CHAPTER FOUR

HUMAN PREDICAMENT

1. Human Predicament

The quest for meaning, purpose and value of life has being a long and arduous process. This has being a back-breaking investigative programme from ancient to contemporary philosophers. Theist and Atheist existentialists have attempted to philosophically promote a robust answer to this quest. Every human being has been caught in this predicament. There has being self-reflective analysis or self-questioning to the problem of existence since time immemorial. This problem has being further aggravated by our search for meaning, purpose and value of life amidst the factual experience of difficulties, suffering, pain, unknown future and death. Every day, the thoughtful creatures are bombarded with the question of “death and prospect that our lives are only but short stints against the backdrop of a universe that has existed for almost fourteen billion years” (Guthre <http://sguthrie.net/>). This question brings home the notion of the great existential problem known as the human predicament.

Human predicament “is a situation lived and felt from the inside. It is something you seek to ameliorate or rise above” (Conolly <http://www.thefreelibrary.com>). Warnock has placed his perception of human predicament on the wants, needs and interests of man; biologically looking for the fullest satisfaction but “there will absolutely be no reason to believe that his total satisfaction, meaning thereby satisfaction of all his needs, wants and interests, is, in any order of priority, even logically possible, let
alone practically” (Warnock <www.econ.iastate.edu/>). Sophocles has found our predicament to be one in which multiple gods - or forces, it is not entirely certain which - are either indifferent to human welfare or hostile to it. Our predicament, according to him, involves how to negotiate life in a world that is neither providential nor susceptible to consummate human mastery (Conolly <http://www.thefreelibrary.com>). A godless existentialist view of human predicament is the endless game of life and death. A comprehensive understanding of human predicament can be found in the following:

Animals live from day to day doing what their instincts tell them to do, enjoying whatever pleasures they can, giving no thought to the future, totally unaware of the pain, suffering and death that await them. But man is acutely aware of the potential suffering he faces and of the inevitability of death, except to the extent that he can distract or deceive himself. Moreover, this endless game of birth, growth, reproduction, suffering and death goes on and on, and as is true for all life on earth, the game is totally meaningless. It's not really going anywhere, and there are no real winners. In the long run you're dead. Life is absurd. It's a cruel joke of nature, a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Man is the only creature that can appreciate the joke and realize that he has been thrown into a situation that is absurd, without meaning or purpose. This is the human predicament (“What is the Human Predicament?” <http://wiki.answers.com>).

Existentialists are entrapped in the search for the meaning of life. It is this human predicament which has kept both laypersons and intellectuals constantly striving towards an end. The end, here, refers to the fulfilment of the search. Laypersons seek to find their niche in society through a sense of
contribution or through a sense of accomplishment. Philosophers through the ages have approached the question from a rational perspective. “Thus”, says Shandon L. Guthrie, “people desire to determine the meaning of their lives and not the mere abstract notion of ‘life’ as existence” (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net/>).

2. **Existentialism and Human Predicament**

Existentialism holds the idea that human existence is a peculiar kind of existence in and for itself and it holds that existence precedes essence. Just as life and experience, conceptually, differ from person to person, existentialists too have diversified approaches to life and existence. Therefore, it is difficult to pigeonhole existentialism as a singular thought because there are a variety of approaches to the issues relating to self-purpose (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net/>). Different schools of thought have perceived the existentialist individual as chewing over the “philosophical realization of self-consciousness” (Solomon 328). In an unambiguous portrait of the human predicament, Robert C. Solomon has stated that “the irresolvable confusion of the human world, yet resists the all-too-human temptation to resolve the confusion by grasping toward whatever appears or can be made to appear firm or familiar—reason, God, nation, authority, history, work, tradition, or the other worldly, whether of Plato, Christianity or utopian fantasy” (Solomon 328).

The crux of the matter lies in the irresolvable confusion and existentialists have been confounded in trying to shell out the meaning of the human predicament. This enterprise has been suffused in a cornucopia of ideas and attempted resolutions. The quest for an answer to this predicament has continued since the beginning of humanity setting its foot on the earth. Philosophers only heighten the quest rationally. John Dewey has analyzed and
considered the issue to be one of an endless game. He has believed that the existentialist pursuit of resolving the problem was the quest for certainty (Boydston 21-39).

Existentialist’s quest is again battered with the notion of freedom in attempting to explicate the human predicament. The irrefutable stance of existentialists is that human individuals are objective beings and they are beset with the capability of volition. Endowed with this gift of volition, man is a free being. Jean-Paul Sartre has said in his lecture that “we will freedom for the sake of freedom” (Sartre <http://www.btinternet.com>). He has continued to hammer his point on subjective freedom when he said, “We are alone, without excuses. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free” (Sartre <http://www.btinternet.com>). Existentialists, especially the notable Sartre, have expressed freedom as paramount for personal decision-making and this is, in general, an arduous pursuit of existentialists. Assessing the existentialists’ attitude on the magnitude of human freedom, Robert Solomon has opined that “every decision must be considered a choice. Yet the existential attitude itself is apparently not chosen. One finds oneself in it” (Solomon 240).

Human predicament ensues from this dilemma. The problem of the self in a world asking that pressing question about the meaning of life is itself not a matter of choice. This encapsulates the existentialist’s holding on an individual’s freedom of choice. A person finds himself in the choice of choices. “In such a world where the individual is truly an individual, there are choices that can be made unhindered by what others think one should think and do” (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net>). But the real problem arises when certain things sneak out of this existential perception. Natural death cannot be a choice because it is there as the ending of mortal life. Therefore, the threat
of existentialism is the imminent death. Even a passing thought of our own mortality is enough to jerk us out of our current involvements, though for a moment, and force us to look at our lives.

3. Select Existentialists

Existentialists are engrossed with the quest for meaning, value and purpose of life. Some philosophers who have embraced existentialist movement are considered for the purpose of explicating the human predicament. Their philosophies, whether it is an idealism or phenomenology are an effort at pursuing the escape from the human predicament. Select existentialists are considered for discussion and application in this chapter.

3.1. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

He is not within the proclaimed group of existentialist thinkers but his thoughts have a bearing on those who would be. His philosophy has stemmed from the schism between Kantian Idealism and British empiricism. In the philosophy of Kant, we come across his suggestion of two existing worlds: a phenomenal world, which is an empirically verifiable reality, and an unknowable noumenal world, which is the actual reality of the empirical world. Hegel has synthesized the two competing philosophies in his dialectic, in which he has brought forth the notion of consciousness, which he calls it Geist, and this stands as the bridging element in the universe, which is filled with different perceivable objects.

Swami Krishnananda, while discoursing on Hegel’s philosophy of life, has commented that “Hegel appears to bring down the Absolute (Spirit) to the relative realm of the individuals when he makes it realize itself in art, religion and philosophy, so that there is the dialectic even in the pure Spirit” (Krishnananda <http://www.swami-krishnananda.org>). He has drawn this relationship to enunciate deeper on the validity of consciousness in
correspondence with the objects it perceives. Shandon L. Guthrie has opined that “on a global level, the notion of consciousness could be understood as a universal Ego intimated with every individual ego” (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net>). Solomon has carried further the conception of Geist in a phenomenological reasoning and explained the relationship between a universal Ego and individual ego. He has opined that “Geist abstracts from the peculiarities of individuals and focuses attention on their similarities: Geist is a convenient way of talking about the common properties of a society, of a people, or of all people while ignoring, but not denying, their differences” (Solomon 89).

Consciousness, therefore, does not need any particular reference to be addressed. Geist is metaphysical in nature but it becomes phenomenological while dealing with it in relation to the world. There exists a relationship between consciousness and the object it perceives. Joseph Anton Goebhardt has opined that “Consciousness distinguishes something from itself and at the same time it relates itself to it” (Goebhardt 40) and calls the perception of this as “sense-certainty” (44). This philosophy heralds us to Edmund Husserl’s conception of phenomenology.

3.2. Edmund Husserl

Husserl’s philosophy is characterized by his emphasis of consciousness and the relationship it holds on the world. He believes that a perceiver could take in the experience of an object but only concentrates on the experience itself of what it is like to see, hear, touch, smell or taste. This philosophy is called phenomenology (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net>). He has philosophized that essential Being must be distinguished from actual existence, just as the pure Ego must be distinguished from the psychological Ego. Essences are non-real, while facts are real. The realm of transcendentally reduced
phenomena is non-real, while the realm of actual experience is real. Thus, phenomenological reduction leads from “a knowledge of the essentially real to a knowledge of the essentially non-real.” “Husserl’s Ideas on a Pure Phenomenology and on a Phenomenological Philosophy” <http://www.angelfire.com>.

Through phenomenological reduction, Husserl has arrived at a conclusion that the metaphysical status of the objects perceived are no more considered and brackets the empirical data. Bracketing empirical data away from further investigation leaves pure consciousness, pure phenomena and the pure Ego as the residue of phenomenological reduction (“The Phenomenological Reduction” <http://www.iep.utm.edu>). The ego only needs to enjoy the physical state of pleasure of the experience.

Phenomenology presents a very loose knit system in which problems and philosophies are brought together only by the slack and definitive vacuous insistence that a first person description of one’s own consciousness of the world must precede all philosophical theorizing. Phenomenology is, therefore, an effort at improving our understanding of ourselves and the world by means of careful description of experience. Through the conscious experience of objects by the ego, one can venture out further into experiencing the world. A Phenomenologist stands on this foundation to assess his metaphysics. But the existential hurdle mounts when subjective consciousness supersedes universal consciousness. As multiple is the perception and conception of the world by as many individuals existing at a time without theoretical bias, the predicament of existence will also be multifarious if subjective experiences are taken as the ultimate force of the guiding principle for existence. There will be no consolidated effort or concordant force to unite the existing
individuals because each individual will have his way. This leads us to the assessment of a godless world of Nietzsche.

3.3. Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche is famously associated with insanity and atheistic proclamation of God is dead. His assessment of the human predicament is surprisingly similar with the Christian Kierkegaard in his affirmation that life is devoid of any objective meaning, value or purpose. We are usually reminded about Nietzsche’s madman who runs in the street crying, “I seek God! Seek God!” (Nietzsche 1954, 95). Nietzsche himself has said in his The Portable Nietzsche, “Wither is God?” He cried, “I shall tell you. We have killed him – you and I…God is dead…” (Ibid).

The vocabulary here is clearly dictating the death of God, but the sense of his death is representative. That is, God is dead because tradition is veering away from itself and the related Christian attachments. In this scenario, which is envisaged by Nietzsche, the madman claims that he has arrived too early and that the actual death of God is still in process. Nietzsche has acknowledged in his madman story that with the death of God comes the implications of atheism and nihilism. This nihilism is the destruction of all meaning and value in life in the absence of God. In fact, Nietzsche has said, “Our European culture is moving for some time now with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade, as toward a catastrophe: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect” (Nietzsche 1975, 130-131).

It is lucidly perceivable from what Nietzsche has said that modern thought recognizes the death of God. Therefore, with the death of God, tradition has also been murdered. As a result, life trudges through the path of meaninglessness, devoid of any value and purpose. The journey of life is just
a meaningless struggle and nihilism surges into the path of existence. This nihilistic percept is not only due to the traditional values but a strident demand to a release or freedom from the imposed values.

Nietzsche’s philosophy presents an astounding perception of the atheistic discernment of life. Life for the existentialist is heading towards a crushing point of nihilism. To inverse the tragedy of meaninglessness of life to something meaningful, it is at this stage of confrontation with nihilism that human beings must work from to produce their own path to meaning.

3.4. Martin Heidegger

Heidegger was influenced by the ancient Greeks as well as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dilthey, as well as Husserl. He was particularly engrossed with an exploration of the verb ‘to be,’ particularly from the standpoint of a human being in time. Although he was strongly influenced by Husserl’s phenomenology, his interests lay more in the meaning of existence itself. The nucleus of his quest is, therefore, “behind all our day-to-day living, for that matter, behind all our philosophical and scientific investigations of that life, how is it that we are at all?” (Boeree <http://webspace.ship.edu>).

Existence is being present. He has brought forth this idea in the form of relationship with the world. He calls the human existence as *Da-sein*, which means being-there or being-in-the-world, existing in connection with things in the world instead of being a detached observer (DiSalle <http://instruct.uwo.ca/>). This is the special relationship that human beings have with the world, totally immersed in the world and yet stand out as well.

Heidegger’s perception of freedom is akin to that of Sartre but differs in the sense of ‘becoming’ of the being. A big part of our peculiar nature is that we have freedom. We create ourselves by choosing and, therefore, we are our own projects. This freedom, however, is painful, and we experience life as
filled with anxiety (Angst, dread). Our potential for freedom calls us to be an authentic being by means of anxiety. One of the central sources of anxiety is the realization that we all have to die at one point of time. Our limited time here on earth makes our choices far more meaningful and the need to choose to be authentic is urgent. We are, he says, “being-towards-death” (DiSalle <http://instruct.uwo.ca/>). We become authentic by thinking about being, by facing anxiety and death head on and, here, he says, contains joy.

Heidegger’s perception of human beings as heading towards death makes life no different from inorganic objects. Life is nothing but a hopeless being heading towards an end with no higher value to strive for. Being conscious of the objects of the world and relating with it in existence do not call for any value derivation from it. There is meaninglessness, hopelessness and purposelessness of life and existence. This leads to the godless philosophy of Sartre.

3.5. Jean-Paul Sartre

Sartre is one of the most prominent and influential existentialist philosopher of the modern day. He is a confirmed atheist and he clearly straddles the line between a philosopher and a psychologist. He was influenced by Martin Heidegger in his thought process. He has perceived ‘Being’ in two states of existence as ‘being-for-itself’ and ‘being-in-itself’. The being-in-itself represents a brute fact of reality, such as a rock or a flower. The latter, the being-for-itself, is human consciousness that is free from a world where God exists. This being-for-itself rejects any values imposed on it by anyone else. Thus, the human individual must make external objects as well as other people a part of his own world and they must be made valuable to him, as a perceiver. All objects in the world, particularly those that are
being-in-itself, are given an interpretative framework, whereby they gain value and meaning in the world.

Contrary to the medieval scholars, existentialists take existence as preceding the essence. This means that we arrive in this world as a conscious being, but our worth is defined only by what we do to make it worthy. And we, as human beings, have the atheistic freedom to choose which value system to follow and to make all external objects have a purpose for our existence. As is opined by Sartre, man is condemned because he did not create himself. The sentence that man must serve is that he must accept at first his nothingness and has no say regarding when or why he is thrust into existence. At the same time, man is free because once he has come into being, every choice that there is to be made he must make, and is solely responsible for doing so.

The freedom that Sartre speaks of is not one of liberty or emancipation, but rather the enormity each decision plays in the formation of mankind. As he has stated in his piece, "And when we say that a man is responsible for himself, we do not only mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men" (Sartre 346). When it is all pieced together, his main point which he is trying to convey is that we as mankind are sentenced to the punishment of creating ourselves. This notion can be traced back to the main idea of Existentialism that existence precedes essence. He has defined this as, “first of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only afterwards, defines himself” (Sartre 344).

This concept of freedom, in Sartre, evokes mental disturbance. In *Being and Nothingness* he has outlined a theory that human consciousness was a sort of nothingness, surrounded by the thickness of being. As nothingness, human consciousness is free from determinism, resulting in the difficult situation of
our being ultimately responsible for our own lives. Man is free to choose to live and perform an action and anything that he picks up is a choice. This is the meaning of his famous dictum: "Man is condemned to be free" (Sartre 350).

On the other hand, without an essence to provide direction, human consciousness is also ultimately meaningless. Robert Solomon posits this response to Sartre in his imaginary dialogue that “the question of freedom is a question of subjectivity, a question of how the subject must see his own situation…Whether in fact one can do it is not the question of freedom. It is rather a question of will” (Solomon 288-289).

Choice is subjective and situational. Solomon’s concept of freedom entails a situation where one is no longer under the constraints of a value system apart from the agent. To choose or not to choose is an act. Therefore, from this standpoint Shandon L. Guthrie has remarked that “one is genuinely free by virtue of acting in accordance with what will be done” (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net/>). Hence, Sartre’s famous saying “Man is a useless passion” (Sproul <http://www.ligonier.org>) stands in conflict with will.

