CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Don’t walk behind me; I may not lead.
Don’t walk in front of me;
I may not follow.
Just walk beside me and be my friend.

—Albert Camus

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that views human existence, having a set of underlying themes and characteristics, such as anxiety, dread, freedom, awareness of death, and consciousness of existence. Existentialism has its roots in Denmark, France, Germany, and Italy in the early phase of development. The reaction against Hegelian ‘Rationalism’, the Industrial Revolution in Europe, economic and physical destruction caused by the World War II, ramification after the two deadly World Wars and the beginning of the Cold War and nuclear age are the main reasons of the rise and development of this philosophical trend. After the World War II, existentialism has reached at the highest position as the latest trend in philosophy and literature.

Although existentialism has traditionally been considered the exclusive province of European intellectuals and writers, existential themes are easily identifiable in many American and African-American novels. Especially, in 1940’s and the 50’s existentialism became a dominant aspect in the American Literature. However, after the independence, it is only through English translation that Indian gets acquainted to whatever is considered ‘modern’ in the Western countries. English translations of Outsider a novel written by Albert Camus and
Nausea written by J. P. Sartre reached in the hands of Indian, especially Maharashtrian readers, and scholars of Marathi literature started to study the existential thought and its way of thinking. Before proceed further, it is necessary to have a research framework and the theoretical background for the present study, however, the first chapter, ‘Introduction’, is devoted for that purpose.

1.1. Significance and Objectives of the Study:

Rene Wellek says, ‘The object of comparative literary study is essentially the study of diverse literatures in their relationships with one another’ (15). In other words the comparative literature studies the different relations in two or more literatures in different languages. Max Muller also says, “all higher knowledge is gained by comparison and rests on comparison” (9). The present comparative study aims at analysing the select American and Marathi novels in terms of existentialism.

Though the selected authors—J. D. Salinger, John Barth, Walker Percy, John Gardner, Chuck Palahniuk, Bhalchandra Nemade, Bhau Padhye, Kamal Desai, Vilas Sarang and Kamlesh Walawalkar—belong to different countries, different literary traditions, cultures and languages, they have some similarities. All the writers are significant in their literary traditions, and their select novels are the representative existentialistic novels. Man’s actual existence in the world is less significant than some pre existing essence is the common theme in all the select novels. Therefore, for the present comparative study, the novels of the above authors are selected.
Existentialism was a prominent literary movement in Europe and America in the Twentieth Century. The socio-cultural scenario of the contemporary society has the broad appeal of the movement. It reflects the spiritual crisis of the society. Alienation, the loss of sustaining religious beliefs, the sense of anxiety, guilt, and the absurd are the aspects of the movement. All these feelings and attitudes are given powerful and explicit voice in existentialist thought. In this context the first objective of the present study is to define the concept of Existentialism. However, the major objective of the study is to make a comprehensive statement on the existentialism depicted in the select novels of Marathi and American Novelists, and to arrive at a comprehensive comparative perspective.

The comparative study of all the select novels will enhance the understanding and perception of the novelistic vision of the novelists. Such a comparative study has several benefits. It has its own significance as a study of literature and literary criticism on one hand, and, it provides certain comparative perceptions of the concept of Existentialism in terms of a glimpse of human life on the other hand.

Matthew Arnold has emphasized the necessity of comparative study in order to understand one’s own literature better. With the help of the comparative literary study, one can find out the relations between genres, movements, and themes in different literatures.

Thus, comparative literary study helps to satisfy the natural intellectual curiosity. It is, therefore, interesting and rewarding to explore the concept of ‘Existentialism’ with reference to the select novels of
American and Marathi novelists. The present study is an attempt in that direction.

1.2. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

It is not possible, here, to analyze each and every novel which is considered as an existential novel. That would widen the scope of the study. The select representative novels from two different literary traditions amply represent the two different cultures, and it limits the scope of the study. Therefore, the objective of this study is limited one. It aims at analyzing the select representative novels in terms of existentialism. The present study takes into consideration the following novels:


All the select novels are considered as the representative novels of existentialism in American and Marathi Literature. The selected authors are prominent authors of their respective literary traditions. These authors have also written short stories and poems besides the novels. Obviously, apart from the select novels, such works of the authors are not within the
purview of the present study. Thus, the focus of the present study is only on the above select novels.

1.3. METHODOLOGY TO BE USED:

For the present study, emphasis is laid on a very close reading of the primary and secondary sources. The analytical, interpretative, and comparative methods are used for the present study.

An introduction to the novelists and their select novels is followed by the brief consideration of the objectives, and the scope of the study is the initial part of the study. Some considerations of the term existentialism are necessary for the present study. It is followed by the analysis and interpretation of the select novels in terms of existentialism. Against such background certain conclusions are drawn. Thus, in a sense, the present study is an attempt to understand the reception of the existentialism in Marathi and American literature. The present attempt is thus, a comparative study on one hand and an interdisciplinary on the other.

1.4 DEFINITION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMPARATIVE STUDY IN BRIEF:

Comparative literature is the study of literature and other cultural expressions across the linguistic and cultural boundaries. It is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular region, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief such as the arts, philosophy, history, the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc. on the other.
It is an intellectual field emerged in the nineteenth century, a counterpart of the equally new fields of comparative anatomy, comparative law, and comparative philology. ‘Comparative literature’ presumably acquired its name from a series of French anthologies for the teaching of literature published in 1816; they were entitled Cours de littérature comparée. The New Zealand scholar H.M. Posnett’s Comparative Literature (1886) is considered foundational in the field of Comparative literature in the English-speaking world.

Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett is one of the ‘map-makers’ in the now burgeoning field of the comparative literature. In his Comparative Literature (1886), he defines the proper order of studies in comparative literature as “the pursuit of causes which can be specified and described.” This study reveals the socio-cultural development of “man” from clan to city, from city to nation, from both of these to cosmopolitan humanity (Posnett, 1886: 85-86). In short, comparison is a basic procedure of explanation and analysis. A comparison presents two or more objects, and describes and analyzes their similarities and differences. Comparison usually makes to see the items under discussion more clearly, and in a new light.

As Max Muller has said, “All higher knowledge is gained by comparison and rests on comparison” (Stone 135), comparative literature is a kind of critical scholarship that deals with the literature of two or more different linguistic, cultural or national groups. While most frequently practiced with works of different languages, it may also be performed on works of the same language if the works originate from different nations or cultures among which that language is spoken. It
received wider attention as it provides more balanced view, truer perspective than the isolated analysis of a single national literature.

Comparative literature entails not only the study of various literatures in a variety of languages, but also the study of the connections (and differences) between different modes of thinking and of representing the world. Thus, a true “comparitist” is interested in the ways in which a variety of concepts, images and histories have enriched or complicated our cultural ethos. Comparative literature is an entryway to the World literature, a means of exploring what various people and individuals have thought about being in the world.

1.5. LIFE AND WORKS OF THE SELECT AUTHOURS:

J. D. Salinger:

Jerome David Salinger was born in New York on 1st January 1919. His entire corpus of published works consists, one novel and thirteen short stories, all originally written in the period 1948–59. He enjoyed major critical and popular recognition with *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), the story of Holden Caulfield, a rebellious boarding school student who attempts to run away from the adult world that he finds “phony”. After *The Catcher in the Rye* he published *Nine Stories* (1953), a selection of his best short stories. He also published *Seymour: An Introduction*. In June 1955, at the age of 36, he married Claire Douglas, a Radcliffe student. In 1972, at the age of 53, he had a year-long relationship with an 18-year-old Joyce Maynard. He was also romantically involved with a television actress Elaine Joyce for several

Salinger was very interested in Zen Buddhism, Hindu-Buddhism, and other Eastern beliefs. He borrowed increasingly from these traditions for his own work. Traces of Buddhism can be found throughout Nine Stories; particularly in ‘Teddy’, the closing story of the book. Salinger can be identified closely with his characters. He is endowed with various techniques of dialogue—interior monologue, letters, and extended telephone calls and other. Adolescents are featured in all of Salinger’s work, from his first short story, ‘The Young Folks’, to The Catcher in the Rye and his Glass family stories.

Richard Wright:

Richard Nathaniel Wright was born on 4 September 1908, near Natchez, Mississippi. When Richard was five, his father Nathaniel, a former sharecropper, abandoned the family. His mother, a schoolteacher, then moved with her children to Jackson, Mississippi to live with her relatives. Early strife with his aunt and grandmother left him with a permanent, uncompromising hostility towards religious solutions to mundane problems. At the age of fifteen, Wright penned his first story, ‘The Voodoo of Hell’s Half-Acre’. It was published in Southern Register, a local black newspaper. In September of the 1923, Wright registered for mathematics, English, and history courses at the New Lanier High School in Jackson but had to stop attending classes after a few weeks of irregular attendance because he needed to earn money for family expenditure. In 1927 he moved to Chicago after securing employment as a postal clerk. He read other writers and studied their styles during his leisure. In 1935
Wright completed his first novel, *Cesspool*, published as *Lawd Today* (1963), and in January 1936, his story ‘Big Boy Leaves Home’ was accepted for publication in *New Caravan*.

He, first, came to the general public’s attention with a volume of novellas, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), based on the question: How a black man lives in a country that denies his humanity. Wright was the first among the black American writers, who protested against the white treatment of blacks, notably, in his novel *Native Son* (1940) and his autobiography, *Black Boy* (1945). He inaugurated the tradition of protest explored by other black writers after the World War II. In *Native Son*, a protagonist, Bigger Thomas, accidentally kills a white girl, and in the course of his ensuing flight, his hitherto meaningless awareness of antagonism from a white world becomes intelligible. After the World War II, Wright settled in Paris as a permanent expatriate. His next important novel was *The Outsider* (1953). It was acclaimed as the first American existential novel, which warned that the black man had awakened in a disintegrating society not ready to include him. These three later novels were not well-received. *Eight Men*, a collection of short stories, appeared in 1961. The autobiographical novel *American Hunger*, published posthumously in 1977, narrates his experiences after moving to the North.

