

Chapter- II

The Concept of Meaning of Suffering in the Existentialist Thought

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have seen that the suffering takes an important place in our lives and also makes our life meaningful. Although it is one of the most troubling experience of the individual that exist in every aspect of our life, but it has vital significance to make our life meaningful. Life is full of suffering and escape from suffering means escape from our life. And by escape or avoiding suffering no one can solve the problem of suffering. For that, we have to face it and by doing that we can know the real cause of suffering and will be able to overcome it. So, we always have to take a positive attitude to suffering that it makes our life meaningful. The negative attitude towards suffering can do destroy the life of an individual. It is up to the individual how she/he leads her/his life and makes life meaningful.

The problem of suffering is one of the major concerns of human thought throughout its history. As we have known that there are many traditions of thought for which this is the central problem of intellect as well as of life. All other problems arise ultimately from it. Generally, we have seen that many philosophers both in west and in the east have tackled with this problem. A traditional approach to the problem of suffering would consists in the question, 'why is there suffering in this world?'. Fundamentally, this question is about the origin of suffering. This is the way that Indian philosophers took the question. On the contrary, other approach to the question consists in taking the question as a question about the meaningfulness, coherence and justification of the phenomenon of

suffering. They took the question as, 'does suffering somehow fit into the total scheme of things?'. Or, 'is it really absurd, meaningless?'. The former question is concerned with a causal explanation of the phenomenon of suffering. But, later is consisted mainly in an enquiry into the rational justification of the phenomenon.

Philosophy is a human effort to comprehend the problems of the universe. Starting from the traditional to contemporary period, an attempt has been made to solve the problem of being by means of reflection and analysis. The Western traditional philosophy has been resulted in the system building on an impressive scale because of the cultural and social environment of Europe. But the contemporary philosophy in the West is not an exception to this traditional influence. After the first and second world wars, due to traumatic experiences and sufferings the contemporary philosophers begin to rethink of human values.

At that time there were also some contemporary philosophical schools which deal with the problem of 'man'. In medieval period, philosophy very much attached with the concept of God. But in modern period, philosophers tried to base their systems on the basis of science because of which they failed to provide a clear explanation to the 'existence' of man. This philosophical attitude is known as rationalism. And this rationalistic attitude towards the human problems is found in Hegelianism. According to him, the existence of man is only conceptual. But, at that time a philosophical trend was grown known as existentialism which try to get rid of the conceptual man. This philosophical trend attaches due importance to the human existence. After the two world wars, man today finds it difficult to forget her/his traumatic experiences and sufferings.

They were starting to think about their existence. They have become the focal point of her/his entire thought process.

2.2. Existentialism: The Passion and the Movement

Generally, it is to be believed that existentialism is a revolution against traditional Western rationalistic philosophy and also a continuation and logical growth of themes and problems in Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx and Husserl. But it is not wholly true, it is a half truth. And this half truth provides us with less than the whole truth. Existentialism is not simply a philosophical rebellion. Rather, it is the clear conceptual appearance of an existential approach which is the strength of “the present age”. It is to be stated that

It is a philosophical realization of a self- consciousness living in a ‘broken world’ (as said by Marcel), an ‘ambiguous world’ (de Beauvoir), a ‘dislocated world’ (Merleau Ponty), a world into which we are ‘thrown’ and ‘condemned’ yet ‘abandoned’ and ‘free’ (Heidegger and Sartre), a world which appears to be indifferent or even ‘absurd’ (Camus)¹.

Actually, the philosophy of existentialism started with an individual facing a confused world that he/ she cannot accept. This confusion was one of the by-products of the Renaissance, the reformation, the growth of science, rejection of Church authority, the French Revolution, the growth of mass militarism and technocracy and the two world wars, for which the world was clearly not prepared. Solomon states that “existentialism begins with the expression of a few such isolated individuals of genius, who find themselves cut adrift in the dangerous abyss between the harmony of Hegelian reason and the romantic celebration of the individual, between the warmth and comfort of the

‘collective idea’ and the terror of finding oneself alone”². So existentialism is philosophy of this self discovery which always presupposed what ‘I am’, not what ‘I think’.

