception and ultimately the developing of consciousness [...]. (209)

Therefore, predicament is that the narrator fails to get out of his/her self-perception or self consciousness.

The narrator could understand that excessive mental activity is harmful if it destroys reality; that is existential particularity of other human being. The cure lies in narrator's existential particularity and in the identity of other person. To justify this context Henry James remarks that:

Closely related to this dawning awareness is the narrator's incipient recognition of the existential particularity of the other guests. Removed from the events of the weekend, he can investigate a problem that has been with him ever since. "What was the matter with me? [. . .] Why I should have minded this, should have been anxious" [. . .] anxiety and scared [. . .] was a question troubling [. . .]. (213)

To sum up, '*a priori*' conceptual analysis can't dictate who or what human being will be. The corrective force of the truth of other human being that improves gradually that is the cause of detached existence or alienation or take part in the world but narrator refuses the logical mind of others'. The narrator's movement trapped spectator to the label of action and understanding self so that, gradually understanding of the danger mental activity carried to the point where it distorts reality and his/her discovery of the consequent desiccation of the emotional life is bewilderment which is crucial for development.

Lukacs' Critique of Existentialism and Adorno's Rebuttal

For George Lukacs, modern literature and ideas accept the non-realistic dogmas and are away from reality. Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl,

Russian formalists, Neo-critics, objectivist all are bourgeoisie critic for Lukacs because they all are away from reality. They focus on form, other embellishment, style, technique, but not to the content. Lukacs here makes a sharp distinction between traditional writing and modern writing. Traditional writing according to him, were content oriented. The focal point of traditional writing on a 'man' as they were concerned to content, which is embedded with intention and, intention is our meaning, theme or lesson. They took 'form' merely as a coverage to context. Modern writing, in the other hand, is 'form' or 'style' oriented. Modernists came with the view that is it 'form' which determines context. They ignore context or intention. Every text has intention or consciousness of writer. When they ignore intention, they also gave no importance to writer, in a sense they negate humanity. They had nothing to do with human norms and values but 'style'. Modernists, according to Lukacs fail to locate the decisive formal problems and turn a blind eye to their inherent dialect.

For modernist writers man is a solitary, asocial (between antisocial and social), unable to enter into relationship with other human beings, unable to engage himself in social intercourse. In this regard Thomas Wolfe once wrote, "My view of the world is based on the firm conviction that solitariness is by no means a rare condition, something peculiar to myself or to a few specially solitary human beings, but the inescapable, central fact of human existence" (qtd. in Pandey 197).

We can take the example of 'Hamm' the protagonist of 'Endgame' by Samuel Beckett, Hamm is the product of modernism that is in solitary, asocial and also can't engage in social intercourse. He is isolated and frustrated. Lukacs here brings the example of great heroes of the past. They are Achilles and Wrether, Oedipus and Tom, Jones, Antigone and Anna Karenina. He says they are also isolated, suffered from solitariness but they can not be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance, their

specific individuality can not be separated from the context in which they were created.

Oedipus's isolation for example does not lead us to frustration but makes us know man is inherent to society.

Lukacs further says the basic solitariness of man must not be confused with what individual solitariness to be found in the literature of traditional realism. The fate of such individuals is characteristic of certain human types on specific social of historical circumstances. Beside and beyond their solitariness, the common life, the strife and togetherness of other human being goes on as before. In a world, their solitariness is specific social fate, not a universal human condition. So, Oedipus was not the product of isolation, he was the product of necessary social circumstances. He was the product of inner necessity and so was the case with other characters too. His isolation does not discourage the man's relation to society but strengthens according to Lukacs.

