INTRODUCTION

BEFORE HIM HE SEES LIFE UNROLL,
A PLACID AND CONTINUOUS WHOLE -
THAT GENERAL LIFE, WHICH DOES NOT CEASE,
WHOSE SECRET IS NOT JOY, BUT PEACE....

ARNOLD, "RESIGNATION"

Self is an oft discussed concept, that receives various definitions, theories and ideas at the hands of philosophers, psychologists and epistemologists. As long as man exists, his existence is made significant by his Self. Existence can be referred to as predicamental, contingental, absurd and void. The axis upon which this existence rests and can be defined or deciphered, as one or the other 'type' mentioned above, is Self. There is no 'existence' for a man if he has no Self (or Selves). Self is that which makes man's existence a vagabond of choice or choicelessness; for the (concept of) Self is never one and the same between two beings; and though they may be 'similar', the Self's emphatic choice or vagrant perplexity categorizes it. It is not merely between two men that Self is not identical, even within the same person or individual, Self is momentary and fleeting.

'Self' is the matrix upon which man's 'existence' forms the major unit. Yet, another major unit lies within the individual's mind and the remaining units are fragments of contingencies, choice, choicelessness, in terms of society,
obsessions, fears, relationships, and all emotions, in terms of the psychology of the individual. All these could be further elaborated, but the concern being different, it is essential to pass on to the next idea that whether predicamental, psychological or sociological there is no assurance or guarantee that any one of those mentioned here alone initiates, urges or ignites the Self towards choice or choicelessness. The possibilities of 'influence' are not definite and any one can initiate in turn, different individuals, and they are reversible and inconsistent making Self a complicated concept that differs from person to person - subtly or at large.

The traditional/conventional view of Self as a complete whole, a stretch of consciousness, that knows no intermittent break or impediment is no longer in vogue, ever since Self has been treated or dealt with by modernists. The idea behind the concept of Self has been "know thyself" from Delphic times down to Erich Fromm's discussion of Self. This state of inspiration has remained ever static but the Self each individual comes to terms with is never the same but is fleeting, momentary and temporal in each individual. This is the reason why each of these various disciplines throws a new distinct light on the subject of Self catering to the requirements and essentials of that discipline of thought or system alone. The definitions or discussions of Self by these various disciplines simultaneously
strike merely on echo of the old discussions of the past, that is, though many fresh ideas of 'Self' are made accessible to the new reader, much of it seldom differs from the definitions of the past or the difference is subtle. The subject of Self draws such a peculiar oneness because basically Self is common in all men and the aspects mentioned earlier (choice, choicelessness, existential forces and personal manifestations) alone make all the difference. As a result of this no two disciplines have ever defined Self in exactly similar tones nor do they differ so totally from each other - the underlying matrix is a common one to all disciplines of knowledge, that attempt to define it.

However, the idea of rendering Self a distinct, peculiar identity has become the trend of modernist writings. Therefore, Self could be defined as the inner being affected or influenced by various factors outside, within and elsewhere, that is, the unpredictable, instinctive changes in man. The modernists are of the opinion that Self is elusive and evasive. It is so, because on analysis of individuals, it is evident, that every individual has a tendency to indulge in some kind of manifestation as a defensive security or emphatic, aggressive protest or indicate some relevant compromise with the given predicament in that context or finally annihilate the pursuit itself making itself a negative, pessimistic figment of
personality. Such a state occurs very often owing to the unruly, ruthless chaos of existence or turmoil within the mind to make compromises with modern predicament or psychological perplexity. This state demands a role peculiar to every moment from the individual. These roles that the Self makes evident are manifestations of various selves, embedded within the Self. And the roles made manifest by each individual are never one and the same but are totally distinct from the one just made manifest. Therefore, it becomes a difficult task for any individual to keep track or retain all selves role-enacted before him. The individual naturally loses substantial track or vis of selves role-enacted one after another. He does not have a stable view of his own Self owing to the lack of stability in the 'presentation' selves of the individual. Therefore, the modernist finds it convenient to arrive at a compromise with these roles made manifest every moment. That is; a compromise made with the idea that the singular Self made manifest at one instance is not the same as the other made manifest at another instance. In other words, the individual is not what he 'was' earlier, not what he 'is', for neither of the two is an absolute, ultimate presentation of himself.

With such apparently controversial factors affecting the concept of Self, it is only fair to arrive at a compromise as the modernist fixing the concept of Self as contradictory
controversial, evolutionary, apparently static but subject to constant changes according to the whims or convenience or necessity of the individual concerned, yet common to all.