3.6. Soren Kierkegaard

Kierkegaard has presented a three-category view of human existence. Each category, or stage, is a progression toward achieving the virtues of meaning, purpose, and value in life. His philosophy foreshadows the problem of life that bespeaks the existence of God. The first category of existence is the aesthetic stage. On this level, human beings are primarily concerned with personal gratification and living for self-complacency. This does not necessarily mean that the aesthetic man is a gross hedonist; rather, he is simply very circumspect about his life. Everything revolves around the
aesthetic man but Kierkegaard has explained that this ultimately leads to unhappiness.

Pursuers of meaning, purpose and value are, ultimately, compelled to arrive at the ethical stage. At this stage, the struggling individual attempts to recognize certain moral and absolute goods and live in conformity with it. The problem for the ethical man is that this stage, too, leads to despair. Such a man perceives the ethical life to be a fruitless task and an impossible achievement. The last stage, the impending conclusion of the struggling individual, requires a drastic leap of faith for the realization of the existence of God. This irrational step compels man to view the meaning, purpose and value of life through the perspective of divine providence. In this sense, the notion of truth is subjective because the perceived truth is quite real to the perceiver. Solomon has concluded Kierkegaard’s perception of truth by saying that “A subjective truth is a psychological truth about the author. The object of the author’s belief may be false, but it is true that the author has that belief. This account could also explain how it is that subjective truth is for only one person (Solomon 75).

Kierkegaard has made a leap of faith to God for a release from the existential dilemma. God becomes the ultimate source of meaning and satisfaction. The irresolvable confusion breathes a sigh of relief in Kierkegaard’s philosophy and this resolution brings a deep sense of respite to the struggling individual. His only disagreement with Christianity is the usage of over-intellectualization within the religion. He hoped to salvage man from the “strings” of an “established order” which “imprison life” (Kierkegaard 1941, 190); the imprisonment was composed by a pattern of feelings, thought and behavior, in which men tend to live and with which they tend to identity their own selves.
There are some affirmations in the existentialism of Kierkegaard. He has cognized the tragedy and nonentity of placing all sensitivity and response under subservience to abstract reasoning. The tendency to identify life with its abstraction is a major aspect in the problematic predicament of man. Nolan Pliny and Jacobson have opined that this tendency “is the tragedy at the root of all misplaced desire” (Pliny 241). The tendency of man to incarcerate the feeling and response in the form of abstract thought is part of a universal and unavoidable direction that man, as a culture-bearing and culture creating creature, tends to take quite naturally. Evidently, man’s volition to choose, however erroneous or false the choice may be, bespeaks of his discriminatory behavior because the specific good things of this world that appeals to him most will inevitably get into the web of his choice. Man’s suffering sprouts from here because he discriminates one thing after another and grab only the minimal from all other possibilities of existential good things and lives in and for this least distinguishable. Kierkegaard, however, presents that “the relationships of an individual to the source of his fulfillment must be individual relationships, fashioned in the crucible of personal experience” (Pliny 244).

3.7. Concluding observation on Existentialists

Summing up the existentialist philosophy that had been discussed, it is generally observed that existentitialists are engrossed in the mundane struggle for life. Quest for meaning, purpose and value of life had occupied the centre stage of their strenuous activity. Life does not seem to them to be so fortunate to go through. Theirs is a humanistic perspective on the individual situation, a philosophy of existence, of being, of authenticity and of universal freedom. It is a quest, beyond despair, for creative identity. It is the philosophy that is a
counselor in crisis; a crisis in the individual’s life, which calls upon him to make a choice regarding his subsequent existence.

It is evidently perceived from the existentialists’ views that existence does not mean being alive alone but to maintain a perfect, powerful, self-conscious, responsible and intelligent life. The nucleus of existence is man rather than truth, laws, principle or essence. Existence precedes essence and man is characterized by decision making, will and choice.

Man’s uniqueness conspicuously stands out in the existentialists’ analysis of life and its meaning. This uniqueness of man comes from his emotions, feelings, perception and thinking. This philosophy stresses on the meaning of life. Only through the development of meaning in his life, man can make something out of the absurdity that surrounds him. Man is the maker, and, therefore, the master of culture. It is man who imposes a meaning to his universe, although that universe may well function without him.

Man is connected with other beings in the world and communicates with them. He is free to choose commitments in life and in his choice, he becomes himself. He is the product of his choices and he is, therefore, an individual different from others. He is a free agent capable of shaping his own life and choosing his own destiny. Thus we cannot treat people as machines, first pulling one lever, than another, and expect predictable results. He transcends both himself and his culture.

A Godless world has been delineated by existentialists. Faced with the concrete reality of physical world, existentialists like Sartre, Nietzsche, Heidegger or Dostoevsky have no faith in a supra-natural Being. It is discernible in their philosophy that, in the absence of God, man searches for power; power to determine his life. In the absence of God life and existence
incur innumerable problems. Dostoevsky’s percept that ‘in the absence of God everything is permitted’ holds true for the existentialists.

Freedom in the guise is a curse; there is no release from freedom. In fact, one is fettered in the freedom. A person does not have the freedom to choose but be in the choice. This is the reason of Sartre when he pronounced that man is condemned to be free. As a result, life and existence is absurd.

Sartre’s account on responsibility does not entail accountability and, therefore, this calls for an ethical emptiness. There is a moral deficit in the existentialists’ philosophy of godlessness. Power and authority reign in each individual’s consciousness. As a result, social and political derangement will invariably happen in an environment filled with human power and authority only. There will be subjective perception of truth and its application in life with power and authority will invite chaos and anarchy.

When there is no traditional ethics to guide the mass of people in the universe, personal interests will sway the world and human society will be infested with clashes and war. Society will find itself in the Darwinian world of survival of the fittest. Instead of a humane world, we will find ourselves in the animalistic world of ferocious domineering fight.

Therefore, we are all aware of our situation in life, limited by death, and existentialists have rightly remarked that man is the only being in the world who knows that some time he will die. That is the reason why, his existence is, throughout, permeated by dread, anxiety and fear. He cannot escape or transcend these situations and he must learn to live with anguish, dread and anxiety and, he must also learn to love death.
4. Religion and Human Predicament

Beliefs are central to every religion of the world and these beliefs have set forth the kind of life and thinking in man. Though no single definition of religion is complete and all inclusive, in meaning, for all religions of the world, I would like to quote Roger Schmidt because it serves a wider purpose of understanding the meaning of religion. According to him, “Religions are systems of meaning embodied in a pattern of life, a community of faith, and a worldview that articulate a view of the sacred and of what ultimately matters” (Schmidt 10). Ninian Smart has suggested seven dimensions for a better understanding of religion. These include ritual, narrative, experiential, doctrinal, ethical, social and material dimensions of religion (Smart 1-8). A particular group of people positing faith in a religion is expected to live in a certain way and to regard everything about life from a particular perspective. This particular religious tradition can be thought of as expressing a distinctive worldview or way of understanding reality and adherents of that tradition are expected to embrace that worldview.

At the heart of each religious worldview are some basic beliefs about the nature of the cosmos, the religious ultimate and the relation of humankind to this ultimate. Religious beliefs are significant, as Smart observes, for “the world religions owe some of their living power to their success in presenting a total picture of reality, through a coherent system of doctrines” (Smart 5). Religious believers are expected to accept the teachings of their tradition and to pattern their lives in accordance with such teachings.

Looking at Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, which will be discussed in this section, they all have a general believe in a life beyond the physical life. This non-physical life is the ultimate goal which is called Moksa, Nirvana, Salvation or Liberation from the world of death and decay.
into the world of everlasting peace and joy. This attainment is not automatic; it is the reward of a person’s conscious and earnest search. The search, according to the religions mentioned above, involves suffering, pain and struggles. Therefore, there are always the tempting tendencies for man to cling on to the immediate sensual pleasures. This will tarnish the path of search and blur the goal of the ultimate end. It will, then, deteriorate the relationship between man and his deity or object of his belief.

Religions of the world are based on faith in the object of belief and all of them are Divine-human centric. Relationship between the Devine and His creatures, especially man, determines the consequence of man’s life. God is there; but man is unstable. This is the reason why different religions of the world, especially those that will be dealt with in this paper, concentrate themselves on the ways of man, his fallibility and his possible redemption, depending on his action or karma. It is believed that all the major religions are more or less equally true and have effective ways of responding to the religious ultimate. No single religion can, therefore, claim legitimate superiority over other religions, in terms of truth or in relating appropriately to the divine.

Dealing with human affairs, along the line of faith and belief, there are concrete evidential proofs that show that human beings are caught in a predicament or other, from where extrication requires a strenuous and conscious effort. Christianity and Islam take human fallibility, sin and attachment to the world as the root cause of human predicament. Ignorance stands as a barrier to all forms of realizing the Self in Hinduism and Buddhism. All of these religions consider human beings as susceptible to the temptations of mundane life.
4.1. Hinduism

Hinduism is the predominant and indigenous religious tradition of the Indian Subcontinent. The religion is known to its followers as Sanātana Dharma, a Sanskrit phrase, meaning the eternal law that sustains, upholds and surely preserves amongst many other expressions. It also includes a wide spectrum of laws and prescriptions of daily morality based on the notion of karma, dharma, and societal norms. A great degree of freedom of belief and worship is granted to its followers.

Hinduism centres its concern on Brahman, Atman and Moksa. Human–Divine relationship occupies the nucleus of its recourse and activity. The Vedas, The Upanishad and the great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, delineate the affairs of gods and human life in relation to the gods and the cosmos. A human individual is made to be deeply conscious of his essential karma and his inevitable destiny depending on his karma. The ultimate destiny is, basing on the karma, either to attain Moksa or to receive Samsara.

Believing in the immanence of the Ultimate, Hinduism is pantheistic. Therefore, it is natural that Hinduism denies the existence of any one exclusive way of reaching God. Brahman is infinite, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent but He may appear differently in different forms. He is the Ultimate Reality, who is the Knower, Knowledge and Known. He is Attribute-ess (Nirguna) and Attribute (Saguna). Therefore, the apparent conflicting views of God may be nothing more than the infinite aspects of the same Supreme.

Hinduism affirms that the world emerges out of Brahman, the impersonal Ultimate Reality. The sacred scriptures ultimately teach that the world not only emerges out of Brahman, but that the true Self just is Brahman.
The material world is taken as *Maya* (illusion) and Self, which ultimately is Brahman, is the only reality.

Human life, therefore, is taken as a journey towards the attainment of liberation. Since human beings are beset with senses, ignorance locks them up in the sensual world. Human beings take the unreal as real in his ignorance. Hinduism teaches that while living the earthly life, man considers the physical world as real and he gradually gets attached to the things of unreal because his desire endorses him to start craving for the things of transitory and impermanence. This veils the vision from seen the real, the Ultimate Supreme.

Hinduism offers a deep knowledge of existential predicament of human beings. Men are believed to be one and the same with Brahman but they get entangled with the material world due to ignorance. And *ayida*, which is the spiritual ignorance of our true nature, is taken by the Hindus to be the root cause of our suffering on the earth. When human beings are in a bondage to *ayida*, they experience aversion (*dvesha*), attachment (*raga*), self-centredness (*asmita*) and fear of death (*abhinivesha*) because they are clinging on to the physical life and mistakenly believing that our physical bodies are real and the sole identities. In *Bhagvat Gita*, we find that “Whoever perceives the supreme Lord to be the same in all beings, who recognizes the eternal one amidst those who appear to be dying, that person sees the truth” (*Bhagvat Gita* 13:27). Therefore, Hindus belief that ignorance of the Self and the Lord or Brahman would lock a person in the cycle of birth and rebirth or samsara.

To extricate oneself from Samsara, Hinduism recommends Dharma. This step requires a conscious and constant effort to fulfill the life’s purpose. It means doing what one is called to do; doing it ethically, purposefully and with the best ability. It calls for living the inner truth, which is the essence of one’s duty in life. Hinduism preaches the purpose of life to be gradually
achieving spiritual perfection, which is one’s own divinity. The gradual achievement of spiritual perfection should be done by purifying the consciousness. One should move from ego to divinity. There is a need to strive, to continually focus on divinity and one’s own real unity with that oneness. Since the divine is flawless, one will become an actual reflection of the divine, utterly perfect, without blemish or pain. This will enable a person to see divinity in everything. Bhagavat Gita has confirmed this Hindu faith: “Those who have realized the Self, see that same self equally in a humble scholar, a cow, a dog or dog-eaters” (Bhagavat Gita 5:18).

Existential predicament cannot be divorced from this self realization of the Self. Living the everyday life, however enlightened a person is, that person faces the daily reproaches of humaneness that prowls around as if to devour him, like a hungry lion roaring in hunger. Bhagavat Gita exhorts man to be vigilant and steadfast. It says, “If you perform the duties of your own nature imperfectly, that is no reason to abandon those duties and begin something else, for all your undertakings, at the outset, are enveloped by evil as smoke surrounds fire” (Bhagavat Gita 18:48).

Hinduism has envisaged such an existential truth of human condition. Amidst consolation of an assured liberation, man gets caught up in the cycle of birth and rebirth due to his ignorance and karma. It is the spiritual self which is responsible and accountable for all the choices taken. To understand deeper about Hinduism, Vedanta School of thought will be accounted; Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva’s thoughts will be taken up for discussion.

**4.1.1. Sankara**

Sankara has considered Dharma Marga (The way of righteousness) and Bhakti Marga (The way of devotion) as possible paths to salvation. They are clearly considered to be subordinate to Jnana Marga (The way of
knowledge). The former two lead to a better Samsara, either in this world or in the world of gods. Therefore, “they are at best preparatory and cannot in and of themselves lead to complete spiritual liberation. For it is only through the discipline of Jnana Marga that one can find absolute liberation” (Netland 54). So, Sankara believes knowledge to be the key to liberation and, therefore, the source of the present predicament is ignorance, concerning the true nature of reality.

It is discernible from Sankara’s philosophy of Jnana Marga that suffering or painful life is primarily caused by ignorance. This ignorance keeps the individual in bondage and he gets into tussle with the world. All that is negative in the world, then, befall man. Man indulges himself in different activities which are divinely not approved. Man, therefore, lands himself up into a difficult situation from where extrication is difficult. This is the human predicament according to Sankara. Ignorance is the root cause of all human predicaments in this world, let alone the realization of Brahman.

Sankara has acknowledged two concepts of God or Brahman: Saguna Brahman or Isvara, is the God with qualities and Nirguna Brahman is the God without qualities. The former is thought of as the cause, creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe. He is endowed with qualities like love, kindness, mercy and the like and, is worshipped by man with different names like Rama, Shiva or Krishna. He stands in relation to man and the world and, is a personal God. But qualities and relation can only belong to the realm of appearances and, therefore, Saguna Brahman is only God as appearance and not God as reality.

Solution to the confusion between the appearance and reality comes in Nirguna Brahman, God as reality. Nirguna Brahman is neither the cause nor creator nor sustainer nor the destroyer of the universe. He can neither be
prayed to nor be worshipped. He is SAT, CIT, ANAND, meaning God as Pure Being, Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss. Sankara has put forth that, only with respect to God as Saguna Brahman, one can talk about Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience and Omni benevolence and, accordingly, hold Him responsible for the good and evil appearances. Therefore, Nirguna Brahman serves the foundation for attaining the knowledge of reality. Detached from God, then, man will be inundated in ignorance, thereby, causing confusion and chaos in the world.

Sankara’s theology affirms that the true Self is not the impermanent body-mind complex but rather the Atman. Atman is the eternal light of consciousness (Cit) that illuminates the mind but it is not itself the mind; rather it is the inner witness of the workings of mind and body. He has laid emphasis on the teaching of Hindu scriptures that this Atman is Brahman. Brahman is ultimately ineffable, but it can be characterized provisionally as the unchanging and infinite ground of the world. It is not a being among beings but is rather being itself (Sat). Precisely, this affirmation of the identity of Atman and Brahman qualifies Sankara’s position as non-dualistic. Moreover, Sankara has laid down that only that which is everlasting and unchanging can be called truly real. By definition then, there is only one reality that qualifies as real in this absolute sense and that is Atman-Brahman. This is yet another strict non-dualism. The role of discipline in Advaita Vedanta is knowledge (Jnana) of the identity between one’s true Self and Brahman. Only such transformative knowledge leads to liberation from samsara, the beginning-less cycle of birth and death.

