

## **I: Introduction of the Study**

### **Background of the Study**

The present study takes Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's famous and successful play *The Seagull* for the study. Characters' situations in the play are thoroughly observed. They are found struggling for their existence. To reach to the proposed goal, as proposed in the title, the study has taken the hypothesis that meaninglessness in existence brings suffering in the lives of characters. It makes the struggle for a meaningful existence. Characters in Chekhov's *The Seagull* suffer from problems in their ambition to accomplish goal of a meaningful, happy and successful lives with administrations from others. Masha's 'mournful life' due to her hopeless unrequited love to Treplev, Treplev's repeated suicide attempts due to his failure in career as a writer and in love affair with Nina, Nina's failure to achieve greatness as an actress, Trigorin's problematic excited nature and a high ambition to be a successful writer like Turgenev, etc. make them to explore the meaning of their lives and to get problems in their existence which urges them to struggle for existence.

Existence becomes the main concern for most of the characters. If possible they want a meaningful, happy and all admiring existence as they have dreamed to accomplish an authentic existence. If not possible, they may make a compromise up to their goal of an existence which sustains a hope for future improvement and also gives them a moment, an opportunity to struggle for the goal. So, they do not want to loose their lives. For the study of existence German philosopher Martin Heidegger's theory about existence of human beings becomes a facilitator. Heidegger, in his writing focuses on the 'question of being' thinking it to be a fundamental question of philosophy. Through the question of being he wants to reveal 'the sense of being. He praises human being for their consciousness about their own being which for him is

Dasein. Such conscious are the characters of Chekhov. This study takes Heideggerian Existential elements like-Dasein, choice, Authentic Existence, Anxiety, etc and observes these elements in the situations of characters of *The Seagull*. Out of total thirteen characters, mainly ten major ones have been taken for the discussion. But this doesn't mean that the study has discarded those three characters. They are the characters similar to the other ones on the basis that they too are representatives of a class or a rank in our society as the others are. Among the characters Treplev, Nina, Trigorin, Masha, Arkadin, and Sorin have been taken as the more major ones. These characters have represented human existential conditions of reality which have proved Anton Chekhov to be a realistic playwright. This playwright, though famous, has not been studied for thesis by no one in the Central Department of English till date. So I wanted to go with him. The characters, Chekhov has presented are in such conditions which made me to discuss the play in terms of Existential Philosophy.

Though Anton Pavlovich Chekhov wrote limited plays, he became a famous playwright. Chekhov, one of the most studied playwrights of western drama, was professionally a medical doctor. He started his career of writing as comic sketch writer and explored it through short stories to full length plays. His works reflect the frequently turbulent developments specific to Russia in the years leading up to communist revolutions, but their lasting appeal lives in Chekhov's talent for exploring universally human situations with grace and insight. With a handful of plays, he overthrew the long-standing tradition of works that emphasize action and plot, in favour of dramas that treat situation, mood, and internal psychological states. The content and dramatic technique of Chekhov's major plays inaugurated fundamental changes not only in the way plays are composed but also in the way they are acted. Chekhov became so much influential writer for many later writers. Tolstoy, too much

impressed by his simplicity in writing has written in his *Youthful Diary*: “O God, grant me simplicity of style!” (Qtd. in *Clark* iii)

Chekhov was born in Tanganrog, Russia, on January 17, 1860. The fabric of the Russian society was permanently altered when Chekhov was only one year old: on February 19, 1861, Russia’s serfs were freed. Chekhov was the grandson of a serf. This overturning of older social order plays a central role in many of his writings. Anton Chekhov’s father was owner of a small grocery business in Taganrog, the village where Anton was born. When the family business went bankrupt in 1876, the Chekhovs without Anton moved to Moscow to escape creditors. Anton remained in Taganrog until 1879 in order to complete his education and earned a scholarship to Moscow University. There, he studied medicine and, after graduation in 1884, went into practice. By this time he was publishing sketches, mostly humorous in popular magazines. Chekhov did this to support his family. The respect he gained for his humorous pieces encouraged him to begin writing short stories. He published more than three hundred short stories in his early career as a writer. In the late 1880s Chekhov began to produce what are regarded as his mature works in the short story form. At the same time he began experimenting with writing of plays. His early plays received only moderate interest from the public and critics. Chekhov has introduced himself like this:

I, A.P. Chekhov was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1860, at Taganrog. I was educated first in Greek School. [...] Then in taganrog high school. In 1879 I entered Moscow University in the Faculty of Medicine. [...] I began in my first year to publish stories in the weekly journals and newspapers, and these literary pursuits had early in the eighties, acquired a permanent professional character. In 1888, I took the Puskin

prize. [...] Not counting reviews, feuilletons, paragraphs and all that I have written from day to day for the newspapers. [...] I've during my twenty years of literary work, published more than three hundred signatures of print of short and long stories and some plays. (Qtd. In Clark 56)

Chekhov carried two careers simultaneously. He ran a free clinic, as a doctor, for peasants; took part in famine and epidemic relief and traveled to a penal colony in Siberia to study the poor conditions. Chekhov fully realized later the influence which his profession had exercised on his literary work, and sometimes regretted the too vivid insight it gave him, but, on the other hand, he was able to write “only a doctor can know what value my knowledge of science has been to me” and “It seems to me that as a doctor I have described the sickness of the soul correctly” (Qtd. in <http://www.theatrehistory.com/russia/chekhov.html>).

The young doctor-writer was an untiring worker who led a life of ceaseless activities both among his patients and on his writing desk. Success began to overtake the young author rapidly. After publication of his first collection of stories in 1887, he got motivation for further writing. He began to compose comic one-act plays as well often adopting the plot from his short stories. *Ivanov*, his first full length play and another one called *The Wood Demon* were published and staged but they became unsuccessful. His first major work as a drama, *The Seagull*, was also a failure when it was staged in a disastrous 1896 production at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. A discouraged Chekhov vowed never to write for the stage again. However, two years later, in their debut season, the Moscow Art Theatre mounted an acclaimed revival of *The Seagull*. This revival established both Chekhov as an accomplished playwright and the Moscow Art Theatre Company as an important new

acting troupe. This success gave a good impression for his writing career. He wrote all other full-length famous plays like *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* due to spirit of success of *The Seagull*.

In March of 1897, Chekhov suffered a lung hemorrhage and was forced to spend most of his time in the Crimea for his health. Chekhov took a little cottage on the banks of a little river and surrendered himself to his teaching love for nature in the quiet of the country and in the music and gaiety of the peasants. His health did not improve and he died of tuberculosis while visiting Germany with his wife on July 14, 1904, at the age of forty-four. His body was delivered back to Russia in a railway coach marked "Fresh Oysters."

Though a celebrated figure in Russia at the time of his death, Chekhov remained rather unknown internationally until the years after World War I, when his works were translated into English. Chekhov was very much concerned about theatre. He wanted to change the trend in theatrical world. He jumbled comic and tragic elements together in his plays. This practice of Chekhov became an important contribution not only to theatre, but also to 20<sup>th</sup> century literature in general. Chekhov is also known for the emphasis he places on dialogue and off-stage action. The audience experience the most important events by hearing about it afterwards. He used ordinary conversations, pauses, miscommunications, inaction, incomplete thoughts, to reveal the truth behind trivial words and daily life. Chekhov considered his mature plays to be a kind of comic satire, pointing out the unhappy nature of existence in turn-of-the century Russia. He presented bad and dreary lives of then Russians in his plays. His characters seem sympathetic in the audiences' eyes. There is no villain in *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Characters have their real antagonism with existential problems rather than with human beings.

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

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

Chekhov was first a writer of prose narrative and believed that he could not write a good play. Yet, his prosaic presentation got appraisal as his unique dramatic technique. Chekhov, though, isn't today among us, he has left many valuable souvenir to us.

### **Critical Response to *The Seagull***

*The Seagull* is the first play in Chekhov's second period of writing for the theatre-that of last few years of his life – in which he penned his widely acknowledged dramatic masterpieces. The play was first staged in St. Petersburg in 1896, but it was very badly received. The audience were unwilling to applaud a work that in technique and style countered the traditional kind of play. They seem simply not ready to accept a work that seemed to violate almost all dramatic conventions.

About the first failure production of *The Seagull*, Lucas says:

This play, when first acted at Petersburg in 1896, inadequately rehearsed and insensitively cut, proved a dismal fiasco. The critics were mercilessly malevolent. But after five performances the play stopped. This new wine had burst the crude old bottle of Russian stage-

tradition. Chekhov must wait for the new style of Stanislavsky and the Moscow Art Theatre to get success. (38)

Thus new wine in Chekhov's *The Seagull* latter gets a new bottle and gets life.

Had Chekhov's friend, Nemirovich-Danchenko, not taken an interest in the work despite its initial stage failure, the dramatist might well have given up writing for the theatre. Nemirovich-Danchenko and his co-director of the famous Moscow Art Theatre, Konstantin Stanislavsky, brought *The Seagull* to the stage again in 1898. This time, the play got a remarkable success. This success became a great blessing to Chekhov, for his dramatic career and to Moscow Art Theatre, which began its staging with *The Seagull*. Clark has quoted a Russian critic Efros about contribution of Chekhov and the theatre to each other:

It would be idle to measure exactly whether Chekhov did for the Art Theatre or the Art Theatre did more for Chekhov. At any rate, the Art Theatre would not be what it is if it had not been for *The Seagull* and *Uncle Vanya* and the problems they brought to the stage to the actors. It is equally true that were it not for the Art Theatre, Chekhov would not have written at least *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* in the form of drama. (59)

*The Seagull* has since been performed successfully in many languages. Its most successful production in America came in 1938. As *The Wild Duck* was for Ibsen, so *The Seagull* was for Chekhov a symbol of shattered illusions and its fate was woven into the real plot. *The Seagull* has been greeted by many critics with 'wild applauses' and criticized with 'loud hisses'. Some critics have talked about thematic side of the play. Lucas says, "*The Seagull* might have for sub-title 'The Egoists'; or 'of Human Loneliness'; or 'Artistic Vanity and Vanity of Art'; for such are its themes. It is about

lonely people unhappy in love, and making others unhappy; obsessed with art yet unconsolated by it” (41).