**John Gardner:**

(1970), before his reputation was established with the appearance of Grendel (1971), a retelling of the Beowulf story from the point of view of the monster. His next novel, The Sunlight Dialogues (1972), was an ambitious epic with a large cast of characters. His later novels are October Light (1976; National Book Critics Circle Award), Freddy's Book (1980), and Mickelsson's Ghosts (1982). He was also a gifted poet and a critic who published several books on Old and Middle English poetry. He expressed his views about writing in On Moral Fiction (1978), in which he deplored the tendency of many modern writers toward pessimism. On Becoming a Novelist (1983) and The Art of Fiction (1984), were published posthumously.

Walker Percy:

Walker Percy was born in Birmingham, Alabama on 28 May 1916. He graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1937, and received his degree Doctor of Medicine from Columbia in 1941. While serving a residency in pathology, he contracted tuberculosis, and during his enforced rest in a sanatorium, he read widely literature and philosophy. Although he recovered after two years and started teaching pathology at Columbia, he had a relapse, and so gave up the practice of medicine. Walker Percy published a number of articles and wrote two long, unpublished novels before The Moviegoer. In 1961 The Moviegoer was published and received the National Book Award. Since then, Percy published The Last Gentleman (1966), Love in the Ruins (1971), The Message in the Bottle (essays, 1975), Lancelot (1977), The Second Coming (1980), Lost in the Cosmos (mainly essays, 1983), The Thanatos
Syndrome (1987), and numerous articles, reviews, and books published in limited editions.

His novels contain intellectual, philosophical, religious ideas. To understand these ideas one must look at some of the influences on Percy's philosophical and intellectual development. While recovering from tuberculosis, he did a great deal of reading. In this period he read the philosophical treatises of Dostoevsky, Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Heidegger, Marcel, and Kierkegaard. Among these writers, particularly, Kierkegaard influenced him much, his philosophy worked as foundation to whose writings. The Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard can be seen in many of Percy’s works.

Chuck Palahniuk:

Charles Michael ails Chuck Palahniuk is an American novelist and freelance journalist. He was born on 21 February 1962 in Pasco, Washington. In 1986, he graduated from the Oregon’s School of Journalism. He began writing fiction in his mid-thirties. His first novel Invisible Monsters had been rejected by publishers for its disturbing content. Then he published his most famous novel, Fight Club (a winner of the ‘Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award’ and ‘Oregon Book Award for Best Novel’ in 1997) in 1996. In 1999 he published Invisible Monsters and Survivor (nominated for the 1999 ‘Oregon Book Award for Best Novel’). A few years later he managed to make his first New York Times bestseller novel, Choke, which was published in 2001. From then on, his later books would often meet with similar success. He published his novel Lullaby (a winning of the ‘Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award’ in 2003) in 2002. His sixth novel, Diary

Palahniuk also wrote some short non-fictional works such as, *Fugitives and Refugees: A Walk in Portland, Oregon* (2003), *Stranger Than Fiction: True Stories* (2004), and *You Do Not Talk About Fight Club: I Am Jack's Completely Unauthorized Essay Collection* (2008). Working as a freelance journalist in between books, he wrote essays and reports on a variety of subjects. Furthermore, he also interviews with celebrities, such as, Juliette Lewis and Marilyn Manson.

Palahniuk’s writing style has been influenced by authors like the minimalist Tom Spanbauer, Amy Hempel, Mark Richard, Denis Johnson, Thom Jones, and Bret Easton Ellis. However, he is best known for the cynical and ironic black humour that appears throughout his work. The characters in his stories often break into philosophical asides offering numerous odd theories and opinions, often misanthropic or darkly absurdist in nature, on complex issues of death, morality, childhood, parenthood, sexuality and God.

**Bhalchandra Nemade:**

Bhalchandra Vanaji Nemade (बाळचंद्र वणजी नेमडे) was born on 27 May, 1938 at Sangvi in Jalgaon district, Maharashtra. He completed his Metric in 1955 and graduation from Fergusson College, Pune in 1959. From the Deccan College, Pune, he completed his M. A. in Linguistics in the year 1961. In 1964 he completed M. A. in English Literature from Mumbai University. After 1965 he worked as a Lecturer in various
colleges. For the year 1971-72 he worked for the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. From 1974, he worked as a Professor of English in the Department of English, Marathawada University Aurangabad.

In the initial phase of his literary career he was active in Marathi ‘Little Magazine’ (Aso and Vacha) movement. Since then he published a large number of critical essays, a collection of which was published under the title Tikaswayamvar in Marathi; and another volume of essays on style, Sahityachi Bhasha was published in 1987. Bhalchandra Nemade came into fame as an avant-garde novelist, when he was in his twenties, soon after the publication of his first novel, Kosla (1963). Three more novels Bidhar, Jarila, and Zul and two volumes of poems, Melody and Dekhni, followed it during 1980s. Beside his literary output, Nemade has exerted an influence in Marathi fiction, prose style, and literary culture. He is popularly known for his contribution to the theory of Nativism. Nativism insists that the literature be treated as a sub-system of the native culture, and literature should represent the social reality.

Bhau Padhye:

Prabhakar Narayan Padhye (प्रभाकर नरायण पड्हे) known as Bhau Padhye (बहू पड्हे) in Marathi literary world, was born in Dadar in 1926. He graduated in Economics from Mumbai University in 1948. He worked as a volunteer for a labour union during 1949-1951. Before starting his career as a journalist, editor and columnist in different Marathi magazines, he worked as a teacher in various high schools, and even as a clerk in a spinning mill. His columns were published in different Marathi magazines, Rahasyarajanjan, Abhiruchee, Manoos, Sobat, Dinank, Kridangan, and Chandrayug. He started his literary career as a novelist

Padhye’s oeuvre was varied and substantial. He wrote in an idiolect: a hybrid of various dialects of spoken Marathi and a film-inspired Bambaiyya Hindi—a seemingly unliterary style. This gave his characters and situations a certain punch and credibility. Ironically, Padhye spent most of his life in poverty, and died in penury. He suffered a disabling attack of paralysis in 1989 and died in 1996 at the age of 70.

**Kamal Desai:**

Kamal Desai, a novelist, short story writer and distinguished teacher of Marathi literature, was born on 10 November 1928 at Yamakanmaradi near Belgaum on the border of Maharashtra and Karnataka states. Her early school education completed at Sangli and Miraj and then she went to study at Belgaum, Dharwad, and Mumbai. She won a gold medal for the postgraduate degree in Marathi and English literature from Bombay University. She then went to teach Marathi
literature and Aesthetics in different colleges in Gujarat and Maharashtra. She now lives in Pune.

Kamal Desai writes short stories and novels with a marked philosophical inclination. Her short story collection, *Rang* (1962) received critical attention for the subtle delineation of the inner world of middle class working women. *Ratrandin Amha Yuddhacha Prasang* (1963) portrays the individual and collective struggles of the characters. In the book the imagery is startling; the narrative disjointed and personal struggles take on dimensions that exceed and rupture the narrative framework of realism.

The novels *Kala Surya* (1968) and *Hat Ghalnari Bai* (1970), which first appeared in the prestigious literary journals *Satyakatha* and *Mouj*, were published together in book form in 1975. These novels have secured, for Kamal Desai, a permanent place in the literary map of Marathi. Her texts offer, simultaneously, a critique of patriarchal culture and of binary epistemology. Since 1970 Kamal Desai has published several short stories, brought out in a collection by Popular Prakashan, Mumbai. She has also written a play, *Tila Ughad*.

**Vilas Sarang:**

Vilas Govind Sarang (विळ गोविंद सारंग), a critic, poet, and novelist was born on 11th June, 1942 at Karwar, Maharashtra. He secured his master degree in English from Mumbai University and completed his Doctoral research on W. H. Auden’s poetry in 1960. He started his literary career at the age of ten. In his literary career he wrote articles on Sartre, Camus, Beckett, Kafka, and T. S. Eliot in the Marathi. *Soledad*
(1975) and Atank (1999) are his short story collections. Enkicyya Rajyat (1983) is the only novel written on his experience in the Iraq and Kuwait. Sisyphus and Belvacka is a book which contains the critical articles assessing the works of western authors and philosophers. His other critical writings are Marathi Navakadambari (1983) and Aksharani Sram Kela. In Marathi Navakadambari, he critically evaluated the novels of Kiran Nagarkar, Kamal Desai, Bhalchandra Nemade and T. C. Khanolkar. He has also written a poetry collection Kavita 1969-1984, published in 1986.

Kamlesh Walawalkar:

Kamlesh Walawalkar (कमलेश वाळवळकर), a young Marathi writer, was born on 20 October 1970 in Sangli, Maharashtra. He has completed his high school education from Modern English School, Sangli in 1986, and completed his Bachelor of Engineering from PVPIT College Budhgaon in 1992. At present he lives in Sangli as a self-employed Civil Engineer. As a writer he wrote many short stories in Marathi and English periodicals. In the year 2000 he has completed his first novel Baki Shoonya (बकी शौन्य) and published in 2005. Search for universal meaning and search for identity in hostile world is the main concern of the novel. It is a story of Jayaraj Sardesai, who vignettes his experiences of his educational life in autobiographical form.

Before moving into the actual textual analysis of both sides’ authors, the existential interpretive framework of this study needs some explications. Therefore, it will be convenient to discuss the concept of existentialism as theoretical frame.
1.6. THE CONCEPT OF EXISTENTIALISM: A THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Philosophical inquest is a vital element in the intellectual history of various historical civilizations. As Merriam Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus defines Philosophy is, “a search for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative . . . (and) an analysis of the grounds of and concepts expressing fundamental beliefs,” it has used different ways by different scholars. The difference in the use of the word “philosophy” itself demonstrates the manner in which the various schools of philosophy understand what philosophy is and what it should aim to be. Existentialism has been among the most influential philosophy on the European continent in the Twentieth Century. It is a philosophy that interprets the human existence in the world, and stresses its concreteness and its problematic temperament. The strong appeal and popularity of existentialism in the post-war era owes to the confusion, the crisis, and the feeling of rejection and rootlessness during the World War II and its aftermath. At present, while existentialism has lost much of its former glory, its temperament is still rampant and exercised powerful influence on writers and artists. Existentialism proposes that man is full of anxiety and despair with no meaning in his life. Existentialists believe that adopting a social or political cause is one of the ways of giving purpose to a life. Existentialism provides a moving account of the agony of being thrown in the world.