Lukacs also mentions how modern thinkers define human existence. They define man's existence is 'thrownness' into being. It is an existential concept developed by Heidegger. Modern thinkers attributed this characteristics to man. Man can not establish relationship with things or person outside himself. It is impossible to determine the originless and goalless entities in the world. Likewise, the modernist thinkers say that the men negate the history therefore, they are isolated creatures. They always live in present forgetting past. Man thus is conceived and ahistorical being. The negation of history takes two different forms in modernist literature. The hero is strictly confined within the limits of his one experience. Hero does not have pre-existent reality beyond his own self. Another one is— hero is without personal history. He is thrown into the world meaninglessly, unfathomable. He does not develop through contact with the world: he neither forms nor is formed it. The only development in this literature is the gradual revelation of the human

condition. This is more related to absurdist existential writing, for example, Leopold Bloom, the protagonist in James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

But, Adorno argues that literature, unlike the mind, does not have a direct contact with reality. In his view, art is set apart from reality; its detachment gives it its significance and power. He praises modernist writings are particularly distanced from the reality to which they allude, and this distance gives their work the power of criticizing reality. He argues that art cannot simply reflect the social system, but acts within that reality as an irritant which produces an indirect sort of knowledge; art is the negative knowledge of the actual world. This can be achieved, he believes, by writing difficult experimental texts and not directly polemical or critical works. By making down-trodden humans shockingly aware of their own despair, the work of art announces a freedom which makes them fume.

Literary form, for Adorno, is not simply a unified and compressed reflection of the form of society but a special means of distancing reality and preventing the easy reabsorption of new insights into familiar and consumable packages. In this sense, modernists, as Adorno reminds, try to disrupt and fragment the picture of modern life rather than master its dehumanizing mechanisms. The absurd discontinuities of discontinuities, the pared-down characterization and plotlessness in literature all contribute to the aesthetic effect of distancing the reality and thereby giving us a 'negative knowledge' of modern existence.

III. Existential Predicaments in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

Holocaust in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*

Mr. Sammler's Planet by Bellow concerns on a Holocaust survivor, Artur Sammler, who lives in New York City. He tries to overcome his bitter experience of Holocaust atrocities of the Nazi concentration camp in Sojourn. The image of the death camp constantly rises to the surface of his mind asserting itself as the chief determinant of his life. This leads him a severe sense of alienation and frustrations. He considers himself as a defeated person by the history and makes every effort not to make others suffer from alienation in the family, in the society, and in the New York City.

The war caught him, with his daughter Shula and his late wife, in Poland. His wife Antonia was murdered by the Nazis in 1940. His daughter remains hidden by nun and Sammler escapes death by shooting, by crawling out from under a pile of Jewish bodies into the Zamosht Forest and spends the rest of the war hiding in a tomb. He remembers his past:

When Antonia was murdered. When he himself underwent murder beside her. When he and sixty or seventy others, all stripped naked and having dug their own grave, were fired upon and fell in Bodies upon his own body.

Crushing. His dead wife nearby somewhere. Struggling out much later from the weight of corpses, crawling out of the loose soil. Scraping on his belly.

Hiding in a shed. Finding a rag to wear lying in the woods many days. (18)

It is crucial situation in the novel when Sammler escapes from the death, hides in the shed, and lives in the woods full of blood shed and corpses for many days.

In Zamosht Forest, he shoots a disarmed man. Sammler ordered the man to take of his coat, the sweater and the boots. After this the man says to Sammler in a low voice, “Nicht Schiessen” or “He asked for his life”. But Sammler sees violence under his eyes because he

saw the grave on his skin. The man again begs for his life. "Don't kill me. Take the things" (139). Sammler does not answer but he pulled the trigger; the body then lies on the snow. A second shot went through the head and shattered it. "Bone burst. Matter flew out" (138). Sammler picks up as much as he could – gun, shells, food, boots, gloves. He had wanted those badly but was too weak to carry his loot far and, thus, sits down under winter-creaking trees and eats the "German bread". With it he takes snow into his mouth to help swallow.