Similarly, in D. Magarshack’s translation of *The Seagull*, there is Stanislavsky’s original notes for its production. In his note, Stanislavsky says how an affectionate environment has been created to help the audience getting into the sad and monotonous life experience of the characters. To quote his lines:

The play starts in darkness, an August evening. The dim light of a lantern on top of a lamp-post, distant sound of a drunkard’s song, distant howling of a dog, the croaking of frogs, the creak of a landrail, the slow tolling of a distant church-bell, help the audience to get the feeling of the sad, monotonous life led by the characters. (Magarshack vi)

This play of Chekhov has many characteristics similar to the *Hamlet* of Shakespeare. Some characters’ interpersonal relationship and the technique of play with-in-the play remind us Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. On this issue *Wikipedia Encyclopaedia* says:

The play has a strong inter-textual relationship with Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Arkadin and Treplev quote lines from it before the play-within-a play in the first act (and the play-within-a-play device is itself used in *Hamlet*). There are many allusions to Shakespearean plot details as well. For instance, Treplev seeks to win his mother back from the usurping older man Trigorin much as *Hamlet* tries to win Queen Getrude back from uncle Claudins. (2)

Many critics have talked about the tone of the play. Chekhov’s plays being more realistic cannot be said strictly whether they are tragedy or comedy. Many critics have



said *The Seagull* not to be a tragedy, though they clearly haven't said it to be a comedy as well. Brooks and Heilman too refuse to call it tragedy:

It is thoroughly unimportant whether we decide to call the play a comedy or Tragedy. The play is what it is – good, if it is good; poor, if it is poor and the affixing of a label, merely as a label, has little significance. The mere fact that the play ends with Treplev's death does not in itself commit us to calling the play a tragedy. As we have seen tragedy requires more than an unhappy ending. Moreover, we have seen that the tragedy requires a dominant figure, a hero or a protagonist, who is capable of meaningful struggle. He must have a certain force. If we take Treplev to be the protagonist he hardly measures up in this respect. So, by these tests *The Seagull* is hardly a tragedy. (497-98)

Certainly, the triangular love affairs of characters, their unrequited love, all characters' feeling of sadness and ending of the play with Treplev's suicide make us to go to the conclusion that *The Seagull* is a tragedy. But on the basis of many other evidences, many critics say it a comedy. In director's note for the production of *The Seagull* in 1999, the director Tony Vezner has written the following claim:

Chekhov called his play a comedy. Scholars have said that the word Chekhov used does not really translate into English clearly, and thus 'comedy' is not really an apt description. I think that people who are passionate about their loves and jealous will tend to go to great extremes for these feelings, and they will expose their own personal foibles in the process. Watching people make fools of themselves for love can be very funny. Is the play also sad and bittersweet? Yes, it is

that too. Should this contradiction exist in a good play? Well, as often happens in life, the funny things make us a bit sad, and the sad things are also a bit funny. And that's what makes Chekhov's writing so worthy. (18)

Certainly, Chekhov's writing sketches happenings of our daily lives and influences readers with this worth.

Readers enjoy reading Chekhov's work because it involves so much without really having any action. Simple sketch of the events and dialogues of ten people's lives and yet the characters and their personalities are much more complex than what is spelled out in the play. Though majority of critics say it to be more comedy than a tragedy; Guernsey calls Chekhov's technique a distinct type of tragedy. To quote him:

Chekhov's Theory of tragedy was far from the conventional approach of either classicism or romanticism. There are no heroic deaths in his plays; life wears away slowly and unhappily and there are not providential endings. Occasionally a suicide takes place due to outside exigencies of duty and frustration, young lives are cut off in their prime. (403)

Whether the play is a comedy or tragedy, it has been able to establish itself in the mainstream of modern drama as a good play.

Chekhov's unique plot development is the other feature of his writing which attracted the eyes of critics. Chekhov does not give neither a proper beginning nor a proper ending. He gives stress on action than on plot. His distinct plot development from the traditional convention has been discussed by many critics. Brooks and Heilman write about Chekhov's writing - "Chekhov's plays have the reputation of dealing with frustration, and in a sense this reputation is well founded". Talking about

the structure of *The Seagull*, they further say, “To say that *The Seagull* deals with frustration is perhaps to say that apparently “nothing happens”, that is we don’t find conventional dramatic structure in which one or more characters develop and carry through a line of action by a traceable forward movement” (490)

Brooks and Heilman have written about fiction-like plot of *The Seagull*. To quote them again:

In *The Seagull*, we are at first glance tempted to find a novel presented on the stage and not a proper ‘drama’ at all. It is true that the technique of this play shows the influence of techniques developed in fiction. For example, the play is not focused on the central character. There is rather a multiple focus of the sort which occurs more frequently in fiction. (491)

Similarly, Ronald Hingley in introduction to his English translation of Chekhov’s *Five Major Plays* writes about unique plot development of *The Seagull*:

‘I began it *Forte* and finished it *Pianissimo*, contrary to all laws of the theatre’. As this comment of Chekhov himself indicates, *The Seagull* abandoned the traditional concentration on a single star part and on the strong, carefully prepared dramatic crisis that had characterized *Ivanov*. *The Seagull* stands, as it were, halfway between that earlier four-acter and Chekhov’s mature drama. (xviii)

Many critics have paid tribute to this writer for the use of unique, unconventional tone and structure in his play. None of the critics have focused on the existential issues Existential problems of characters, their desire to accomplish meaningful existence and their struggle to achieve the desired point have become the issues of inquire for the present study. To solve their problems of lives and to get meaningful existence,

characters of *The Seagull* engage themselves in a network of conflict which adds the more problem in the existence with urge of further struggle.

The struggle for the existence is the central issue in this play. However, a piece of literary composition requires no explanation; it stands on its own worth as it reveals about the human condition. The characters' struggle is in such an atmosphere where pain, failure, frustration, unrequited love, subtle hope, etc. prevail. They play the role of problematic characters. Masha is frustrated as she could not get expected result for her love to Treplev. Treplev runs after an ambition for his career and for Nina's love and gets failure ever. Nina's hope for her career as an actress dooms when she is deserted by Trigorin. Trigorin too is suffering his unsatisfactory building of his career through out the play. Such and such problems have asked struggles from the characters. Struggle can be seen all over the play. The struggle is existential because the characters supreme target is to achieve an existence, in amidst failure and frustration. Some questions can be raised - Why does Masha marries Medvedenko though she loves Treplev? Why does Nina elope with Trigorin? Why can not she forget the lake and the stage there? Why does Treplev shoot himself? All these are steps of struggle for their existence. A number of questions can be raised. These questions still remain unanswered even though the text has given rise to many interpretations. Ultimately we come to the question: is the entire play not a manifestation of struggle for existence? This question becomes a base for this thesis.

## **II: Heideggerian Model of Existentialism**

### **Existentialism: An Introduction**

Existentialism is rooted from the word 'existence' which is derived from Latin – where *ex* = out + *sistere* = to stand. Thus, the meaning of existence is to stand in the world that is incomprehensible (Stumpf 448). Existentialism, philosophy as such emphasizes human existence, man's vital experience in intimate relation with his body, the world and the society. Man is the central theme of the existentialism. Neither God nor the world apart from His or its relation to human existence is the concern of existentialism. Though existentialists are atheists and theists, even theists lay greater stress on man who experiences God or on the meaning of God in human experience. Existentialism emphasises man's interpretation of the world and the human society. It is not concerned with the nature of the world as it is in itself. Its standpoint is not that of a scientist, just as its approach to God is not that of theologian.

Under the influence of pre-modern and pre-philosophic thinkers, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers developed a new philosophic trend by placing man at the centre of their thought. This philosophic trend was developed as existentialism. Though originated in 20<sup>th</sup> century Existentialism as a philosophical movement got prominence particularly in Germany and France after the great two world wars. Great wars separated mankind from their relatives and nearer ones. That separation brought feeling of alienation and loneliness which further spreaded anguish, despair, forlornness, frustration, and so on. They could not believe in old concepts like unity, rationality, morality, value and even Christianity. It was during the time of war, when Europe found itself in a crisis and faced with death and destructions the existentialism began to flourish as a movement. Existentialism analyses dread, anguish, despair,

fidelity, hope, love, etc. and attempts to cover their meanings. By observing the world war period, Stumpf writes:

Existentialism was bound to happen. The individuals had over the centuries been pushed into the background by system of thought, historical events and technological forces. Every men and women were losing their peculiar human qualities. They were being converted from 'persons' into 'pronouns', from 'subjects' into 'objects' and from an 'I' into 'it'. (449)

Existential philosophy was highly used in literary writing as well during the years following the war, the time when Europe was in a despairing mood, perhaps with pessimistic intention and with the nausea of human existence and its frustration. Even the works of optimistic and confident authors like Karl Marx, Soren Kierkegaard, Frederich Nietzsche have the dark portrait of human life with existential themes.

Existential themes have been hinted at throughout the history of western philosophy including Socrates and his life, St. Augustine in his *Confessions* and Descartes' *Meditation*. Before the modern existentialists, we could find some norms of existentialism in the works of St. Augustine, Socrates, Pascal, Duns Scots and others in extent. They were followed by Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre, Simon de Beauvoir, Camus and others. Blaise Pascal published his book *Pensees*. In the work he described many fundamental themes of existentialism. Pascal argued that without a God, life would be meaningless and miserable. Gabriel Marcel persued theological version of existentialism, most notably Christian existentialism. Other theologian existentialists include Paul Tillich and Martin Buder. Hegel and Schopenhauer are other important influences on the development of existentialism.