As the scientific and Industrial Revolutions came to a head in the 19th century, and society became increasingly secularized, the traditional social order underwent radical change in a very short time. During this
period, people began to feel disconnected from the traditional belief systems that had helped them to make a sense of the world and of their lives. In these conditions, people may not literally commit suicide, but a kind of spiritual death—a spiritual suicide—becomes a real danger. This spiritual death occurs when people realize the pointlessness of their existence. Existentialism is the philosophy that recognizes this problem and attempts to address it. The existentialism is the philosophy that makes an authentic human life possible in a meaningless world.

1.6:1. Origin and Development of Existentialism:

The word ‘existentialism’ was widely used to identify a major movement of the Twentieth-century thought during the mid-1940s, immediately after the end of the World War II. Though the word ‘Existentialism’ gets much attention after the World War II, it has been used by the philosophers like Gabriel Marcel, Nicola Abbagnano, Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. Gabriel Marcel, a committed Christian thinker, used the language of existentialism in the 1920s. The Italian thinker Nicola Abbagnano elaborated a version of it in his La struttura dell’esistenza in 1939. Both Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers appropriated the term ‘Existentialism’ in the form of the most suitable English translation of Existenzphilosophie. Afterwards the term was explored by both the theist, Soren Kierkegaard, and the explorer of the implications of the ‘death of God,’ Friedrich Nietzsche, as nineteenth-century existentialist ancestors.

French philosopher Gabriel Marcel coined the term “existentialism” in the mid-1940s. The very term is adopted by Jean-Paul Sartre on October 29, 1945, while discussing his own existentialist
position in a lecture to the *Club Maintenant* in Paris. Later on this lecture was published as *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* in a short book form. It became one of the books on existential thought.

The trace of existentialism’s origin goes back in the seventeenth century, towards Blaise Pascal (1632-1662). His book *Pensées* is supposed as the first philosophical book that expresses the existential thoughts. In fact, this existential thoughts can be traced back to St. Augustine (354-430) and Duns Scouts (1266-1308), both Catholic philosophers. Perhaps the preoccupation with existence can be traced back even further to the works of the Pre-Socraties also. Walter Kaufmann, while discussing the origin of Existentialism, rightly points out:

> Existentialism is a timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in the past; but it is only in recent times that it has hardened into a sustained protest and preoccupation. (12)

In the modern age Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky are the first to think on existentialism. Kierkegaard reacted against the idealism of G. F. W. Hegel (1770-1831), whose doctrines developed from the classical idealism of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Nietzsche was influenced deeply by Arthur Schopenhauer (1778-1860), whose views were strikingly pessimistic. Dostoyevsky and Franz Kafka (1883-1924) contributed significantly in literature of existentialism.
The works German phenomenologists Franz Brento (1838-1917) and Edmund Husserl’s (1859-1938) work preceded the development of modern existentialism. They were immediately followed by the modern existentialists like Martin Heidegger (1889-1979) and Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), who represent German existentialism; the French existentialism by Jean-Paul Sartre; French phenomenology by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961); Spanish existentialism by Jose Ortego y Gasset (1883-1955); and Italian existentialism by Nicola Abbagnano (b. 1910).

Among these existentialists, the most forceful voice of the existentialist thoughts is found in the works of the French existentialists—Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus. Especially, Sartre contributed more to make this existentialist philosophical trend popular than any other. Gabriel Marcel, a Christian existentialist, wrote plays. Camus’ semi-philosophical essays won sympathizers. Through the works of Karl Jaspers and Luwid Binswagner (1881-1966), a Swiss, existentialism diffused into the arena of psychiatry. Christian existentialism, inspired by Kierkegaard, is a creed of its own kind. Among its noteworthy exponents are Marcel Karl Bath (1886-1968) and Rudolf Bulymann (1884-1976). The leading Jewish existentialist was Martin Buber (1878-1965). Somewhat there are also Islamic existentialists; famous among them are A. R. Badawi and Rene Hana Chi.

1.6:2. What is Existentialism?

The term Existentialism consists of explicit Philosophical History and its ensuing literary response. In the twentieth century it arose as a philosophical movement. Philosophically, “existentialism” is a reaction against abstract rationalist philosophical thought. It becomes more visible
in the works of Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Gabrielle Marcel.

1.6:3. Definitions of Existentialism:

Existential philosophy in its early stages of development was misinterpreted by many contemporaries as it is a philosophy of ‘nihilism’ and ‘utter despair’. This interpretation is due to the overwhelming response to the rejection of the traditional values and their failure to understand the positive note of the existential philosophy. Another important thing is that the existential philosophers are not agreed among themselves on many issues regarding the human values. So to draw a full fetched portrait of the existential philosophy, it is necessary to point out the defining statements of the leading existentialists.

Though Søren Kierkegaard was afterwards labelled as existentialist, throughout his writing he exhibits the panoramic characteristics of the existential thinking. His major philosophical writing published in 1840’s. In his writing he explicitly writes about an individual’s experience of existence. Earnshaw Steven in his book *Existentialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, rightly points out the major themes of his writing, which afterwards turn into the parameters of the existential philosophy:

Focusing on the subjective individual, Kierkegaard explores themes which subsequently became central to Existential thought: freedom; authenticity; angst; alienation; the individual as ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’; the self as ‘exception’; responsibility for one’s ‘existence’; the
necessity to ‘choose’ one’s life; the self as a ‘relation’ rather
than a concrete entity; the self as ‘style’; the self as ‘future-
orientated’; the ‘leap of faith’; dying as ‘mine’. (31)

His scheme of dividing human life into three stages—the aesthetic,
the ethical, and the religious, explores an individual’s journey towards his
own self. In the last religious stage, an individual ‘chooses itself’ or
‘receives itself’ suggests the significance of understanding the meaning of
existence. Thus, much has been discussed so far with relation to the three
stages which broadly conceptualize Kierkegaard’s idea of the term
‘Existentialism’. His book Concluding Unscientific Postscript elaborately
discusses the tenets of the Existential Philosophy. This offers an
argument that what is centre to all is the ‘actual existing individual’.

Although, Nietzsche can no longer be included in the philosophical
school of existentialism, it is necessary to consider his striking
preoccupations with the existential themes like ‘failure’, ‘dread’ and
‘death’. His thought-provoking philosophical writings serve foundation
for the precursors like Jaspers, Heidegger and Sartre. Even, in the
conclusion of Camus’s The Myth of Sisyphus ‘sounds like distant echo of
Nietzsche’ (Kaufmann, 21). For him modern thought recognizes the death
of God and with it the death of tradition. After denying the traditional and
cultural values, what remains in life is the path of meaninglessness,
devoid of value or purpose. Further, this nihilistic attitude does not
suggest the destruction of traditional values, but covertly it demands
freedom from imposed values.
Another important philosopher of Existential school is Martin Heidegger, who contributed to elucidate the concept of ‘Existentialism’. Throughout his writings, he tries to answer Aristotle’s question, ‘What is being?’ For instance, while discussing about ‘death’, in *Being and Time* he says:

> The primary factor of care, “being ahead of itself”, however, means that da-sein always exists for the sake of itself. “As long as it is”, up until its end, it is related to its potentiality-of-being. (Marino 300)

Sartre, the most influencing existentialist, in a true sense tries to define ‘Existentialism’ in his post World War II essay ‘Existentialism and Human Emotions’. In it he answers various claims against Existentialist movement. In it he draws various characteristics of the movement:

> In any case, what can be said from the very beginning is that by existentialism, we mean a doctrine which makes human life possible and, in addition declares that every truth and every action implies a human setting and a human subjectivity. (Marino 342)

He explores the idea of ‘Existentialism’ in terms of two kinds of being, ‘being-in-itself’, which is common to all mere things, and second is ‘being –for-itself,’ in which man may have, when he claims, his responsible freedom.

Besides these existential philosophers, many intellectuals attempted a logically ordered discourse, which tries to define
existentialism. Among them Walter Kaufmann’s *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* is famous one. He tries to illustrate the term by analysing the works of different writers who may be defined as Existentialists. He defines Existentialism,

> The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life – that is the heart of existentialism. Existentialism is a timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in the past; but it is only in recent times that it has hardened into a sustained protest and preoccupation. (12)

Earnshaw Steven, in his *Existentialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*:

> Its concerns are fundamental and immediate to ourselves – who am I? what am I? what life shall I live? How shall I live it? – and by 'adopting' this attitude there is an inherent sense of dynamism, of process, journey, discovery, enlightenment and revelation that is felt and believed to be more important than the building of self-contained, all-encompassing systems more usual to philosophic endeavour. (1-2)

Robert C. Solomon, in his book *From Hegel to Existentialism* (1987), defines existentialism as an individual’s “philosophical realization of self-consciousness” (238). Fernando Molina in his book *Existentialism as Philosophy* defines the term as:
...a type of philosophising which endeavours to analyse the basic structure of existence and to call individuals to an awareness of their existence in its essential freedom. (2)

Molina’s definition focuses on an individual’s awareness about his own existence. This definition highlights the importance of ‘individuality’ and ‘subjectivity’ along with freedom. Besides these intellectuals it is also necessary, here, to point out the general understanding of the term through the definitions from different dictionaries. Webster’s New World Dictionary simplifies the existentialism as:

The doctrine that existence takes precedence over essence and holding that man is totally free and responsible for his acts. This responsibility is the source of dread and anguish that encompass mankind.

According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary existentialism is,

...a chiefly 20th century philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centring on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for his acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad.

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines it as:

A philosophy that emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent
universe, regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one’s acts.