The war memories have shocked his mind so powerfully that Mr. Sammler can not resist the thoughts about his experience of the death at the death camp and in the Zamosht Forest in Poland. In the forest the Polish partisans turned on the Jewish fighters. Sammler hid later in the mausoleum, it was not from the Germans but from the Poles. The war was ending, the Russians advancing, and the decision seems to have been taken to reconstruct the 'Jewless' Poland. Therefore there had been a great massacre of which Sammler had been a witness and a victim. Sammler remembers:

The Poles at dawn came shooting. As soon as it was light enough for murder. There was a fog, smoke. The sun tried to rise. Men began to drop, and Sammler ran. There were two other survivors. One played dead. The other, like Sammler, found a break and rushed through. Hiding in the swamp, Sammler lay under a tree trunk, in the mud, under scum. At night he left the forest. He took a chance with Cieslakiewicz next day. (140)

Father Newell, with whom Sammler had shared sometime during the war, this event also brings an image of nostalgia in the mind of Sammler of a Jesuit correspondent. He had even borrowed ten dollars from father Newell. They shared war experiences and cultural things. Sammler remembers again:

Father Newell wore the full battle dress of the Vietnam jungle – yellow, black, and green daubs and stripes of Camouflage. [. . .] Sammler still owed him ten dollars, his share of the taxi they had hired in Tel Aviv to drive to the Syrian front [. . .] Father Newell sweated in his green battle clothes. His hair cropped Marines Lyles, his eyes also green and the cheeks splendid meat-red. Down below the tanks raced and the smoke puffed yellow from the ground. Few sounds rose. (166)

Alienation in Mr. Sammler's Planet

Mr. Sammler, a European Jew is subsequently brought to America by a wealthy American relative, Dr. Arnold Elya Gruner after the war when he and his daughter were reunited. He was rescued from the ruins in Poland where he had gone there to liquidate his father-in-Law's estate with his wife and daughter. He lives on alienated life in New York City. He has lost all the meaning of his life because he doesn't have any definite aim and job, so the sense of loneliness and alienation constantly haunts him. "He thought, since he had no job to wake up to, that he might sleep a second chance to resolve certain difficulties imaginatively for himself, and pulled up the disconnected" (4).

The memories of the past and near-death experiences frequently occupy his mind. He sees the Zamosht Forest as glimpses even in the dream. Sammler can not resist the thoughts about his experience of the death scenes at the death camp and Zamosht Forest in Poland where from he hardly escaped by killing a disarmed man. That kind of flash back leads Sammler towards alienation:

Freezing in Zamosht Forest, he had often dreamed of being near a fire. His heart felt lined with brilliant, rapturous Satin. To kill the man and to kill him without pity, for he was dispensed from pity. There was a flash, a bolt of

fiery white. When he shot again it was less to make sure of the man than to try again for that bliss. To drink more flames. He would have thanked God for this opportunity. If he had had any god. At that time, he did not. For many years, in his own mind, there was no judge but herself. (141)

He lives with bitter experience of the past war period, which is making him alienated at the present. Nobody does know the fact of the deadly incident except God and him. He must thank the God for rescuing him from the mouth of the death. Therefore, he is indebt in God. And he himself is the judge of the incident sufferer which is striking in the mind since many years.

As an intellectual person, Mr. Sammler tries to direct his alienation towards the observation of the things around him. Thus he becomes minute observer of the chaos and decay of civilization in New York City of America. Psychologically he is in alienation. He liked to see the changes in everything according to his wish and dream but could not. He wishes to see the light everywhere but he sees shade only. Although he is blind in 'one eye' owing to Nazi's brutality during the holocaust he is a perfect observer. The novel describes:

He liked to watch the changes of the ashen wires. They came to life with fury, throwing tiny sparks and sinking into red rigidity under the Pyrex laboratory flax. Deeper. Blenching. He had only one good eye was dark-bright, full of observation through the overhanging hairs of the brow as I some breeds of dog. For his height he had a small face. The combination made him conspicuous. (4)

But his conspicuousness seems to be on his mind, which worries him a lot, making him psychologically alienated. He has only one good eye but it too sees dark everywhere rather than the prosperity of the life in New York.