Existentialism arose as a reaction against both Naturalism and Idealism and against other traditional European philosophies. According to Naturalism, material phenomena are governed by mechanical laws and matters, life and mind, though they are different from one another but are different function of material phenomena. The actions of man are determined by motives and impulses, which are ultimately functions of matter. Radhakrisnan writes:

Naturalism is the philosophy of the scientific man and is fast becoming.[...] The point to be noted for us here are these: man is an item among innumerable other items in a vast objective structure; he has no real freedom and everything in reality is in principle knowledge.  
(423)

According to Idealism, mind, spirit or consciousness is the ultimate reality; the absolute is the ultimate ground of everything including the human mind. The divine will shallows up the ultimate wills. Hence, human freedom is only an illusion. In idealistic picture the position of man is improved than in naturalistic picture, because it is in man both consciousness and the ideal are realized. Man is considered as a mere tool and has no real freedom. Radhakrishnan on the very book says: "Idealism tends to falsify our sense of death. In fact, in making us one with the ideal, it puts us beyond death" (424). Existentialism, thus, is a revolt against this falsification of real human existence. Both naturalism and idealism deny human freedom and individual human being. We have irrepressible consciousness of freedom and responsibility but this is not really explained by these philosophies.

Existentialism draws a distinction between 'essence' and 'existence'. In *Being and Time* Heidegger means by the term 'existence' the being of man (316). Idealists regard 'essence' universal concept or thought as prior to 'existence' where as

existentialists take it vice versa. Radhakrishnan says, "man should not be dehumanized, idealized or conceptualized. Man as he is, as he lives with his actual existence in all its layers has to be analysed, interpreted and evaluated" (435).

Existentialism stresses subjectivity of man. Unlike naturalism and materialism, which reduce man to matter and explain him by material phenomena, existentialism emphasises the subjective inwardness of human experience. Human experience can neither be reduced to thought nor to matter. Existentialism lays stress on the individual. It talks about individual and stresses freedom of the individual. To quote Encyclopedia Britannica: "Existentialism is investigation of the meaning of being" (822). But such investigation is not an easy task. This being that exists is man, according to Heidegger. He says, "Man only exists. Rocks are but they do not exist. Trees are, but they do not exist." (316). So, existentialism is generally considered a study that pursues meaning in existence of human being. More generally it rejects all of the western rationalist definitions of being. To quote Radhakrishnan again:

It (existentialism) tends to view human beings as subjects in an indifferent, objective, often ambiguous and 'absurd' universe in which meaning is not provided by natural order, but rather can be created, however, provisionally, by human beings' actions and interpretations.  
(427)

Though all existentialists talk about human being in individual with some common tendencies among them, they have many differences and disagreements among them. In general they give their personal ideas about human lives. The following illustration of J. B. Coats may clarify it much:

Every existentialist philosophy is necessarily a personal interpretation, it is limited by the limitation of the author; if the quality of his



experience is not of a high level, his thought will display his mediocrity; if he is lacking in wisdom his interpretation will record his folly; if he is a neurotic, his failures of adjustment will be manifest.

(Qtd. in *Sinha* 386)

Coats gets Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as neurotics; for him Jaspers and Buber are the wisest existentialists.

Existentialism is dominated by pessimism. It emphasizes on pessimistic feelings like solitariness, subjective inwardness, dread, despair, anguish, etc. Existentialism places the emphasis on the lack of meaning and purpose of life and solitude of human existence. Sinha talks about human being- "The human being as a being is nothing. The nothingness and the non-existence of an essence is the central source of the freedom the human being faces in each and every moment" (386).

Existential philosophy says human beings are condemned to be free. The existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Because as Sartre says our actions and choices are ours and ours alone, we are condemned to be responsible for our free choices. Yet the human choices are 'subjective'. Individuals are free to make their own choices and are completely 'responsible' for their choices.

The human beings have to take this freedom of being and the responsibility and guilt of his actions. They must not slip away from their responsibilities. They must take decisions. If human beings reject the false pretensions, the illusions of their existence having meaning. They encounter the absurdity. The human beings' role in the world is not pre-determined or fixed; they are compelled to make a choice. Choice is one thing the human being must make. When one refuses to choose, the trouble comes. Here, he cannot realize his freedom.

Human condition in the world is pathetic because he is in domination, humiliation and unsuccess. In his famous essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* Albert Camus says that the world is void, meaningless, irrational and at least absurd. To quote him further "For the existentialist the meaning of life is the most urgent of all those question, suicide is nothing but mercy of a social phenomenon" (57). In *The Rebel* camus talks about a slave who says – yes and no at the same time. Immediately the slave refuses to obey humiliating order of his master. He demands respect for himself. So, he rejects the condition of slavery.

Basically, existence has two forms: authentic and inauthentic. The authentic form of being is the being of the human being. But it is attained rarely by human. Yet it is what human must strive to gain. It is being for itself. The inauthentic being is the being of the things. It is characteristically distinctive of thing; it is what the human being is diseased with for his failure to act as a free agent and his impotency to reject bad faith. Inauthentic being is being-in-itself. Things are only what they are. But the human beings are what they can be. Things are determined, fixed and rigid whereas human beings are free because they can add essence in the course of their lives. The human beings do not live in a pre-determined world, they are free to realize their aim and their dreams. The human beings disguise themselves from freedom by self-deception, acting like things, instead of realizing the authentic being for the human being – this is bad faith. In such bad faiths, the human beings imprison themselves within inauthenticity for they have refused to take the challenge of responsibility.

### **Evolution of Existentialism**

Existentialism covers diverse and vast areas both geographically and theoretically. Because of many delimitation in the study, it is not possible for me to in-corporate all the philosophical doctrines and philosophers in this study. I have

attempted here to deal mainly with Martin Heidegger. Before going to him let's look at the evolution of existentialism in brief.

Existential thought consists the modes of existence, the condition of despair, the human being's tendency to avoid authentic existence, his relation to things, to his body or to the other beings, the suffering of life, etc. This thinking about being and his condition, and his relation is not a recent phenomenon. Though existentialism as a distinct philosophical and literary movement began and developed in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; its elements can be found in many works of pre-modern philosophers and writers. Existentialism goes back to man's pre-philosophical attempts to attain self-awareness and understanding of existence around the world. While studying pre-modern, pre-philosophical thinking, we get many existential elements and can realize that modern existentialists are only trying to reestablish those ideas. In ancient Greek thinking. Man also was the one part of their study man is the centre of existentialism.

Socrates showed his concern for personal existence. He recommended to everyman as edited by Peterfreund and Denise, "Know thyself for the unexamined life is not worth living" (183). In platonic tradition, the emphasis is on socrates playing the role of philosopher rather than on Socrates himself. In the *Apology*, Plato's Socrates has said – "Men of Athens I honour and love you; but I shall obey god rather than you, and while I have life and strength I never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy" (Peterfreund 184).

The main ideas of existentialist theory were already common to religious thoughts like the idea man being responsible for his own action and so on. These thoughts left many influences to theistic existentialism developed later. Theistic existential movement has been properly developed by St. Augustine and Pascal. In his most poignant work *Confessions*, Augustine has talked about human beings, their

conditions, their enslavement to the desires, swept by conflictic winds of passion and their corrupted morality. Augustine discovered that man is unable to make himself free from these deprived and helpless conditions through his own capacities. Like Socrates Augustine counsels us to "know ourselves". To Augustine it is in God alone that human despair comes to rest.

Existentialism got a distinct philosophical mode with the Danish Christian thinker Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1853) who is the first thinker to call himself an existentialist. He, being a religious thinker is an existentialist because he accepts the absurdity of the world as fully as Sartre and Camus. His works were popularized by Martin Heidegger. Kierkegaard is critical of Hegel's philosophical system which analyzed being or existence in an abstract and impersonal way. He discussed man's essence with the existential predicaments and limitations: hope, despair, anxiety, and so on. Kierkegaard takes human beings as god's creatures and offers many possibilities of being without reasons of heart or mind, Kierkegaard can get to God by a leap of faith. He believes only in existence of God, and not in any other doctrine. For Kierkegaard "to think in existence means to recognize that one is faced with personal choices. Human beings find themselves constantly in an existential situation" (*Gaarder* 450). This is Kierkegaard's central point that each person possesses an essential self which he or she should actualize. He became very much influential to later both theistic and atheistic existentialists.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), German Philosopher and poet, gave a new mode to existentialism. Before him there was majority of theistic existentialists. He strongly stood as an atheist declaring the death of God. With this idea of Nietzsche that God is dead, existentialism got a new mode where human existence is perceived with a new conception. Nietzsche was among catalytic literary writers like

Dostoyevsky and Rilke who have talked about human subjectivity and problematic human existence. His response to the tragedy of modern man was of anger and disgust. Nietzsche advocated for 'authentic living' and insisted that the individual must make his decisions entirely on his own. He advanced his thesis that for modern man 'God is dead.' In the absence of God or in replacement of God, Nietzsche proposes the concept of superman and will-to-power which is applauded by all modern existentialists. The superman is the higher man above 'the herd' with triumphant 'will-to-power'. He is free who takes what he wants and does what he likes. He is authentic. Toward the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century existential philosophy got company of some religious thinkers. Among those, famous theistic existentialists are Martin Buber, Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel.

The development of modern existentialism gets help from the works of the German phenomenologist Franz Brentano (1838-1917) and Edmund Husserl. 20<sup>th</sup> century German existentialism is represented by Martin Heidegger (1889-1979) and Karl Jaspers, French existentialism by Jean-Paul Sartre, Spanish existentialism by Jose Ortega Gasset and Italian Existentialism by Nicola Abbagnano. The most forceful voice of existentialist thought are the works of German and French existentialists: Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus.