Sankara has accounted the non-duality in which human beings are never other than Brahman. Nevertheless, he has also presented human predicament as marked by ignorance, desire and aversion. However, there is a possibility
of liberation while still living a mundane life because the true Self is Brahman. This is so, because human beings are never really at a remove from divinity and the true Self is Brahman and divine immanence occasions a radical hope for sanctification. As a result, one is assured of the possibility of attaining Moksa. But as it is given in Jivanmukti, which means while still alive physically, human beings experience and recognize that we suffer acutely and cause others to suffer as well. This physical experience causes doubt and fear in man. As a matter of fact, man gets inclined to lesser pain and more pleasurable experiences. This hinders the realization of Atman-Brahman union and ultimately causes samsara in man.

In the light of presenting human world, with all human experience of various sorts like suffering and pain, confusion and dilemma, Sankara cannot avoid positing a sharp duality between an unreal, but experienced world of flux, and a real and unchanging Brahman, which Nelson calls dualism of non-dualism (Nelson 61-88). But this conflicting perception does not eschew the real situation of man that is delineated by Sankara. The world of flux, caused by human ignorance, desire, aversion, suffering and pain, has deluded human beings to get disarrayed. This causes confusion, chaos and conflicts in society, making the condition of man all the more difficult.

4.1.2. Ramanuja

Ramanuja holds Brahman as the ultimate and the sole reality, like Sankara. But he deviates from Sankara by maintaining that the cosmos, the phenomenal world, is not illusory. Brahman is said to be an all-inclusive unity which includes within itself real ontological differences and destinations between both selves and the material world. The distinctions are objectively real, albeit they ultimately fall within the one inclusive reality, the all-encompassing Brahman. Thus, the material world and material individual self
are regarded as the body of Brahman, created by Brahman out of His own creative Being. Just as a human self animates a human body, so also Brahman is the Higher Self underlying the individual human self. Sankara’s view of dualism, that each individual self is ultimately identical with the one Self, Brahman, is clearly rejected by Ramanuja, who maintained, instead, that individual selves are objectively real and eternal.

Ramanuja’s primary concern is to argue for the legitimacy of the way of theistic devotion. He holds *bhakti marga* as an effective means of salvation (Netland 54). For him Samsara and Karma are objectively real. In this sense, he is more akin to the existential considerations than Sankara who is more akin to rational spiritualism. His path to *Moksa* requires devout meditation of the worshiper; *jnana* alone was inadequate for liberation. In such a release, the individual self is not completely absorbed into the higher self but maintains its own consciousness of blissful devotion to the Lord. Thus, while accepting much of the broader structure of Sankara’s thought, Ramanuja turns his soteriology upside down; it is devout worship and not knowledge alone which produces a release (Neville 55).

Ramanuja holds Brahman to be unity-in-difference. Unlike Sankara’s teaching, he holds that Brahman is not quality-less and undifferentiated pure Being but is with real qualities. The three essential qualities of Brahman are *Satyam* (reality), *Jnanam* (Consciousness) and *Anantam* (Infinite). He has maintained that Brahman is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. Similar to Christian belief, God creates the world out of His will. He has created the universe not out of nothing. Since selves and matter are co-existent with God, creation means, God’s bringing about the world of variety and multiplicity, which is potentially present in Him. God wills Himself to be many and divide Himself into the manifold of the animate.
In the creation, God has manifested Himself as selves and material objects. The kind of body a self receives depends upon its Karma. Ramanuja’s conception of creation and existence of man is similar to Christian concept. God gives every individual self freedom of will and, therefore, He is not responsible for its good or evil deeds and Karma. Man, as a result, is wholly responsible for his state of existence. Ramanuja has maintained that evil in the world cannot be traced to God who is the embodiment of all the positive virtues in highest perfection. It is clear from this consideration that unlike Sankara, Ramanuja has rejected complete identity of man with God. Man is identical with God only in the sense that God pervades and controls the whole universe.

4.1.3. Madhva

Madhva, whose view defines the Dvaita of Dualist School of Vedanta, reacted even more strongly against the Monism of Sankara than Ramanuja. For this school of thought, Brahman, individual souls and the material world are objectively real and are clearly distinguished from one another. Although, Brahman, ultimately, is the only independent reality, the world and individual selves are also eternal and are not created by Him, albeit there is a sense in which they are dependent upon Brahman.

Madhva has advocated devotion to Vishnu and held that “there are three cloves of souls. The first clove includes those who are devoted to God alone and are destined to attain liberation. The second cloves are those who will never attain liberation but are destined to perpetual rebirth and finally those who reject Vishnu and are thus subject to damnation” (Netland 55).

Within Vedanta school of thought, varied views are advanced regarding the nature of the cosmos and its relation to Brahman and, the way to attain liberation from Samsara and karma. Such differences of views, on basic
issues, within a major school of Hinduism, to say nothing of the sharp differences between the broader Hindu traditions themselves, is frequently regarded by non-Hindus as evidence of fundamentally internal inconsistency within Hinduism. But such diversity is not an immediate concern and the diversity, on the other hand, is also not necessarily problematic by Hindus themselves. The major concern of speculation and discussion is the essential Hindu thought of the general assumption that there are many ways of approaching God. One can approach Him through knowledge (Jnana), proper action (Karma) or devotion (Bhakti). Each is in its own way legitimate and effective.

All the Hindu thinkers accept the fact of ignorance and Samsara as the cause of preventing human beings from attaining Moksa. Another concept of human suffering propelled by Hindu thinkers is that, it is the desire in man that makes the world and its material beings so dear to him. Therefore, the unreal is considered real. This is the predicament of man and he is responsible for being chained in the cycle of birth and rebirth.

4.2. Christianity

Christianity believes in the doctrine of creation. “God created the universe” (Genesis 1:1) and before creation there was God and, with the Word of God (1John 1:1-2) everything in the universe came into being. This doctrine of Ex Nihilo makes theologians speculate at providing robust answers, which, on the one hand, proves the power of the Almighty and, on the other hand, to make the created human convinced. Man, having received life and started living his being in the Garden of Eden, began to show his fragile humanity despite the presence of his providential and watchful Creator. This shows that the creator and the creature live in relationship but man is beset with his will and freedom to accept or reject this rapport. Through this
admission, it is clear that man requires an unequivocal placing of faith in his
Creator. This entails that when man is misguided or is self-absorbed, then, the
faith is placed in other people, status, wealth, power or notoriety. Misplaced
faith, therefore, causes man’s life to become unmanageable. So, to live
securely while still alive and to attain salvation, after the physical being ends
the mortal life, man has to rely on his Creator as it is revealed in St. John’s
gospel: “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

A traditional Christian commits itself to positing a radical and relatively
impermeable separation between the creator and creature. The doctrine of
creation, which appears to erect an unbridgeable chasm between God and the
world, stands in sharp contrast with Hindus’ commitment to non-duality,
especially the Advaitins. In this context, one is tempted to think that those who
live in a postcolonial globalizing world, the world of Rushdie and postcolonial
theorist Homi Bhabha, may speak of “multiple religious identities and
hybridity, but when it comes to theology, there can be no blurring of lines, no
crossing of boundaries” (Bhabha 4). Inter-religious dialogue, on the other
hand, has developed a way to converge various theological ideas. Theological
anthropologists have shown the way out by presenting the divine as immanent
in the universe.

Intimately related to the question of divine immanence is the matter that
cconcerns theological anthropology. Christian tradition posits not only a sharp
distinction between God and His creatures but also insists upon the fallibility
and sinfulness of human beings. The doctrine of original sin has maintained
that human beings are radically broken and diseased; therefore, they are veiled
from realizing the good, apart from receiving divine healing through faith. It
is in God that all comfort, healing, and resting are found. St. Mathew’s gospel
presents the affectionate invitation of God: “Come to Me, all who are weary
and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mathew 11:28). But God never forces His will upon His creatures. Creatures have the free will to determine their action and destiny. St. John’s gospel affirms this: “If you abide in Me and My word abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7). This confirms the free will of man. God offers Himself and His grace to man, but it is the will of man, to accept or reject, and this determines the flow of God’s graces into him. The above quotation also accounts a deep underlying unity between humanity and divinity. The only barrier that tarnishes the close tie is man’s will to cling on to worldly pleasures.

Clinging on to the worldly things and craving for whatever is physical and, ignoring the spirituality is held as opposing the teachings of God. Man is forfeited the reward of heaven because of sin. Christians accept the reality of sin; an action deviating from the ways of God. Man has fallen short of the graces of God due to his sinful ways but it is the mercy of God that He has revealed Himself in Christ for the salvation of man. St. Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews says:

In the past, God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through His Son (Jesus Christ). He is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end. He reflects the brightness of God’s glory and is the exact likeness of God’s own being, sustaining the universe with his powerful word. After achieving forgiveness for the sins of mankind, he sat down in heaven at the right-hand side of God, the Supreme Power (Hebrews 1:1-4).
God, the Supreme Power, is a merciful God who has humbled down to the level of man in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Salvation is a gift of God’s grace and is possible only because of the unique person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Sinful human beings are saved by God’s grace through repentance of sin and faith. Thus, Jesus Christ is the one Saviour and Lord for all people at all times. But there is a clear specification about an individual’s choice of abiding by the offer of God’s grace and gift of salvation: while God’s love and mercy are extended to all, salvation is limited to those who repent and accept by faith in God’s providential love through Jesus Christ. St. Peter has said: “Salvation is to be found through Him (Jesus Christ) alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us” (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ has responded to a question from His apostle Thomas by stating, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one goes to the Father except by me” (John 14:6). Timothy has echoed a monotheistic notion when he said, “For there is one God, and there is who brings God and mankind together, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).

The particularity of the Christian gospel has always rendered difficulty for many to comprehend and accept the faith. It was widely accepted in the ancient Mediterranean world that the same deity could take on various forms, like the God of Hindus, and be called by different names in different cultures. According to historian Robert Wilken, “The oldest and most enduring criticism of Christianity is an appeal to religious pluralism…All the ancient critics of Christianity were united in affirming that there is no one way to the divine” (Wilken 27). It is within this context of religious syncretism and relativism that we find the New Testament of the Bible putting forward Jesus Christ as the one Saviour for all people. Within this consensus of a Saviour, available for all, there is the true nature of man. Man continues to sin and disobey God’s commandments. Christianity accepts the fact that the flesh is
weak though the spirit is willing (Mark 14:38) to turn to the side of God and be saved. This is the human predicament delineated in the Christian ethics. Another difficulty faced by the creatures is the desire to hold on to the flesh and make use of God-given abilities in ways that attempt to be egoistic.

This sinful nature of man contrasts with the ever merciful nature of God. To dismiss this notion of paradox, Christian faith posits that man receives his reward from God according to his deeds. This entails the notion of hell and heaven. Heaven or salvation is grace fully offered to man but it is man who can decide to accept and live according to the plan of God or reject the offer by living a life of concupiscence, selfishness, lust and all that is against God.

To understand Christian theology deeper, Paul Tillich, a modern Christian Existentialist, has been considered here for discussion. Some important aspects of his theology will only be discussed to serve our purpose in this thesis.

4.2.1. Paul Tillich

He is a twentieth century existentialist theologian, who best understood that the time had come to formulate a Christian theology and worked it out in dialogue with the history of religions. Tillich has vigorously announced and championed God’s immanence in the world in Christian tradition. His theology amounts to a twentieth century distillation of the history of Christian mystical theology. He is deeply indebted to mystical theology even though he doubts that mystical experience can offer an adequate religious solution to problems of the human predicament.

Like Sankara, Tillich has characterized divinity, not as an infinite being among beings but rather as being-itself, that which gives being to all beings but is not itself one of those beings. A striking point about Tillich is “his
radical claim that it would be truer to say that God does not exist than to say that God does” (Tillich 1951, 205). Rationally, then, beings exist and are determinate. To utter that God does not exist is to mean that God is not a determinate being but rather is the source of being for all that exists. He believes that encountering this God is a matter of recognition and not by chance. He has stated that “man discovers himself when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical with himself although it transcends him indefinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never was and never can be separated” (Tillich 1959, 10).

Tillich is anti-dualistic and beholds that any conception of divinity, imagining Him to be a supra-natural being or deity who can and does regularly intervene from without into natural networks of causation, is supra-naturalistic. This is problematic for a relatively straightforward recourse, most especially because it is not only utterly incompatible with science but also because it puts God in the position of regularly disrupting the “inviolability of the created structures of the finite” (Tillich 2:6). At the same time, conceiving God as a Being who is against the world is dualistic and raises weighty philosophical problems. This is a challenge because it “transforms the infinity of God into a finiteness which is merely an extension of the categories of finitude” (Ibid). The God of dualism is an entity who resides in heaven, acts in time, causally interacts with other beings, and is one substance in the universe that proves to be more encompassing than God is. Thatamanil has opined that “precisely this desire to avoid so unworthy a conception of God drives Tillich to insist that God is better regarded as the creative ground of being rather than as a supra-natural deity” (Thatamanil 19).

The conception of God as an item in the world definitely will make the world go topsy-turvy. Tillich’s ebullient brain foresees the possible
misconception which will derange man’s understanding of the true power and holiness of God. To make matters clearer, he has considered the notion of distance between the creatures and the creator. He has posited a distance between God and His creatures for phenomenological reasons. In any encounter with the holy, human beings experience the holy as that which exceeds them utterly. Here the word distance is a figure for the sheer depth and awe-inspiring of the God who is encountered (Tillich 2:7).

This notion of distance that is applied to the creatures and the creator entails the idea of freedom. In the human-divine encounter, the meaning of distance is not from the side of divinity but from the side of humanity. Therefore, distance here bespeaks of human estrangement from the divine life. It also entails freedom of both the human and divine. Tillich’s conception implies the mutual freedom of God and creatures. Therefore, we can perceive from his concept that distance and freedom are not the terms which suggest that God is elsewhere or that a creature is ever at an antic remove from God. But to be is to be sustained in being by the God who is being-itself.

Whatever may be the notion of distance, Tillich has maintained that God is always radically present to the creatures. The heart of his thought process is that, in spite of the realistic independence and freedom of human beings, they have no being apart from God. Thatamanil has summarized Tillich’s notion of human existence in the following words: “when human beings exercise their freedom in separation it leads, ultimately, to estrangement, characterized by unbelief, hubris and concupiscence, of the human predicament” (Thatamanil 20-21). Human beings take mundane life as the a priori in this process of exercising their freedom. The separated creatures, getting estranged from their Creator through freedom, make
themselves centers of their own lives and then attempt to draw everything else into that center.

Tillich also believes that theology has been helped immensely by existentialism and psychoanalysis. They have offered theology an important contribution concerning estranged existence. In his essay *The Theological Significance of Psychoanalysis and Existentialism*, he has argued that psychoanalysis belongs to the general currents of existentialist thought. He has accepted estrangement as a serious issue that man combats with in earthly life, but disagreed with Marx with regard to the notion that we can isolate a specific cause of estrangement. We can never get rid of the entire dilemma of estrangement by isolating the cause of class conflict and by eliminating that specific problem. For Tillich, “such a hopeful belief is utopian nonsense. Therefore, all naturalistic anthropologies, which seek to identify the fundamental, finite cause of human estrangement, are doomed to fail” (Tillich 1995, 67). If so then, for a solution to human estranged existence, one has to transcend beyond our predicament. There is no one particular aspect of human predicament. In this regard, Tillich has aligned himself with neo-Freudian and humanistic psychologists as well as Marxists who believe that estrangement can be overcome by human effort.

Finally, Tillich has discerned that psychoanalysis and existentialism share a common platform of revolting against the philosophy of consciousness. Existentialism and psychoanalysis delve into the deepest crevice of human beings’ life and their thought, while philosophy of consciousness, on the other hand, takes human thought at the face value. As a result, the actual human predicament is left with unsolvable dilemma at the end. So, Tillich believes that to get into the core of human estrangement or human nature, existentialism and psychoanalysis are indispensable.
4.3. Buddhism

Buddhism thinks of the human predicament in terms of bondage to Samsara, the cycle of birth and rebirth, characterized by a pervasive suffering or dissatisfaction. If Samsara is a disease, it needs a cure. The need for overcoming the human predicament is not simply improvement of one’s lot within Samsara, but an escape or complete liberation from Karma and Samsara. This is possible through the elimination of Tanha, which means desire, thirst or crave. To accomplish this, strict adherence to the Noble Eightfold Path is necessary. Together with this, Right View is an indispensable tool, which involves having an accurate understanding of the nature of the cosmos. In other words, the key to eliminating desire, thirst and craving is the denial of any enduring, substantial self. By doing so, one can be released from Samsara and attain Nirvana.