Thus, all these definitions centred an individual and his experience about his own existence at the core of their concern. The entanglement between this philosophy and literature, mostly produced by the philosophers, demonstrates a model of ‘an existential being’; it is evident from Nausea’s Antoine Roquentin to the most famous Meursault of The Stranger. All these definitions echo the basic thought, ‘Existence precedes Essence’.

1.6:4. Nature of Existentialist Thought:

Existential philosophy believes that existence is always particular and individual. It primarily deals with the problem of existence; its prime motto is to investigate the meaning of being. This investigation continually meets to the diverse possibilities, and it is necessary for a man to make a selection from these possibilities, to which he must then commit himself. Because these possibilities are constituted by man’s relationships with things and with other men, that limits or conditions choice. As man is defined by the fact that he exists, or he is in the world and inhabits it, Heiddegar calls him, ‘Dasein’ (“there being”).

Existentialism is opposite to any doctrine that views man as the manifestation of an absolute or of an infinite substance. It is thus refuses the forms of idealism. Existentialism denies the traditional doctrine which believes that man has in him some given and complete realities that must be resolved into its essence. In this way Existentialism opposes to any
form of objectivism or scientism which leads Existential philosophers towards the ridiculous reality of external fact. It is also against any form of necessitarianism. The man’s existence is constituted by possibilities and from these possibilities he has to choose one. Further, as Existentialism opposes objectivism and necessitarianism, it has to deny “any solipsism (that I alone exist) or any epistemological Idealism (that the objects of knowledge are mental), because existence, which is the relationship with other beings, always extends beyond itself. It is, so to speak, transcendence.” (Existentialism Brit. Encyclopedia)

Thus, Existentialism in its developing phases takes different and inter-contrasting directions. On the one hand the philosophy attempts to pose the principle of ‘existence precedes essence’ and on the other hand simultaneously contemplates on the ‘transcendence of being with respect to existence’. This contemplation of ‘transcendence of being’ leads one to locate the theistic principles in comparatively sceptic philosophy of Existentialism. Though it sees the origin of human existence in the transcendence, it also stick with the absolute freedom of human being which affirms him the ability of creating his own world which is simulated with the function of God. As Existentialism attributes the creative function of God to the human being and presents itself as a radical atheism.

From 1940s onward, the existentialism has developed in terms of the diversity of the interests like the religious, metaphysical, moral and political. These varied interests are rooted in the diversity of sources drawn by Existentialism. This argument can be illustrated by the example of ‘subjectivism’ proposed by theologian St. Augustine. According him
man must quest the absolute truth within him instead of searching it in the outer world. Furthermore this thought can be observed in Existentialism when existential philosophers focus the subjectivity of the truth. Nietzsche in his philosophical treatise *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, claims that proper task of man should be to transform himself into a “higher man,” who exists beyond good and evil. The roots of Existential thoughts can also be traced in the novels of Dostoyevsky who explores the themes like Freedom of choice and responsibility.

As a consequence of the diversity of these sources, Existentialist doctrine focuses on several aspects of existence. First, it focuses on the problematic character of the human situation through which man is continually confronted with diverse possibilities or alternatives. Among diverse possibilities, he may choose one, and on the basis of it he can project his life. Second, it focuses on the negative or baffling phenomena of this situation. Such as the concern or preoccupation that dominates man because of the dependence of all his possibilities upon his relationships with things and with other men. For example, the dread of death or of the failure of his projects; the guilt inherent in the limitation of choices and in the responsibilities that derive from making them; and the boredom from the repetition of situations and the absurdity of man's dangling between the infinity of his aspirations. Thirdly it focuses on the inter-subjectivity that is inherent in existence, and is understood either as a personal relationship between two individuals—I and thou. The ‘thou’ may be another man or God, or as an impersonal relationship between the anonymous mass and the individual self. Fourthly, its focus is on ontology, on some doctrine of the general meaning of ‘Being’ which can
be approached through the analysis of the temporal structure of existence; through the etymologies of the most common words; through the rational clarification of existence by which it is possible to catch a glimpse, through ciphers or symbols, of the Being of the world, of the soul, and of God; through existential psychoanalysis; or, finally, through the analysis of the fundamental modality to which all the aspects of existence conform—i.e., through the analysis of possibility. And fifthly, existentialist doctrine focuses on the therapeutic value of existential analysis. It permits, on the one hand, the liberating of human existence from the beguilement or debasements to which it is subject in daily life, and, on the other hand, by directing of human existence toward its authenticity. That is towards a relationship with other men, with the world, and with God.

1. 6: 5. A Brief Overview of Major Existentialist Thinkers:

   It would be impossible to discuss general existential philosophy without discussing the writings of key thinkers of this philosophical trend—Soren Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus and others. However, here intention is not to analyze philosophical works of these thinkers, but to have a brief account of their lives and philosophical thoughts, related to existentialism.

**Blaise Pascal:**

The first existentialist was Blaise Pascal who, in 1670, published the *Pensees*. In it he describes many fundamental themes of existentialism and points out that without a god, life would be worthless and despondent. People can create hurdles and can overcome it in an endeavour to get away from monotony. Such relic triumph would
eventually turn into futile, as we would finally die. This was good enough reason not to choose to become an atheist according to Pascal. His thoughts proved influencing and path-guiding for the modern philosophers like Sartre and Camus. Sartre takes his idea of avoiding the inevitable death as bad faith, and Camus centre his philosophy on the idea that ‘without a god ultimately everything is meaningless’, and tries to find meaning within it.

**Soren Kierkegaard:**

Soren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is a Danish religious philosopher and critic of rationalism. He is regarded as the father of existentialist philosophy. Kierkegaard is, according to Robert Solomon,

. . . [He is] not only the first Western philosopher to attack the cosmic idealism of Hegel but, more importantly, he laid down the basic principles of the Existential movement which guided the writings of Heidegger, Jaspers, and Sartre. (b, 69)

Two of his popular ideas are ‘subjectivity’, and ‘leap of faith’. The ‘leap of faith’ is his conception of how an individual would believe in God or how a person would act in love. He also emphasises the significance of the self, and its connection to the world. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* Kierkegaard acclaims ‘subjectivity is truth’ and ‘truth is subjectivity’ which makes the distinction between objective truth and subjective truth of individual. His notable works, which express the existential thoughts, are *Either/Or* (1843), *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), *Stages on Life's Way*
(1845) and Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments (1846).

**Friedrich Nietzsche:**

In addition to Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is another prominent philosopher who contributed for existential theory. Unlike Kierkegaard, who is identified as a ‘religious’ existentialist, Nietzsche is an ‘atheist’. Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche are two of the first philosophers considered prominent to the existentialist movement. These philosophers emphasizes on subjectivity of human experience rather than the objective truths of mathematics and science. Nietzsche’s philosophical discourses are centred on man’s ‘quiet struggle’ with the meaninglessness of life. These discourses also encompass the diversions used by man to escape from boredom. Nietzsche and Pascal focuses on ‘the role of making free choices’, especially about the fundamental values and beliefs. They further explain ‘how such choices change the nature and identity of the chooser’. Nietzsche’s Übermensch (superman) is an example which defines the nature of his own existence. This idealized individual invents his own values and creates the very term, under which he excels. Nietzsche is also precursors to other intellectual movements like postmodernism, and nihilism. His Major works are: The Birth of Tragedy (1872), The Gay Science (1882), Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1883–1885), Beyond Good and Evil (1886), On the Genealogy of Morality (1887), The Antichrist (1888), and The Will to Power.

**Martin Heidegger:**

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The next influential existential philosopher is Martin Heidegger. Whereas Kierkegaard analyzes the concept of the individual from a religious perspective and Nietzsche from a social perspective, Heidegger analyzes the concept of the individual from a psychological perspective. In 1926 his most important philosophical work, Being and Time, was published which established his reputation in Europe as one of the major philosophers in the twentieth century. The central theme in Being and Time is the problem of ‘Being’. The text moves around the basic question—‘What does it mean for man to exist in the world?’ Heidegger has coined the concept of ‘Dasein’ which looks at being in such a way that one has an understanding of ‘Being’, that is his own existence in the world. He asserts that ‘we are ourselves’, that is a simple logical truth, but we do not know ourselves, that is, we cannot give an adequate analysis of ourselves. Heidegger, like Kierkegaard, argues that Hegel’s ‘conceptual existence’ is not sufficient to give us knowledge of what actually exists and what doesn’t—our frame of reference—and in the greater world around us. His philosophy gives importance to the possibility than actuality. He believes that the concept of ‘Time’ is purely related to the human existence. Therefore man has history and nature has no such history.

Jean-Paul Sartre:

The central figure of French existentialism, one who has given the movement both its definitive expression and its name, is Jean-Paul Sartre. His version of existentialism is set out in popular form in his essay L'Existentialisme est un humanisme (1946), translated as ‘Existentialism is a Humanism’. In this essay he claims his famous dictum, ‘Existence
precedes essence’, which shatters the traditional belief that man has predefined essence. So he believes that people must decide for themselves the meaning of existence.

Sartre attempts to offer a philosophical foundation to existentialism through his treatise Being and Nothingness. His existentialism takes it for granted that there is no God, and so for this reason, essence or the nature of human beings cannot precede their existence. When these philosophers denies the concept of divine creator then the question arises ‘how could there be an idea or definition of what human nature essentially is?’. Sartre holds that human beings are not only free to act as they choose, but they have a responsibility to do so. According to him man must accept the outer world without God and therefore no pre-existing moral principles to guide them. As Sartre says human actions determine who humans are, man must rely on himself and so must take the decision and its responsibility. They cannot blame their environment, circumstance, or chance for their successes and failures. Rather it is their actions that make them who they are, and these are determined by their own choices. One of the central ideas in his philosophy, which is encountered for several times, is ‘freedom’. He thinks that man is condemned to freedom. And this freedom is followed by responsibility.