Highly influenced by the ideas of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Marcel, German Philosopher Martin Heidegger, made further shaping and elaboration of the movement. He notably tried to disclose the ways of being in his most famous influential 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 – "what is the meaning of being" In his another book, *What is metaphysics?*

Heidegger has given a phenomenological approach to the situation of human existence.

If not in whole, talking about atheistic existentialism French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre is considered as the most influential of all-modern existentialists. He made existential philosophy popular even among laymen. His main idea is of freedom of human consciousness, freedom to act, freedom to value and freedom to make ourselves. Sartre is one of the self-declared existentialists. He declares the core of the existentialism to be 'existence precedes essences' which many others also have talked. Sartre takes the concept of individual conscious existence from Heidegger and concept of death of God from Nietzsche. He divides existentialists in two groups: theists and atheists. He makes a distinction between being – in itself and being – for itself. For him, the existence of God is not necessary for the existence of human beings. He believes we are makers of our destiny. We can make our future choosing it as we are condemned and free to choose. Hence, the human being is responsible for what he is.

Sartre's lifelong companion and intellectual associate Simone de Beauvoir chooses to concentrate on the personal and moral aspects of life. She attempts to apply existentialism to feminism.

Albert Camus was a journalist and a philosopher. More than that he was a literary practitioner of existentialism. His famous novel *The Stranger* (1942) concentrates on the alienation of the human being failure of human being and his inability to find values to shape his life. Thus the human being remains an outsider. For Camus, this world is absurd yet man has to face it or accept it as his destiny. This idea of Camus has been presented in his most influential essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Camus reaches to the conclusion declaring the condition of man absurd. By

portraying a tragic hero like Sisyphus, Camus tries to express man's pathetic, toilsome existence in the meaningless world. Camus makes the final of existentialism. Some say that Camus cannot be called an existentialist, but his ideas evolved alongside those of Sartre and others.

### **Martin Heidegger and His Existential Philosophy**

Primarily a phenomenologist, Martin Heidegger is regarded as an existentialist thinker though he personally never accepted it. Though his philosophy is scorned as rubbish by some contemporaries like the Vienna Circle and British Philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and Alfred Ayer, it became highly influential to others. His ideas about being, existence and metaphysics have influenced all modern philosophy. Moreover, almost all well – known modern existentialists are heavily relied upon Heidegger's philosophy about nature of human existence. Heidegger is regarded as a major influence on existentialism, deconstruction, hermeneutics and post- modernism. Thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lecoue Labarthe, Hans-Georg Gadamer have developed their Philosophies on the basis of Heidegger's one. Such an influential philosopher and his philosophy has been overshadowed and even scorned as rubbish because of his political loyalty to Nazism. For Heidegger, there is only basis question in philosophy: *Seinsfrage* or the question of being. Heidegger developed a philosophy in which he argued that the nature of human existence involved active participation in the world. His philosophy focuses on existence than on essence, on Being than on beings, consequences of choices and mode of being. Heidegger's personal life was as an 'active thinking being' which he loves much for human beings.

*Being and time* (German: *Sein und Zeit*, 1927) is Heidegger's most important work. Though his many latter works as well have become popular, almost all those

latter works have depended upon the central idea of *Being and Time*. The book as published is only one-third portion of the total project outlined in its introduction. This book marks a turning point in continental philosophy. It is said that many philosophical views and approaches, such as existentialism and deconstruction, would have been impossible without *Being and Time*. Existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre is strongly influenced by it. His notion of freedom, choice, responsibility, human consciousness and his famous work *Being and Nothing* are due to Heidegger's philosophical influence. Heidegger's other works like *What is Metaphysics?* (1929), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927), *Kant and Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), *The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysic* are some important with their philosophical emphasis on existentialism. Though Heidegger claimed that all of his writings. Concerned a single question, the question of being, in the years after the publication of *Being and Time* the focus of his work gradually changed. His latter works focus on art, technology and truth.

Most readers today tend to classify Heidegger as an existentialist, even though he never specifically adopted the term to describe his own philosophy nor accepted himself to be an existentialist. Moreover, Heidegger also distanced himself from Sartre's existentialism because the latter focused so much more on the nature of human reality than on the nature of being more generally. However, many latter philosophers relied heavily upon Heidegger's analysis of the nature of human existence as it relates to one's engagement with the outside world. Especially Heidegger's lifelong focus on the single question- what is being? and his ideas about being and existence made readers like me to take him as a prominent existentialist. Heidegger's concern is with being in its unity and totality rather than with existence but his very concept about being gives the existentialist movement and important



mode. Greeks and other philosophers too had talked about the meaning of being but Heidegger has attempted to find being not as a derivation from the individual existent but as being in itself, revealed in a context far more fundamental.

The question 'What is being?' is not Heidegger's coin. It seems that from Brentano's dissertation Heidegger learned that the philosopher has to answer one and only question, the question of being. Furthermore, he learned that this question is more fundamental than the problem of the special sciences, and that it is the most fundamental question a human being can ask. The history of question of being does not end only with Brentano. According to Aristotle "the question of being is the fundamental question of philosophy" (Qtd. in *Philipse* 5). Certainly, Heidegger studied Aristotle deeply. It seems in Herman Philipse's book that Heidegger was not satisfied with Aristotle's answer for the question of being for the following reason- "Although Aristotle analyzed different meaning of "being", he didn't discover the one leading and fundamental sense (*sinn*) for which the other meanings are some how derived" (6).

Heidegger claims that being aims at discovering one fundamental sense that underlines the other senses of "to be" (6). It means his question of being aims at revealing "the sense of being" (31). In his essay, *The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics*:

In whatever manner beings are interpreted whether as spirit, after the fashion of spiritualism; or as matter and force, after the fashion of materialism; or as becoming and life, or idea, will, substance, subject; or as the eternal recurrence of the same events-every time, beings as beings appear in the light of Being. (Heidegger 310)

Heidegger's existential philosophy begins with and moves round the question of being. This question also helps us to differentiate being from thing. By which he talks

about human beings in the world, their lives here, their possibilities for future with their path of choices, anguish they experience in their living and their survival with an awareness of inevitability of death. Philipse writes, “in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger often uses the term ‘being’ for constitution of being, whereas ‘a being’ refers to an entity that has a specific constitution of being”(17). From his interpretation of the concept of being, Heidegger produced a new conception and understanding of humanity. Between humanity and things for Heidegger there is this fundamental difference: only human being can raise the question about their being or about itself. Heidegger found an error in traditional philosophy and sought to correct it that is the tendency to think about humanity in the same way as we think about things. Unlike the being of things, the being of humanity includes an awareness of being. Referring to Heidegger's idea Stumpf writes in his book:

‘Unlike hammer, which is simply as kind of being, a person,’ says Heidegger, ‘always has to be (i.e. realize) his being as as his own’ - by which he means that one is aware of the possibility of being or not being one's own self. Whether one realizes or fails to realize this possibility of being one's unique self is a matter entirely of one's personal decision. (469)

Heidegger's use of the world 'being' is not only for passive existence; instead it is for the active engagement with the world-Dasein or 'being there', sometime is translated as 'presence'. Heidegger says a person's "being in the world" is a mode of being rather than a matter of spatial and temporal location. The word here is not an impersonal container of human being like a glass is a container of water; rather it is the field of human concern where we discover and develop our full potentials. Our 'being in-the world' is possible because of our relation with things and other beings in the world.

For we need an active existence. To talk about this concern of being, Heidegger's term Dasein in details will be suitable here.

Dasein is an important concept, which remained his most striking achievement, forged by Martin Heidegger in his magnum opus *Being and time*. By looking at the history of philosophy, Heidegger thought the word 'human' can be deceptive, because definitions of humanity have tended to resemble the definitions of things. So, to talk about human beings and their existence, he used the term Dasein. This term is derived from German word *da sein*, which literally means being there /here. Though many interpreters of his book have explained the term with its literal meaning, Heidegger was adamant that this is an inappropriate translation of Dasein. Some have translated it to mean 'Humanity'. For Heidegger we human beings are thrown into a world and Dasein is our consciousness of this thrown quality between concepts that form the reality of the present and the concern for the safety into future. Being comes into existence at the limit of the thrownness of everyday existence between past and future.

Dasein, according to Heidegger possesses a threefold structures which makes a being's relation to the world possible and worth some. These structures are: understanding, mood and discourse. The structure of understanding is Dasein's projecting of the context of purposes and their relationship within which any particular thing derives its meaning. Next structure is Dasein's mood that is how we will encounter our environment and get it. In a despairing or joyful mood our projects will open up as either despairing or joyful. The third structure of Dasein- discourse is subject of our speech which depends on our environment and so upon our moods. Together these three structures in their interrelationship represent the essential structure of Dasein's existence.

Heidegger analyzed Dasein in its temporal or historical character. For Heidegger, man is the being that knows he is going to die. This consciousness of and about his being is Dasein. He dies not only at the end of his life but every day or every moment of it. Death is a certainty among innumerable uncertainties of life. Death is life's boundary and is its supreme possibility. Death becomes goal of a man's existence. It is primordial reality. Sinha says: "Man's being is for death"(388). For Heidegger, man is the being that knows he is going to die. This consciousness of and about his being is Dasein. He dies not only at the end of his life but everyday or every moment of it. Death is a certainty among innumerable uncertainties of life. Death is life's boundary and is its supreme possibility. Death becomes goal of a man's existence. It is primordial reality. Stumpf adds, "He (Heidegger) emphasises element of time in human existence. We know time, he says, because we know we are going to die. Man's existence therefore is temporal (471). This is the temporal awareness for Heidegger. This awareness of time, the being knows his approaching death. Man looks his past, observes it in memory and estimates for future counting the approaching death. Death is a scary subject. Most people don't look forward to death, and wish to postpone it as long as possible. However, accepting our temporal finiteness implies confronting death. Philippe further elaborates, "We try to hide our finiteness from ourselves, and to make ourselves feel at ease in everyday life. The tendency to flee from finiteness and from it into worldly occupations is what Heidegger calls *verfallen*, the 'falling' of Dasein" (18). About temporality of Dasein Fuller writes:

The Greeks failed, in Heidegger's view, properly to assess time other than as a sequence of presents. But man is not simply his present. He is his past and his future. Man is forever oriented to his future, to his

possibilities. He is projected toward the future, toward something yet to come and this inspires *anxiety* and, to use a term which Heidegger has filled with meaning *care*. Man transcends himself toward the future. He lives continually ahead of himself. His very being is temporality. (608)

Man wants to live longer as he thinks new possibilities may improve his daily existence. He lives waiting for new possibilities to choose.