The war shattered his life so cruelly that he can not even remember his age properly. Neither can he determine at what point of life he stands. On the street he is tensed, quick, erratically light and reckless with the 'elderly hair' stirring on the back of his head. He lifts the rolled umbrella high and pointed to show the cars, buses, speeding trucks and cabs bearing down on him the way he intended to go and cross the road. He seems as an abnormal human being who fails to maintain the normal behavior. Of course, the most brilliant sardonic parody is contained within the character of Mr. Sammler himself. The memories of war have shattered his life in such a way that he seems to be oblivious of himself and his situation. This happens especially when he is alone whether be at home, or the streets.

In connection with the day-to-day observation of things, he comes across a 'negro pickpocket at work' while returning on the customary bus late afternoon. When he saw the activities of the Negro pickpocket, Mr. Sammler deeply affected and haunted by morally shocking things like war, killing, crimes. He keeps an eye on him almost on daily in the buses, which irritates the pickpocket. One day the Negro boy corners Sammler into the lobby and shows him his penis:

The Blackman had opened his fly and taken out his penis. It was displayed to Sammler with great oval testicles, a large tan-and-purple uncircumcised thing-a-tube, a snake; metallic hairs bristled at the thick base and the tip curled beyond the supporting, demonstration hand, suggesting flesh mobility of an elephant's trunk. (49)

This activity of the Negro is the manifestation of the degradation of moral values in American society. The Negro is totally disrespectful towards Sammler who is an old man. Moreover, he forcibly pushes Sammler into the corner beside the long blackish carved table. This incident takes him a bitter experience of living in the New York City.

Sammler finds the pickpocket on the bus daily and decides to report it to the police. When he phones the police station, the police do not take this case seriously as they say they have other “priorities and they have a waiting list” (13). This makes Sammler disappointed at not being able to stop the pickpocket from his criminal activity. He comes out of the police station and sits ‘tensely’ forward in bright lamplight, like a “motorcyclist who has been struck in the forehead by a pebble from the road, trivially stung, smiled with long lips. ‘America!’ (He was speaking to himself)” (51).

Later, with one of his friends, Feffer, Sammler talks about Negro pickpocket, Sammler doesn’t want to tell everything that had happened to him. He asks Feffer, “who told you about him?” Then Feffer replies Sammler if the Negro pickpocket had threatened him with a gun. When Sammler heard the word ‘gun’, he finds himself mentally disturbed because the death scenes of the Nazi concentration camp emerge in his mind: "No gun. Had Sammler been in good balance he would have been able to resist Feffer. But his balance was not good. Descending to the subway was a trail. The grave, Elya, Death, entombment, the Mezvinske; vault” (120).

Feffer wishes to divert Sammler telling him the tale of the insurance adjuster who pulled out the pistol. Feffer says that with the rotten gun one has to shoot a man at close range, and in the head, killing point blank. This shooting in the head is what Sammler more troubled. This diversion shrivels up. These things are not subject to control for Sammler.

Sammler tries to erase the shade of the past but he enters in the world of isolation. He couldn't be out from the shocking picture of the past.

Sammler lives at Margotte's house now with his daughter, Shula, who is an absent-minded person. Margotte, who is his niece, also shares joys and sorrows with Sammler. Her husband was killed in a plane crash. Both Sammler and Margotte get along as well as they always recall things and happening about the past. Moreover, most of her family had been destroyed by 'the Nazis like his own' though she had 'gotten out' in 1937.

Margotte's husband, Usher Arkin was a good man to whom Sammler misses very much. He often goes to Margotte's room and has a talk with her; the war memories draw him to her as she is also the victim of the holocaust. When he is invited by the widow to occupy a bed room in the large apartment, Sammler asks to have 'Arkin's humidior' in his room. Margotte continuously recalls Arkin in this way "when my man was alive [. . .] my man used to say" (10). Now she is with Sammler sharing her bed and joys and sorrows but she remembers all the time her husband. So she is also alienated as Sammler, whenever, they have a serious talk, the subject automatically moves toward the "Existential predicaments." Sammler finds solace in the company of Margotte, who is the only close family member in his life.