**Albert Camus:**

Another proponent of French existentialism is Albert Camus. Albert Camus wrote several works on existential themes—The Rebel, The Stranger, The Myth of Sisyphus, and Summer in Algiers. As Sartre initially denied the label of Existentialist, Camus also denies the label and puts forth the new school of thought named as Absurdism. In his
philosophical essay ‘The Myth of Sisyphus’, he illustrates the absurdity of human existence and futility of human action by using the Greek myth of Sisyphus. In the myth, Sisyphus is condemned for eternity to roll a rock up on a hill, but when he reaches the summit, the rock will roll to the bottom again. According to Camus man’s existence is pointless and without any reason, however Sisyphus eventually finds meaning and purpose in his task of pushing up a huge stone. The first half of the book contains an extended rebuttal of what Camus take to be existential philosophy in the works of Kierkegaard, Shestov, Heidegger, and Jaspers and second half continuous his theory of absurdism. His fictional works outshine his philosophical tracts. Camus has depicted many existential themes in his works, such as *The Stranger, The Plague, The Fall, and The Possessed.*

**Karl Jaspers:**

Karl Jaspers, a German psychologist and philosopher, is the leading founder of modern existentialism. In his philosophical works he has proposed two types of being – one is the ordinary being (Dasein) which is open to the objective inquiry of science and second is ‘existence’ which is the mode of authentic existence of freedom, infinite possibilities, loneliness, and responsibilities. He calls it as “boundary conditions” in death, agony, and suffering of human being. According to him human being is open to boundless possibilities therefore the authentic self is outside the scope of science which gives an existential principle that man must be responsible for his choice and actions.
Gabriel Marcel:

In his early essay ‘Existence and Objectivity’ (1925) published in Metaphysical Journal (1927), Gabriel Marcel coined the term “existentialism”. His fictional work along with the philosophical treatises has significantly contributed to develop the school of Existentialism. His experiences in life and his early acquaintance with death make him curious about the fundamental meaning of the human existence. According to him life is not a problem or puzzle that one must try to conquer but on the contrary life is something that one must strive to be. This fundamental analysis of man and his existence brings forth many existential principles which further emerged as major thematic concerns in the existential fictions.

Thus, Soren Kierkegaard stresses the absurdity and ambiguity of the human situation, and claims that the only way to face existence is to embrace the individual, subjective aspects of life. Embracing all these aspects might be Paradoxical but still we should go with it. Friedrich Nietzsche attacks the accepted metaphysical and religious paradigms of the society, and argues that these paradigms were either worthless or nonexistent. He believes that we must make our own morality. For Nietzsche, Truth is not an objective ideal, but a phenomenon which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification. He thinks that the truths are illusions. Martin Heidegger, like Kierkegaard, argues that the world in which we find ourselves is an unknowable one; the only thing to do is to choose a path and follow it. Jean Paul Sartre feels that existence precedes essence; building on the groundwork lay by the above philosophers (and others), he believes that since the world has no set
meaning or purpose, humans must choose their own path. As a novelist and dramatist as well as a philosopher, he explores the existentialist philosophy on several fronts.

1.5:6. Thematic Aspects of Existentialist Literature:

Existentialism is philosophical and literary tendency, which emerges as a revolt against the traditional beliefs of the contemporary philosophy. It basically displays a dismissal of abstract theories of traditional philosophy, which believes that ‘essence precedes existence’. Existentialists try to illustrate the untidiness of actual human lives in their philosophical treatises and explore the subjective realities of individual existence, individual freedom, and individual choice in their literature. In fact Existentialism is a label for several widely different revolts against the traditional philosophy, for example, some writers take a theological perspective whereas others are atheistic, and thus it is difficult to fully grasp what existentialism is and what it is not. Many of them raises question of freedom of an individual in the world, whereas others relate themselves with the question of individual identity in the world and raise question ‘who we are’. These intellectuals have attempted to define the human existence fundamentally meaningless and absurd. Much has been discussed about the nature of existence and what it is to exist with diversity of approaches. It is not possible to claim the unique definition of the term ‘Existentialism’, but it is possible to point out certain characteristics of it.

Here are the some major characteristics as themes of existential literature that recur again and again in existential philosophy, as well as in art, literature, movies, and any number of other fields:
Existence Precedes Essence:

The concept of ‘essence’ and ‘existence’ and the difference between them are the oldest debated issue in the history of philosophy. Existence is characterized by concreteness, whereas essence is characterized by abstractness. The existence of anything can be defined by the fact that ‘it is’, and the essence can be defined by the answer of the question ‘What it is?’ In the history of philosophy, right back from Plato and Aristotle to the present age, sometimes essence and sometimes existence have dominated on the thinkers. At a certain period few philosophers have even drawn the conclusion that the existence and essence both are unreal. But afterwards in the age of reason and empiricism, the concept of existence became dominant again.

For Sartre as for Hegel, essence is what has been. Sartre calls it man’s past. There is no pre-established pattern for human nature, for all existentialist existence precedes essence. What you are (Your essence) is the result of your choices (your existence) rather than the reverse. Essence is not destiny. (Flynn 8) Sartre explains:

We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, and he himself will have made what he will be. . . . Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. (Marino 345)

Humanism:

Several reproaches have been laid against the phenomena of Existentialism. One of the most discussed claims is of communists that
'Existentialism is a contemplative Philosophy' and 'essentially a bourgeois philosophy'. Another important reproach is that Existentialism is ignominious in the human situation. Many critics of Existentialism claim that existential philosophers centre their philosophy on an alienated individual and deliberately forget the solidarity of mankind. To all these reproaches Sartre gives an answer in his illustrative lecture “Existentialism is Humanism” delivered in 1946. He says:

In any case, we can begin by saying that existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity. (Kaufman 346)

Further in his lecture, Sartre asserts that unlike all other doctrines Existentialism does neither treat mankind as a materialistic object nor it identify man with ‘a set of pre-determined reactions’. Instead, its aim is “to establish the human kingdom as a pattern of values in distinction from the material world” (361).

Thus, “Existentialism is a person-centred philosophy. Though not anti-science, its focus is on the human individual’s pursuit of identity and meaning amidst social and economic pressures of mass society for superficiality and conformism” (Flynn 8).

**Individuality/ Subjectivity:**

According to Existential school of thought to achieve an authenticity of human existence one has to rely on individuality.
Existential philosophers think that the logic, reason, scientific method and systematic life style often take individuality from man. Kierkegaard lays down the foundation of existential theory by emphasizing the concept of the individual and his responsibility towards subjective thinking. “By “subjectivity” Kierkegaard does not mean subjectivism: a belief is true because one believes it to be true. He is concerned with the degree to which a person “lives within” the truth he confesses” (Moore xxv). Kierkegaard maintains that an individual can be defined as one who has inwardness, earnestness, and responsibility.

For Kierkegaard ‘Inwardness’ means the individual spends some time of every day by himself, contemplating his existence. Many scholars have been compared Kierkegaard's concept of ‘inwardness’ with the concept of ‘meditation’ in Zen Buddhism. It is that period of the day in which you talk to yourself about your behaviour and your relationships. In Kierkegaardian philosophy, inwardness is necessary in order to develop an ‘inner voice’ which, while every human being has it, and while it never really becomes extinct, the act of inwardness makes it stronger.

Kierkegaard in his ‘Stages on Life’s Way’ (1845) claims that man can recuperate meaning in life by accepting the challenges and face hostile and unknowable world. In this context he explains three spheres of individual’s existence—aesthetic, ethical, and religious.

**Authenticity:**

The existential philosophers have made a fundamental distinction between ‘being-in-itself’ (non-experiencing material objects which are
not free) and “being-for-itself” (experiencing being which is free). As a second category human beings are free to construct their lives by their own way of existence. Linsenbard in his book An Investigation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s Posthumously published Notebooks for an Ethics asserts that the human beings are free projects ‘in-the-making’ and they all “aiming toward a certain kind of future” (107) But this ‘freedom of choice’ is not acknowledged by every human being and therefore, again two categories are emerged out of it which are defined as ‘bad faith’ and ‘good faith’.

This categorization is illustrated with examples in Sartre’s Being and Nothingness. According to Sartre in the category of ‘good faith’, human being is authentic to his own self and accepts his role as a creator of his own way of life. Instead of accepting the social roles as it is given, the human beings are conscious in their choice. This sense of ‘freedom’ is not naturally given but must be “won over” from a state of pseudo-satisfaction, traditional notion of happiness, and self-forgetfulness. Existential philosophers motivate humanity to live their lives under ‘good faith’ and accept ‘one’s essential finitude, freedom, and responsibility’ and apply it in their actions. But, in general, the people lose their individual identity as a ‘creator’ and deny the ‘responsibility’ of their actions.