Before proceeding with the modernist view of Self, it is necessary to fix the conventional concepts of Self at least as far as philosophers, psychologists and sociologists are concerned, so that the distinction, if there is any, in the modernist view of Self can be classified intelligibly. Philosophers for instance, generally aspire for transcendence of Self. To most philosophers Self is clairvoyant, virtuous and a continuous stretch of one's inner views, which the individual can perceive provided he ascends to the realisation of this clairvoyance or virtue. Once, such a state is attained, then the rest of man's existence is attributed to achieving a transcendence of Self. As Self now knows the value of transcendence, the pursuit then becomes liberal and almost divine and the individual manages to sense a superhuman command over existence itself, which according to Plato, "... is but moving image of eternity ...where truth is achieved through reason or the disciplined intellect of a philosophic mind" (Gill, Existentialism 8). Plato's idea on the other hand is a close view to this which says, that when the individual perceives his Self then it is treated on par with his having reached his final goal and then he "becomes the spectator of
all time and existence" (Gill, *Existentialism* 8). Kierkegaard believes that Self is that which humanely educates the inner mind of the seeker and transforms the many presentations within the individual into a single individual (Currie, *Genius* 105). Kant explains that Self is a projection of those inner characteristics that already exist, into the world beyond personal experience and a compromise is reached between the two by the operation of intellect and reason (Scruton, *Kant* 12). Locke agrees that Self is a certain consciousness born of reflection and reason and in retrospect should equip man with a capacity to identify his Self with the spiritual substance (*Encyclopaedia*, Vol 586, 96). Sartre points out that Self is an awareness that reveals the immediate presence of being and the presence of being even beyond its immediacy of existence in order to reemphasise the awareness of the Self (*Being and Nothingness* 216). According to Hegel, Self is an embodiment of both truth and knowledge (Quinton, *Thoughts and Thinkers* 164). A few philosophers' opinions on Self are mentioned above in succession to point out the subtle difference in each of those versions, much of the basic ideas merely pointing to Self as something transcendental, extending beyond the human limitation of physical existence into a psychological or mental prowess that suspends itself into a world outside, giving it a touch of spirituality.
Psychologists believe that Self is born from the inner world of consciousness which is purely psychological, be it an effect of the moods within the individual - such as alienation, obsessions, fears, love, sex, resentment or aversion; or the effect of the indirect predicament of the society or the world outside, which affects the mind or psyche or consciousness. For instance, Freud perceives the conscious or unconscious will in the performances or manifestations of all human actions and emphasizes the major function or role of psyche, the awareness of which leads to Self knowledge (Quinton, Thoughts and Thinkers 242). In other words, Self is a consciousness derived from any system philosophical or sociological or psychological, but all these effects are embedded in the mind and the final outcome is purely psychological. While all other effects of philosophy or society can be ruled out at one instance or the other, the psychological aspect is a static, perpetual, predominant aspect of Self without which Self cannot exist.

However, the mental and social aspects are interrelated and one or the other of these two, can receive or enforce effects on the other. The consciousness of Self, however, is not exclusively autonomous and contrives the state of its manifestations and principles or manner of demeanor from the influence of its environment and interpersonal relationships or interpersonal communication. And this effect is quite often complementary.
Besides the systems of thought discussed so far, the concept of Self as perceived or conceived by writers has to be considered, for this concept is peculiar and important rising from the consciousness or Self of an individual whose Self is subject to all the effects and influences discussed above. The psychology (or Self) of a writer can be studied from several points of view - with regard to the writer's creative process, his works of art and their effect on the audience. The most common of all these views is that writers quite often document the images, reflections and shadows of their own selves by splitting the identity into numerous characters, identities and projections thus pointing out to their own assets and demerits which are not possible in a man who is not a professional writer. A writer's Self is a combination of contradictory aptitudes and duality. His Self too, is no exception to his own personal life as well as impersonal creative impulse in him. A work of art, therefore, when complete, is a combination of the capacity of the artist's Self, his personality as made manifest through various manifestations of selves, and the emotions expressed are nuances of the artist's Self, an insight which the artist himself gains through some introspection into his own psychic framework, peculiar of an artist alone. In the context of the novel the novelist enjoys the privilege of capturing 'presentation-selves' in the entire novel - the protagonist has the advantage of being the agent through whom
these selves are exposed. The novelist and the protagonist are busily engaged, all through the novel, in communicating the minute details of each Self adjusting to each 'mood' in appropriation to the contingencies accessible in the novel.

It is this condition of the artist that has either inspired the modernist trend of Self or has made the trend relevant and important. This study of Self is taken up here, to decipher the modernist will of the strong individual towards the dissolution of the Self in contrast to the traditional utopian connotation attached to it as merely transcendental or an overwhelming soul. The modernist Self bears a fierce will for independence and impels towards Self dissolution, not always suffered as a disaster but taken up by the individual or protagonist in any novel as a response to chaotic modern conditions that defeat any kind of hope. The predicament of existence is such that the contingencies are momentary, unruly, fragmentary and quite disarrayed, never evident or available as a continuous smooth stretch of incidents. When the predicament of existence is itself a fragmentation of life or lives then automatically, even if the Self or psyche has the capacity to think continuously, the Self can only respond accordingly. As a result, these fragmentary forms of contingencies in life impel a new identity of Self at each instance, that vanishes only to reappear differently characterized by a different mood,
thought or passion relevant to that moment alone or recalled at some other moment if necessary. All these fleeting selves ultimately lead to a certain limit of expression or to the coherent Self that is subject to dissolution of impressions accumulated that far.