For Heidegger man is possibility and his existence is in the choice of possibilities open to him. He keeps on choosing and gets new possibilities to face (Stumpf 469). Our present is outcome of our own choices. We chose many possibilities throughout our present we lived (past) and construct our new present. Our every moment is outcome of our own choices. We must stay in the world and to create lives for ourselves. We must create our selves from choices. This choice is never final as existence is in determinate. Man is free and acts in accordance with the demands of historic situation that gives more possibilities. But man is not totally free. On the basis of Heidegger's ideas, Jadunath Sinha says:

I can free myself from a particular preoccupation but not from some preoccupations; so I can free myself from dependence upon some persons but not from all relations. I am in the world in the sense that I am an existence not chosen, but having to be chosen. (381)

Out of possibilities man is not only free to choose, he is also condemned to choose, condemned to be free. Philipse adds- "Heidegger contends that Dasein is faced with a fundamental choice: the choice between being oneself (authentic) and fleeing from oneself (inauthentic). It may seem that the choice between authentic and inauthentic is merely a choice at the ontical level" (19). Being's continuous task of choice ends when its existence ends.

Heidegger evaluates man's existence in two modes i.e. authentic and inauthentic. Human existence is authentic only when he faces up to the world in all its particularistic and concreteness. His authentic existence requires that he recognizes and affirms his own unique self with his responsibility for his every action. But generally we live an inauthentic life because we deal with the world through abstractions. We level us downward toward an averageness and behave like the average 'everyman,' leaving our selves. Authentic existence, a particular mode of being, is a necessary condition for being able to obtain a specific kind of knowledge, ontological knowledge of Dasein (Heidegger 19). Heidegger agrees in this point that people tend toward inauthentic rather than authentic existence. According to him it is because people want to avoid dread or anxiety.

According to Heidegger, Anxiety ultimately has its origin in our very mode of being (197). A person knows limitations and temporality of his existence and when he sees transparently what and who he is, anxiety intrudes. The experience of anxiety brings one to the profoundest level of human emotion. It is not simply a psychological state, nor is it similar to fear. Fear has an object, a definite enemy against which it is possible to defend oneself. But anxiety is an indefinite 'feeling about', it refers to nothing. It is not any things in the world but the fact of being in the world that produces anxiety. Anxiety reveals the presence of 'nothingness' in our being. It demands a choice between inauthentic impersonal existence and authentic existence. Being's existence has inevitability of death. So, man always lives with dread.

Dread is the experience of nothing. But this nothing for Heidegger is not merely the negation for something Heidegger wonders when science investigates of what is and reject any consideration of what is not or nothing. In his unusual essay entitled *What is Metaphysics?* he talks about very nothing. Nothing for him can be

experienced and its experience is an experience of naked 'is-ness' and being devoid of all meaning. Nothing is primordial being the ground from which everything comes and to which it must return. Man always experiences that nothing and exists with anxiety. Heidegger agrees with Hegel's logic that "pure Being and pure Nothing are the same." He further says:

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

Heidegger makes a sharp distinction between 'essences' and 'existence' in his view, when we ask a thing we are actually asking about its essences. This doctrine-existence precedes essence became pivotal idea of existentialism. The essence of Dasein lies in its existence. Through Dasein we seek one's being rather than its what-ness. Dasein must be distinguished from existent things. The existent things always belong to a genus and have describable qualities. They have essence. But with Dasein there is no essence. Dasein is being that can be a conscious existence man has existence and has possibility. He exists through his choices. Fuller's following lines say:

'Animals and inanimate things' are there 'because they are localizations in space and time, but they do not exist'. Only man exists, because only man has a conscious awareness of his existence. True being is self being, involving not only consciousness but responsibility and free decision as well. (607)

The individual being achieves self transcendence through ethical choice. Self transcendence is transcendence of the world through active participation. It is also

transcendence of the individual's momentary existence in his absorption in the thought of death. Man's struggle for existence always remains for at least an existence only; though their main struggle is to achieve a meaningful existence or to achieve self-transcendence.



### **III: Existential Problems and Need of Struggle in *The Seagull***

The playwright Anton Chekhov has repeatedly emphasized the mundane life of characters in his play, *The Seagull*. Chekhov dramatizes the issues of life, which are not obvious or exciting in the theatrical sense. He has dramatized his characters rather than his plot: it is they who direct the scenic development of the issues. While observing the development of the play, we get majority of characters facing harshness in their issues of lives. Almost all of them, to take some major ones: Masha Sorin, Treplev, Trigorin and Nina, have been surviving lives with existential crises and are struggling to achieve a successful, meaningful existence with admiration from others. Masha, twenty-two years old daughter of estate manager Shamrayev and Polina, at the beginning of the play brings our attention to think for her problematic existence when she says: "I'm in mourning for my life. I'm unhappy" (73). She transfers the purpose of mourning for death to life. She bemoans her boredom and dissatisfaction with her life as she secretly hopes it will be turned around with the love of Treplev. At the end of the act first Masha in despairing way confesses that she loves Treplev and no one knows her suffering. If Treplev loved her in return, her life would suddenly have a purpose and meaning. Without his love, Masha views her life as pointless and death-like. She thinks life to be a punishment that must be fulfilled. In the opening of act three, she says - "[. . .] So I simply decided to wrench this love out of my heart and uproot it" (102). Desperate Masha, to cure herself, resigns herself to marry her poor school master, Medvedenko. Though married to one and borne him a son, Masha yet loves Treplev like before. Only a subtle hope, to get Treplev's heart, is with her which is enabling her to struggle against harshness of life.

Peter Sorin, old man of sixty, wonders why he goes on living. He is living a sick and weak retired life. He cannot figure out the meaning of his life. He thinks

about his past and becomes so sad thinking that there is no meaning in his past life. He spent most of his life working in an office and he does not know why or how that came to happen. "It just happened" (117), he says. Sorin sympathizes Treplev because he observes Treplev struggling to fulfil goals like being a writer and a lover that Sorin himself once held as his own goals. But ironically, he never married nor wrote a page.

Chekhov's another character Constantine Treplev, 25, is most suffered character among all. He becomes the most serious victim of triangular love affairs among characters. Treplev has an ambition of being a successful writer and getting Nina and his mother's love. Throughout the play, he struggles hard yet gets the reality harder. He pursues meaning in his life, believing he will find his identity through his work. He longs to be a successful writer with admirations of others. He writes a play; it fails and he is frenzies of despair. He writes stories; but they dissatisfy him. He loves Nina, but she deserts him for his mother's lover, Trigorin. He tries to shoot himself; but fails. He tries again and at last succeeds; but that indeed is the one thing in which poor Constantine ever does succeed.

Constantine Treplev has a feeling that he is deprived from proper direction in his life. He thinks he is talented and creative, possible of greatness, but his ambition of success as a writer and as a lover dooms. In act three, he says - "I'm more talented than all you lot put together" (108). On the very page talking with Irina about his love to Nina and Nina's indifferences to it, Treplev says - "... I've nothing left. She doesn't love me and I can't write any more" (108). Treplev is so tired of life and cannot choose life rather surrenders to death. While talking to Nina in act four Treplev says, "Life's been unbearable" (127). For that he loves death. His failure as a writer, as a lover, as a son (mother doesn't pay proper attention to him), as a rival (to Trigorin) make his struggle for life to be changed to his struggle for death. Due to

repeated attempts to commit suicide, his struggle seems rather to be a struggle for death, but actually it is not.

Boris Trigorin, a dowdy person, suffers an existential crisis due to his own ambitious nature. He is a writer who may satisfy his public but cannot satisfy himself. He passed his life with his devotion to writing and for that he forgot his youth as well. When he meets Nina, he realizes and creates a new sense of awareness about his existence, i.e. Dasein in Heidegger's word. This awareness of lost youth makes him excited. In excitement he is infatuated with Nina. This young lady is bewitched by his ideas or way of talking and falls madly in love with him. As he loves other old lady Arkadin too, he selfishly pleads with her to allow him to be with Nina so that he can relive his youth. In youth Trigorin lived in a serious way, not frolicking with young girls. Now, he thinks about his past which lost the meaning and his future threatens to have meaning only if he attempts to have an affair with Nina. On the one hand he wants to enjoy, on the other he wants to be a successful writer like Turgenev. This living of his, in a conflicting situation makes him needy to struggle for his existence.

Nina Zerechny is a young girl with a dream for a successful life. She is the daughter of a strict rich land owner who does not let her freely to go out. She wants to be an actress which her parents do not like. She, like Treplev, wants a meaningful life with admiration of others. At the beginning of the play, Nina believes she will love herself and find happiness if she can acquire fame and fortune; but her this hope lies in shade later. In the beginning, Nina loves Treplev and they together perform a play which she acts. But the play goes flop. After that she is wildly bewitched by Trigorin, another writer's love affair. She may naively picture great writers as radiantly enthroned on bed of roses. She leaves her parental house and elopes with Trigorin by forgetting Treplev, the former lover. For going with Trigorin she dreams to be an

famous actress. At last of act second, Nina murmurs “A dream!” which becomes like mirage to her. But in act four, we get Nina living a different life. Nina had borne a child to Trigorin, which died, and then Trigorin went to his old mistress; leaving Nina to become a struggling actress on the provincial stage. The lost Nina comes to the old stage in her mad-like situation. Yet she seems not tired with her unsuccessful struggle, rather she comes with a new belief that endurance is nobler than success. Certainly, it is not her desire to change her belief of life but it is the bitter option she has got to choose for her further existence with struggle. She says, “I’m not fit to live” (Act IV 127), yet lives.