The term “authenticity” (Eigentlichkeit), in the philosophical context, was first introduced by Martin Heidegger in Being and Time, though the idea derives from Søren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard’s philosophical texts urge for the authentic selfhood which, he thinks, must be wrested away from the average anonymity of social life and from
“aesthetic” diversions and distractions. Therefore, his philosophical discourses speak about the “becoming a self” rather than “being a self.” According to his view, an individual must consider his role as ‘singular’ and ‘particular’ instead of universal and general. He thinks that one must choose his own way of existence and remain committed to it. Thus, the ‘authenticity’ emerges when one acts with his personal commitments and increases with the intensity of that commitment. Kierkegaard finds the highest level of commitment in the religious faith, which is intensely subjective and yet objectively uncertain. Thus, an authentic being accepts the challenge of his freedom as its meaning is revealed in action. (Michelman 45)

**Inauthenticity (Bad Faith):**

‘Inauthenticity’ or ‘bad faith’ is the binary opposite pole from the term ‘authentic’. Under the ‘bad faith’ a human being assumes the societal role uncritically, and accepts it as antecedently given. In it one fails to see himself as a creator of the role which he has chosen. Sartre has given an illustrative account of the psychology of inauthenticity, which he analyzes in terms of the phenomenon of bad faith. He describes this phenomenon as a way of escaping from the responsibility of the ‘freedom of choice’. Therefore, by adopting the life of an inauthentic being, one can avoid acknowledging one’s freedom and responsibility as a self-determining being. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre illustrates this term with examples of the café waiter, the homosexual and the idealistic woman. A waiter identifies his true self as a waiter, and, therefore, the action of serving in the café becomes the action of his life. The homosexual accepts the model of accepted behaviour and plays out it...
accordingly. The idealistic woman suppresses her sexual aspirations by separating her true self from her body. In all these cases an individual uses the strategy of ‘bad faith’ and avoids to committee one’s true selves. (Michelman 45)

**Freedom of Choice:**

In the existential philosophy the ‘freedom of choice’ is a significant characteristic of human existence. According to the existential philosophy the term, existential freedom refers to the one’s capacity to shape his life according to his own chosen projects and commitments. Existential freedom denies following the external factors like, heredity, society, family, or fate. The freedom is seen as a general power of choice. In this self determinate state one is free to chose his project and evident it in a range of behaviours and actions. All the traditional values and notions are denied and replaced by an individual’s will. This freedom of the will gives an individual a ‘self-experience’ which is something new and different from the established fabric of social behaviour. This radical freedom is evidenced through the fictional characters like, Merursault (*The Stranger*) and Roquentin (*Nausea*). Merursault behaves according his own will and therefore when his body requires a coffee, he has it in the presence of his mother’s dead body and in the next day when he fell sexually stimulated he has a sexual intercourse with his girlfriend. These behaviours are seems radical in the premises of the social and cultural values. Thus, taking a risk and accepting one’s freedom is the normative goal of human existence in existentialism. Hence, an individual who lives life with the awareness of existential freedom, most probably he can
realize the most genuine possibilities of human existence. (Michelman 156)

**Responsibility:**

Another important aspect of the Existential philosophy and literature is its concern with the sense of ‘responsibility’. Existentialists believe that everyone bears responsibility. After rebelling against the traditional meaning of human existence they try to create their own meaning with the help of their freedom of choice, this choice is followed by a responsibility. Existentialists think that we have to bear the responsibility to make our life meaningful because there will be nobody to guide you what to do and what not. For Existentialists, the responsibility is primarily a matter of responsibility for the *self*. When an individual becomes aware that he is free and self-determined being, he also become aware that he is fundamentally responsible for he has chosen to be.

The core of existential responsibility is the insight that one is ultimately responsible for oneself. Existentialists portray responsibility as a momentous event, not an everyday occurrence. In a particular moment one accepts his own life as a product of his own choices and actions, and not the result of the environment of the context and other socio-cultural aspects that have the potential to influence the choice of an individual. Other aspects of existentialism including negation, absurdity and meaninglessness, generate the realization that the human life is without foundation, this realization leads an individual towards his own ‘responsibility’.
According to Kierkegaard an individual knows that he is responsible for the quality of his life. This responsibility is not about the external events but his own response to it, for instance, if a car crashes into the back of one’s car, then one is not responsible for the accident but he is responsible for how he reacts to the accident. In the existential philosophy this concept of ‘responsibility’ is derived from another existential concept of ‘Thrownness’. Existentialists believe that human beings are thrown into the world absolutely without any choice about the gender, culture, nationality, race, and family conditions. In this context Doreen M. Tulloch comments:

Man’s discovery of himself as a self is a discovery of himself as necessarily linked to the material universe, not in any abstract sense, but concretely in the ‘here and now’. He finds himself as we have been told ‘thrown into the world’. It is clear then that man does not choose to be; he does, however, according to Sartre, choose his essence. (41)

The concept of responsibility always underscores that we always have a choice, that we are not a victim of the social, economic, psychological, and physiological conditions. In this sense responsibility means that we are responsible for developing our own unique individuality. Kierkegaard maintains that the awareness of the concept of responsibility is the responsibility of one who becomes a unique individual, one who makes his own decisions and is aware that his decisions ultimately direct the meaning of his life.
Death:

The subject of death receives a very little attention in the history of philosophy. In certain respects, existentialists are the first philosophers in modern times to recognize its importance and propose. For existentialists, death is not a physical event or biological process but the awareness that one is going to die. According to them ‘death’ is the ultimate context for all human actions and an important source of the absurdity of life. Many existentialists like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre offer different interpretations of this death awareness.

According to the existential philosophers the idea of death is dimmed down when we treat it simply as a natural fact rather than an event that evokes fear and anxiety. Existentialists assert that a proper understanding of one’s death is not just a genuine experience, but also necessary to understand properly the nature of the world.

Heidegger deals with the attitude of an individual towards death in his philosophical book *Being and Time*. According to him a full existential awareness of death is a necessary condition for authenticity. This awareness places the contents of one’s life in a properly finite and first-person perspective. In this connection he points out:

Only by the anticipation of death is every accidental and ‘provisional’ possibility driven out. . . . Once one has grasped the finitude of one’s existence, it snatches one back from the endless multiplicity of possibilities (435).
He thinks that in everyday life we exist as a stereotype which he defines as inauthentic. Thus, according to Heidegger, anxiety in the face of death shocks Existence out of everyday satisfaction and allows it to understand itself as a “finite freedom.” In their philosophical treatises and in fictional writings, Existentialists’ decisive fact about death is that each person must regard his own death as the paramount reality.

The Absurd:

‘Absurd’ is one of the important aspects of existentialism, which especially gets much weightage in the philosophical writings of Sartre and Camus. Absurd means meaningless. Existentialists believe that Man’s existence in the universe, is absurd because his contingency finds no external justification.

The actions and motifs of an individual to live are absurd, because they are directed towards an unattainable goal, for instance, a desire to become a God. According to Camus that one can overcome the absurdity of his existence with absurd itself, as Camus says in The Myth of Sisyphus: “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (152) The notion of the Absurd contains the idea that there is no meaning to be found in the world beyond what meaning we give to it. This absurdity is also a part and parcel of the amorality of the world.

The conceptual understanding of the term absurd in the context of existentialism is defined in two different ways. In the first way life is absurd, it makes no sense and has no meaning or ultimate purpose. But further it is also cleared that human beings need to make sense in order to
create a meaning or purpose in life. The absurd is a sense of the radical contingency of all things that exist. It contains the sense that everything might be ‘otherwise’ than it is, because there is no ultimate plan or purpose according to which things might be justified. Second, the absurdity is limited to actions and choices of human beings. These are said to be absurd to the extent that as they issue from human freedom and lack a foundation outside of themselves.

The latter view of absurdity was first elaborated by Søren Kierkegaard in the context of Christianity, and was developed diversely by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. A literary understanding of the absurd was expressed by Sartre in his first novel, *Nausea*, and explored by Albert Camus in his extended “essay on the absurd,” *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

The notion of the absurd has been prominent in literature throughout history. Søren Kierkegaard, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoevsky and many of the literary works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, contain descriptions of people who encounter the absurdity of the world.

**Anxiety:**

The feeling of ‘Anxiety’ generally arises when an individual starts to recognize life is absurd. ‘Dread as Anguish’ is often rendered as a major theme in the Existential philosophical treatises and even in the existential literary works. The term is derived from the original German word ‘Angst’. The concept of anxiety receives a range of distinct treatments by different existentialists. But in common they share a belief that anxiety is not merely a psychological state that reflects the
personality of the individual. Rather it is an ontological or metaphysical phenomenon that reveals a deep truth about the nature of human beings. The idea is expressed well by Jean-Paul Sartre: “In anxiety I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself” (*Being and Nothingness*, 40).

Kierkegaard associates anxiety with ‘man’s peculiar constitution as body and soul, established in the spirit’. He represents man as a subject to a tension, and this tension is anxiety. According to him the phenomenon of the Anxiety is peculiarly human. An animal knows no anxiety, for its life is purely sensual. An angel likewise knows no anxiety, for his life is that of the pure intellect. But man, conjoining sense and reason, body and soul, lives in the shadow of anxiety. Anxiety awakens us from our illusions and false securities. It compels an individual to confront with his responsibility and drive to grasp his authentic being. But in fact it is known as a rare phenomenon in human experience, because it is for the most time suppressed and kept away from our own conscience. Very closely connected with anxiety in Heidegger’s analysis is the ‘phenomenon of care’ (*Sorge*). According to him this is one of the broadest characteristics of human life; it is a life of care and life of caring.

Anxiety is linked with threat to the basic, fundamental values of an individual and it often involves uncertainty and feeling of insecurity.

**Alienation:**

In the feeling of Alienation individual feels a stranger in his own life, and the world around him. In the context of existentialism, to be alienated is to be divorced from one’s true nature as a human being.
general terms, it means, lacking a clear sense of oneself as a “being of possibility.” Gaining such a sense of oneself is the same as to attaining authenticity, while remaining alienated is synonymous with existing “inauthentically.” Alienation is thus a central problem of existentialism, and it receives diverse treatment from different existentialists.

Man has been separated from his concrete earthly existence. The socio-cultural and politico-historical forces always drive him to live at higher levels of abstraction. The concept of God and religion compels him to live with the general model, generated by them. These models always concerns with the codes and conducts of the culture, and modes and manners of the society. But in the modern age these traditional values were shattered and replaced by nothing which makes man alienated from God, Nature, Society, and even from his own true self. The classic conception of authenticity proposed by Heidegger in *Being and Time* is highly individualistic. It suggests that one must free oneself from alienating social conventions and seize hold of life’s possibilities on one’s own, through a solitary confrontation with death and anxiety.

The separation of the traditional values and the concept of the God are most shockingly expressed by Nietzsche's anguished cry, “God is dead”. This cry has continuously echoed through the writings of the existentialists, particularly the French. This cry barrens man spiritually and fumble him with various questions of identity and meaning. This theme of spiritual barrenness is depicted in the literature of this century. The subject was handled by many contemporary literary personalities from Eliot's “Hollow Man” to the novels of Dos Passos, Hemingway, and Faulkner.
This spiritual barrenness leads man towards the estrangement at the social level. The social alienation and emptiness of social conducts is a result of growing depression at man’s helplessness in the face of industrialization and urbanization. This can be observed as a major thematic concern in the contemporary Western literature.