The term 'unselfing' first used by David J. Gordon as a title of an article "Comedies of unselfing" is therefore apt for the following reasons to explicate the modernist Self: every man has a Self or inner being of which he is either 'aware' or 'unaware'. This Self is vulnerable and accessible to every beck and call of existence or existential aspect of life. This Self is complex and clear, all powerful and weak, much 'within' the individual and 'without' too, superseding all his efforts to contain his Self within him. And from these facts it becomes evident that man is constantly on the pursuit of Self by comprehending the world within him or without or both at the same time; meeting simple failures or successes or some super human sense of achievement or diabolic sense of loss about which he learns or loses at one instance or the other through the process of unselfing.

According to the modernists, it is important to resort to an all compromising view of Self in order to avoid ambiguity as far as possible. Therefore, to define the modernist Self more precisely in terms of unselfing, is that Self and
unselfing are reciprocatory - either one arising from the other or vice versa. Self is a 'State of identity' never static or perpetual but shifts and changes from context to context. As a result of this, Self can be merely an 'awareness' of the various nuances of existence, a 'consciousness' that is an offspring of some assessment of the pros and cons of existence or 'chaotic misapprehension' misled by contingental or psychological factors, or a void, or absurd sensation that comes as a response to repeated failures, frustrations, resignation or hopelessness or even all the possibilities mentioned could relate themselves to the concept of Self - each emerging from the process of unselfing.

The study though, is only about Self - the term 'unselfing' has been used as an added appendage here to completely shun all traditional and conventional connotations attached to Self and to make the modernist idea of dissolution of Self more evident and distinct from the traditional terms such as 'Self realisation' and 'knowledge'. Instead the term 'unselfing' would substitute in lieu, so that transcendental levels can be ruled out to a considerable extent.

The unselfing process would help the audience perceive the various fragments of Self each in their own fullness, making themselves manifest, each peculiar to that particular
context - all fragments emanating from the same individual. Each fragment of Self would dominate a particular moment or phase of life of that individual. The individual becomes helpless in the face of such autonomy of that fragment which shows every inclination to change or shift to some other stance. The unselfing process incorporates a study of these shifts and changes in all these fragments, undoing the 'creases' that might otherwise affect the Self and marking limitations that existence would provide.

Our consciousness is seldom void. There is something - a description, an idea, a discussion, a conversation, a forethought, foreboding sense, some emotion, decision, a revision of the past going on consistently within the mind. When the concept of Self is discussed, most often this state that precedes the consciousness is neglected. The "unweaving" of the mind, as Helen Norris uses the term ("The Self" 258), on par with unselfing, is seldom given sufficient consideration. This perhaps, is what renders Self its elated status, placed high on some altar, which seems unattainable to an ordinary individual gyrating in the irksomeness of existence. Whatever possible tall claims can be made of Self, it should be remembered that Self is innate in man, rising from his mind or consciousness or psyche or the reality pertaining to his existence. This innate drive, of course, has to be made
implicit which requires a media or a term and that purpose is served by the 'unselfing' process. Gordon used the term to perhaps suit his own critical intention but it is exploited here to suit the purpose of the thesis and to enfranchise the modernist's peculiarity of the concept of Self.

In view of the above discussion, Self, in this thesis, is viewed through the protagonists' process of 'unselfing', the agents that communicate being the protagonist, his Self, the other characters, situations, and existential modes above all. And unselfing could further be simplified as the process of 'sharing ourselves within ourselves' where the voice of the multiple 'other' in us, each time makes us more evident and explicit to our own understanding.

Some recurring themes in the matrix of Self are alienation, guilt, despair, obsessions, fears, the question of God, death, marriage, love, sex, interpersonal relationships, the problem of truth, reality, resentment, frustration, society and religion, almost all issues that form a part of existence making it a complete whole. It may be remembered, that every novelist cannot possibly accommodate all the above moods or emotions or predicaments in his novel. The novelist is normally discreet and picks and chooses those relevant to the contingental predicament in his novel and those suited to the type of protagonist he creates.
Modernist novels are concerned with man/protagonist as fixed amidst chaos - a unique individual, solitary in his scruples or destiny, thoroughly independent or eccentric, and groping with Self compelled to choose and define his own fate. As the protagonist progresses or degenerates through the developments of the novel not many quarters of his predicament assure him of a definite or final effect or object and he is quite solitary in his predicament. The protagonist's mind is seen to probe the questions that frame his existence and the unselfing response enables him to come to terms with the puzzle of existence, with reality, and with the 'complexity' that he himself is. This, in the modernist sense, is what Self is and Self ought to be and not transcendental, revelatory, enlightenment or illumination of Self.

Eaton's observation should make the modernist will to Self more implicit. Since the very beginning, man, fixed in a cultural context, has strangely sensed the past and has been in a deep unpronounced manner aware of this past that he had lost and in the same apprehensive manner faces his future. Quite obviously man is aware that he is different with assets to his credit and fallibilities to his dismay. These very thoughts make him apprehensive of the fact that he is in a world that shows every probability of drawing him deep into its chaotic
circle. Such a mixture of feelings, admonitions, fears, and guilt, that shows itself to him becomes his Self revealing to him that he exists in a world of intermingling reality and illusions and that he needs to continue to exist until the end. His Self is the kind of certainty, the voice that tells him that such consciousness and the milieu of existence have attained a stable place in man's existence where there is no idea of reversal or return. This concept would continue to recur in its myriad forms within the single individual, within multitudes and their psyche, in social milieu and the individual, in a cultural context until existence terminates their span or unless they manage to manifest themselves as something new, strange or odd (for instance, as some god-figure with a transcendental consciousness) (Eaton, "Dangerous Paradox" 7).