Irina Arkadin is mother of Treplev and an actress of forty-three. In Chekhov’s own words, she is “a foolish, medacious, self-admiring egoist” (Qtd. in Lucas 42). She is ruthlessly possessive about her money, her success as an actress, her dresses, and her lover. It is perhaps not too much to say that Arkadin is really a great actress precisely because of her self-centered nature, because of the very superficiality of her emotions or because she is incapable of the kind of sincerity which Nina or Masha possesses. Though she loves her son and her brother Sorin, she has no time to read her son’s writings. She is jealous of her son’s beloved Nina, seeing her as a potential rival on the stage. Her life becomes problematic with the rise of Nina who later becomes actual rival of her when she runs with Trigorin, Arkadin’s lover. Treplev becomes an addition to her problem. Because of his 'unbearable' situation, he attempts to commit suicide again and again. Arkadin thinks that her son Treplev is out of the proper path. So, she worries. To her, there remains another burden that is Sorin, her old brother. But most of the time she is in problem with her love, stage career, money and beauty and for what she has to go through a struggle.

Among other remaining characters Medvedenko is suffering in his poverty and

one-sided love with Masha; Shamrayev cannot make his owner satisfied as a manager; his wife Polina loves Dr. Dorn and wants to run away with him; Dr. Dorn being doctor never can treat other properly and so on. These all have their own problems in their existence for what they need struggle in every step. Though their problems and struggles have been over-shadowed due to main characters' pathetic, chaotic, meaningless existence with inevitability of struggle and difficulty to succeed yet. The ambitious, yet bitterly unsuccessful and meaningless lives of the characters impressed me to go through their problematic existence and to look at their struggles against the problems in detail. To facilitate my study, I deal with characters' paths of lives with German philosopher Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy. The following is the application of Heideggerian existential elements with characters' struggle for existence.

### **Dasein**

The characters in Chekhov's *The Seagull* seem to be similar to the human being of our society, for which style of presentation Chekhov is famous as a realistic writer. Almost all of them have awareness of their situation in which they are living. According to Heidegger, human beings are thrown into the world. The consciousness of this thrown quality in the temporality of present is denoted by Heidegger with the word-Dasein. Dasein is the quality of human beings which helps us to distinguish them from things. In between reality of the past and hope of the future, there lies the temporality of present, on which point of time we live with consciousness of our thrown quality. Certainly, for Heidegger, Dasein is awareness or consciousness of our being. All the characters in Chekhov's *Seagull* too, seem with proper awareness of their thrownness. They all are conscious about their present and are enduring with ambition of a bright future. They are perfectly aware of their present situation and

accordingly proceed and maintain relations with others. Being's existence is tied up by his relation with other beings and things. Character's love, desire for love and triviality with one another are because of their relations and their awareness of their being. In the act one Sorin says the following:

SORIN (leaning on a stick): Country life doesn't really suit me, boy  
and I shall never get used to this place, you can see for yourself. I  
went to bed at ten o'clock last night and woke at nine this morning,  
feeling as if all that sleep had glued my brain to my skull or  
something (laughs). Then I happened to drop off again this  
afternoon (74)

By these lines we get Sorin is very much conscious about his present, about his life and health and is not satisfied with it. He knows that the town is better for his health, for his being; yet he has been thrown in a village. Similarly, Trigorin gets his life a barbarous one. He is obsessed with his present, yet he is struggling with a hope of a better future. To quote him here:

TRIGORIN: ... I feel I must go to my desk hurry up and start writing,  
writing, writing all over again. This sort of thing goes on all the  
time, I can never relax, and I feel I'm wasting my life. I feel I'm  
taking pollen from my best flowers, tearing them up and stamping  
on the roots-all to make honey that goes to some ague, distant  
destination. (Act II 98-99)

Trigorin knows his present only as a writing being and fears his future thinking that after his death while crossing his grave, his friends and readers will say - "Here lies Trigorin, a fine writer. But not as good as Trugenev" (Act II 99). His goal is to achieve a fame like of Turgenev. He is not satisfied with his past and fears his future;

for that at present, he wants to live his past and make something for his future. So, he lives an active life at present.

Nina loves to be an actress. First problem to her is her strict father who doesn't let her to go out. This ambition to be an actress becomes the main footsteps she follows for her problematic future. Like other characters she too is properly aware about her existence. In the play immediately after her arrival:

NINA: I have to leave in half an hour, so, we must be quick. No, no, don't try and keep me. For god's sake. My father doesn't know I'm here [ . . ] my father and stepmother won't let me come here [ . . ] They're afraid of me going on the stage. (Act I 78)

Nina faces the reality. Though she is aware, she cannot devoid herself from the problematic existence. She is ambitious and her struggle is to achieve the ambition. But upto the later part of the play, she realizes her failure and she compares herself with the Seagull which is killed by someone just to pass the time. Her problematic existence is more problematized by her relation with Trigorin. She says with Treplev, "He (Trigorin) didn't believe me in the stage, he always laughed at my dreams and I gradually stopped believing too and lost heart" (Act IV 127).

Treplev too is an ambitious boy like Nina. His ambition makes him actually well conscious about his living. He wants to be a successful writer and wants Nina's love in return to his. He knows clearly about his goal, his responsibility to himself and to his family; and works for that. He loves his mother very much but he is too much jealous to her lover, Trigorin. He is properly conscious about his being and struggles for ambition; yet with failure he rather reaches to obsession.

### **Temporal Awareness (Death and Future)**

Heidegger's emphasis on temporal nature of Dasein makes us to know that our life is confined by time limit. Because of what, we get time consciousness. As the temporal nature of Dasein means we live in our present, observing our past (memory) and fearing our future (imagination). Due to time consciousness we know we are going to die. Yes, mankind here are to die. Man's Dasein is limited by time. He looks his past and estimates for future. He observes his passed life and counts for approaching death. In *The Seagull* majority of characters are unsatisfied with their past. They are living at present featuring (with hope of improvement) future. In first act Sorin says: "... and now I feel more dead than alive" (74). This line clarifies his consciousness about approaching death. He looks through his past and becomes unhappy with it. He says - "As a young man I always looked as if I had a hangover and so on. Women never liked me" (Act I 79). Like this Sorin lives calculating the pulses of time. Toward the closing of act three Arkadin says - "Good-bye, darlings. We'll meet again next summer if we're alive and well" (112). This shows her awareness about uncertainty of death and future and domain of idea of death in her mind.

Throughout her short life Nina has suffered much. She can not get success in her ambition nor can to be happy with her older lover, Trigorin. In the act four Nina says- "I'm not fit to live. [...] oh, I'm so tired, I need a rest, a rest" (127). Now, she realizes that she cannot tolerate such suffering any longer. For that, she wants rest from life. Another character Treplev too has the similar experience, on the very page he says - "Life's been unbearable" (Act IV 127). It means though their lives are problematic; they are bearing unbearable problems only for their existence. This shows their struggle for existence.



While analyzing Heidegger's idea of human existence *History of Philosophy* has said - "Man is forever oriented to his future, to his possibilities. He is projected toward the future, toward something yet to come" (608). Certainly most of the characters in *The Seagull* are thinking and living for future. Their ambitions are for fame to be gained in future. By any means they want to achieve their loving ones' heart. Yet the triangular love always becomes mirage to them. Masha loves Treplev so much that it has made her almost mad. She fears for her future. So that she cannot wait for Treplev's heart and marries with a poor schoolmaster who loves her. This choice of her is not for her happy future but only for sustaining it. Treplev loves Nina and is determined for his career as a writer. Both love and career building are for future. He wants an admiring success as a writer and eternal love from Nina. His suicide is due to his failure to achieve his goal. Nina leaves Treplev and loves madly to Trigorin, not because he is young and attractive, but because she thinks it would be easier path to her success as an actress. She views Trigorin as one of the best writers and imagines a bright future while being with him.

Trigorin's unquenched thirst for his career of a writer is his orientation for future. He wants to be Turgenev and his struggle is to reach upto that point. Madam Arkadin too is very much concerned about her career. She loves her career more than her only son and the old brother. She cares and spends time and money for her physical beauty. Arkadin is jealous to Nina thinking her to be a potential rival of her own. The temporal nature of Dasein, as Heidegger believes made them fear for death and orientation for future career.

### **Choice**

Man chooses and makes his destiny himself. Man's existence, for Heidegger, is in the choices of the possibilities open to him. Man gets many possibilities in his

daily living and he keeps on choosing and getting the more new possibilities. He finds himself 'thrown into the world' and here he must stay but to create a life for himself he must also create his self. To create a self, through many choices, is a continuous task that is never finished. So, his present is outcome of a consequence of the choices he must make everyday. His present, his being, his Dasein is his own choice. Choice is never final. While looking at *The Seagull* all characters are in a fixed situations or stand points which are product of their continuous choices. For their existence, they continuously are keeping on choosing new possibilities. They choose a possibility and take themselves to a situation they preferred. But their some mistakes in choices and other consequences take them rather toward their harsh problematic situations. All the problematic situations they are facing are product of their own choices. Their problematic existence is the derivative of their own choices. In the play, Arkadin chooses to be fashionable rather than to be responsible for her son. She doesn't give a proper guardianship to her son. She advocates for the writing of her lover, Trigorin rather than of her son. This can be the one of the reasons of Treplev's depression and suicide. The situation what she has to face after Treplev's death, i.e. after the fall of the curtain of the play, seems problematic and is consequence of her own choices. Her relation with Trigorin, to her son and her rivalry with Nina all are her choices. She is leading her life to the gulf of problems by choosing such and such possibilities.