Sammler's only one daughter Shula is not worth companionship for Sammler. She is mentally disordered and schizophrenic. Her relationship with her father was not good. According to Shula, Sammler can not consider the social reality and can't accept the changes but Sammler disappointed these as a degradation and decay of the society. Sammler always comments on her 'dresses' – it was the causes by the changes, according to Shula. But Sammler refutes the open sex but Shula and including other relatives takes 'sex' as a

natural process. Therefore, the contrastive relationship with his own daughter makes the victim of alienation and boredom.

Shula's cousin Elya Gruner, the doctor, who had given a job to Shula, a typewriter. Gruner had saved her from her equally 'crazy husband', Eisen, in Israel, sending Sammler ten years ago to bring Shula to New York. Eisen is also the victim of the Holocaust, which makes his life hell, "with other mutilated veterans in Rumania, later, he had been thrown from a moving train. Apparently were amputated" (24). Thus every one in his close relation, are alienated and became a victim of war directly or indirectly, and faces the existential crisis as Sammler. That relationship with others and viewing the situation of the relative Sammler has been victimized of isolation and frustration.

Uncle Sammler observes the western civilization. He sees by his Cyclopean eye, only the degeneration, decay, degradation in New York City. He studies the social and cultural situation of the surroundings which do not satisfy him but frustrates very much.

Sammler comments on dress up of his own daughter and others' which he does not like at all. He thinks that how they using dresses that is vulgarity according to Sammler. He says, "I can remember Shula in New Rochelle, coming downstairs in her nightgown, and she was no kid, she must have been twenty-seven or so, kneeling in front of everybody in the parlor and praying" (98). Sammler disagrees on dresses of Shula. Wearing a nightgown and living in downstairs in the parlor and praying is decay of the culture according to Sammler. Wallace tries to convince him but he does not agree with Wallace. He thinks that that is the immoral activities of his daughter.

In one another event Sammler says that he knew Angela's grandparents; "They had been Orthodox" (71). This gave a queer edge to his acquaintance with her paganism. Somewhere, he doubted the fitness for these Jews for this erotic Roman Voodoo

primitivism. He questioned whether release from long Jews mental discipline, heredity training in lawful control, was obtainable upon individual application. "Although claims for erotic leadership had also been made by modern Jewish spiritual and mental doctors" (72–73) but Sammler had his doubts. He sees Angela an erotic girl genetically. Sammler comments with Wharton the misleading and corrupting power of Angela in this way:

Cheeks brusting with color, eyes dark sexual blue, a white vital heat in the flesh of the throat, she carried a great statement to males, the powerful message of gender. In this day and age people felt obliged to temper all such powerful messages with comedy, and she provided that, too. In America certain forms of success required an element of parody, self-mockery, a satire on the-thing-itself. (70)

Sammler further puts it:

When she became hearty with the man and laughed, she turned out to have a big mouth, a large tongue. Inside the elegant woman he saw a coarse one. The lips were red, the tongue was often pale. That tongue, a woman's tongue-evidently it played an astonishing part in her free, luxurious life. (67)

Sammler had ideas about this chaos. He had his own view of everything, an intensely peculiar one, but he made allowances for error. He was a European, and these were American phenomena. There was the statement that "Europeans often misunderstood America comically" (68). Therefore, the contribution to changing by Sammler was fruitless and unworthy.

Sammler tries to include all the people in his ideal world but can't to bring on. He undergoes the devastating effects of the war, the holocaust in one side and in another, side even his own daughter doesn't go in his way. Therefore, humiliation further, aggravates to

his condition. In this regard Bellow says, "Daily at five or six a.m. Mr. Sammler wake up in Manhattan and tried to get handle on the situation. He did not think he could. Nor, if he could, would he be able to convince or convert any one. He could leave the handle to Shula in his will" (74). In this way Sammler tries to control Shula. He wishes wearing dresses according to him. He wants to control the possession what he had. He tries to convince Shula going further in his ideas. But she tries to follow American culture, rule and regulation what the American society provided but he was from European culture. In this way, they have antagonistic relationship between father and daughter. He had conceptualized a European culture and he likes to go in such a way. Therefore, this kind of distinct nature between Sammler and Shula and others disintegrated the familial and social ties.