All along, the question of the writer's Self interfering or intervening in context of his creative works has never been ruled out, especially by men like Freud and Jung. The audience or the reading public has always wondered if the writer's creative works are simply a mere reflection of his personal hallucinations or biased opinions of the society or a shadow of his own neurosis. Do these writers present these peculiar reservations often with no difference parallel to the real world and fantasy world or do they reveal a certain immaturity
in the analysis of existential predicament, reconstructing experience suited to their own vanity or pleasure? In the case of novelists and dramatists the emphasis lies on characterisation and plot construction. The literary man's preoccupation is with the problem of associating ideas drawn from the world 'within' and the world 'without', dissociating them in turn when his emotions demand it, and at times even rearranging or recombining these elements as per the necessities, the existential contingencies in his work demands. Much of it lies embedded in the psyche of the writer, it has registered itself as striking or has affected his emotions in some profound or vague manner or the other, and springs forth into the narrative when the novelist begins to authenticate his narration with the realistic touch of his consciousness.

Critics are of the opinion that the realistic writer observes and presents the behaviour of various individuals in each of his characters while the romantic writer comprehends his Self better and therefore projects himself into the character. But only when a writer comes to terms with his own Self, can he present characters who become living characters in the novel for it is only then that his characters are enabled to display the variegated, emotional nuances involved in existence, in all its reality.
Helen Norris's categorization of writers would help further explication of the play of writer's Self in his works:

[There are]... two classes of writers: those who write to remember, who mind their own lives, the lives of relatives, ancestors, and friends, or the accounts thereof. They write to remember and so to understand themselves. These are what we may call the autobiographical fictionists (and playwrights and poets), continually weaving themselves anew, seeking parts of themselves they have left in the past or in some relative's past, to understand these portions to celebrate or to condemn what they have understood.

But there are those who write to forget - let us call it for want of a better word - To forget the Self? Or to unweave the Self? Those who find their own lives, however interesting in the act, uninteresting in recital, who find it questionable, if not morally reprehensible, to exploit their friends and relatives for the sake of gain or art, who do not seek to spin themselves by some centrifugal force out into the world, as do those others of their kind, but instead have found a way centripetally to spin the world into themselves. ("The Self" 259)

The former, therefore, is an oft repeated case of writers where the writer's Self indulges in a subjective self-analysis and self-judgement while the latter is subject to self-dissolution and is more psychological than the former. The former, is a certain quest of the writer after his own, Self, seeking its fragments to assemble them in order to 'know' his Self, while the latter lies more within the consciousness of the writer and more emphasis is laid on the writer's Self
than the selves of the others around or the social milieu. For instance, the confessional novel is an approximate instance of Norris's former analysis. The second type described by Norris is the psychological novel, wherein as Freud observes "... the author sits in the mind of the hero and observes the other characters outside... splitting his own 'ego' into several parts to personify his own mental life in several heroes" (Major Works 276).

In this study of Self, four broad categories are exploited. As mentioned earlier, the first broad categorization is the incorporation of the novel's protagonist in relation to himself, that is, the mind within, with its flaws, fallibilities, and all other psychological disfigurements. The second category, explores the protagonist's Self in its peculiar milieu of laughter, gaiety, frivolity and flippancy. The third one, is the Self of the protagonist in terms of its peculiar obsessions implemented positively and negatively in a cultural context. The fourth and final one, is the Self's predicament in the face of specific reservations of career and their idiosyncratic minds in their respective contexts.

A close view of the ideas expressed here would reveal a prominent inclusion of any themes of existentialism. This
becomes inevitable owing to Self being an entity of existence at whatever stage of maturity or immaturity it is found to be, within the individual.

Existentialist aspects have pervaded modern literature to an inextricable extent. Modernist writers repeatedly fall a victim to the ceaseless feats of such themes as alienation, inauthenticity, solitude, fear, identity crisis, personal, social, and cultural malady that affects an angst ridden world. Sidney Finkelstein points out piquantly that:

Much of the literature which embraces or approaches... (existential themes) deals with what Riesman calls, in another context the that the sense of crisis reaches an almost hysterical intensity. Far more acute and widespread is the alienation disclosed in family and social relationships, and the impossibility of one person to know another is advanced as an undying truth of life. People are shown clawing at each other in a disorderly, absurd and violence-ridden world. Sexual violence, physical brutality, homosexuality, suicide and murder, all in a death-haunted setting recur as dominant themes. The physical aspects of sex are described with virtuoso elaboration and cogent to this is Marx's insight: when what is human in life turns into the animal, or when the humanized psychological ties among people are disrupted by the hostility of alienation then the animal becomes human, and it is in himself as an animal that the despairing human being seeks his own humanity. (Existentialism and Alienation 213-14)

An individual, when he 'seeks' within himself, may encounter his own humanity, besides which he would come to terms with
the implicit realities of human experience and both put together forms the matrix of 'Self'. Therefore, the disorderliness of the world outside, is an impetus to pursue a world 'within' the individual - a dissolute, resolved world of Self that should help extenuate the burden of the effect of the malaise outside.