Buddhism investigates deeply into the human nature and accepts the real presence and concrete experience of suffering in human life. It believes that suffering has an origin and cessation, and indicates that there is a path to follow, to bring suffering to an end. This tradition recognizes that suffering is a reality of human experience. Buddhist’s canonical tradition provides the following account of the Buddha’s first sermon:

The Nobel Truth of suffering (Dukkha) is this: Birth is suffering; aging is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering, association with the unpleasant is suffering; dissociation from the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering – in brief. The five aggregate of attachment are suffering. The Noble Truth of the origin of suffering is this: It is this thirst (craving) which produces re-existence and re-becoming, bound up with passionate greed. It
finds fresh delight now here and now there, namely, thirst for sense-pleasures; thirst for existence and becoming; and think for non-existence (self-annihilation)...The Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering is this: It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path, namely right view; right thought; right speech; right action; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; right concentration... (Neville 50-51).

The Noble Truth is the guiding principle for the Buddhists to lead their lives until the attainment of Nirvana. Life is full of dukkha according to this tradition and it has a cause. Craving for what we don’t have, for more of what we desire and attachment to these both causes suffering. This attachment is due to ignorance of man and this ignorance gives rise to inordinate desires and cravings which create the condition for dukha. Majjhima Nikaya also confirms that “Birth is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering...not to obtain what one wants is suffering” (Majjhima Nikaya 9.15). These existential realities of man come from holding the world so dear. As it is stated in the Second Noble Truth, man’s suffering is due to his ceaseless desire for physical pleasure. According to Buddhism, this comes from human predicament, called ignorance of the Truth. Majjhima Nikaya has clearly stated the same: “It is craving which is accompanied by delight and lust that is craving for sensual pleasures” (Majjhima Nikaya 9.16).

Buddhism sees human beings with multiple problems. The Four Noble Truths and The Eightfold Paths are the tools to set man free from all divine abhorrence. The Third Noble Truth offers the way to get rid of the human craving and attachment to all things in life that are impermanent, unsatisfying and without eternal substance. Man cannot experience Nirvana or bliss until he lets go of his clinging nature.
This religion presents the existential nature of man comprehensively. In the Right Speech, Buddha has taught that words and speeches have the potential to create and to heal as well as to harm and produce chaos. *Anguttara* states that a person is a true Buddhist if

He avoids slanderous speech and abstains from it. What he has heard here he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there; and what he has heard there he does not repeat here, so as to cause dissension here. Thus he unites those that are divided; and those that are united he encourages. Concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord; and it is concord that he spreads by his words (*Anguttara* 10.176).

Thought manifests itself as words and words in turn get manifest in deeds which will develop into habit and finally habits get harden into character. Therefore, Buddha has advised the Buddhists to maintain right intention, the intention of renunciation or detachment, the intention of good will and the intention of harmlessness. Right view also entails the link between action and intention. As a matter of fact, generosity, virtuousness, renunciation, karma and the Four Noble Truths should be the foundation for all human affairs. It is apparent that Buddhism views the human nature realistically. It is a pragmatic approach to mend the twists and turns of human nature.

The basic tenets of Buddhism, on ethical existence, are found in the five precepts. In the first precept, it is given that we abstain from killing any being, be it people, animal or all living creatures. Safety should be given to all beings without discrimination. We should abstain from taking things which have not been given freely to us because things not given freely belong to someone else. The third precept says that we should abstain from sexual misconduct
which is defined as sexual abuse, extramarital affairs and sexual relationships with those who are underage. In simple terms, no sexual harm should be caused to anybody. The essence of Buddhist practice is to seek the truth. And the fourth precept states rightly that we should abstain from lying. Finally, the fifth precept speaks about abstaining from intoxicants. This is to prevent any potential harm to others and ourselves. In short, these five precepts emphasize the potential human nature of causing destruction.

4.4. Islam

Islam is monotheistic and it takes Allah as the only one True God and Saviour. Every action of man should be guided by Allah’s words given in *The Quran*. This sacred scripture frequently depicts unbelievers as having hearts which are diseased. This belief is in alignment with the medical model of addiction. It also aligns with the fundamental belief that those who do not have spirituality in their life, experience disease for which they continually seek external means of fulfillment. In Islam, Allah provides the solution, which is submission to His will.

Like the Christian belief, Islam understands and accepts the fallibility of man. It is this fallibility of man that makes Allah to be merciful. It is in His mercy that He has offered heaven and salvation for His creatures. Like Christian belief, repentance of man will open the way for receiving the eternal reward. The weak nature of man makes him commit sin and offend Allah. The reward for sin is hell but repentance from sin is awarded with heaven as its abode after death. *The Quran* mentions:

The avarice of plenitude keeps you occupied
Till you reach the grave.
But you will come to know soon.
And yet if you knew with positive knowledge
You have indeed to behold Hell;
Then you will see it with the eye of certainty.
Then on that day you will surely be asked about the verity of pleasures (The Quran 102:1-8).

Sin is the greatest predicament of man for attaining unity with God because God is all pure but man is impure due to his sin. To attain this unity, man should not confound the truth with falsehood, or knowingly conceal the truth. This will enable a person to get rid of sin and falsehood. Muslims wholeheartedly believe that Allah will show them the path to liberation and salvation. “God guides to the right path whomever He wants” (2:213). However, it requires that each person makes his spiritual path and work for a lifetime. The results are not up to God, but a combination of God’s mercy and man’s right actions. “Those who seek the protection of God will certainly be guided to the right path” (3:101). The path is described by Allah as an uphill path and it outlines the required works like freeing people in bondage, helping those in need and feeding the poor. Those who obey Allah will be successful: “But the Prophet and those who have embraced the faith with Him, and have fought wealth and soul (in the way of God), are blessed and will be successful” (9:88).

Submission to the will of God is a supreme act of an Iman. A complete submission to the will of God includes belief, profession and full commitment to Allah’s will. Iman has two aspects: recognizing and affirming that there is only one Creator of the universe and worshipping only this Creator. According to Islamic thought, this comes naturally because faith is an instinct of the human soul. The other aspect is willingness and a commitment to Allah and His prescriptions for living. An Iman’s work is to help the unbelievers and to follow what is given in The Quran:
Tell them:

“O people of the Book,
Let us come to an agreement on that which is common between us,
That we worship no one but God,
And make none His peer,
And that none of us take any others for lord apart from God.”
If they turn away you will tell them;
“Bear witness that we submit to Him” (3:64).

Like the other major religions of the world, Islam too preaches a righteous living. Righteousness is a commitment to acting in accordance with the will of Allah. Specifically, it means living one’s life with a sense of justice, equality and fairness. It encompasses a generosity of spirit and deeds, reaching out to those in need, maintaining one’s inner strength to stand firm against the powers of evil and carefully fulfilling one’s duty each day. It is obedience to the Law of Islam. But as man gets contaminated with the evil ways of the world, he fails. Failure to be obedient to Allah contaminates his body and mind and, as a result, he needs purification. Rak’at or cleansing ritual precedes prayer. These preparations, known as wudu, are obligatory if water is available. It is believed that Allah only hears the prayers if only one is physically clean:

O believers, when you stand up for the service of prayer
Wash your faces and hands up to elbows,
and also wipe your heads
and wash your feet up to the ankles.
If you are in a state of pollution,
Then bathe and purify yourself well.
But in case you are ill or are travelling,
Or have satisfied the call of nature,  
or have slept with a woman,  
and you cannot find water,  
then take wholesome dust and pass it over your face and your hands,  
for God does not wish to impose any hardships on you.  
He wishes to purify you,  
And grace you with His favours in full  
So that you may be grateful (5:6).

The God of Islam understands His creatures’ physical nature. He disciplines His children through fasting, as it is instructed in their scripture. “O believers, fasting is enjoined on you as it was on those before you, so that you might become righteous” (2:183). Fasting is performed by Muslims in obedience to Allah and it helps them learn the practices of discipline and self-restraint. It also clears the mind and the body and, readies it for an open and receptive communication with Allah through prayer and meditation.

The body of Islamic law, as a whole, is known as *Shariá*, which means path. According to Islam, this is a divinely appointed path explicitly laid out for humanity to follow in order to attain salvation. It has two primary sources, *The Quran* and *The Sunna*. *The Sunna* is significant for the spirituality of Islam because it teaches Muslims about how Muhammad acted during his life. It also addresses the ways of life, dealing with friends, family and government. In order to live in integrity with the law, it is necessary to understand the five categories of acts. They are Obligatory acts, Prohibited acts, Recommended acts, Undesirable acts and Permissible acts. The *Quran* states: “Do not strut about the land with insolence: Surely you cannot cleave the earth, nor attain the height of mountains in stature. All these are evil and odious to you Lord” (17:37-38).
Islam strongly recommends a community life and the sense of solidarity, shared by Muslims, is highly valued. They view themselves as a community (umma) who share their belief in Allah; they value their spiritual kinship and their own individual freedom. Any attempt, therefore, by anybody to sabotage this close tie causes a great stir. Muslims cannot tolerate any individual or group or community endeavoring to break down their community spirit.

Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) has the ultimate benefit of receiving forgiveness for one’s sins. The actual events of Hajj heighten a person’s consciousness of God and create a sense of spiritual fulfillment. Muhammad had promised that those who perform the Hajj will return from it as a newly born baby implying a freedom from sin. The pilgrimage to Mecca, to visit the Ka’aba, is a lifetime goal of every Muslim. It is one of the five pillars or requirements of the faith. The journey is taken as purification.

4.5. Concluding Observation

The major religions of the world, that had been discussed, pose great concern for the ethical behavior of man. Spiritual life, though, is the prime goal of all religions, it is the life and action of man that will determine the destiny. Hindu belief of Brahman as the One Ultimate Reality echoes Buddhist’s belief in the One and only Truth which Buddha teaches. Both Christianity and Islam take God as one and the savior of the world. The latter two traditions take sin as the barrier that stands between God and man. Heaven is assured to those who believe in God, obey his commands and live the life according to the law of the religion. The former two, on the other hand, takes the Ultimate Truth as the God. Realization of the Self is the realization of the Ultimate One. This realization will finally reward a person
with *Moksa* or Nirvana or Liberation which will end the predicament of man caused by *Samsara*.

In all the four religions, the major point of concern is human beings and the earthly existence. Hinduism and Buddhism take ignorance as the stumbling block towards actual progress in life. It is the desire which fetters man from moving further in the realization of truth. Christianity and Islam take physical weakness of man in yielding to the temptation of sin as the greatest barrier which denies man of all necessary peace and joy of life.

All the religions, in discussion, have taken desire and freedom as real aspects which bring negative experiences in life. Attachment to the physical pleasures causes much of human strive and misunderstanding and, it brings conflict in human society. These are the major concerns in relation to the existential problems faced by man, however spiritually based life is.

5. Human Predicament and Asif Currimbhoy

Currimbhoy has considered human predicament as a “survival” struggle (*IQ* 81). There is a tendency for everyone to strive in life, a prodigious strive contemplating the “philosophical realization of self-consciousness” (Solomon 238). It is not for a realization that leads to Nietzsche and Sartre’s nihilism, exclaiming that traditional values no longer exist today because God and tradition have been executed by man (Nietzsche 1954, 95). On the contrary, the playwright’s endeavours playing dream is that there is an objective individual struggle in life which is battered with existential issues of meaning, purpose and value of life. Therefore, he has desired that in any action “the means has to be as important as the end, must be ethical” (*AEWT* 15).

Ethical issue looms large in Currimbhoy’s world and in this world, there is no absolute truth in life but only subjective truth, which is echoed by Soren Kierkegaard that pursuers of meaning, purpose and value in life endeavour
with subjective truth which Solomon holds it as “a psychological truth” (Solomon 75). The dramatist believes in the reality of this subjective and chaotic world of man, enmeshed in struggles. It is chaotic because every individual finds himself in the cocoon of his world, struggling to carve out his position in society or striving to reach his destiny. Through this arduous journey of life, part of our “essential life” “dies everyday” (MLA 36).

The dramatist’s view of life comprehensively encompasses social, political and religious affairs of man. He has dealt with this life through psychological, rational and spiritual speculations. Human life is not a fantasy but a concrete reality, which is streaked with existential problems and dilemmas. These difficulties cross every person’s life and renders man to be in a predicament or the other. This great existential problem of human predicament, which is found in the select plays of Currimbhoy, will be discussed under various sub-topics.

5.1. Predicament of living in an Imaginary World

The potential in man, for higher dreams, leads him to strive hard in life. Holding hostage to this potentialities and embarking on uncertainties calls for a serious and faithful introspection. Currimbhoy’s worldview anchors on flinging of the selfish self and transcending the tangible physical world. Rising above the cocoon of self-centeredness will unfetter the wrong vision of life. Human life, shrouded in uncertainties, will see the light of certainty only when the cocoon of selfishness bursts because one “can’t change the fortune to suit (your) one’s needs” (MLA 15).

Manubhai is “locked in the death struggle” (36) due to his refusal to look into his conscience (39). There is a conspicuous stubborn attitude in him to use “violence…as a means to an end” (Ibid). He willfully takes recourse to violence and corrupt means. Therefore, his ‘will’ becomes greater than his
destiny (37). Nolan Pliny and Jacobson have opined that “man develops and matures his potentialities only as he expresses himself objectively; yet, on the other hand, potentialities for new growth emerge only as he releases his preoccupation with powers already matured” (Pliny 245). Manubhai’s preoccupation is his will and this has led him to humiliate the Vice Chancellor and Minister for Social Welfare (MLA 14). Therefore, neither the astrologer nor his mentor can reason with him convincingly and rectify his selfish and evil motive. His innate human potential is in fetters and, therefore, he cannot transcend his selfish ego (54). As a result, he is utterly lost and alienated from the sources of his emerging good.

Jennie, like Manubhai, is lost in the ideal world of her own but, unlike Manubhai, she gets back to the past and longs for the irretrievable. Currimbhoy has dealt with this theory of impossible possibilities to bring home the idea of unproductive life. Jennie has unproductively spent her energy by constantly going back to the past; not to derive something good out of it but only to brood over the lost past. Her possible action of romantically getting lost in the past memories also contains a sheer impossible task of concretely getting into the past physically. She has uttered, “I know I shouldn’t but I keep dreaming of the old times” (DT 11). This shows that she is attached to her past glorious days and detests the present, which offers her old age and waning beauty. She feels rootless and she is just a-been-to. Her continuous brooding over the lost times has been consuming her vigour, which is needed for the present life. She said, “…And now I think of home…and the awful loneliness here…in the midst of these incredibly beautiful hills” (Ibid). She is locked between the past and the future; the past grips her tightly and the future has no promises for her in India. Therefore, the dramatist depicts clearly that Jennie’s psychological predicament has made
her to live a fruitless life and this has eaten up the essential grace and cheerfulness needed to enliven her present life.

The playwright has shown that the desire for continuing to live in a pleasurable youthful life has created a psychologically difficult situation for Jennie. She is defiant and annoyed at her advancing age and waning beauty. She told Sally, “Oh, my dear, who does not regret loss of youth…even if one were really queen” (14). The dramatist has hammered on the theory of flow of time to show that no living creature can escape the advancement of age. Participating in the flow of time is the great leveler for all human beings. Sally and Jennie have exposed their minds and hearts in the following dialogue:

Sally: Oh, the mad things we did, Jen. Remember when we first came here? Slim, pretty brides of twenty, marrying the, oh, so-romantic outdoor planter…the long sea voyage to this far-away place.

Jennie: (Musing) Yes, we were queens in these plantations. The white memsahibs of the fearful planters who held absolute authority. (Voice hardening to reality) Twenty years later it all seems a sham, Sally.

Sally: You…you don’t regret it, do you, Jen?

Jennie: (A bitter smile) Regret? Oh, my dear, who does not regret loss of youth…even if one were really queen. And the men there Sally, ours the very best he-men in the world, somehow seem pathetically out-dated today. And us, Sally, we sit and wait, drying up inside, getting older, unable to face this horrible loneliness any further…
Sally: (Reproachfully) Jen, sometimes I just don’t understand you? (13-14).