As an intellectual, Mr. Sammler is intermittently invited to give a lecture on the subject of war at the Columbia University. But he cannot get much acclaim from alienation, frustration and depression. Bellow puts on:

A microphone was hung on his chest. He began to speak of the mental atmosphere of England before the Second World War. The Mussolini adventure in East Africa. Spain in 1936, the Great Purges in Russia. Stalinism in France and Britain. Blum, Daladier, the People's Front, Oswald Mosley. The mood of English intellectuals. For this he needed no notes, he could easily recall what people had said or written. (40)

The Holocaust is deeply rooted in his mind. He remembers exactly what happened there during the war. He further addresses, "I assume," he said, "you are acquainted with the background, the event of nineteen seventeen. You know of the mutinous armies, the February Revolutionary in Russia, the disasters that befell authority" (40). Finally when Sammler mentions Orwell to say that British radicals were all protected by the Royal Navy,

the students put objection, saying it 'shit'. And they humiliate him shouting at him, "Hey! Old Man!" (42). Most of the young people seem to be against him. The shouting sounds hostile. Then Sammler feels alienated and disappointed, turns from the lectern, and finds his umbrella and hat and leaves. He finds himself "abruptly out of the university. Back in the city" (43). Even if "insulted, pained, somewhere bleeding, not with sadness, but translating heartache into delicate, even piercing observation" (44), Sammler thus returns home. He does not let this pain affect others. He carries it within himself in a lonely and alienated way, and he is greatly shocked to find disintegration everywhere.

Sammler's alienation reaches its climax when his only trusting person, Gruner, his nephew lies on his death bed. It was Gruner who had brought Sammler and his daughter from Poland. So, Sammler is deeply affected by the condition of Gruner. When Sammler and Margotte talk about Gruner's death, Sammler again becomes preoccupied with the subject of death, recollecting his past war memories:

By coming back, by preoccupation with the subject, the dying, the mystery of dying, and the state of death. Also, by having been inside death. By having been given the shovel and told to dig. By digging beside his digging wife. When she faltered he tried to help her. By this digging, not speaking, he tried to convey something to her and fortify her. But as it had turned out, he had prepared her for death with out sharing it. She was killed, not he. He had been blinded, he had a stunned face, and he was unaware that blood was coming from him till they stripped and he saw it on his cloths. (273)

Ultimately, Gruner dies and Sammler is shattered and alienated than ever before.

Since everyone in his close relation has been the victim of the holocaust, Sammler faces existential crisis. Though he is haunted all the time by the bitter experiences and, he is

suffering from alienation and frustration. He struggles hard for his existence. In order to escape from the 'Existential predicaments', he turns to the writings of great western philosophers and writers. So far he has been relying on great western writings and philosophies. But when these things fail to satisfy him he seems on the brink of 'faith' in order to escape from the 'Existential predicaments'.

He is greatly impressed by H. G. Wells, whose memoir, he wants to write. Wells attracts Sammler's attention because he wrote such things in his final sickness, horribly depressed by World War II. Shula says that, "Wells had said to papa about Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, World peace, atomic energy, the open conspiracy, and colonization of the planets. Whole passage came back to papa" (29).

Sammler's great infatuation had been with the utopian socialism of H. G. Wells. Speaking to a group of Columbia University, Sammler becomes excited, as if once again entranced by the dream of reason; as if once more hopeful about that he gives lecture about imaginative world. Bellow writes:

[. . .] The building of a planned orderly, and beautiful world society: abolishing national sovereignty, outlawing war; subjecting money and credit, production, distribution, transport, population, arms manufacture et cetera to world-wide collective control, offering free universal education, personal freedom (compatible with community welfare) to the utmost degree; a service society based on a rational scientific attitude toward life. (41)

By creating the utopian world Sammler finds the meaning of life. Therefore, he is surviving in the meaninglessness world as a human being. And, he tries to include all people in his imaginative planet where he imagines orderly and beautiful world society which is full of moral, economic, scientific, and practical values and prosperous life.