This study, however, strictly adheres to the concept of Self and wards off any hindrance of 'a study' of existentialism in the context of Self except for the exploration of the contingental aspects available in the novels in which the protagonists' ordeal of lives play havoc. Patricia Waugh observes that:

...Erikson's Self is the unified liberal subject approached in terms of (existential) 'struggle' rather than 'transcendence'. Crisis and resolution rather than a natural flowering... concerned to achieve autonomy and separation (in the sense of emancipation. Waugh further conceives that) the definition of Self through relations with others, identify as mutually defined, and the centrality of primary affectional relationships are not in fact pathological positions, but essential for the 'survival' of the human race. (Feminine Fictions 41, 44)

It is intelligible that Self exists and is made dissolute in existential predicament. It is also comprehensible that man has numerous presentations of his Self, of which some are reserved for his very private and personal disclosures alone,
while some others are the presentations the Self makes to the world outside. The individual dilly dallies between these two circles of selves and the former Self watches those presentations that project themselves into the drama of social existence. The two circles of selves attempt to attain a comprehensible state to shun disparity or irresoluteness, so that the Self can suspend itself into existence unagitatedly. The Self that extends itself into the social drama draws the experience back to the 'psyche' and the individual finds it possible to unify the personal psychic experience with that of the Self's commitment with the world outside. The impediments again arise from the existential predicament as mentioned earlier, that entangle the social Self and paralyse the individual's effort "to be fully the character he plays", as all other selves make a natural claim of being predominantly important. The Self then expends itself in finding an appropriate response to the query as to where exactly the Self should locate the milestone by which the consciousness could come to terms with all aspects of itself, reality and truth. Once again there is dubiousness regarding the point as to which Self should authenticate the other as all selves belong to the same matrix and cannot be rejected or ignored. Such an evaluation could be made possible if all the selves could be unified and regarded, viewed, presented, accepted or studied as
a single whole. But, this is impossible as, in reality, an individual cannot see his Self as a single, consistent whole, as the fragmentary forms of Self recur and cannot be stopped. Thus, in the modernist sense of Self the compound, collective fragments of Self with its obscure contradictions would be the Self that 'is' rather than the Self suggested by traditionalists who conceive Self in the mind as a unified assessment of the entire lot of fragments (Illie, Unamuno 74-75). This Self that 'is', is in constant touch with the individual through the unselfing process and the unselfing itself is an end in itself or means to Self.

Self is indeed an inevitable and predominant phase in existence without which no philosophy or psychology or even human interaction could have been possible. For that matter, any discipline or system of thought is Self-oriented and is born of either one or the other consciousness. In the 'descending order of existence' the next given due importance, after the personality of the individual, is God, religion or truth, quite often equated or treated on par with each other in specific contexts. At the face of both mental or physical struggle man has the tendency to either reject God, suspect his very existence and at times even annihilate him wilfully. When the individual rejects God it comes forth from a Self that is dejected and depressed. There, the Self is almost like some
Christ figure and the Self maintains the image either with a hackneyed devotion or sincerity or in a mood of fatalistic resignation reconciles to some fatalistic, tragic acceptance of the crucification of existence. The third stage, is a worsened form where God is annihilated either because the Self has made positive compromises with reality or because of being recklessly toyed by existential predicament. Then, the state of Self is made absolutely obscure and some catastrophic manifestation has to be made possible to extenuate the mind of its tensions. The Self then takes the extreme form of individualism. Undue importance is given to the Self alone. The Self suffering from depravity refuses to lose itself in the secure, snug feeling of being protected by God. The Self only sees God as the deployer of a series of betrayals, falsities, failures, depressions and illusions. Therefore, the Self needs some kind of alternative to thrive on and itself assumes the role of God not wanting any more to suspend itself unto the will of God or submit itself to the destiny God has designed for it. Instead, "the individual wishes to be God, he usurps His creative power and relegates God, depriving Him of His power, to the end of all things" (Heinemann, Existentialism 162).

In the traditional sense of the word, every Self-seeker is in pursuit of "truth". Truth could imply two meanings. One
finds its placement in the context of existence, that is, reality - the bare disfigurement, or distorted face of reality. The other truth being the realisation of the existence of Self 'within'. The modernist trend of Self does not rule out the identity of Self/Selves with truth though the more agreeable form is its identification with reality. But the modernists render truth a different touch or connotation. Self here, is not merely a visionary aspect but something made recognisable to others coming forth from the consciousness within (through the unselfing process) (McGowan, "Soulful Self" 425).