Masha, a young character of the play, seems very conscious about her choices. She chooses to love Treplev who doesn't love in return and not to love Medvedenko who loves her very much. Regarding her choice not to love him, in the act one Masha says to Medvedenko- "What rubbish. You'r loving me is all very touching, but I can't love you back and that's that" (74). During the living of life, she knows that her existence is more important than her love. For that reason, now, she chooses Medvedenko to

marry with, though she doesn't love him. Her this choice seems one of the strongest steps the characters have taken in their struggle for existence.

Treplev's choices to be a writer and to be a lover create problems in his living. His career as a writer makes him near to Nina, to whom he chooses to love instead of loving Masha in return for her love. His choice to be a writer develops rivalry between him and Trigorin, an established writer. So, Treplev is too much jealous for Trigorin's success, and his mother's and Nina's love to Trigorin. This choice of him becomes the most problem deriving factor in his life. He loves a life with success and admirations of others. But when he cannot achieve his ambition, he thinks worthless to live further. He gets his life unbearable and tries to commit suicide. When he fails to commit suicide in his first attempts he again chooses to live by developing a hope for a new success. He again tries to achieve his career and to get Nina's hand. But fails. So, again he chooses to commit suicide and succeeds. This is only success he achieved through his choices but bitterly, this success ends his existence. His choices in the struggle for existence always give him failure.

Another character Sorin is suffering his problematic present which is consequence of choices he had made in his sixty years long life. Even now he chooses life to death though he knows his present life is very much unbearable to bear. He in agony remembers past choices he had made. To quote him here -

SORIN In youth I wanted to become a writer I didn't. I wanted to speak well-I spoke atrociously. I'd be doing a summing-up sometimes, and find myself jawing on and on till I broke out in a sweat. I wanted to marry-I didn't. I wanted to live in town all the time- and here I am ending my days in the country and so on (Act IV 117).

Now, Sorin clearly knows that he wanted one and chose the other in his past. He now knows what he should have chosen and what shouldn't; he chose not the intended one. Because of his such choices he is facing his lonely, obsessed present.

The young lady Nina also chooses many things and makes her existence the more problematic. Firstly, she chooses to come to Sorin's garden with a hope of being an actress. Treplev loves her and she too loves him. But later when she meets Trigorin, she chooses to transfer her love to him. This choice of her to love Trigorin becomes the most harmful for her life. Later Trigorin betrays her and proceeds relation with Arkadin. She has a hope that her love with Trigorin will help her to achieve her ambition; but that cannot be. So, at last she realizes a need to choose a new path for her existence and for that she prefers existence to her career:

NINA: [. . .] Constantine, I know now, I've come to see, that in our work- no matter whether we're actors or writers-the great things isn't fame or glory, it isn't what I used to dream of, but simply stamina. You must know how to bear your cross and have faith. I have faith and things do not hurt me so much now. And when I think of vocation I'm not afraid of life (Act IV 128).

By her own choices, Nina has get a mad-like life. Yet she is struggling alone for her existence and wants life. Now, though she has regret for her past choices, which she cannot change now, she lives with hope of new possibilities and her opportunity for appropriate choice.

Another important character in *The Seagull*, Trigorin also makes many choices on his path of life. His choices to be a writer, to love Nina, to love Arkadin, are some. His choice to be a writer makes him a suffering being; because on the one hand he is not satisfied with his creation and on the other he doesn't like his friends' attention,

praise and admiration to his works. Trigorin loves Arkadin but when he gets Nina, he takes this as his opportunity to enjoy with her. He enjoys and later betrays her. He reestablishes relation with Arkadin. Though Trigorin's situation in the play does not seem much problematic, his choices have disturbed others lives. Similarly other remaining characters too have chosen something from their many possibilities and have created their present and still are struggling for future betterment. Who they are and what they have at present are products of their own choices which they had made during their struggle for existence.

### **Authentic Existence**

Majority of the characters in *The Seagull* are living their inauthentic lives and are struggling to achieve an authentic one. Rather than living a life with determined self, majority of them choose to live in group i.e. to be "everyman." For Heidegger, human existence becomes authentic only when he faces up to the world in all its particularities and concreteness. He should be a unique self with his responsibility for his every action. Characters of *The Seagull* are including themselves in general groups to avoid anxiety. They want to call themselves artists on the stage, and players while playing cards. Yet some of them want their authentic existence and are struggling for that. Those who are struggling for their authentic existence are desirous to construct a self of their own. Both Arkadin and Nina want to establish themselves as actresses on the one hand and are seeking love of Trigorin on the other. It is their search of authenticity. In act two Nina says to Trigorin - "You're one in a million-have fascinating, brilliant lives full of meaning. You're lucky" (98). It means that Nina as well wants to be such a lucky one with 'a fascinating, brilliant life full of meaning'. Such a life can be an authentic one for her. She again reveals her desire to be famous and to be celebrity. To quote some lines here:

NINA: And I'd like to be in your shoes.

TRIGORIN: Why?

NINA: To see how it feels to be a famous, gifted writer. How does it feel? What's the sensation, being a celebrity? (Act II 97)

In act four while talking with Treplev Nina says: “[. . .] come and see me when I'm a great actress” (128). It means she has still a desire and hope to get a successful life of an actress which can be authentic to her. Like Nina, Arkadin too is very concerned for her career. To achieve her career of an actress, she prepares herself by this and that. In the play:

IRINA: I keep myself in trim and my clothes and hair are always just right. Do I ever go out, even in the garden, with my housecoat on, without doing my hair? No, I don't. That's why I've lasted so well because I've never been slovenly and left myself go like some I could mention. See what I mean? [...] I could play a girl of fifteen (Act II 90).

These lines acknowledge us that Arkadin is too much concerned for her career. She wants to develop or establish a self of her with authenticity.

Next character Treplev, too, is very much aware for his authentic existence. He thinks his career as a writer and his love with Nina as base for his life. His life long struggle too is to achieve these two targets. To get success on these is his only goal. But destiny comes upon him with failure on each side. He loves his authentic existence which is his world of dream and when he cannot achieve it in frustrated mood he shoots himself. Treplev's struggle is for his authentic existence. In the beginning of the Act four Treplev plays a melancholy Walz in the next room. That shows his failure to achieve an authentic existence and depression caused by it. When

he cannot be a successful writer with admiration of others and a successful lover with Nina's love in return, he gets the life to be inauthentic and commits suicide rather than to surrender to inauthenticity. So, his suicide can be counted as his martyrdom to authentic existence for which he was struggling.

Other remaining characters like Masha, Trigorin, Sorin, Dr. Dorn too at first want their authentic lives but when they know that it is impossible for them to achieve authentic existence, they compromise with their inauthentic lives because they love existence more than success. Yet, they haven't left their desire to be an authentic being. Masha thinks the authenticity of her life is possible only when she gets Treplev's love. She loves him from her inner heart and struggles to win his heart but cannot. To sustain her existence she marries Medvendenko. By this she chooses a family life, a social life as she couldn't get a life of self. Even after her marriage, she is hoping to get Treplev's love and lives with hope which never comes to her. Trigorin wants a good improvement in his career. He is not satisfied with his writing and always wants to be a writer like "Turgenev". But rather than to practice more for his authentic existence Trigorin begins to take enjoyment by engaging himself in relation with Nina and Arkadin. With Nina he wants to quench his thirst of youth thinking it as his opportunity. He doesn't leave his desire for an authentic existence yet does not work hard for it. So, his struggle seems more toward inauthenticity. To sum up, the authentic existence is the main goal of almost all characters. They have desires to achieve authenticity in existence which lead them to a continuous struggle.

### **Anxiety**

The temporal nature of Dasein and characters' desire, hope and struggle for an authentic existence become the problem for them against which they have to fight. Both of these elements develop a feeling of anxiety in them. They have their dream

for authentic existence and they are living inauthentic lives. Furthermore, they are totally aware about temporality of the existence i.e. they know the fact that their lives are to die. Yes, each moment they are approaching death. Heidegger says - anxiety ultimately has its origin in our own mode of being. Being's existence has inevitability of death. Anxiety intrudes as he knows he is going to die soon. Being fears death because it is the end of his existence. This psychological level of fear is anxiety. On the other side, being fears to be lonely; for that he erases his authentic existence (self) and wants to go to inauthentic (group). Because of this anxiety he prefers inauthentic existence. Though there intrudes anxiety while they exist their authentic existence, majority characters of *The Seagull* are struggling for authenticity. While struggling for their authentic existence, they realize their approaching death. In the play Dorn and Sorin talk about life and death like this:

DORN: To talk about being fed up with life at the age of sixty-two-  
that's a bit cheap, wouldn't you say?

SORIN: Don't keep on about it, can't you see I want a bit of life?

DORN: That's just silly. All life must end, it's in the nature of things.

(Act IV 118).

Here, Sorin has feeling of anxiety. He is anxious to death. He wants to live longer because he hopes remaining life may give new possibilities to him from which he can achieve an authentic existence.

Treplev is the another character who has feeling of anxiety to inauthentic existence which he doesn't like. He wants an authentic life with requited love of Nina and success as a writer but as he couldn't get it, he decides to shoot himself. His suicide is due to his feeling of anxiety to face an inauthentic life. After killing the Seagull Treplev says - "I shall soon kill myself in the same way" (96). It shows



feeling of death has hunted him because of his flopped play. Treplev's suicide can be taken as one step of his struggle to achieve the authentic existence, though it ends any possibility.