Life is inevitably moving forward but Jennie rebels against this flow of time because she cannot halt herself from advancing in age. She is inundated in the thought of her glorious youthful days and, therefore, at an advanced age, everything seems to be worthless for her. Even the very best he-men in the world she has married seems pathetically out-dated now. The inescapable old age and the loss of youth have caused an irreconcilable regret in her. Longing for the glorious past and getting lost into it mentally by neglecting the present has sabotaged Jennie. Therefore, the dramatist believes that refusal to accept the reality of life will make a person sit and wait, drying up inside, getting older and unable to face the painful loneliness any further.

The author believes that feeling nostalgic about the past and ignoring the present makes life miserable. Jennie has “suffered from that nostalgia” (25). She has ignored the most essential aspect of living a fruitful and happy life; “facing the now – one that only needs to be revitalized” (Ibid). She feels “somewhat different” and “cut off from the other women” (22) by self-pitying and taking refuge in her own self. She becomes a loner even while living amongst other people. When she asked her husband, “Is there something wrong with me, with me, Mac?” (Ibid), like many questions, the answer is contained in the question itself. Her predicament has sucked her day and night like a leech sucking the essential part of life through the blood. Even the play within the play could not pull her out from her predicament. The play “by itself means nothing…but as a trigger, a release, a memory, a promise…” (22). It has the essential vitamins to re-invigorate and make her rethink about the meaning, purpose and value of her life and, thereby, propel her to envisage the preciousness of an advancing age. Nevertheless, she has failed to imbibe
the precious value of the play because she is inebriated in her fanciful world. As a result, it only served as a momentary promise of a lightening joy that did not stay long. Therefore, she has always attempted an escape from her painful world because she is tightly gripped with the fear of “what will happen when it’s all over” (26). This has made her life “more restless than ever” (Ibid). Her life is fettered in despondency and, therefore, she feels alienated even in the presence of her husband and companions.

Currimbhoy has presented a more severe case of nostalgia through the character of Joseph in *This Alien...Native Land*. Joseph broods over the past failure but does nothing to convalesce from this mistake. The conversation between Joseph and his daughter speaks volumes about the regret and inner pain of Joseph:

Joseph: Jerusalem. Oh, Sarah, Sarah, Jerusalem. I wonder if we made a wrong decision of not going there, child. You were a child then, clinging on to me...See how this city has grown. I...I can’t cope with it... *(His rocking become a little more agitated)*

Sarah: *(Taking back his pipe, replacing his burnt-out tobacco)* Jerusalem would have grown too. Remember...it was a long time ago...

Joseph: But not like here...Here it’s dirty and filthy and...and...ingrown. There it’s the wide spaces...and a new life... *(TANL 12-13).*

The playwright has used the rocking chair to symbolically indicate the inner functioning of Joseph. His lost past and failure are expressed in his agitated rocking of the chair. He feels the ill effects of taking the wrong decision of not going to Jerusalem and staying back in India. This regret has
kept him bound to the rocking chair without being able to courageously resolve the mistake and decisively moving forward. As a result, he has being drained out of his essential manly vigour to carry on with his life. This is well exposed in his own words when he said, “while I weary underneath…ageing…with a feeble heart” (14). Joseph never dared to commission himself for a fruitful and evolutionary future. The dramatist has conveyed his vision of life, through this, that those who do not have dreams and missions in life are doomed to fail and suffer.

5.2. The Predicament of Pull and Push factor in Man

The dramatist believes that alienation and fear make a person to be eternally in the whirlpool of wanting and fearing the same thing. Eva Pierrakos has observed that “Man’s greatest struggle and greatest conflict is his desire to overcome isolation and loneliness while, at the same time, fearing relationship and close, intimate contact with another being” (Pierrakos <http://www.awakeningtruth.org>). In An Experiment with Truth, the author has presented an ideal person who desired sensual relationships, yet feared the temptation of falling into such relationships. Gandhiji feels lonely after the death of his wife, yet fears an intimate relationship with other persons to fill the vacuum. He said, “Though I always…and yet never…walked alone, the loneliness I felt after Ba’s death never left me…” (AEWT 57). He has yielded to the temptation of his sensuous weakness several times but he has always struggled with the consequential fear. “After almost forty years of practicing brahmacharya and abstinence, I was shaken to find my weakness still there” (58), “…of my succumbing to the desire I thought no longer existed in my being” (59). There is a simultaneous pulling and pushing forces in him. The dramatist has cognized the struggle that is so fierce in man and presents that
both desire and fear are, often, equally strong that man either surrenders to the more palatable thing and sacrifice the other or stays locked up in the lock jam.

The human predicament of desire for and fear of closeness is likened by Currimbhoj to Issac Newton’s third rule which states that “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction” (Cannon <http://www.mindbodygreen.com>). In human relation, when the dichotomy of desire and fear rules a person simultaneously, the push and pull factors will be strong enough to out-crush each other and there will be a tug of war. Senhora fears closeness with the “coloured people” (GOA 37) and she even abhors them, considering them as “dirty” (Ibid) but, at the same time, she initiates closeness of relation with Krishna, an Indian (63-64). In the face of desiring sensuous pleasure, she has played the role of an initiator and Krishna, an Indian, becomes a meek prey to her sensuousness. She is an opportunist and befriends Krishna to gratify her sexual appetite (59-60). So, when she desires something, she, at the same time, fears close relationship with the same object and her predicament is present in this respect. Her disturbances, disharmonies and sufferings can be brought down to this simple common denominator. Pierrakos has commented on this type of predicament saying, “man’s destructiveness and his insistence on holding on to it not only represents the barriers which keep him separated, but at the same time, serves to maintain the barriers” (Pierrakos <http://www.awakeningtruth.org>).

The barrier stands as the demarcating line between the push and pull factors. Both sides are equally strong; simultaneously pulling and pushing in the opposite directions. Senhora Miranda has desired an Indian’s flesh but, at the same time, fears to degrade her assumed White dignity by constructing a close and intimate relation with Indians. The following dialogue has explicitly disclosed her artificiality and meanness:

Senhora : Why don’t you ask me…who my father was?
Alphonso: You’ve already told me...he was Portuguese.

Senhora: Ah!...But it’s evident that I’m lying somewhere. That girl’s either got the blood of her father...in which case my father was not Portuguese. (ALPHONSO is silent) Why are you silent, Alphonso? Wouldn’t you like to know where I’m lying? Either my child’s a bastard...or I am.

Alphonso: (Quietly) I told you before...it makes no difference to me.

Senhora: Ah! But it does to me. Can you imagine my feelings, Alphonso? Now you know why I don’t like coloured people. They make me feel dirty (GOA 36-37).

The playwright does not feign in presenting the people and their true nature. Senhora Miranda lives in the superficial world of her own. She desires the attributes of the White race and demands respect from her surroundings. Despite her parents been a cross-breed, belonging to different races - an Indian and a Portuguese - she assumes the White race and abhors Indians. At one moment, she hated Indians because they are coloured, but at her lustful moments, she clings on to them to gratify her sexual urges. Her opportunist and licentious nature is denuded when she caresses Krishna (49-50) and sleeps with him (71) and, even collaborates with him in raping her daughter. This meanness in her reflects the baser nature of man which bows down to temptations, the enticements that please the desire and palate of a person the most.

5.3. Predicament of Temptation

Life, for Currimbhoy, is survival in the midst of trials and tribulations; it is a rose with thorns that pricks and bleeds (TOC 12 and 62). He feels that it is
a tragedy for human beings to trudge through the rough road of life and fails to handle it. There is life in dead and dead in life, which is found in Monsoon. For the author, man is caught in the web of this predicament of an unpleasant and trying situation, from where extrication is difficult.

In “Darjeeling Tea?”, Currimbhoy presents a woman who could not accept the bastard daughter of her husband and intolerably goes through the ordeal of feeling jealous of it and at the same time continues to live with her infidel husband. BigMac’s compassion and love for Didi, his bastard daughter, has made Jennie even more envious. At one point, she was tempted to transfer her passion to Bunty, an Indian who stays with them. The following dialogue is revelatory:

Jennie: Bunty, are you or are you not…interested in being a planter?

Bunty: (Heroically) I am.

Jennie: Well then, start with the planter’s wife.

Bunty: Oh, I say…

Jennie: Not the same as a coolie woman, I admit, but then I suppose I am rather different compared to you.

Bunty: I should hope so.

Jennie: Opposites attract.

Bunty: So they say.

Jennie: Why don’t you…discover?

Bunty: (Trumpeting) Mcclouds ahead! (She kisses him. He is stunned, serious, she is too; long moment of silence, both do nothing, the half-bantering joke’s all gone, so also is her nervousness and hysteria)
Jennie: (Quietly) We did a beautiful final act, didn’t we, Bunty?

Bunty: (Looks back, equally soberly) We certainly did.

Jennie: (Controlling herself) Goodnight, Bunty. (Bunty goes to the door, hesitates, turns around)

Bunty: (Softly) Jennie…

Jennie: (Breaking out, unable to control herself any further) GO, BUNTY, PLEASE…LEAVE ME ALONE (Bunty leaves, Jennie hurts out shamefully in tears closing her face with her handkerchief) (GOA 48).

It is crystal clear that, in the moment of Jennie’s great grief and jealousy for her husband’s transference of his compassion and concentration on Didi, she desires the passion of Bunty. But on waking up to her true self, she retards from him and weeps in shame about her unfaithfulness. The dramatist has shown, through the character of Jennie, that jealousy and sexual urges gone sour in married life negatively impacts a person. He is acutely alive to the redeeming possibilities in man and this is shown in Jennie’s act of retarding from Bunty, weeping in shame. Though Jennie feels shattered due to her husband’s infidelity, she wakes up to the befalling temptation before yielding to it and this is the kind of redeeming factor that Currimbhoy trusts.

The dramatist believes that temptation plays the role of a cupid when a person is shuttled between self-control and desire. Gandhiji has faltered and yielded to the tempting physical pleasures several times, in spite of his herculean effort in trying to contain it. His predicament lay deeply embedded in this empirical sensuousness. Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy of a priori senses takes the upper hand when it comes to the taste of pleasure. Gandhiji has said, “After almost forty years of practicing brahmacharya and
abstinence, I was shaken to find my weakness still there…of my succumbing to the desire I thought no longer existed in my being” (AEWT 58-59).

The playwright depicts that sensuous desires stand as a stumbling block for a person of straw on the path to chiseling and mastering the senses. This problem gets further aggravated by feelings and emotions which cannot be exterminated from men and this makes the situation harder to handle. Human beings who are with a better control over them can deal with temptations boldly and decisively. On the contrary, the one with a weak mastery over them will, perhaps, fall to the temptation submissively and placidly.

Gandhiji is conscious of his weakness but he still finds hard to contain it. Therefore, he said, “That is why …my experiments…towards a form of desirelessness became necessary…” (44). Nevertheless, he failes and fall into the temptation of sexual pleasures and, in his assiduous attempt to contain the temptation of the flesh, he has discovered that his weak flesh has succumbed to it.

The word ‘perfection’ is philosophically debatable because perfect means unsullied and without blemish. Attainment of it is, therefore, humanly discoursing, almost an impossible human affair. However, striving towards perfection is a plausible endeavour. Existential discourses have stood on this proposition to deal with human predicament. In An experiment with Truth, the dramatist has dealt with an ideal protagonist who has faced the daily reproaches of his affairs like Sisyphus of Albert Camus. Gandhiji’s strive towards perfection is a conscious effort and he has even taken a “vow” to fight against his imperfection (23).

The author has deciphered from the laborious endeavour of Gandhili and depicts that by being aware of the desire, strength and weakness, a person needs to channelize them in the proper direction. As a culturally designed
human being, morally acceptable behavior ought to be at the helm of man’s activities. This is the reason why the playwright has considered the inhuman treatment of humanity, in The Refugee, as “bestiality” (RF 18). Therefore, his contention in the moral society is “to have a bit of moral rectitude” (MLA 27) in all our actions.

Currimbhoy has scanned human weakness of different kinds and presents that desire for sex is one of the strongest urges in man and, paradoxically, falling into the trap of this allurement is one of the weakest points in man. The physical pleasure of sex, and the emotions involve with it, easily tempts man. Manubhai, a lecher and infidel, yields easily to the temptation of an adulterous sex. The following episode is open and clear about his behavior:

Manu: ...(Goes up and gingerly pats her enormous buttock) Looks substantial…and…real, all right…wonder, she will respond to the pinch (Pinches).

Sonal: Oow!

Manu: (Eyes growing big) Real right. Sorry, Sonal bhen…er…sorry. Sonal.

Sonal: (Coquettishly) Is that how you like to start? By pinching?

Manu: (Leering) There are all kinds. All kinds.

Sonal: How do you like it?

Manu: I’d like you to go back to wiping the way you were.

Sonal: So?

Manu: So (Sonal shrug her shoulders and gets back to wiping with here raised buttocks in front of his eyes. Manu tiptoes quietly
to the candle, thuds his palm to squash it, and approaches her stealthily in the darkness. No more sights; only sounds left: suggestive, provocative) (29-30).

The above episode has vividly exposed that Manubhai and Sonal have befittingly complimented each other in their lustful approaches. Manubhai has provocatively tickled the feelings of Sonal and has reapt the best fruit of the opportunity, in the absence of his wife. This denigrating nature of a married man is further laid bare, in an uglier manner, in the following:

Manu: Before you go I’d like you to know something… (She looks)
    Sonal, my dear, you were the loveliest, highest-assed woman
    I ever had and I shall miss you.

Sonal: Thank you

Manu: How about a quickie before you go? I’ll give it to you from the front this time (52).

There is a complete sense of irresponsible and guiltless behaviour in Manubhai as a politician and married man. The author exposes his astuteness in reading the mind and heart of a lecherous person through the depiction of his character’s personality as it is conveyed in the above dialogue. The language used is original and the emotional involvement is genuine. Manubhai has acted as his instincts prompts him and, therefore, there was no inhibition in his invitation of Sonal for another quickie. The dramatist’s genius is denuded through the tactful handling of such characters in this play and Sonal has befittingly fitted into the plot to enhance the fullest exhibition of Manubhai’s predicament.

Currimbhoy has taken a deeper plunge into the conscience of man for unearthing the predicament of temptation, through the character of Joe, in The
Doldrummers. He has pictured that a sympathizer can easily endear, befriend and win the trust of the receiver of sympathy. It is also seen that both, the giver and receiver of sympathy, have an easy transference of emotional trust on each other and this provides the platform for the sympathizer to provoke, incite and persuade the sympathized person. The dramatist has also presented that if emotional attachment grows between two persons of opposite sex in such situations, it is likely that they will surrender to each other physically as well.

He has proved this notion through the characters of Joe and Rita. In the play, Rita is passionately in love with Tony, Joe sympathizes Rita when Tony has gone after Liza at the magnetism of her bountiful gifts and, he gradually grows closer, both emotionally and physically, to Rita out of sympathy. This affinity has facilitated Joe’s opportunity for yielding to the temptation and has impregnated his friend’s girlfriend, Rita. Finally, guilt and shame have bogged him down because he has failed to get reconciled with his misdeed and this has dragged him to commit suicide by drowning himself in the sea. Hence, the dramatist has brought forth the message that betraying the trust of a person is hard to get reconciled and be absolved.

The playwright believes that temptation preys on the weaker section more than on those areas which are within the consciously tight grip of a person. Befittingly, he has pictured human physical pleasure as the most prone area to yield to temptations. Lust of the flesh easily gets tickled and it can respond to lustful stimuli without much effort. Currimbhoy has taken this weakness in man to explicate the power of temptation and brings home his message that enticements work most effectively on those things that are most palatable to a person.
5.4. Predicament of Action and Inaction

For Currimbhoy, “life is action” (RF 29) and not to indulge in action will, therefore, equate oneself to abiotic things. Action or inaction is the gateway to experiencing human predicament and this is the dilemma. Besides, action or inaction entails the necessity of making choices in life. But if Nietzsche’s philosophy of making choices, where man is condemned to choose, is the principle moral guide, then human society will be caught in a chaos because there can be no condemnation or rebuke regarding human behavior and action, however mean and destructive the choice may be. Besides, morality will have no implication in life because the choice that a person makes is his/her rightful execution.