Self viewed in terms of religion is a rare phenomenon unless in some specific context it is identified with love and thereby religion or the seeker becomes aware of the complete form of reality and he ceases with that realisation treating it as his very discipline or tenet. The Self struggles to make compromises with reality for the fierce look of reality cannot be contained by a person who is not prepared for it. For instance, a Self that has not come to terms with reality finds that

...Reality is absurd, cruel, meaningless and bounded by the horror of death, which is so frightening because life has given nothing. (Finklestein, Existentialism 236)

Here, the individual whose Self fails to analyse reality and accept it with all its distortions and disparity finds life a
parody of existence threatening the beholder with its various menaces. But, once the Self reconciles with itself and abandons the veil between reality and itself then the reality that was lost to Self itself becomes a general impetus for Self to gather itself. Finklestein once again observes that

...There is an appealing truth in... (Self's) urging that the most ordinary things as they are can be seen as beautiful and are capable of giving joy. Nevertheless the modern world has put the need to see things as they are on a far higher plane than simple humanized perception. The awakening to things - seeing the world as it is, discerning the forces leading to human misery and those leading to human progress demands a great deal of knowledge. (Existentialism 232)

In this context, the most common state of mind in an individual who has failed to realise any one of the four discussed so far such as Self, God, truth, religion or reality, suffers a psychic degeneration - the common ailment or manifestation being the flight of the Self at the instance of existence, drawing itself into seclusion or cloistering itself within its mental institution. This exclusive world knows no gaiety or happiness but suffers in profound anguish and wallows in Self pity and frustration. The mind then wills to yield to reckless whims and fancies disclosing all its absurd eccentricities 'inaugurating' every now and then a person who is not just oneself or consistently the same.

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This state of estrangement occurs as a result of the Self's inability to reconcile with the matter of fact existence, and failure to take existential predicament in its stride. The Self may be capable of grasping flashes of truth about existence, but this truth again is seldom consistent, eternal, and repeatedly implies or reveals merely the pretensions of reality. As a result, the Self merely sees the obscure side of reality, its distorted version and cannot be easily convinced that a final recompense from such a state lies within one's own acceptance of existential contingencies however drastic they may be and cannot be acquired from the external world outside.

Yet another factor affecting alienation is psychological, which arises from a common yearning for love, warmth, understanding and depth in human relationships. The answer to either cases of alienation, be it a misinterpretation of existence instigated by society or caused by some psychological aggressiveness, lies in Heinemann's solution to the question of alienation in the context of existentialism:

(Alienation, he says)...arise(s) immediately from our human condition and concern us directly as persons. We are not looking out for problems. The problems choose us. We have to express them. We have to meet their challenge. All of them start from one point and return to it. Because the very existence of man on this earth is menaced, because the
annihilation of man, his dehumanization... 
and, of all moral values is a real danger. 
Therefore, the meaning of human existence 
becomes...(a) problem. (The solution thus 
lies in a comprehensive) ending (of the) human 
condition. (Existentialism 178)

Therefore, the anodyne for alienation lies in the individual 
himself, in his deliberate acceptance of reality and in his 
coming to terms with reality by accepting the standards of a 
ruined or a shattered world or existence in it. That is, 
"awakening (of) man from his apathy and of reminding him of his 
true Self" (Heinemann, Existentialism 178).

The further the individual holds himself from his Self, 
the more pathetic becomes his state of existence. Man needs 
some imperative (sense) within, which would sustain him amidst 
the trepidations of existence. His mind could be further 
victimized by certain other calamitous emotions if he 
constantly holds his Self aloof. Man's mind has always been 
vulnerable to existential predicament and the faintest 
aggravation incapacitates his Self and slips it into fragments 
of which each could enact some innate obscurity. Obsessions 
are one such manifestation of the dark corners of the mind. To 
fantasize or indulge in illusions is a palpable mystery of the 
mind while to indulge in some irrational, reckless or random 
choice of the mind is the release of a psychological tempest. 
Such obsessions are quite often dual in nature - one of those
being an easily conquerable one with a will that practises atonement and the other deep-rooted to the psyche unflinchingly staring into the face of existence. For instance, guilt, death, fears, are those which can be easily evacuated from the mind at least when the Self becomes implicit to the individual. But, there are certain other specific clinical obsessions which are not easily extricable from the consciousness as the mind gets lulled by the devouring humdrum of it.

The sense of guilt is a tortuous common state of the mind which forms part of our everyday existence. This feeling arises from some sense of dread of the past, or some transgression or some punishable offence which has escaped retribution. This state though, has a possibility of rendering the individual a release of his psychological tension by leading him to Self. It can also prolong his guilt-ridden state for an excessively long period where the Self fears a repetition of the negative commitment in future or fears treason by the individual's neurotic awareness of it or punishment in turn or extend the crime into worse entanglements. This again has to be resolved by the Self's adherence to the cause and reason for such a fear and thereby disentangle itself from its recurrence, through a sense of resurrection from the hazardous debris of the past.
Death fear is common to all Selves - an obsession born along with life, a feeling that cannot be conquered or cured as it is natural but can be reconciled to as an inevitable part of existence through clear understanding of Self.

Psychologists are of the opinion that the awareness of death is constant in man and it also works as a kind of rein upon his brutal or animalistic tendencies, however diabolic he may be (unless the person concerned is either insane or a psychopath). Quite often man attempts to purge himself of this fear by some exercise of the mind or some manifestation or some eccentric indulgence and finally loses faith in existence. This obsession is rather drastic and austere in its effects than the other obsessions mentioned earlier. When all else fails the individual has to seek the solace that Self could afford him leaving aside all the tragic sense of life that this obsession could set upon man's mind. Macquarrie in context of death observes...