According to Existential Philosophers, philosophy is the realization of one’s existence or the problems and the possibilities through which an individual has to live her/his life. The philosophical enquiry begins with search for ‘truth’. From the very beginning of human life, man finds herself/ himself that she/ he is surrounded by an enormous variety of natural things. She/he realizes that she/he is the only being who is endowed with the capacity to solve these problems and to make her/ his existence more secure. The word ‘existence’ comes from the Latin word ‘*existere*’ which means ‘to stand out’. In existentialism, the term ‘existence’ means a full, vital, self-conscious, responsible and growing life. Moreover, this understanding of the term ‘Existence’ is found in Husserl’s philosophy that ‘consciousness is essentially intentional’, which refers beyond itself to things other than itself. A man is self conscious and her/his field of consciousness is not to be considered as something separate from her/his body. As consciousness is always intentional, every man by dint of this power stands beyond herself/himself. According to Existentialist, ‘existence’ means the same thing. It means to stand beyond oneself. A man exists by being conscious that she/he exists and becomes conscious of things other, which is her/his consciousness.

One very important point is that this philosophy gives emphasis to human consciousness and its absolute freedom. It is concerned with the individual person existing in the world as well as all the problems she/he has to face in her/his path of life. It makes out an examination of the difficulties of human existence and authentic living. Moreover, it emphasizes a practical focus on various important matters of life, namely,

anxiety, boredom, aloneness, death, suffering etc. These are the existential characteristics of individuals that are related with the very essence of human nature.

Suffering is one of the modes of our existence that is as old as human existence. It is a kind of truth which cannot be apprehending objectively. Because it is not an abstract idea, it is purely subjective idea. Very often philosophers who have thought about the problem have treated the subject “objectively”, but not as something which has its basis in one’s own subjective existence. This tendency seems to be present in western thought in all the stages of its development- the Greek, the Christian and the modern. What they have usually used for it is a systematized description of the universe, not paying adequate attention to man’s disquiet when she/he is confronted with direct experience of the universe. The thrust of western philosophy has been to direct man away from her/his own immediate evidence so that she/he is encouraged to live within a system.

But, existentialism is a philosophical movement which brought a different concept regarding this tendency and the existentialists find wrong with the tendency that it is manufactured inauthenticity. It has been fabricated over the centuries not on the basis of direct observation of the world or as the result of attention to individual psychological experience, but by spinning out a complicated number of a priori ideas. They have produced a detailed description of the mechanisms of the universe elaborated within the context of an ontology which has more to do with metaphysical systems and their preservation than with accurate description of what man really and repeatedly experiences. It is a world view whose presupposition is that one can readily apply the methods used for the scientific description of the operations of the universe to the descriptions of human reality. The puzzlement and disquiet with which the existence and

nature of the world fills us, however, do not appear to be such that they could be removed by any information that the empirical sciences may be able to offer.

Existentialists claimed that instead of depending purely on deductive reasoning based on a priori principles as a means of interpreting the world, we should recognize the resources provided by experience, particularly the inner experience. Schopenhauer says,

I say that the solution of the riddle of the world must proceed from the understanding of the world itself; that the task of metaphysics is not to pass over the experience in which the world exists, but to understand it thoroughly, because outer and inner experience is...the principle source of all knowledge³.

Scientific knowledge presupposes objectivity and in order to be objective, it has to be independent on the knowing subject. On the other hand, philosophical knowledge need not be objective in that sense. Thus, it is said that Kierkegaard opens the door for an anti-intellectual voluntarism. For Kierkegaard, “philosophy is more properly a way of life, a mode of realizing authentic existence”⁴. That means, it is based on concrete personal experience rather than on abstract objective speculation. Suffering is the most concrete personal experience of every individual which is regarded by Kierkegaard as the highest subjective truth. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to elaborate the very concept of suffering in existentialism and also explicate Kierkegaard’s view on suffering as a highest subjective truth which is a path for attaining eternal happiness.

2.3. Significance of the Concept of Suffering in Existentialism

Suffering is one of the most important features of our life. It is to be noteworthy that suffering is a mode of our existence. It is an undeniable truth of our life from which

nobody can escape. To come to the real grips with suffering, we must examine it existentially, that is, as something that involves us. Then we really see suffering in a way which makes us conscious of the mystery of its existence or of the mystery of existence itself. Existentialism is a philosophical movement which seeks to define the individual and tries to find out her/his independent existence. It involves the idea that at first a person exists in the universe, and after that she/he seeks to define herself/himself in order to appreciate the nature of life and humanity. The whole philosophy of existentialism is concerned with being rather than existing. According to existentialism, the individual is fully responsible for creating the meaning of her/his life and, this can cause suffering and *angst* which eventually lead an individual being to discover the true nature of her/his essence.