Sammler presents his optimistic vision though he is alienated. American society represents for Sammler the triumph of equality and the institutionalization of the ideals of the Enlightenment. According to Sammler the masses have come into their own; everywhere there is the tent of sexuality. The labour of Puritanism now was ending. Therefore, Sammler perceived different developments rather than boredom and disorder. Bellow further remarks:

The dark satanic mills changing into light satanic mills. The reprobates converted into children of Joy, the sexual ways of the seraglio and of the Congo bush adopted by the emancipated masses of New York, Amsterdam, London [. . .]. He saw the increasing triumph of Enlightenment – Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery” (32).

This is the hope of surviving because he finds fraternity and equality instead of deeply haunted past memories and disorder in the society. An isolated man finds changing in every field and he starts to joy in increasing triumph of Enlightenment. This is the symbol of the development of the human relationship from isolation.

As a direct observer and witness to the war atrocities, Sammler has seen everything such as moral values, norms, and civilization devastated before his own eyes. Like many people who had seen the world collapse. Once, Mr. Sammler entertains the possibility it might “collapse twice” (33). So, he emerges himself in the study of the great historians, thinkers and philosophers in order to probe what went wrong:

Labouring in his room with hard words and thoughts that had to be explained, stumbling through Toynbee, Freud, Burckhardt, Spengler. For he had been reading historians of civilization – Karl Marx, Max Weber, Max Scheler, Franz Oppenheimer. Side excursions into Adorno, Marcuse, Norma O. Brown, [. . .]. Together with these he took on *Doktor Faustus*, *les Noyers de L’*

Altenburg, Ortega, Valery's essays on history and politics [. . .] he wish to read only certain religious writers of the thirteen century – Suso, Tauler, and Meister Eckhart. (37)

First he reads about the philosophers like Toynbee, Freud, Burckhardt, Spengler. He got life power for surviving. And then changed his wish of reading historians- Karl Marx, Max Weber, Max Scheler, Franz Oppenheimer. It helped to know the history of the world. He studies about the political philosophies. It helped him to know the geo-political situation of the contemporary world and at last religious writers. He is searching the meaning of life in reading turn by turn.

Sammler rejects the social attitudes of the dream of the nineteenth-century poets; apocalypse and the day-of-doom pessimism. Some intellectuals claim that these are working in human mind. According to Sammler the dream of the nineteenth-century poets polluted the psychic atmosphere of the great boroughs and suburbs of New York. But he refutes it. Sammler says that, "I don't know whether human kind is really all that much worse. In one day, Caesar massacred the Tencteri, four hundred and thirty thousand souls. Even Rome was appalled. "I am not sure that this is the worst of all times" (304). Human being can commit into the crimes and massacred but all the times they are not wrong. Sometimes they can do so far their existence. If it so it is necessary. Once a time, even in Rome was appalled but now Sammler sees harmony there. Likewise, in New York City Sammler saw disharmony, decay and degradation but it does not continuously go on. He sees the hope of life in New York. Therefore he is existing. "But we don't have to decide whether the world is ending." (305). That can be the hasty judgment if people decide so.

Another escape from the existential predicament of Sammler is the thesis of Dr. Govinda Lal, the Indian Biophysicist, on 'The Future of the Moon'. Unlike other Bellocian

Heroes, Mr. Sammler is more intellectual and more composed. Post-war degradation had made Sammler's planet a doomed one and New York in which the novel is set-is simply a waste land. Therefore, Sammler wants human settlement of the moon in future. Dr. Lal who has come to New York to present his optimistic paper, 'The Future of the Moon' at the seminar. The manuscript has purloined by Shula for Sammler because she thinks Sammler was desperate for that manuscript. It fascinates him. This desire of him for the manuscript is his escapist attitude because he has been feeling alienated due war memories. When Sammler meets Dr. Lal at Elya Gruner's Long Island mansion, they have it out friendly colloquy. For Dr. Lal, "Not to accept the opportunity would make this earth seem more and more a prison" (219), but Sammler draws back from the insatiable desire for unlimited experience. Worldly and World-Wary, he accepts the fact that those around him have this irrational need to voyage into space, just as they have less admirable needs to explore each other's bodies and Sammler proposes to become an interplanetary fellow traveler.