...death comes as the appropriate culmination of life. But more often death appears as the violent cutting off and interruption of life; or it may delay its approach until long after a man's powers have broken down, so that clinical death so to speak, comes along months or even after years after the death of the man's personal being. (Existentialism 195)

The ideal alternative to such a menacing threat to existence is to come to terms with death and to go forth and ahead with what
existence has in store for one rather than suffocating oneself in the strangling obsession of death. Self that unravels the various mysteries of existence, again, could offer the panacea to this remote thought.

Such sufferings as death, guilt, obsessions become cause of natural 'fears' in the individual. He becomes suspicious about all that relates itself to him be it positive or negative. This very inability to trust the predicament, the contingencies, the relationships, the personal commitments and its outcome could again hinder the individual's progressive unselfing.

It is easy and fatalistic for man to become a tragic hero or wallow in self-pity by disallowing anything but the tragic sense of life. Such an individual finds it a strenuous task to emerge out of his own 'created' cloister and prefers to exist dully in such a state. The fear obsessed tragic hero needs counselling and this becomes irrelevant if the individual learns the causes for his fears and overcomes them by transforming these fears into a positive investment of faith, specifically in Self which is a handy rescue to an over-wrought consciousness (Gill, Existentialism 162).

A broad discussion of obsessions has been done so far without specifying the various obsessions which could be sex,
power, money, love, personal relationships, desire, resentment, sense of freedom, and eccentric manifestations - the last two abused in an exorbitant manner. These vary in their degree of manifestations from individual to individual and cannot easily be fixed within a limited framework of discussion. They show possible multiplication of numerous loop-holes and it would not be justice to express them in a brief discussion. Therefore, under the earlier broad categorizations - fear, guilt and death obsessions and the psychological eccentricities are discussed fairly well in the thesis with the lead given by the protagonists in each novel pertaining to their specific contexts of existence, predicament, Self and demeanor.

Thus existence has its own paradoxes and in fact there is no rational solution to the dilemma that existence can provoke and promote. In whichever state man is, he is basically a victim of temptations, yielding and closing himself to them every now and then. He has not even a possible outlet or escape from this network of a trauma, at least as far as modernists are concerned. He has to effect his own redemption for which he needs to view himself, communicate with himself, attain a rapport between his Self and Selves, and constantly keep himself in the possible lime light of the unselfing process. This process alone would help him sift himself in a fair, unbiased manner, as Macquarrie puts it "These
accounts come from very different areas of the existentialist spectrum" (Existentialism 217), each one appealing to one fragment of the Self or the other giving the individual a fair placement in the fabric of existence.

In reality, in the ordinary simple existence of man, in his day to day life, reincarnations of 'ideal' becomes impossible. An average man goes through the irresoluteness of existence and in his utmost capacity acquires a multidimensional view of his selves. He views them quite collectively in an effort to gather them altogether for want of some peaceful significance in the otherwise traumatic experience of life. This state of ascension comes gradually, in the due course of existential experience, based on which the thesis attempts to study the protagonists' Self in select novels of Iris Murdoch and Saul Bellow.

Iris Murdoch and Saul Bellow, writers of two different nationalities - English and American respectively - have much in common to begin with, though they stand characteristically related to their very different traditions. Born in Dublin and bred at Oxford, Murdoch reveals a dignified stateliness retaining an attractive charm in her works. The theme, plot and structure of her novels maintain a distant tone and manner in the creation of her fantastic characters. Her novels bear
an unsmiling rootedness to reality and are staunchly enclosed within the limited framework of characters, situations and contingencies often found to be repeated in her novels. On the other hand, the Russian-Jewish born, Montreal, Ghetto and Chicago bred Bellow, reveals an excellent capacity for hilarious "belly laugh" as critics point out. The characters that he creates supersede, more often, the manoeuvrings of their creator in their skill for jokes ridiculing or parodying the absurdity of existence charming the audience to join them all in a similar indulgence of almost self-mockery. Though the two writers hail from strikingly distinct traditions and cultures, what is highly impressive is not their differences but their similarities especially in the case of Murdoch who

... has more in common with her contemporary Saul Bellow than with anyone writing in Britain over the past several decades. Her strengths and weaknesses as well as what may at first seem far-fetched, her affinity with Bellow - are readily apparent (in her novels, especially) in her latest (twenty-third) novel *The Message to the Planet*. (McCormick, "The Urbane" 160)

Murdoch's novels are enwrapped in specificity and singularity, encircling a world which makes obvious the odd absence of certain specific characteristics of novels in general - as newspapers, children and life or existence
picked out from the past with references seldom made to contemporary history, and at times feigns to make a retreat into the safety of conventionality or anti-modernist stance. But this is not so as she contradicts this pseudo-stance by expressing an urge through her creativity to substitute the traditional aspects of narrative and character with something more reliant on observations made of existence, reality and Self. This is an overall view of Murdoch's writing career that has ranged for thirty-three years as she turned seventy, with her twenty-third novel.