Existentialism's concern about man arises specifically out of modern conditions. Among these conditions, some are; the loss of the individual mass culture and technology, the resultant alienation of the human being from herself/himself as well as from her/his production and the loss of meaning of life through the divisions within the human spirit. The result of these conditions is what is frequently called the 'existential experience'. According to many writers, artists as well as philosophers, it is an experience of the decomposition of our phenomenal world, first of all, of all rational concepts, next, of objects, then, of time and history, until finally all coherence is gone to the point where one faces only meaninglessness and experiences only despair. An experience of this nature found in Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* that,

Getting up, train, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, in the same routine, and then

suddenly the setting collapses and we find ourselves in a state of hopeless lucidity⁵.

The existential experience usually arises in times of social or personal catastrophe. When the extraordinary, in the guise of disease or death, suddenly seizes the structure of our daily life, it unsettles the round of ordinary life, which was taken for granted, disturbing its routines. The life which had appeared till the last moment so interesting and colorful suddenly begins to fade, to become wearisome and bleak. The disorder awakens the anxiety of 'being' threatened by non-being. With this threat it is not only the power of being but also the meaning of being which is at stake.

The anxiety of death and fate is added to the anxiety of meaninglessness and emptiness. In Kierkegaard's 'Sickness unto Death', we found to that human being suffers a two-fold despair which may be defined as a despair of despair. In describing and analyzing the experience of despair, Kierkegaard finds this tension to be the result of the fact that man is a spiritual being; she/he is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite. According to Kierkegaard, "man is a synthesis, but simply as synthesis, he is not a self. Despair arises because man is synthesis- that is over self itself. Despair reveals that simply as given, the self with all finite things is meaningless"⁶.

With the awareness of the interdependence between death and meaninglessness, suffering enters our consciousness as the despair of despair. This suffering maintains an ever-changing balance between death and the meaning moment. It requires some concentration of mind to realize that this suffering is an inwardness of our self. In the ordinary sense, for instance, when we say, I suffer from such and such a thing, the 'I' as the subject of suffering is presupposed as a being. But here in the despair of despair,

suffering is presupposed as the whole of our being, as the complete form of our self-consciousness. Suffering is not only the centre of 'I' but it is also the source of all being.

Suffering is a very common fact of our life and Existentialists are extremely engaged with discovering significant import in human existence. Searching meaning of life fulfils a central role for individuals that can be found in all human experiences as well as these are some unavoidable experiences that entail suffering. The questions raised by existentialism are related to *'Who am I?'* and *'What gives meaning to my life?'*. Nietzsche argues that the individual who has the way how to live can bear anyhow the life as well as all the obstacles of life. Moreover, he stated that it is possible to bear suffering rather than meaningless suffering. On the other hand, Frankl claims that suffering has meaning if it generates change in the sufferer, as diversified to despair, which is worthless suffering.

2.4. Views of different Existentialists Philosophers in the context of Suffering

Existentialism is basically a 20th century philosophical movement whose roots can be traced back to the 19th century, particularly to the philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. There are mainly nine prominent existentialist thinkers, namely, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, Maurice Merleau- Ponty, Albert Camus and Emmanuel Levinas. Generally, these thinkers have diverse outlooks, although they discuss certain general ideas which are coming from the philosophical approach known as existentialism. There are two forms of existentialism, one is theistic existentialism and other is atheistic existentialism. Theistic existentialism believes in the existence of God. According to them, at the deepest level of human existence we encounter God. God is often regarded to be the deepest subjective truth. In theistic existentialism, the conception of human

loneliness is not fully accepted. Man is not completely abandoned in this universe. By a 'leap of faith' man can stand before god.

On the other hand, atheistic existentialism emphasized the idea of human loneliness. According to atheistic existentialism, the very conception of God is self-contradictory. Man is completely fortunate and abandoned. There is no God to guide him. The founder of theistic existentialism is generally regarded to be Kierkegaard. For him, God is the deepest living reality. The subjective truth of God is wholly undeniable. Friedrich Nietzsche, the founder of atheistic existentialism has declared that "God is dead"⁷. Death of God leads to the rejection of a belief in cosmic or physical order and also to a rejection of absolute values themselves.

It is to be noteworthy that existentialism paying attention on individual human lives and the very touching inevitability of suffering and choice of every individual. At the beginning of the 20th century, after the world war, a kind of despair took possession of the human mind which completely destroyed man's faith in future. At this stage, philosophy tried to rediscover man as an individual and in doing so, it came to discover the philosophy of Kierkegaard.