1.5:7. Existentialist Literature:

Highly vocal personalities of 20th century philosophers—Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, and Merleau-Ponty along with many literary figures, are mainly responsible for the popularity of the existential philosophy. Moreover, it is a philosophy that is best expressed in plays and novels. In fact, the major tenants of the philosophy can be sort out only through the analysis and interpretation of the fictional writings of these philosophers. Major philosophers of this tradition considered themselves first as a writer, and, then as an academic philosopher. Their novels and plays (Sartre’s *Nausea* and Camus’ *The Stranger*), published during and after the World War II, become more popular and widely read than their philosophical treatises. This resulted in the misconception of existentialism as a literary movement rather than a form of philosophy.

Since 50’s decade, the label of existential fiction has been attributed to a broad range of literary works, but the clear cut criteria for distinguishing ‘genuinely existentialist’ works is not yet formed. Thus, in the early phase of development the scope of this fiction indefinitely large. But afterwards many scholars come with three basic criteria to identify the existential literature they are: works of literature written by
existentialist philosophers, and works of literature that explore the themes of existentialism and significant in the development of existentialist philosophy.

Works of literature written by existentialist philosophers generally explore specific themes associated with existentialist philosophy. Prominent works of this category are the novels, plays, and short stories of Sartre, Beauvoir, Marcel, and Camus. In this category existentialist works can be defined as: those works which are written with a philosophical motive related more or less explicitly to the author’s existentialist philosophy. The classic works that can be judged on this criterion includes: in the genre of drama, Sartre’s *No Exit* and *The Flies*, Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, Jean Anouilh’s *Antigone* and many other playwrights from the theatre of the absurd. They wove into their plays existential belief that we are absurd beings lost in the empty universe. In the genre of novel the famous existential works are Sartre’s *Nausea*, Beauvoir’s *She Came to Stay* and Camus’s *The Stranger*.

These plays and novels primarily address issues of contingency, freedom, and bad faith; many of them explore the themes of alienation, faith, and love. In this tradition Camus’s fiction primarily reflects the futility of traditional meaning and the absurdity of human action. Many critics relate his works with the philosophy of nihilism.

The second category of existentialist literature comprises works of fiction that are influential to the development of existentialism, but is not written by existentialist philosophers. Many times these writers write
their works without any philosophical intentions, but afterwards the scholars and literary critics analyse their works as an existential fiction. Famous examples of this kind are 19th-century Russian novelists Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) and Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910). Both of them are very influencing in Germany and France by the late 19th century. But their works—Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from Underground* and Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*—were significant in the development of the existentialism. Both of these works demonstrates the concrete models of the human experience of death, guilt, and suffering.

Third principle which differentiates existential literature from other literary trends is the literary work which demonstrates the specific themes of existentialism. Such works, in fact, lack the clear philosophical intentions, but at the same time exhibit an idea central to existentialist philosophy such as human alienation, finitude, or freedom. The works of Samuel Beckett and Franz Kafka are the good examples of this category. Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot* and Kafka’s novel *The Trial* are frequently cited as examples of ‘existential fiction’ because they deal with the existential themes like alienation and absurdity.

American authors Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner are also described under this category. Though they are not related with the existential philosophy, their works explore the content which can be analysed as an existential fiction. Besides these authors, other distinguished authors are Herman Hesse, Norman Mailer, and J. D. Salinger.
Thus, this brief view of the development of existential literature reflects the liberal approach of scholars and critics, while interpreting existential fiction. After 1960’s, this philosophy emerged as a broad cultural trend, rather than a narrowly defined form of European philosophy. This schema for discussing existentialist literature is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive. The existential ideas of Dostoevsky, Foucault, Kafka, Nietzsche, Herbert Marcuse, Gilles Deleuze, and Eduard von Hartmann, influenced and motivated the literary artists like Chuck Palahniuk, Szymczyk, David Lynch, Crispin Glover, and Charles Bukowski.

1.5:8. Existentialism in American Novel:

In American culture Existentialism entered soon after the World War II, largely through the poetic and imaginative power of the works of two French authors, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. To their striking literary gifts was added the distinction of their having fought fascism as members of the French Resistance. Its appeal soon broadened until it encompassed the entire existentialist philosophical tradition. Among those whose works were translated, published and studied were Edmond Husserl, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger, three 20th century German philosophers who had hardly been known before in the United States. Friedrich Nietzsche had been a strong influence on American writers in the first two decades of the 20th century. However as an apparent apostle of irrationality and breeder of anti-Semitism, his stock had fallen in the America of the 1930’s.

Readers and Scholars of American Literary tradition are well aware that, unlike, France, America does not claim in its literary tradition any
names that could match those of distinguished and highly vocal personalities such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, Simon de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Likewise, no important philosopher has succeeded to its defence or has eloquently spoken on behalf of an intellectual movement. In American context Existential Literature has always suffered from the lack of an imaginative and effective leadership, which can create an interest in philosophy. A German-born American Protestant minister Paul Tillich is well known for his philosophical treatise *The Courage to Be*, which gives him a label of religious existentialist.

Though, America does not have any famous existential philosopher on her account, it is clear that, some fundamentally existential ideas were contemplated in America long before Kierkegaard. The 19th century was a time of chaotic changes in the socio-cultural space of the world, and America was no exception. New scientific innovations shattered the religious faith and traditional meaning. This was the period in which authors became more conscious about the question of ‘human existence’. Stephan Crane (1871-1900), though he was associated with naturalism, his writings convey the main existential ideas: God and society are indifferent to one’s existence, and in the struggle for survival one cannot rely on reasoning and logic either, is the main concern of his work. The best known example of it is his short story ‘The Open Boat’.

The feeling of alienation, rootlessness and meaninglessness strongly arises in the Lost Generation of early 20th century novelists. (Like Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Richard Wright and many others spiritually wounded survivors of the World War
I.) This chaotic and nihilistic atmosphere makes him to present the characters that are adrift, searching for existential meaning in their lives. In Fitzgerald’s novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the protagonist Jay Gatsby trapped in the rich and hostile society, finds society around him as indifferent to his existence. Another significant example of existential fiction, in this era, is Hemingway's short story ‘A Clean, Well-Lighted Place’ (1926). The story is highly symbolic, in it the protagonist experiences anxiety of supposed nothingness of his existence, and it forces him to seek temporary refuge in the orderliness of a Cafe. William Faulkner’s literary enterprises are deeply influenced by the history of defeat, destruction, and loss of Old South. His exploration of defeat and sense of loss in his work can be analysed as existential thematic concerns. This feeling of defeat and loss influences his fiction, and motivates him to represent the contemporary existential dilemmas. His novels *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Sanctuary* (1931) depict the futility of human existence, and his characters represent an individual searching for the clear sense of self, in the hostile world. His fictions always explore the world in which the traditional values have been swept away, which is one of the characteristics of Existential Fiction. Richard Wright's work provides another important example of American existential literature. In his *Native Son* (1940) protagonist, Bigger Thomas becomes aware of his own position in the indifferent world. He becomes conscious about the economic and social forces, shaping his life. Later, he experiences moments of insight into the possibility of his own non-existence and the implications of human contingency.
Existential themes like anxiety, absurdity, disorientation, and exile are explored especially in the works of Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Walker Percy, J. D. Salinger, Norman Mailer, Ken Kersey, Flannery O'Connor and Joseph Heller after the World War II. For instance, Joseph Heller’s novel *Catch-22* depicts the life of Captain Yossarian who experiences the war and its inhumanity. The novel also speaks about the modern scene as a nightmare, in which mindless butchery perpetuated by men, who have become more like machines than humans.

African American writers Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, with the help of existential ideals, criticize both Marxism and American racism. Each of them wants, with the help of existentialism, to ground their characters within the concrete experiences of racism. Ellison’s writings convey ideas that are particularly existentialist. His famous novel, *Invisible Man* (1952), describes a black man’s struggles to keep his identity in the hostile and indifferent society. The man has to struggle to free himself of all illusions to keep his identity. Ellison’s novel captures the essence of existentialism: nothing can be more existential than a man’s struggle to exist.

Richard Wright’s *The Outsider* (1953), is supposed as the first American existential novel. Saul Bellow’s *Dangling Man* (1944), *The Victim* (1947) and *Herzog* (1964) are supposed major existentialist novels. His *Herzog, Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970) and *The Dean's December* (1982), explores the existential themes and also encompasses the principles of nihilistic philosophy. Among the New York novelists Norman Mailer is an important existentialist novelist. *The Armies of the Night* (1968) and *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967) are his best known
existential novels. Among which Why Are We in Vietnam? deals with the story of two Texas teenagers who constantly feel the hot breath of ‘Herr Dread’. Percy’s first novel The Moviegoer illuminates his concept of “Malaise,” a disease of despair, aroused by the rootless modern world.

In Contemporary literary scenario Chuck Palahniuk is a prominent novelist. His Fight Club (1997) and The Survival (1999) are the best existential novels in the American context. Thus, the existential novels from America in the past decade have met with considerable and well deserved success. These novels gain much critical acclaim not only due to their intrinsic merit, but also due to their eloquent concern with mankind and humanity, and they also judge what it means to be a man in today’s world.

1.5:9. Existentialism in Marathi Novel:

The cultural and philosophical movement of the West also influenced the literary movements of the East. This philosophical trend especially in the case of Marathi Literature was started by influencing authors in 1948. In the issue of Abhiruchi (June-July 1948) a periodical, an article written by Dinkar D. Mahulkar illustrated the philosophical trend of existentialism. This article was an introduction of existential Philosophy to the Marathi literary scenario. In the issue of April-May 1950 of Abhiruchi, D. D. Mahulkar wrote an article ‘नवे मिन्न’ (New Mind) and explained the characteristic features of the Existentialism. Thus, D. D. Mahulkar made a very honest and balanced attempt to introduce this new philosophy through his three articles. Later on eminent personalities of Marathi literature also attracted towards this ideology. Their cognisance was reflected through articles they contributed to various

The period of the mid-twentieth century was a period of social unrest, industrial expansion and excitement, as well as, of grimy slums and shocking exploitation of the labourers. The entire face of society was transformed under the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution. Never before had man’s environment, his image of himself, his attitude to himself, altered so deeply in such a short span of time. Who I am? why does I born? What relation is between me and others? Why should we live? Such types of questions were raised during the 1960’s which made the authors restless. And this unrest of the life was depicted in the contemporary novels.