Bellow had won the Nobel prize for literature at sixty-one and by then he had written seven major novels, short stories, plays, essays and a novella over a thirty-five-year writing career. Bellow's concern is a rediscovery of basic truths in his novels and he has firm convictions in his effort to present a more comprehensive view of the significance of existence, questions of who and what man is. On the contrary to Murdoch's works, Bellow's novels are rootedly contemporary and his protagonists are victimized men whose Selves are displaced, ridiculed and literally made void by contingent existence and these men endlessly grope for Self.

These are the obvious differences between Murdoch and Bellow though the differences in the context of their novels
seem subtle and quite negligible. What is most noticeably striking between the two writers is the manner in which both Murdoch and Bellow often portray repeated types, situations, images and themes rendering history by some means or the other in a stretch (in Bellow's case) from fragmentary forms. However, as McCormick points out, Murdoch's themes are Saul Bellows which are predominantly freedom versus necessity, nature and workings of power, love, marriage, solitude, religion, contingency, choice, death and holocaust showing traces of the influence of Sartre in the former's case, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky in the latter's case ("The Urbane" 160).

Besides these similarities, Murdoch and Bellow protagonists have each a specific bearing in their respective contexts. Murdoch's protagonists are individuals who force amusement upon their readers and are often on some kind of philosophical excavation of the mind like benign figures or images that excel in moral philosophy exhibiting profound intellectual perception of existence. Bellow's protagonists make a compromise with existence by indulging in moving, hilarious jokes that excite the neurosis of the audience making them also aware of the absurdity of existence. Though these men are capable of theology and sociology, they affirm their selves quite often in the context of comic analysis and typical
clowning or buffoonery tapping a fresh vista upon existence made visible to the readers themselves. Bellow's comic medium of writing is to enhance the Self of his protagonists against all odds, difficulties and problems of existence; while Murdoch's comic imperative is at times an inappropriate force ridiculing some hypocritical or illusory element in the novel, however forceful the imposition may be.

A brief general context is brought out in the last discussion with regard to both Murdoch and Bellow and presently the two writers would be analysed in the context of Self, and the predicament under which the protagonists unself. Inspite of Murdoch's philosophy and Bellow's intellectual capacity, the two novelists are chiefly concerned with the capturing of "immediate realities of human experience" (Gill, Existentialism 4). Though Murdoch is said to take intermittent refuge from modernism and Bellow an assertive neomodernist, both novelists show a strong will in protest to abstractions of Self as the old value systems would have and the protagonists are found to embrace Self amidst all oddities of existence through the process of unselfing.

The characters, their moods and situations as seen in the novels of the two writers are close to life but Bellow captures reality more accurately than Murdoch. This difference
is owing to the fact that the Murdochian protagonists often rise to philosophic attitudes and tend to figure as power or Christ images, unlike the practical, down-to-earth idiosyncratic Bellow protagonists.

Both Murdoch and Bellow handle crucial questions of life that puts them on a similar track of themes and analysis. Their differences are however based on those minute or odd differences available in the paradoxes of contingencies and predicaments of existence. As noticed so far, but for the differences in situations, the framing of characters, their structurization, their emotions, obsessions, fears, anxieties, dilemma, Self, are quite relatedly and remarkably similar making ample room for comparison between the two novelists.

Murdoch and Bellow express great concern for the characters and situations they render, though ironically their protagonists enjoy independence and self-will. The two novelists cautiously weave in precariousness in all relationships and contexts that arise in the novels.

As it is common among the modernist writers to give priority to the problems of existence, so it is equally important to give preference to Self that exists in reality which is automatically complex. And Murdoch and Bellow are found to express this carefully in their writings keeping to
the demands of modern literature - "full of rebellious innocents combating a hostile, brutal or indifferent world" (Clayton, In Defense of Man 40).

In the Chapters to follow in the ensuing order - (1) "The Psychic Unselfing System", (2) "Raptures of Comic Self", (3) "Obsessed Form of Self", (4) "Efficacy of Writer's Self", eight novels are discussed in detail giving due importance to the pattern chosen for each analysis. A one to one analysis is shunned here to eliminate paradoxes that might arise in context. But similarities are traced in two novels that figure in each chapter of the two respective novelists in a mixture of whatever the predicament is - mundane or ideal, complex or clear, regular or irregular, and queer or complicated.

Self is meant to construct a cautious balance and the fragments and strife occur when this balance is not achieved. Even if this balance occurs, the modernist believe in its dissolution in reality, as nothing can remain perpetual according to them. In fact, according to the modernists it is quite unreal to talk of Self as a unified stretch of consciousness, untampered with by dilemma or paradoxes of existence. In truth, all those fears, confusions, perplexities and dilemma are a great part of the Self and cannot be
considered as separate entities. The modernist writers give importance to Self because the complicated changes in existence gain fresher grounds and rapidity with each change. And therefore, it becomes important to provide society with a fresh, significant hope for a balanced survival, for which Self that keeps pace with changes, participates in existence and dissolves itself in a compromise with reality which is the drive among modernist writers. This is a required fresh orientation of Self necessitated by modern predicament and malaise, and not annihilation, in the philosophic sense.