In his nephew, Elya Gruner, the old man finds an exemplar of the moral man. Elya, a successful doctor despite his dislike of the medical profession, had followed the dictates of conscience and done his best according to his wits. By no means perfect, he was nonetheless a good man. Sammler visits him in the hospital and responds more lovingly to him than he does to anyone else in the novel. When Elya dies, Sammler descends to the hospital's subterranean morgue and prays for Elya's soul. The prayer, which ends the book, is extremely significant. Bellow writes:

At his best this man was much kinder than at my very best I have ever been or could ever be. He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet-through all the confusion and degrading clowning of this life through which we are speeding-he did meet the terms of his contract. The term which, in his in

most heart, each man knows. As I know mine. All know For that is the truth
of it-that we all know, God, that we know, that we know, we know, we know.

(313)

Mr. Sammler, the old man now finally finds himself helpless and thus alienated when his nephew, Dr. Gruner, in whom Sammler had put some trust, dies from complications similar to a stroke. So Sammler is shocked and frustrated very much.

The issue of the existential predicaments: inner and outer of the protagonist ultimately search for 'self' in the meaninglessness world are the most dominant issues throughout Bellow's novel. Artur Sammler feels alienation, frustration, boredom, isolation and anxiety, and, sees the cultural and moral decay, degradation of the society, holocaust, loss of family, and Nazi brutality. So, he feels his 'self' is in crisis. He tries to escape from the predicaments but time brings him again and again in the dark cave of the frustration. He chooses alternative way to escape from the predicament. He studies about historical biography of the writers, philosophical writers and religious writers but can not get relief. He starts to share his feelings and experiences with his daughter and with others family members though his choice of life fails to exist in the society, culture and nature. Hence, his alternative choice of 'self' shattered time to time and in general creates the difficulties to survive but Sammler struggles hard for his meaningful existence in such conditions too. According to Jean-Paul Sartre existentialism is an attempt to continue life by creating a system in which one realizes "human loneliness". Similarly Mr. Sammler continues his life by creating an imaginative world to come out from loneliness.

IV. Conclusion

Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* deals with the 'Existential Predicaments' of the protagonist Artur Sammler. Sammler suffers from the severe sense of alienation because of his personal experience of the Holocaust atrocities during the Second World War. The past memories of the war always haunt him. What haunts his mind are the scenes of death, Zamosht Forest where he lost his wife and his one eye and his daughter hidden by the nuns. The brutality of the Nazis constantly shocked his mind. These experiences frustrate him and lead him to alienation. He cannot maintain good relation with his daughter and with other relatives. Therefore, his identity and the cause why he lives are challenged within and without.

Moreover, in New York City, he finds moral decay and insanities of the people. Even his own daughter is insensitive towards him. Humiliated and estranged he is on the verge of insanity which is exposed in front of the students at Columbia University. He had to face the pain of disintegration of the familial and social ties in one side and on the other side he sees degradation in New York City. So, his mind is shattered and creates the conflict. Everyone in his close relation has been the victim of the holocaust, Sammler faces existential crisis.

Despite the challenges to his identity from outside as well as within Sammler struggles for the meaningful existence by creating an imaginative planet by studying Western philosophers, historians, and religious writers. In course of leading meaningless and alienated life, Sammler starts to study the writings of great western writers and philosophers like H.G. Wells, Karl Marx, and Franz Oppenheimer etc. As he seeks alternative world for mankind, Wells draws his attention and he wants to write a memoir on him because he is impressed by Wells's science fiction. He chooses this in order to escape from alienation. He

returns to human relationship from isolation. These alternative ways of life are to his existential choice in an attempt to give comfort to his alienated life.

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