The dramatist downplays Sartre’s notion of such irredeemable choice because his philosophy of life has clearly shown that universally acceptable and constructively beneficial choices are upheld by him. The statement of Prof. Mosin, “Yassin must find out for himself that there is no getting away from it” (RF 31), does not mean that there are no other possible choices available for Yassin. The author’s intention is to convey that Yassin must choose the action that has the greatest benefit for himself and for the greater good of his community. Therefore, we can clearly behold that the playwright’s philosophy of choice is existentially universal and it accounts the consequential outcome which is inherent in it.

The consequence of an action, for a positive impact of the future, is the kind of universally desired choice preferred by the dramatist. Besides, his conception of choice also lies in the exigency of the situation in which a person is placed. Yassin has found himself in the predicament of his academic intellect and the stultifying reality of human tragedy. His intellect has attempted to make a choice of running away from the suffering humanity but
the extreme tragedy of refugees follows him, for he himself is a refugee (34). Therefore, he has to choose an action that has the greater positive impact and sacrifice the other.

Currimbhoy’s world view lies in the maximum goodness of humanity and this is reflected in Yassin’s decision. Yassin has finally decided to delve into the work-force for the cause of his fellow suffering refugees (45). This is the collective benefit or good of Jeremy Bentham’s philosophy for “the greatest good of the greatest number of people” (“An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation” <http://librivox.org>).

The playwright has shown that a person becomes idle when the lock-jam in his life is not resolved. A lackadaisical person is prone to brood over the problems and failures of life. He has presented that such persons lack resoluteness and the required courage to face the reality of life. Joseph, in This Alien…Native Land, sits on his rocking chair and expresses his inner turbulence by rocking the chair. He only broods over the lost past that cannot be brought back concretely to the present:

Joseph: …Well, my dear, I wasn’t young. Oh, I was younger then, but I wasn’t young. I…I was almost middle-aged, or at least felt that way. Leave and go where? Start all over again. The Promised Land? It was the unknown land…to me. Those dark areas…of fear. I’d rather be watching…the ocean from here…I thought…true, it’s a small opening…but it’s there, there where I can see it. How was I to know…it would all be blotted out…by these enormous buildings of steel and stone…while I weary underneath…ageing…with a feeble heart.

Sarah:  (Feeling choked, touching) Hush…father, hush.
Joseph: *(Trace of fear and self-pity in his eyes)* No, it won’t quieten within me now, Sarah dear. I can’t stop it.

The feelings that Persian poet described so well… “Those past regrets… and future fears”… unending… unending… unending.

*(He drops the words now, gently but clearly)* Had I taken you there, you’d be a married woman by now…

*(The reaction is electric. Her hand drops she becomes cold, and tense)*

Why, what’s wrong, my dear? Anything I said?

Sarah:  N… No. Nothing new, that is (13-14).

Joseph is painfully locked up in his regret and fear for the unknown but does nothing to exonerate himself from this predicament. Like Jennie, in “Darjeeling Tea?”, he also has suffered the gradual waning of his youthful vigour by rocking on the chair. Sarah’s words, ‘nothing new,’ are a clear indication of their daily experience of regret and sorrow. This shows that exoneration from it is a farfetched idea because there are no signs of Joseph’s resoluteness and courage to challenge the foreboding doom and act manly.

The playwright has presented that regret acts as a stumbling block towards a progressive life because this makes a person’s mind cloudy and inert. Joseph broods over the bygone misgivings but does nothing to overcome this sense of loss. He dares not even have the courage to unfetter himself from this bondage and continues to complacently sit on the heap of his problems. Besides, his feeling of loss and regret has become chronic that it won’t quieten down; he cannot even stop it. This is further conveyed in the following dialogue:
Joseph: Well, there’s something…barbarous about this environment. People different from us. Like natives.

Sarah: (Brittle laugh) Really, father. (Looking around at the old pictures, portraits, old values) You’ve often talked about the old family…your own and others…settled over the generations here…

Joseph: True, but they were all Jews, like us. Where are they now? Emigrated. All of them. And those that didn’t…came to a natural end. Now where would you today… (14).

His failure to take decision at the right moment has seriously impacted him and disastrously shuttered the future joy of his daughter by failing to marry her off at her prime age. His sense of inertness has also influenced the entire family to go through depression and indirection. Besides, his failure, as a father, is reflected in David’s constant changing of his job (10), Sarah’s failure to get married in her prime, Jacob’s wife invading into their Jewish identity with her Indian identity and Rachel’s oedipal relation with David.

The dramatist has made a lucid collage of human beings who fear to act due to trepidation for one thing or the other in life. Apart from fear of acting due to the past experiences and lack of courage, the author has also dramatized, in The Dissident MLA, those people who step back from acting due to fear of tarnishing their public image. This group of people utilizes others to act on their behalf. Currimbhoy tactically employs an invisible voice-like style to powerfully execute the action of a non-visible man. This is cogently seen in the scene of the gherao, where two simultaneous actions take place:
ACTION OF MANUBHAI

Close, close, get close to him.
Jostle him a bit. Scream into his ear.

DON’T PLAY FOOTSIE WITH HIM: GET HIM! GIVE HIM FEAR!

That’s right.
Get him into the sun. Make him stand there…hours and hours and hours…
Let him feel the suffocation of life: to be denied and deprived, as you are…

(Manubhai clenching his own throat)

Make him feel the whiplash of your anger and fury.

…

You let him go and I’ll skin you alive. Keep it up. He’s giving in.

(screaming victoriously)

ACTION OF STUDENTS

GHERAOING V.C.

They close in on him, chanting, shouting slogans.

They push him around without actually manhandling him.

They play it slightly rougher.

Action in burning sun.

They follow out his orders, Whipping themselves into a frenzy, hypnotized by his passion.

Full sound and fury.

Robustness, victory, cheers.
THERE! HE’S WET HIS
PANTS!
HE’S PISED IN HIS PANTS!
Let him go now...let go
Now. He’s finished... (MLA 13-17).

Through the public humiliation of the Vice Chancellor, the playwright has depicted the invisible presence of the action of Manubhai. He does not act physically but makes the students act in his place. He, himself, has told his son that “…it’s always better to work…behind the lines…so to speak” (11). Therefore, it is obviously clear that politicians, like Manubhai, astutely work to save their image. The above dramatic scene also presents a clear picture of Manubhai’s instigating ability to garner the public support. In actuality, it lays bare his diabolic intent because he fears to act and makes somebody else act on his behalf by master minding the plan and making them scapegoats. This clearly pictures his indomitable selfishness like a wild beast in the forest that cares for its own welfare and safety. God or a superior power is absent in his life and, therefore, power and authority means everything to him. As a result, fear of tarnishing his public image and the same political party continuing to relinquish majority in the legislative assembly have made him individualistic and live in a godless world.

5.5. Human Predicament in a Godless World

The playwright believes that men utilize their might and strength to downplay each other in a world free from the controlling power of God. Therefore, Nietzsche’s philosophy of “God is dead” (Pojmon 2003: 117) powerfully hallows this godless world. The offshoot of this godless philosophy entails a new ethic: the ethic of power over others. The meaning, purpose and value of life, in the absence of the Being, are founded on human
power, when there is no comforting foundation on this Being. The scintillating
dialogue between Bhutto and Mujib, in the prison confinement of Mujib, after
the bloody war between Pakistan and Bangladesh is revelatory:

Bhutto: It wasn’t my fault, Mujib. We’re both politicians. We
would have found a way out…a way to compromise.
But Yahya was blind; he could only see black and white.
For a politician there is nothing greater than power.

Mujib: (Quietly) I’m not a politician any more, Bhutto.

Bhutto: (Laughing cynically) Oh…I see. A statesman? A martyr?
The blood of martyrs has made you great, has it? But only
dead martyrs survive. Living ones don’t. People get
disillusioned soon. Only the politician learns to survive (SB 104).

The above dialogue brings to light about the notion that politicians
diplomatically survive the heat of crisis, but not without power. The statement
‘there is nothing greater than power’ entails that politicians are power
mongers and, therefore, it can be concluded that power is religion for them.
They are caught in the struggle for the things that enhances the feeling of
power, the will to power and the power itself in them. As a result, their
morality is also guided by power. Guthrie has said that “Once God is removed
from being the foundation for moral value, human purpose and meaning of
life, we are left with a Hobbesian portrait of mankind that makes it poor,
nasty, brutish and short” (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net>). Mujib, in Sonar
Bangla, stands diametrically opposite to Bhutto. He is a politician, as a
freedom fighter for Bangladesh, but he has ceased to be the person who was
mad after victory like Bhutto. His cool composure has contrasted Bhutto’s
fiery spirit. Therefore, they are at loggerhead with each other in their intention
and aspiration. Bhutto is hungry for political power and victory and, therefore, solution to his predicament is to acquire power and take control of others.

Pakistanis, though Islam by religion, take power as their a priori principle to suppress Bangladeshis, erstwhile East Pakistan. Pushing out refugees inhumanly and blatantly massacring the people, acquiring greater power and taking control of Bangladesh are antecedent to Muslim brotherhood. This is the prima facie proof of their deficiency in religious ethics. The following strategic plan of Pakistani officials, somewhere in East Bengal, has revealed all about this:

1\textsuperscript{st}: Do you think we’ll catch them napping?

3\textsuperscript{rd}: Why not?

1st: Surely they’d be expecting it. Their provocations are probably intended to invite attack.

2\textsuperscript{nd}: They outnumber us two to one.

3\textsuperscript{rd}: One Pakistan  	extit{jawan} can outfight ten Indians.

1\textsuperscript{st}: No doubt. But remember we’ll have two enemies here in the East. The Indian Army and the Bengali people.

3\textsuperscript{rd}: Ah! We can handle both. Tikka did a thorough job of the Bengalis. Too bad he’s being replaced by Niazi.

2\textsuperscript{nd}: He’ll follow the same policy, I’m sure.

3\textsuperscript{rd}: Yes. Push more refugees out. It’ll equalize the two populations in East and West. Who knows – we may end up with a majority! (SB 81).

If Indian army comes in total conflict with the Pakistanis, then the predicament of Pakistan becomes weightier because they will have two
enemies. Politically well tuned, Pakistani army has made a strategic road map to suppress Bangladeshi uprising. Therefore, Bangladeshi Muslims have being looked at as subservient to their designs. As a result, there is a rivalry between power politics and religious humility. In the search for power, God has being conveniently nudged aside and He has been made a mockery.

Currimbhoy has depicted that the meek and the humble bear the brunt of the heat of angry atmosphere, catapulted by rival groups or individuals who roar about looking for the opportunity to mow the adversary. In such an atmosphere, the notion of respect for objects of worship becomes a pie in the sky. More seriously still, the God or objects of worship of the adversary becomes a laughing stock or a mockery. The following brief scene in *Sonar Bangla* justifies the above point:

Jawan: Where’s is your husband?
Sunita: I don’t know.
Jawan: When is he coming back?
Sunita: I don’t know.

Jawan: *(grinning cruelly)* Is he coming back? *(Sunita is silent)*
You’re Hindu, aren’t you? *(He sees the image with vermilion garlands and burning wicks in earthen pots; with sudden and total fury he takes the butt of his rifle and smashes the image; both women recoil with fear)*. That’s what I think of your god…or gods. *(Under his breath)*. Infidels! *(Prowls around the house, still looking for something)* (36).

The dramatist has pictured the darker side of religious rivalry between Hindus and Muslims and, has subtly brought forth the message that human
power seekers take God as a God of convenience. Killing the Hindus in Bangladesh and looting their property for enhancing the status of middle class Muslims is ridiculously a dehumanizing act in the civilized world of modern era. But, through this means, power enhancement has been sought by human power mongers. Ultimately, therefore, happiness is contained in defeat and victory for them.

The dramatist has reflected, through some of his plays, that people imbued with the mundane affairs live within the confines of their own instincts and impulses. He has astutely penetrated into the being of those who uphold physical desires, in life, and exposes the pandemonium that goes on in them. In *The Doldrummers*, he has enacted the morose life of young teenagers who are imbued with illicit sex and alcohol. They have not “worked for a year of Sundays” (*DD* 16) and indulge in the pleasure of lust of the flesh and, give a damn to spirituality and socially acceptable moral code of conduct. The following dialogue reflects the degraded morality of these young teenagers:

Joe: I’ll sell the presents, and with the money you can buy whatever Tony likes.

Rita: (*Cynical now*) It would be simpler to receive cash, wouldn’t it? And it would be simpler to procure strangers, wouldn’t it? But no. We must play the game according to the rules. It has to be a friend and it has to be presents. Whom are we fooling, Joe? Certainly not me or you. Do you think Tony will swallow it?

Joe: Tony won’t object.

Rita: Then he won’t love me. You can’t love someone you don’t respect.
Joe: *(Angrily)* Love! Respect! Love! Respect! What does it mean? I get sick hearing people talk about it all the time. And what does love have to do with respect anyway? They’re the very opposite. You think of the word love like something from a fairy book, patented and germ-free. Like it had to have respectability. Well, it’s not. It’s love that the whore dispenses around the street corner, and it’s the most respectable that pay its price.

Rita: Joe, from hating you I’m beginning to hate myself (40-41).

Rita and Joe have complemented each other well in a world of loose moral behaviour. Rita does not care about selling her flesh and sleeping with strangers to earn money without detouring from playing the game according to the rules of friend and presents. She has even heightened the ironical sense of love and respect when she utters that she cannot love someone she does not respect. The meaning of love and respect is rather obscure for her because if she genuinely and verily loves Tony, she could have kept herself aloof from strangers and avoid sleeping with them. Her behavior has shown that she is only infatuated with and attached to Tony. Therefore, love and respect have no meaning for her like Joe. Imbued with physical pleasures alone, there is lack of moral ethics for this lot of people because physical pleasure and satisfaction is everything for them. As a result, they encounter a powerful sense of emptiness and are held hostage in this vacuum. Spirituality or God has no place because lust of the flesh is the alpha and omega of their search for meaning, purpose and value of life. Hence, the dramatist has lucidly depicted that these lusty young teenagers have constantly felt a kind of incomplete and sense of emptiness through their journey of life.
The playwright believes that these teenagers, in the contemporary era, have spent their vigour and energy in the lust for physical pleasures. Passion has kept their lives going and, actual love and respect have no meaning for them. Therefore, Joe’s denouncement of the basic foundation of good morality, i.e., love and respect, has explicated the inner emptiness and anarchical world of these teenagers. Rita’s words have clearly reflected the morose world of the aimless teenagers: “We each live only for ourselves…and self-sacrifice has no meaning except to satisfy one’s own vanity” (61).

The dramatist has depicted the bungled world of young teenagers to show the regressive evolution of human mind. Youngsters, in the modern era, look for an outlet and freedom to express themselves, as their age demands. Currimbhoy has gone into their minds and hearts, denuded the things that interest them most and has shown the war that goes on within them.

5.6. Disputed Dilemma in War

The author has moved further from internal wars, wars that go on within a person to external wars, wars that go on between different societies. He believes that the predicament of human societies indulging in war is phenomenological. Human beings who are caught in the heat of war find hard to extricate themselves from shedding blood and avenging the hurts. When Pakistani troops have resorted to an intelligent tactic of disguising themselves by wearing civilian clothes (SB 10), Bangladesh is put on a shaky position. Still worse, “plain loads of West Pakistan troops being dropped into the battle field” (10) has pre-empted a violent clash and this has brought forth the idea of victory and defeat. This logic of disguise and quantity for the expectation of victory, though, is held hostage because to counter an over ground armed forces of Pakistan, an underground Mukti Fauj, with Naxalite tactic, is on a vigil to give a blow with an equal or greater force and a sudden blow (34-35).
The dramatist has circumspectly viewed that Pakistan’s predicament lies in their ego-centricity and pre-mediated fear. She is caught in the crisis of power conflict with Bangladesh, the then two geographically separated states but within the same union.

Pakistanis are haunted by the fear for numerical differences and this has made them to evade the actual problem. Psychological problem of identity crises lay deeply embedded at the core of their being and, therefore, painfully they put out the opposing forces with an equal or more measure of their internal pangs. This opposing force came out in the form of “Islamisation” and trying to “re-educate” the Bangladeshis “along proper Islamic lines…” (45). This is a betrayal; self betrayal and betrayal for the Bangladeshi Muslims and, this has opened the floodgate for a greater crisis.