In 1942, *Le-Tranje* a world famous novel by Albert Camus was published. It reached India through its English translation as *Outsider* which made literary field to think and to reach into the roots of the existential philosophy. In 1947 India became an independent nation. The partition of India created a major calamity in the form of ‘refugees’. The ruler of Hyderabad state had rejected to merge his kingdom into India. Therefore, Indian government took military action against the Hyderabad state for its attainment. Before and during this action Hindu people suffered by the Nizam soldiers. On the basis of this incident, E. V. Joshi published the first existentialist Marathi novel in 1957 entitled *Raanbhoool*. People were worried whether or not they would survive.
Human existence was challenged and therefore, all the virtues, principles, ideals, morals, and service to humanity are thrown away at winds. They were caught in such a grim situation, which was nothing but existential. Bhalchandra Nemade’s novel, Kosla was published in 1963. It proved a landmark in the history of Marathi novel. It has first person narration and based on observation of society and personal experiences. The novel provides existential observation about human life that, it is wrong to say that life has any meaning. Any planning for ideal achievements or any intellectual exercise is ultimately futile and meaningless. Life is just imposed upon us by our parents. We should not follow the suit and commit the same mistake (Give birth to children) and mind, love, soul are things beyond human comprehension. A novel Dhakte Aakash written by Manohar Shahane is a story of two brothers sentimentally involved in life. It explores the philosophy that one has to face death. Death is extinction of existence. One, therefore, shudders at the idea of one’s death. In 1967 Bhau Padhye published his novel, Barrister Aniruddha Dhopeshwarkar. If a person has sensed the meaninglessness and futility of life, he gives a peculiar tilt to his ways of worldly behaviour. He may be rich and cultured enough to meet his daily needs and he may dislike leading a way of life which others may prefer to live. He would rather throw away this burden of behaving, unlike others, as a member of society. He would be loyal to his feelings and sentiments. He hates any show-business. Barrister Aniruddha Dhopeshwarkar is such a peculiar person and has been depicted as such by the author of this novel. Bhau Padhye’s another novel is Vaitagwadi; its title is enough to suggest vaitag means ‘nausea’. The novel, Trishanku (1968) is written by Chintamani Trimbak Khanolkar. Its hero Nana is confused; he asks question to
himself that why there is distinction? Our birth offers us a unique individual character and personality and its test is freedom. All restrictions on this freedom are fake and unreal. They should not impose any kind of impediments on our free behaviour or way of thinking. To be is to exist, to exist is to act, to act is to select, to select is to invent values and to invent values is to be responsible and to be responsible is to be moral. It is so simple and logical for him. Kiran Nagarkar’s *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* was published in 1974. There is inherent inconsistency in the name of the novel. Mathematically Seven (Saat) multiplied by Six (Sakkam) comes to Forty Two, but here it is Forty Three (Saat Sakkam). The novelist as if wishes to suggest that ‘life’ is like that. In the life multiples, plus or minus do not work as per logic or mathematics because life is arithmetic everything may go wrong without any logic. The world is full of suffering, meaningless, unintentional. Man is in the grip of death and man is alone alienated.

Some writers are so much engrossed with existentialism that their presence along with this line of thinking is very much apparent in these novels. In certain novels characters’ behaviour, their gossips among themselves make existential purpose visible, clearly. Atmosphere in the novel *Raanbhool* is such that the question of life and death is a major one. Atmosphere in *Vaitagwadi* and *Dhakte Akash* is also identical in which characters are primarily worried about their survival. Writers of *Kosla* and *Barrister Anirudha Dhapeshwarkar* are so aware of this line of thinking that it seems they overpower the whole atmosphere and their characters remain spokespersons. Compared to these, characters in
Trishanku and Kondura offer them their own independent identities and their clear views about life.

Apart from above mentioned novels Padhye’s Putra, Vilas Sarang’s Yenkichya Rajyat, Shahane’s Vasunaka, Shashank Oak’s Amukche Swatantra, Anant Kadam’s Strotra and Kide, Kamlesh Walawalkar’s Baki Shoonya, etc. are the significant novels in Marathi, which depict the existential thinking. Existentialism has not yet conquered the Marathi literary scene, but it is actively discussed, publically; it is appraised, attacked, scorned and even exalted.

1.5:10. Existentialism Today:

Existentialism gets its highest peak during the late 20th century, especially, immediately after the end of the World War II. Afterwards many philosophers lead themselves towards the Nihilism and Absurdism. But still many fiction writers are depicting the existential dilemma in their literature. The prospects for existentialism today are more optimistic than Sartre had predicted in 1960. Today, many departments of Philosophy, Literature and Foreign Languages offer an introductory course in existentialism to the undergraduate classes in all over the world. Many universities are also offering advanced classes in existential philosophy for graduate programs in 1962, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy was founded in America. Today, these Societies retain a sizable membership among American Philosophers. Besides this, the societies are also established to study an individual philosophers including, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. Individual studies of the thought of existential philosophers—Heidegger, Jaspers, Beauvoir, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty—increased strikingly
throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s. Today, there is a voluminous literature on each of the major existentialists.

In fact the philosophy of Existentialism became popular all over the world, through the English translations of Being and Time in 1962 and Being and Nothingness in 1965. The texts of Sartre and Heidegger, supposed as an important documents of the existential philosophy also appeared in English in recent years—Sartre’s War Diaries (1984) and Notebook for an Ethics (1992) and Heidegger’s The Basic Problems of Phenomenology (1982), Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (1990), and The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics (1995). These texts shed new light on the development and substance of existentialist philosophy.

In addition, a complete translation of Heidegger’s writings, including dozens of his university lecture courses, have been underway since 1976. General studies of existentialism have nonetheless been rare since the early 1970s. David E. Cooper’s Existentialism: A Reconstruction, first published in 1990. It has helped to rekindle the interest in the general problematic issues of existentialist philosophy. He follows the path of earlier commentators like Frederick Olafson and John Macquarrie. In his book Cooper synthesizes the views of Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and other existentialists into a single “rational reconstruction” of the existentialist viewpoint. Instead of devoting an individual chapter to each philosopher, he presents a picture of existentialism as a coherent, definable philosophy. Another important fact of this book is its spirited defence of Sartre and Heidegger as complementary rather than opposed in their conceptions of human existence.
British philosophers have traditionally held existentialism in low esteem, but today, the British attitude towards continental philosophers like Heidegger, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty has been improved, and they are taking interest in the issues of existential phenomenology. In Canadian context, philosophers like Charles Taylor have helped to stimulate the interest in the existentialism. Taylor has incorporated the ideas of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty and he has been developing them in the context of his own philosophy. Particularly his work on ethics and on the formation of the self has been influential.

In the recent years American philosophers, Stanley Cavell, Hubert Dreyfus, Charles Guignon, Richard Rorty, and Robert Solomon have helped to refocus attention on the philosophical claims of existentialism. In France, many scholars are attracted towards the existentialism of Sartre, Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty. The post-structuralist and postmodernist scholars have expressed their debt to existential philosophers, Heidegger and Nietzsche.

A German existentialist Martin Heidegger’s philosophical treatise still remained influencing in the contemporary scholars of Germany. In recent years the greatest living German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, has been a formidable critic of Heideggerian existentialism.

The beliefs of existentialist philosophy also found influencing today in Japan and Latin America. Many universities of Latin America prescribed the philosophies of Heidegger, Sartre, and José Ortega y Gasset. Existentialism and phenomenology are accepted as mainstream philosophical paradigms.
In Japan, since the 1950s, we found the revival of existential thoughts of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Pont. Philosophers continue to compare and find out the relationship between traditional Asian thought and existentialism. While writing about the today’s position of Existentialism Flynn rightly points out, “In other words, it continues to defend individual freedom, responsibility, and authenticity in the midst of various forms of determinism, conformism, self-deception, technologism, and the like to prevalent in our day” (106).

Thus, existential philosophy continued to be relevant to the contemporary socio-cultural scenario. It still promotes volumes of treatise on the philosophy and also stimulates many literary works, which depict the existential themes like, dread, anxiety, and freedom of choice, responsibility and the absurdity of life.

While illuminating the existential concept of freedom, existential philosophers imply that the human beings are free to do whatever they please. However, this can be seen as a partial truth because the freedom is not only restricted by the objective reality, but also by his own limitations. He is, to a large extent, the outcome of his own situation. His being in the world is something he had no choice over. Sartre argues that not to be free is not freedom. But only rarely in the world does the human being chosen the negative course of non-being through suicide. The human being’s freedom is based upon his political freedom; this is certainly linked to his social status and class origin. Many critics of Existentialism criticise that existentialists’ denial of the significance of the objective conditions that determine the ‘human being’s state of

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being’. On the other hand they only concern with the subjective attitude of human being towards freedom.

In the contemporary period existentialism has lost its craze, however, importance and implication of it cannot be neglected as a trivial. Its influence on the contemporary literature cannot be underestimated instead, it deserves serious consideration. The contemporary significance and its roots in the ancient philosophical treatises make the thoughts of this school, philosophy of contemporary society. As it denies the reason and faith, it presents itself as a highly unsystematic. Though many intellectuals criticised existentialists concern with the metaphysic, one cannot deny its ability to provide the spirit of the contemporary world to get a relief from the nausea and frustration of existence.

Thus, the first major objective of the present study, to define the concept of Existentialism as a theoretical background, is achieved here. Nevertheless, the major objective of the study is to make a comprehensive statement on the existentialism depicted in the select novels of Marathi and American Novelists shall be achieved in the second and third chapter. The analysis of the select novel will be made on the basis of above discussed thematic aspects of the existentialist literature.