Though Nina's living is very much problematic, she wants longer life. Feeling of death has come into her mind. In anxiety of that in act four she repeats the following dialogue from Treplev's play which she had acted. NINA: [. . .] Men, lions, eagles and partridges, horned deer, geese, spiders, and silent fishes, denizens of the deep, starfishes and creatures invisible - that is all life, all life, all life-has completed its melancholy cycle and died (128). Nina realizes that like all these creatures one day she too should die and for that she fears to face the death. She repeatedly recites these lines. She feels presence of anxiety inside her.

Another character Irina Arkadin, too, shows her awareness to the approaching death. Though she directly does not show the anxiety for death, her lines with awareness of death seem pregnant with it (anxiety). In act three when she says - "Good bye, darlings. We'll meet again next summer if we're alive and well" (112). Among the words pronounced here we easily can read Arkadin's feeling of anxiety.

Certainly, death is a certainty among innumerable uncertainties of human life. Though it would be better not to fear death as Dorn says- "fear of death's an animal thing, you must get over it" (118), we fear death as it makes the full stop of our existence in the world. It ends our relation to the world. While going through an evaluation in *The Seagull* we get feeling of anxiety in the characters thoroughly. On the one hand there is anxiety due to temporality of Dasein, where characters want to get an happy, successful and fearless existence; for that they struggle and on the other side, the anxiety is there to choose between authentic and inauthentic existence that sustains characters' life long struggle for their existence.

### **Existence Precedes Essence**

In the play *The Seagull* the characters who are running after their career, love and meaning in the lives latter surrender to their empty existence when they get failure while struggling to achieve the essence. Their compromise with existence is a proof to say existence precedes essence. Heidegger has said that Dasein's essence lies in its existence (*Socrates to Sartre* 469). For that reason, characters' quest is for existence. Man wants his existence to essence. Existence is the element which differentiates human beings from things. Things need whatness, the essence; i.e. their qualities. They are measured or weighed in terms of their qualities. Animals and inanimate things should possess qualities whereas being need existence. For human being existence is primary and essence is secondary. Career and meaning are essence of life. Masha, Sorin and Nina like characters in *The Seagull* prefer their existence to their love, happiness and career.

Masha has ambition to win Treplev's heart and struggles throughout. But latter she decides to marry with Medvedenko only to sustain her existence. Certainly, she has a dream to get Treplev's love in return for her. Yet placing her dream at a side she chooses her existence. Her such a decision can be observed in her following conversation with Trigorin:

MASHA: I'm telling you all this because you're a writer and can use it.

[. . .] I'm quite brave, though, so I simply decided to wrench this love out of my heart and uproot it.

TRIGORIN: But how?

MASHA: By getting married. To Medvedenko.

TRIGORIN: I don't see the need.

MASHA: To be hopelessly in love, just waiting, waiting for years on

end. But when I'm married I shan't bother about love, new worries will drive out old, and anyway it'll make a change, won't it? (Act III, 102)

As revealed in these lines, Masha prefers existence to love. Treplev's love to her would certainly make her existence happier but if it becomes difficult to get his love, she sacrifices her love for her existence. It is because she thinks existence more important than essence of life.

Similarly, the old man Sorin is living an unhappy life. His living is painful due to his ill health and old age, yet he loves his existence and says, "one wants to live, even at sixty" (act II, 92). His this saying convinces us about the superiority of existence to essence. Sorin chooses life to death, though his life is painful to bear. Likewise, Nina is another character who loves her existence to anything else. Nina, an ambitious girl for her career as an actress, elopes with dowdy Trigorin forgetting Treplev, the former lover. Her elopement is with a hope of help for her career as an actress. By hook or crook she wants to create essence in her life. But latter when she is deserted by Trigorin, she realizes that it is almost impossible for her to get success in her career. She, therefore, changes the philosophy of her life and tries to sustain her existence. To quote her conversation with Treplev here:

NINA: [. . .] Constantine, I know now, I've come to see, that in our work - no matter whether we're actors or writers - the great thing isn't fame or glory, it isn't what I used to dream of, but simply stamina. You must know how to bear your cross and have faith. I have faith and things don't hurt me so much now. And when I think of my vocation, I'm not afraid of life. (Act IV 128)

This is because of Nina's desire to live a life. Though success might be her ambition,

yet existence seems more impressive to her than success (essence).

The characters prefer their existence even if it is without meaning, without success or without happiness; i.e. essence. Though there is failure, suffering and frustration in their present lives they still want to live longer. They prefer even a sorrowful existence to death. Sorin's present life is very much sorrowful yet he prefers life to death as Nina prefers existence to success, and Masha prefers existence to love. They choose their existence to any other possibilities. They think that they can hope for essence if they become able to sustain their existence.

The desire to exist and struggle for that seems to be the central issue in *The Seagull*. Almost all the characters are with hope, ambition or goal to be accomplished. To achieve success in their ambition, they are practising hard throughout the play. Yet, they have get the result of failure and frustration. Whether that is Masha's hope to get Treplev's love, or Treplev's hope to get Nina, or Nina's ambition to be an actress, or both Trogorin and Treplev's ambition to be successful writers, or Sorin's hope to get a happy and healthy life, all these go in vain. Failure in their ambition, for career and to achieve requited love, takes them to frustration. Though deserted by such hopes and ambitions, they are not escaping the situation. Moreover, by all these problems they have learned lessons and have made them stronger for struggle to get successful existence.

Piles of problems and failure found on their path of existence have asked struggles from the characters. Struggles can be seen all over the play and the struggles are existential. At the first glance, the struggle seems to be for their career and love but after a throughout observation, we can say the struggle seems for existence. They prefer existence to career, love or death. Masha decides to wrench out Treplev's love from her mind and to live by marrying Medvedenko. Nina changes the Philosophy of

life which lets her to struggle for her existence. Sorin wishes to live a life, though it is painful. Similarly, Arkadin, Trigorin, Medvedenko and others prefer their existence with courageous feeling of struggle. Without doubt the play is existential. The pathetic condition of the characters and their wish to sustain their existence can be a perfect proof for it. Moreover, the play is a manifestation of struggle for existence. We can raise some questions like: why does Masha marry Medvedenko though she loves Treplev? Why does Nina elope with Trigorin? Why does she visit the lake and stage again? Why is Treplev so frustrated and shoot himself? How do Sorin and Arkadin fear death? A number of such questions can be raised by reading the play. Though the questions remain unanswered, on the basis of these questions we can interpret the play as a manifestation of struggle for existence. The characters' feelings, decisions and practices are parts of their struggle for existence.

#### IV: Conclusion

*The Seagull* is a manifestation of characters' struggle for existence. Almost all of the characters have some problems in their existence which have made it meaningless. What they want is the authentic existence, i.e. the meaningful existence. But whenever they try to get to it, problems intrude and meaninglessness hunts them again. This meaninglessness and characters' suffering due to that forces them to struggle hard. The manifold problems make their struggles life-long (play-long). Masha wants Treplev's love, she thinks, can her self get justice. Throughout the play her struggle is to get to a life where she gets love from Treplev and that would be a meaningful life for her. But later, seeing no hope to get Treplev's love, she marries with Medvedenko. It seems because she wants to sustain her existence even if she cannot get an authentic existence. Her struggle for existence, therefore, has been successful through her marriage; yet she still wants an authentic existence and struggles up to the last of the play. Like Masha almost all other characters of the play are wrestling with problems of lives for their existence. To observe their struggle for existence, in this study, I have taken help of existential philosophy of German Philosopher Martin Heidegger.

Martin Heidegger, the main focus of this study, is considered as an existentialist, though he didn't accept the term for himself, because of his ideas about being, existence and human condition in the world. Heidegger considers the question of being as the fundamental question of philosophy. He argues that the nature of human existence involved active participation in the world. For that they struggle. His book *Being and Time* became so much influential with the keyword Dasein. Like Dasein, he uses terms like temporal awareness, choice, authentic existence, anxiety, etc. to discuss about human existence. While looking at Anton Chekhov's play *The*

*Seagull* together with Heideggerian existential elements, it seems as if Chekhov had written the play only after reading Heideggerian Existentialism.

In Chekhov's *The Seagull* most of the characters are surviving problematic existence. They have faced meaninglessness in their survival. Their hope and ambition for love, happiness and success ever get failure. This meaninglessness of lives with repeated failure continuously urges struggle from them. They love both their existence and success and they struggle for that. But their main preference is for existence. Treading on the path of the hypothesis this study has observed characters' struggles which are to get a meaningful existence. Further than the focus of the hypothesis, some characters are still struggling for their even an empty existence as they realize the existence may sustain possibility for a meaningful existence.

The characters of Chekhov's *The Seagull* are properly aware about their thrown quality. They are conscious for their existence and are desirous to attain the authentic existence. Authentic existence is being for itself that is their being as a free agent rejecting bad faiths. Characters of *The Seagull* Masha, Treplev, Nina, Sorin, Arkadin, Trigorin want their successful selves and for that they continue their struggle. They are totally aware about their temporally bounded existence, i.e. inevitability of death. On the one hand they are aware of their approaching death, on the other their consciousness is for successful future as well. This awareness produces feeling of anxiety in them. They are anxious because of death and their future. Their future may take them to their inauthentic existence. They know that their problematic present is the product of their own choices they had made in past. So, they accept their guilt and know that they themselves are responsible for their situation. Yet, they do not escape from their situation. They struggle hard and try to attain a better existence toward the summit of authentic existence. Their attempts to attain the higher goal always make

them to think for a struggle again. They are dreamers who dream for the authentic existence in future. At first priority they place the authentic existence and struggle hard for that and if they become unsuccessful, they continue their struggle at least for an existence, which can also be inauthentic one. This can be seen in Masha, Sorin and Nina's choices for their problematic existence by placing hope for love, happiness, and success on the side. This shows the title of this study has been appropriate. The play has characters' struggle for existence. Though the degree of existence (authentic, normal and inauthentic) may vary, all their struggles are for existence. Character's preference of existence to career, love or happiness, and their wish to sustain their existence proves the play to be existential and their practices to be struggle for existence.



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