The dramatist’s deep concern for conflicting societies is the violent clash that ensues from this conflict. Existential problem of the meaning of life and existence takes its toll when such feuds take place resentfully. It is a pathetic struggle of man to search for the meaning of life by trying to acquire power and authority. The author does not subscribe to this theory and this is evidently seen in his aversion for war and power conflict, as it is conveyed in the following words: “no war makes sense. But love does” (78).

In the liberation war of Bangladesh, both the parties were dumped into the crisis of the opposition and the opposed, the oppressor and the oppressed. Pakistan and Bangladesh are both the opposition and the opposed. The former has opposed the latter’s move for self-determination and the latter has also opposed the hegemonic rule of the former over them. In the like manner, both parties have detested the superiority of one over the other and endeavoured tooth and nail to oppress that. Their predicament has stemmed from this conflict of opposing interests. There is absurdity in this fight because both the
parties are caught in the dilemma of power and authority. It has only made sense from the Bangladesh’s point of view, at least during the war period, because victory or defeat is going to ultimately end the war.

Currimbhoy, as a philosopher, is bothered with the absurdity of war. The struggle for superiority, through war, is absurd in the sense of abject moral conscience. Millions of people were sent out as refugees during war (43), apart from colossal loss of lives and destruction of the economy (55). Life for those engaging in war is nothing but to search for victory. Nevertheless, war does not necessarily entail victory; there is also defeat and destruction. In the physical sense, there is the destruction of life and material things like economy as well as natural resources that can either be regenerated or permanently stay destroyed. As a matter of fact, there is absurdity and purposelessness of war. The author has believed that even if lost resources can be regenerated or rebuilt, it is going to be a strenuous and long term effort (101).

**5.7. Refugees and their Harrowing Situation**

The playwright believes that the heat of severe political conflict sends out serious waves of uncertainty and obscurity in life and, continuity of life in such a situation is purgatorial. He has rationalized the glaring situation of people uprooted physically, alienated psychologically and bereft emotionally. The only certainty in the lives of these uprooted people, who the author has considered in *The Refugee* and *Sonar Bangla*, is suffering and the impending death. P. Bayapa Reddy has opined that Currimbhoy is concentrating on “the predicament of humanity caught in the political restlessness, moral mooring and psychological alienation” (Reddy 44). The dramatist has perspicaciously explored the plight of refugees in a morally deficit society who are enveloped with hunger for power and authority.
The author feels that politics of oppression ignites a tenacious dissension in the oppressed people. Assessing his discernment of the political world, we can cogently perceive his depth and comprehensive approach to society and its problems. It is found that desire for power and authority has corrupted the entire political spectrum. When Pakistan has guiltlessly resorted to war tactic of violently oppressing the antagonistic forces, their own predicament has glared at them. Their deeds and intention have made them to experience more fear and suspicion. This crisis has mounted because of the opposition that has poured in from all quarters of East Pakistan supported by India. Therefore, they are caught between the devil and the deep, which is found in the discussion among the senior officers of Pakistan Army in East Bengal:

3rd: We can handle them.
1st: Not when they’re supported by the Indian army.
2nd: Yes, that’s serious.
3rd: Why don’t they come out and fight? Nibbling on us all the time…
1st: That’s what they want us to do. Attack them…
3rd: Not a bad idea.
2nd: Hold on. We’re at a disadvantage here. We could be cut off in the East, if the Indian Army comes in total conflict… (SB 81).

The perceivable fear of the Pakistani officers reveals that hurdles on their way are formidably not easy to out crush. They are consciously aware of India’s stance though they want to retain their power over Bangladesh despite a steep opposition from their adversary. Their predicament has ensued from this act of the political aggrandizement. This crisis of political conflict has
created a greater and graver catastrophe of flushing out many Bangladeshis as refugees.

Currimbhoy pictures the universal grim reality of refugees and their situation to discern the plight and volition of being a refugee. “It’s a grinding, tearing reality” (28) that this uprooted lot exists and go through immeasurable sufferings. They carry with them a heavy load of uncertainties as they are flushed out of their native land into an alien land. “This mass of displaced persons” (RF 28) faces the existence and meaning of life absurd.

Victims of political conflict are forced out into the no man’s land against their choice. It is not Nietzsche’s philosophy of ‘choice’ that they choose to be refugees but is the deliberate choice of the mindless Pakistanis that has made them to be so. The Pakistanis have played with the lives of these innocent civilians for their political benefit; sending out refugees to India to equalize the two populations of East and West Pakistan (SB 81), so that they can gain political mileage, on the one hand, and to weaken the position of India, on the other, by filling up the empty spaces to be looked after (RF 20) by them. Therefore, it would be irrational to condemn these victims of political conflict, in the light of Nietzsche’s philosophy, where man has no choice but to choose. When we analyze the philosophy of Currimbhoy, in the light of Robert Solomon’s philosophy, it may mean that refugees find themselves in this predicament. Robert Solomon has said, “According to many existentialists, every act and every attitude must be considered a choice. Yet the existential attitude itself is apparently not chosen. They find themselves in it” (Solomon 240).

It is cognizable from this predicament that refugees have been pushed out to escape the heat of political conflict between East and West Pakistan. Yassin has uttered, “most of us were busy…scrambling for safety” (RF 13).
Therefore, it is clear, from the point of view of escape, that they have chosen this route to safety and for the continuance of life; not the choice of being a refugee.

Refugees’ predicament is not metaphysical but is concretely physical and real. “The refugees exist the same way. They’re alive and oh, only too real” (29). Edmund Husserl’s philosophy of phenomenology is, therefore, applicably justified in the refugees’ situation because their trying situation is one that can be seen, heard and felt. Their harrowing situation is concretely mundane and they live and suffer tangibly, which Emmanuel Kant has called it the “Phenomenal world” (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net>). Experiencing physical alienation and psychological anxiety with a bleak future, “food and shelter” (SB 51) have occupied the core of their being.

Currimbhoy’s philosophy on human survivability is that of strife and struggle. Refugee crisis has stemmed from restlessness in the political world and this, easier said than done situation, is given birth out of moral turpitude. The dramatist has dealt with the bleak future of this homeless and landless lot to depict that their survival depends on providence. He calls them a “passage of bird” (RF 42) and likening them to the migratory birds, whose life depends on the providence of nature. This is the predicament of refugees. They are “human beings reduced to inhuman existence, robbed of dignity and essential life” (18). They are emotionally torn, psychologically traumatized and completely drained of energy, due to physical strain and hunger. Humanity fettered in this predicament has no better description than “Pathetic helpless creatures” (35).

The author believes that the horrible state of refugees is situational; a state of affairs that affects a large section of people and the repercussion of which is serious and painful. The severity of political crisis has created the
fate of refugees unimaginable and their destiny depressing. The playwright has penetrated into the mind and heart of these refugees and has authentically presented their feelings. Following words have powerfully reflected their actual condition: they are “concerned only for food and safety, and shelter, stories of repression and terror, wanting only time to get back their breath from the horrible tragedy” (35-36). Pushed out into an alien land, their tragedy has suffocated them. Returning to their homeland is unfeasible and, at the same time, staying in an alien land is equally unpleasant. Therefore, they are caught between the devil and the deep sea.

5.8. Dilemma in the world of Slaves and Peasants

The playwright believes that humanity been caught in the web of cruel servitude and peasantry finds life miserably oppressive and repressive. *Inquilab* deals with the predicament of slaves and peasants in the hands of landlords and politicians. Peasants’ life is made more complex and tragic because of the closely knitted alliance between the selfish landlords and egotistic politicians. This alliance has made the predicament of peasants more horrendous. Innocent people are hoodwinked by the greedy landlords and shrewd politicians to work for them, in the guise of charity (*IQ* 31). Through this, they are kept hushed by the landlords to make them continue their life as slaves, in order to better the landlords’ capital. This has curtailed the basic human right to freedom and self-determination for the poor peasants.

Currimbhoy feels that the tight spot of oppression and repression can be exterminated only by force. He has put forth the tactic of naxal revolt, in his *Inquilab*, as an eye opener, though it is deemed as dastardly and socially unacceptable. Ahmed, “…the Naxal leader, escapes into the Mizo Hills only to return as the Guru” (14) and inspires the peasants, by exposing them to the thoughts of great men on equality and revolution. Ahmed’s crucial objective
is to take revenge on those who are responsible for the cruel slavery of peasants. His plan has being strengthened by an equally masculine and explosive young man, Shaomik, who is called “the Village Messiah” (36). He is incredulous and refuses to be tempted by Jain’s persuasive words. He has even declined to yield to the lure of Devdas’ money (34) and encourages the peasants in the land grab movement (43). He has also passionately cried out to his fellow peasants, “Constitutional change did us no good. We waited…and waited. Until hope died and the new life withered. Cruelty…is inevitable” (61).

The dramatist believes that cruel slavery of peasants is “only the root cause of revolt…” (81). There is “the harsh inevitability about it, the struggle for birth, for survival” (Ibid) to realize the seemingly “unrealizable” (Ibidem). This struggle has catapulted the Naxalites to take recourse to evil means as an end (25) and “taking law into their [our] own hands” (50). Desperation has smudged the minds of peasants from seeing the evil means they have chosen to liberate themselves from the cruel hands of their oppressors. The dramatist has cut back on that slavery and peasantry will inevitably generate rooms for garnering the sufferings and inner hurts which will one day explode and, explosion of the repressed pains and sufferings will inexorably take a violent tone, however bad it is.

The author believes that peasant revolution is forceful and against any law and order. Peasants can neither confide on the politicians nor on the landlords. Therefore, there is an utter absence of trust between them. Shaomik, the Naxalite leader, tells Devdas, “As long as you work together with landlord Jain, there can be no meeting in our ways” (35). He has detested the offer of politicians’ reformative theory of face value betterment of peasants’ life. So, he refuses to accede with Devdas’ ambassadorial offer:
“You want more wages, better conditions of work, I’ll give them to you” (36). These offers are only a cosmetic appeasement and, therefore, he has refused to accept it because he perceives that this subtle diplomacy does not mean the emancipation of peasants from servitude but only the continuance of peasants taking anchorage in their present state. As a result, his discretion has opted only for owning the land, which is conveyed in the following words, “I want land of my own” (36).

The playwright is deeply affected by the horrible plight of peasants, who are on the horns of dilemma. This affectation is divulged in the outburst of his peasant characters. Shoamik tells his wife, “How we work, what we do…A dog…you want me to be a dog the rest of my life. Or like those animals ploughing those fields…I’m a man” (29). Being a man, he wants his basic right to be a man and not live like the animals. He wants liberation from bondage, “liberation through revolt” (28). Calling themselves as “revisionist” fighting for “Proletarian Internationalism” (12), peasants want their own law to prevail; “Not the landlord’s and not the Government” (27). They feel “Parliamentary democracy is not an effective weapon for socialist revolution: an armed struggle is inevitable” (25).

Currimbhoy’s humanitarian approach to the predicament of peasants does not eschew his believe in the possibility of the outbreak of violence in such a situation. Their plight has induced them to be credulous to whatever may appeal to their better instinct of being exonerated from bondage and slavery to the landlords. Naxal movement, the end product of misery and oppression, has magnetized them together. When Ahmed, a Naxal leader, has appealed to them for their help, they have unanimously yielded to his revolutionary ideology in great excitement. He has told them that “revolutionary theory without revolutionary practice means nothing” (Ibid).
Revolutionary practice, therefore, cannot be divorced from violence and this has landed them up in a fix. Their miserable situation, as slaves to Zamindars and puppets in the hands of politicians, has made them to shrug off the impending outcome of violence. They have toiled for Zamindars and made their children even “toil harder” for them (26). So, they have all toiled “for the damned, bloody, greedy Zamindars! Who never worked a day in his life! Who sucks your blood like a leech, grovels in food and luxury: what gives him the right to own, and you to suffer” (Ibid). Toiling for Zamindars for generations has shown that their status has never improved and they remained poor.

The dramatist believes that poverty and hunger among peasants have given birth to revolutionary vision and this down-trodden people have refused to be intimidated by landlords and politicians. Amar has told his father, “Look around, father, open your eyes: the poverty, the terrible poverty. People dying of hunger, father…Look at the gap between rich and poor. It’s growing, father, dangerously…and unfairly” (13). The basic right that is denied to peasants has made them to strive beyond the cause of their tangible physical degradation. Being a peasant is worse enough to suffer the lack of freedom and self-determination but denying “self-respect” (30) has removed the essential human essence in them. This is their worse predicament. Therefore, Shaomik has told his wife that “the hunger that consumes me is not food” (Ibid). He wants his dignity and self-respect as a being amongst other beings and to achieve this objective, he wants “power” (73). This is the reason why he has said, “There’s much more to life than a small plot of land” (93).

Peasants want to live a normal life without being trampled upon by their landlords. They want to be freed from this bondage and determine their own existence. But joining the revolutionary force for the cause of liberation involves risks and getting involved in it will either make them “become
landlords” or even “land up in jail” (42) at this juncture. This speculation between the two innocent “peasants sitting on their haunches” (Ibid) discloses the wave of thought that is circulating among the greater number of peasants.

Currimbhoy has presented this dilemma of peasants to heighten their difficult situation. They feel that if they “do join, they’re (we’re) brothers…united” and if they “don’t join, they’re (we’re) outcastes…victimized’ (Ibidem). But they take advantage of the loophole in the state’s political spectrum: “politicians and police are afraid [that] any action against us will upset their votes” (Ibidem). Soamik’s men “don’t talk; they kill” (43). Therefore, landlords and politicians are gripped with fear for Naxalites because if they do not choose to support the Naxalite revolution, they face the wrath of Shaomik.

The dramatist spurns the sociological utopianism of Marx. Marxist-socialism rises above the empirical perception of cosmetic appeasement of individuals in society. Writing of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Manuels had argued that “Utopia is a paradiesical, other worldly belief of Judeo-Christian religion with the Hellenic myth of an ideal city on earth” (Manuels 15). Marxist-socialist’s utopian vision shares with this utopia, a longing for totality and perfection. Naxalites have leaned on the Marxist-socialism and embarked on forceful revolution for accomplishing their plan of bringing about change in society by “taking law and order into our own hands...because this is the only law that produces results” (50). Therefore, through the anarchic theory of violence, they want “land to the landless. Collective farming. Community holdings. A distribution of surplus land to be done immediately” (18). They want “Each man an equal share” (99). This utopian vision is a pie in the sky because there can be no perfect equality for all individual human beings. Marxist-socialism fathoms an earthly paradise through violent and chaotic
means. Currimbhoy’s anti-utopian and anti-Marxism ideology perceptibly shows that imposition of reform through coercion is uncalled for without taking into account that “society…such as we live in, must follow certain norms…of law and order” (80).

The dilemma of the oppressed peasants has seldom found any lasting reprieve. Albeit getting imprisoned for being revolutionary and feeling that they may not stay “long in jail if we’re fighting for a just and moral issue” (43), discontentment in them is not expurgated. This mood of discontentment has been heightened by the eloquence of extremist leaders, which is found in the following statement: “When leadership is in the hands of…of extremists…it may not stop with the land grab” (Ibid). The innocent peasants, themselves, feel panicky as to “where to stop?” (Ibidem). Therefore, there is an implicitly discernible fact that there is “an inner group that seems to control and guide” (44) the violent revolutionary action. As a result, the voiceless majority of peasants are “caught between the devil and deep” (43).

5.9. Tight Spot of Politicians

Currimbhoy normally hits the nucleus of human dilemma with precision. The constricted life of egoistic people is peremptorily juxtaposed with violent adversarial forces to expose human society in higgledy-piggledy due to conflict of interests. He has ungrudgingly placed the egotistic politicians and landlords in a crisis as their comeuppance, but this does not mean that it is the absolute poetic justice the author provides for them.

Devdas, the politician, is between a rock and a hard place in a Naxal infested society. He is caught between his career and the people of his state. If he chooses to enforce strict law and order, he faces the test of a public supporting vote and even if he chooses to support the landlord, he still bumps into the acid test of losing the peasants or the Naxalites’ support. As a
politician, he “stood for constitutional change” (*IQ* 33), but the Naxalites stand “for revolutionary overthrow” (Ibid) of the present social and political systems. Besides, he lands up in the burning bush if he delegates the “police to soft-pedal” (Ibidem) on the revolutionary leaders or “trouble-shooter” (Ibidem). Therefore, his predicament suffocates him.

The playwright judiciously scans the political spectrum and depicts that politicians frequently get heated with tension and fear of being estranged. Jain, the landlord, has the innocent peasants by his side in terms of vote-bank and, therefore, Devdas cannot afford to snip the friendship with him. The following dialogue reveals the dilemma of Devdas:

Jain : Come now. Now-a-days neither the peasants, nor the landlords, are ignorant. Each of us…are important voters, qualitatively and quantitatively… (*Devdas looks at him attentively*) Peasants form large votes. I buy them or most of them, or most of them. Until I have a trouble-shooter. And then it’s for you to keep him quiet.

Devdas: How?

Jain : You have your own ways, I’m sure. (*Careful*) Inter-party conflict is not a new thing … (*Devdas is sweating*) … that’s how you came into power. You stood for constitutional change, the other for revolutionary overthrow. Not only of me; of you too! (*Devdas quiet, watching*) Why are you telling the police to soft-pedal them? Are you afraid of losing your peasant votes? You’re under-estimating me … (Ibidem).

As a politician, with his party in “the present Government,” he is “responsible for law and order” (32). Therefore, he is destined to
estrangement if he chooses to “placate” (Ibid) and support the peasant leaders. On the flip side, he gets estranged from the peasants if he “works together with landlord Jain” (35). Therefore, he is between a hawk and buzzard as there is no convergence and mollification in his choices. Jain and the peasants are precious to him, in terms of vote, but the law enforcing personnel cannot be displeased as well. So, the author conveys, through this lock jam, that iniquitous attitude and tactic will receive its just comeuppance.

The author has satirized the corrupt politicians through a hedonist, Manubhai, in *The Dissident MLA*. He has shown that during the hay days, politicians are ostentatious in their attitude and powerful in their command. These politicians commission themselves to override others and play the game of hide and seek. Manubhai is a lecher and adulterer in his private life. Sonal, his maidservant has fallen into his sensuous trap but this has laid bare his insecure psychology. He dares not openly protest against his own party in power or rationally reason with his wife. Bogged down with these fears and tension, Sonal has served as a catalyst to release his emotion. Besides, hedonistically humiliating the Vice Chancellor and Minister for Social Welfare, with the help of students, has given him a temporal cathartic relief. These seemingly triumphant moments befalls him tragically because truth ultimately prevails.

The playwright believes that corruption or evil can never be buried under the carpet forever. Manubhai’s predicament has ensued from the corrupted and evil means he has employed. As a politician, he ought to be loyal to his party, which is in power but he has earnestly wished and worked for the downfall of the ruling government. He is a dissident MLA and been a dissident his crisis is, therefore, weightier because he can turn to neither side of the political parties. The root cause of his becoming a dissident is obscure,
so it has been omitted from detail discussion and emphasis is laid on his
career as a politician and its impact on his life. Politicians live on the edge
because “for a politician there is nothing greater than power” (104). Were
there no vested interest in power and authority, politics would not have been a
hotly contested field, which is reflected in the following words. The author
has gleefully satirized the politicians by saying that “there’s little altruism in
politics” (38). Therefore, politics can do more harm than good if it centres its
focus on acquiring power alone.

5.10. Cultural and Traditional Identity at Stake

Currimbhoy’s shrewd intellect always hits the bull’s eye of every
incident that he picks up to dramatize and presents the most staid issues that
concern human society. Amidst the spiraling problems faced by Tibetans, he
has singled out the flight of the Dalai Lama, in “Om Mane Padme Hum”, to
accentuate on the indigenous identity that is at stake. A very forceful language
has been employed to indicate this: “The genocide of a civilization” (OMPH
66).

The dramatist has seen the dilemma of Tibet from the framework of a
Theo-political issue. Tibet’s predicament has ensued from the threat of a
mightier power, China. The traditional identity that is at stake, at once calls
for a vigorous antagonism, triggering Tibetans to revolt and all who came to
the “molem festival…now revolting against the Chinese
occupation…concerned for their (your) safety” (14). There is no room for
diplomacy in this disputed crisis because the Chinese’s attempt to stamp out
Lamaism and supplant it with their “godless communism” (15) has severely
incensed Tibetans. The life and safety of their great spiritual leader, Dalai
Lama, for the continuance of their religion is politically threatened. His life is
the life of Lamaism because “Lamaism survives with” him (Ibid); but the
playwright has cognized that his death may not absolutely entail the death of its traditional and cultural history. Even if the Dalai Lama has been killed, “there’ll be a 14th…and 15th Dalai Lama” (13).

Tibet’s situation of humanity been caught in the heat of confusion and threat occupies the centre stage of the dramatist’s concern in his dealing of human predicament in this play. He has picked up this particular event not for a historical interest but to philosophically bring about the predicament of humanity been stuck in the mess of conflicting interests. He has circumspectly cognized that the unique ethnic and religious identity that is facing the effacement is paramount to the murder of civilization in the post-modern era.

5.11. Population Growth and its Long Range Carrying Capacity

Currimbhoy has speculatively dealt with the serious issue of the continuance of human existence on the earth through his delineation of population explosion. Unprecedented growth of population is causing an extremely difficult situation for a standardized human beings’ existence on the earth. Refugees marching on in an “unending stream of tragic tableaux” (SB 42) and the overwhelming number, mentioned by Ray, do not only necessarily mean the naked reality of the sheer number. The dramatist’s concern here is the predicament of population growth and standard of living of the human species that is growing beyond the long-range carrying capacity of the earth.

The author has rationalized the paradox of growth and depletion in humanity’s life. As the population grows, consumption also grows and, simultaneously, depletion of earth’s resources takes place. The dramatist has befittingly juxtaposed this issue with the problem of drought. The seeds do not catch the rain to sprout because the incessant utilization of the top soil, in the cultivable land, had depleted the fertility of it. So, rain cannot be expected soon because there are no green leaves to bring down the rain. As a result,
“Two seasons. Two years, and there’s no rain…” (TMS 9). The natural cause of draught is harsh and this has severely scourged Ram’s family. So he speaks out in exasperation: “(To himself) Turned the soil over and over again … (Goes over to the wooden furrow, clutches it familiarly, and hard) … dry and dying, the seed not catching the rain … (Clutching tighter the hoe)” (9). The playwright has subtly hinted at Nature’s reaction to her overexploitation by humanity and human population that is growing beyond the carrying capacity of Nature.

Currimbhoy has intelligently and symbolically employed the refugees’ overpopulation to hammer out the idea of human predicament. George Grace had opined that “the predicament is made more serious by the fact that there is little reason to hope that either the population or per-capita rate of consumption can be reduced” (Grace <http://www2.hawaii.edu>). With more number of refugees increased everyday in the camps, more food is demanded. “More of every human need, like food, medicine…” (SB 57) are required to cater to the needs of hungry refugees. Increasing number of refugees is indicative of a more serious human predicament because there is an obvious perceivable fact that there is little reason to hope that, if not refugees, population can be kept from continuing to grow for as far as we can see into the future.

The playwright believes that the standard of living depends on the size of population and availability of resources. Ecological environmentalists and existentialists dwell on the ecological balance of population and per capita rate of production and consumption for the survivability of human beings on the earth. The author has delved into this problem through his dealings on the overcrowded and ever increasing number of refugees. He has dealt with this basic predicament of human beings, in a candid manner, where humanitarian
workers strive to charitably see to the welfare of refugees. Refugees “dying like flies” (RF 34) and its endless number flocking into the India’s side of Bengal has raised serious issues of population explosion and economic exhaustion. Existentialists have held that humanity’s predicament in an ever growing population is the exhaustion of natural resources. Shandon L. Guthrie has said that “the predicament is made more severe by the fact that there is little reason to hope that either the population or per capita rate of consumption can be reduced. It is made more serious still by the fact that human population will continue to increase” (Guthrie <http://sguthrie.net>).

The author has brought forth the notion of medical facilities and medical personnel to hammer on the universal idea that amidst bloodshed and enmity there are angels amongst devils. Elizabeth has dedicated her life for the cause of saving the ailing refugees who are crowding the nursing home: “They work, throughout the night along with the hospital staff, admitting more refugees for the sick, trying to get a moment’s respite from the grief around whenever they can, until the early hours of dawn (SB 63). This shows that the dramatist is passionate about saving lives and protecting people against diseases. It is through this charitable approach to life that the notion of low mortality rate is subtly referred. Expansion of population size is inherent in such humanitarian care. The message of population explosion is conveyed indirectly through the “unending stream of tragic tableaux” (42) that is crowding up a particular area. Population explosion, by definition, means a rapid growth of population in a particular area and the playwright has subtly referred to this universal problem.

The author is a social realist and, therefore, he has seriously pondered on the threatening upsurge of population explosion. Through the episode of the refugees being pushed out into the India’s side of Bengal from Bangladesh
who are occupying the empty spaces, he has touched upon the serious issue of economic crisis. When India becomes economically weak due to over population, the ability of the country to rise up globally will be slackened. Besides, resource consumption and spatial occupation by the refugees have further fanned the flames of downward trend in the economic and agricultural development because refugees have started occupying the free spaces, fields and gardens (RF 19-20).

Currimbhoy does not believe in the providential resources of the earth when he dwells on the issue of survival problem of human beings. Society itself will be infested with “bugs” (THO 35). Therefore, Charles Darwin’s doctrine of “survival of the fittest” (Diniejko <http://www.victorianweb.org>) will determine the fate of human beings. Society will reach a stage when “there is the harsh inevitability about it, the struggle for birth, for survival, where one has to kill to live again” (IQ 81). In such a situation, human beings will be caught in the crisis of “violence meeting with violence” (36) and the catastrophe of human bestiality will sway the world’s population.

The playwright has felt that nature will take its own course of action to see that population gets controlled. Sickness and natural disasters, like drought, will take its toll to preserve nature from being over exploited. This is how the difficult situation of humanity, dealing with the means and wants of survival, will meet with another difficulty of nature reacting to her over exploitation; her reaction will be harsh. “Two seasons. Two years and there’s no rain…” (TMS 9) and though “turning the soil over and over again” “the seeds (will) not catching the rain…” (9).

5.12. Human Predicament in a World of Poverty and Hunger

The author has judiciously explored the universal human tragedy of poverty and hunger; tragedies that will not only liquidate but also cut short the
lives of people. In the midst of graciously looking at this misfortune, he has echoed the existential problem of life and death. He brings about this perplexing situation of poverty and hunger through the harrowing state of beggars to depict their dilemma situation, despite the abundance of earth’s resources. Commonly encountered situation but less seriously pondered questions of ‘why are they beggars? and ‘who made them beggars?’ have been ignited by the author to picture their pathetic state of affairs; a tear-jerking situation to behold that they continue to die out of hunger in the midst of our earth’s rich resources, which is of course getting depleted due to an ever rising population.

The dramatist has cognized that poverty is not a fancy and hunger that goes along with it is not a mystery as the two beatnik poets feel in The Hungry Ones. He has satirized the rationalists, through the two Americans, who only search for reasons behind human suffering and fail to comprehend its physical reality. He assesses the superficial nature of man and criticizes that rationalism cannot exhaust all the empirical problems of man. People dying of hunger, beggars crowding the charity homes for a meal a day, paupers getting gaunt, specter thin and dying are the alarm bells calling for a greater speculation. The author has pierced into the core of this predicament and shows that there is still a long way to go before poverty and hunger is alleviated, which is found in the words of Al:

So I learnt all there was to the control of mind and matter. I learnt something that was essentially yours, and no one has yet shown me what more there is to learn…until, until, something happened yesterday, calling out to me like you do now, making me understand, but still far, far away. It has still to be proved to me. This contrast and friendship. This need and rebuke.
I…will…still…break…their…reserve…their secrecy…if only to prove my superiority (THO 34-35).

The phrases ‘but still far, far away’ and ‘still to be proved to me’ show that poverty and hunger still remains a mystery for Al. Besides, the author’s greater concern is to convey that reason alone can never solve this human tragedy. Sam and Al have set out to understand the mystery behind poverty and hunger in Bengal but their rationalism has landed them up in a more complex situation because their search was confounded with their hunt for superiority over Indians. As a result, they could not break the reserve and secrecy of poverty and hunger and, finally leaves for their homeland with an understanding that they cannot understand the secret behind India’s beggars. Therefore, by universalizing the Bengal’s famine, the dramatist has shown that nature’s disaster will cause great human tragedy, forcing people to beg and die of poverty and hunger.

Amidst the predicament of growing population, there is a dilemma in the anatomical functioning of human body that Currimbhoy has presented. Hunger for food and desire for gratification of sexual urges that are naturally embedded in the very system of every human being are undeniable facts. Epicureans or Charvakas seek for physical pleasures and this is the ultimate end of all their affairs. The dramatist does not go so far as to be materialistic, like Charvakas, forgetting the metaphysical element of humans. The desire itself is non-physical but the object of desire is physical. This is an individual predicament that the dramatist has accentuated when he has dealt with hunger and desire.

5.13. Diaspora and the Predicament

Currimbhoy has made a candid admission about moral obligations that encumber some people from living a humane life. Failure to fulfil the moral
obligations can hinder the progress and peaceful co-existence of people, either due to fear of taking a decision or lacking courage to confront the wrongs. In *This Alien...Native Land* we find the predicament of Joseph’s family, a minority Jewish family in India. They are on the horns of a dilemma of preserving their own Jewish identity. A native girl, Tara, gets married into their family and invades them culturally (*TANL* 61). Joseph could not courageously decide the future of his family because the past continues to haunt him and the future has created fear in him (35). He has failed to marry off his daughter, Sarah, in time (21) and, therefore, she has gone with a married Muslim man (22). David could not get a stable job because of his pride (10) and attachment to his mother which are morally and directly destroying him and indirectly devastating his family. They feel alienated in India and, therefore, they live in a compartmentalized closet of their home, regretting the loss of time. This crisis has kept the family unhappy and unable to find meaning in their lives. Currimbhoy has presented the dilemma of this Jewish family to show that complacency and lack of courage have made them fail in locating themselves as natives in India. He has also depicted that their recluse and cloistered life have veiled them from absorbing the culture and tradition of the natives.

5.14. Untouchable Predicament

Currimbhoy has moved from the predicament of Diasporas to the predicament of a different sort in untouchables. Untouchables, whom Gandhiji considered *Harijan* or children of God, are the menial workers and considered unclean servants and, therefore bonded to servitude. There is “a divine right to freedom” (*AEWT* 19) for every living being. The dramatist’s percept of divine right is neither theistic nor atheistic but a general basic right that every human being possesses innately. The ‘right’ he referred with the adjectival ‘divine’ is
a metaphysical concept but it gets materialized in a physical form. Therefore, untouchables have occupied the epicentre of his concern, when he dwells on the menace of social segregation, which is morally disturbing.

Life, for untouchables, is being an untouchable. Removed and ostracized from the main stream Hindu social activities, untouchables are disabled and paralyzed of their basic rights as humans. Spiritually, politically and socially lamed, they long for a release: “I want to love: I want the right to enter any temple I choose, the right to drink water from any well I want” (48). Within Hindu society, they are considered unclean; “Even the shadow contaminates” (43). For a Hindu untouchable, liberation from this hellish condition is as tough as to remain an untouchable, who is always “being thrown out and made to feel like a cur or leper…” (48).

The author does not fake and mince with words in his dealings on such downtrodden people. Beggars, refugees or untouchables are allowed to walk in full flesh and blood, experiencing and expressing their real pain, sorrow and suffering. He has realistically handled their tragic encounter of emotional bereavement, psychological emptiness and physical alienation. Of all the downtrodden groups of people, the playwright has presented the life and experience of an untouchable, who live between a rock and a hard place, as the most painful and tragic because of their daily experience of physical exclusion and psychological trauma from the common crowd.

The dramatist has a firm faith in man and his struggles and, so, he has never, for a moment, artificially exonerated his characters from their weaknesses and failures. This has made his characters all the more realistic and authentically impressive. The situations and environments in which they live and have their being are lively, bona fide and suitable. Therefore, the characters crowding his microcosm are real human beings, embodying live
human characters and expressing genuine human feelings and emotions. As a result, the kind of conflict they experience and the predicament they encounter are the everyday experiences of humankind.
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