2.4.1. Søren Kierkegaard

The 19th century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard is generally regarded to be the founder of existentialism. According to him, every individual being is exclusively accountable for giving meaning to her or his life. He maintained that there are many existential obstacles that bring suffering in to an individual's life. It is one of the existential modes of the individual that cannot be avoided.

Suffering for Kierkegaard is the highest subjective truth. Kierkegaard argued that truth can be discovered only in subjectivity, not in objectivity, like that suffering which is an inalienable part of our life can be understood only subjectively. According to him, every individual being is solely responsible for giving a meaning to her/his life. He maintained that there are many existential difficulties and interruptions including despair, *angst*, absurdity, alienation and boredom. These obstacles bring suffering in an individual's life. According to Kierkegaard, inspite of these obstacles, the individual live their lives passionately and sincerely and make their own life meaningful. He distinguishes the life of an individual into three stages, namely, aesthetic, ethical and religious. If one is to understand Kierkegaard's dealing of suffering, he/she has to first understand that Kierkegaard always discusses suffering in these three above mentioned stages. In these three stages, the individual has to struggle for attaining true knowledge about their life and also tries to find out their existence in this universe. Each stage with its own characteristics represents a particular philosophy of life. Among these three stages, Kierkegaard regards religious stage as the highest stage.

Moreover, for Kierkegaard, suffering is the highest subjective truth which can be understood only in the religious stage. This is the stage of highest subjectivity because only in this stage, a subjective individual can understand the highest subjective truth (that is suffering). Kierkegaard pointed out that for attaining eternal happiness a subjective individual should have to understand the meaning of suffering. In the process of knowing this subjective truth, the individual becomes more aware of her/his own objective uncertainty. He argues that truth is subjectivity and truth consists neither in attaining

objective knowledge but in subjective knowledge. It is to be realized within the subject and also assimilated in inwardness. Kierkegaard says,

Only the truth which edifies is truth for you. This is an essential predicate relating to the truth as inwardness; its decisive characterization as edifying for you, i.e. for the subject, constitutes its essential difference from all objective knowledge, in that the subjectivity itself becomes the mark of the truth⁸.

According to him, objective truth is fully based on representation of existence and ignores the essence of living being. Moreover, it is the possibility of concrete existence. It cannot give us the knowledge of human values such as freedom, morality and spiritual inside.

2.4.2. Friedrich Nietzsche

Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche depicts life as terrible and tragic. According to him, “the whole of human life is deeply immersed in untruthfulness; the individual cannot draw it up out of this whole past, without finding his present motives- those of honour, for instance,- absurd, and without opposing scorn and disdain to the passions which conduce to happiness in the future”⁹. The general direction of Nietzsche’s thought is toward the affirmation of life rather than towards its negation. According to him, the Greeks knew very well that life is terrible, inexplicable and dangerous. But, though they were alive to the real character of the world and human life, they did not surrender to pessimism by turning their backs on life. What they did was to transmute the world and human life through the medium of art. Then they were able to give a positive answer to

the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. Through the medium of art, they made life triumph over death.

According to Nietzsche, we should have to take suffering as an attitude in which we can accept our suffering and make a challenge by taking much difficult responsibility as possible. This kind of attitude is to be found in Nietzsche's philosophy that is what he calls the *ascetic ideal*. Brian Leiter claims that before Nietzsche the *ascetic ideal* was the only way to give sense to human suffering.

Nietzsche describes suffering as 'to live is to suffer'. This thinking is controversial if we thereby mean that to live is only to suffer. Moreover, if we say that suffering permeates life, then that also does not require that there is no pleasure in life. It is true that suffering is a very undeniable, inevitable truth of our life. Here a question raised, '*is it true that life will involve suffering for every individual?*'. The answer is surely going to be 'yes' for those who are born and die quick, painless death etc. However, before we rightly answer whether life automatically means suffering, we should find the answer for what is meant by suffering.

According to Nietzsche, suffering is to be regarded as a genus in which psychological and physical suffering are its species. Under mental suffering, we find depression, anxiety, fear, unsatisfied desires, loneliness, anguish, distress, rejection, failure, hopelessness, boredom and so on. While all of the above come to degrees, one can easily claim that any degree of any of them constitutes suffering. On the other hand, due to degrees, physical suffering brings different type of clear and unclear cases of suffering. James Scott Johnston and Carol Johnston stated that "there is pain—really the paradigm of physical suffering—in its various degrees....hunger, which can range from

mild discomfort to actual pain, 'itching' in its various degrees, degrees of being 'too hot or too cold', and so on"¹⁰.

One becomes familiar with more kinds of suffering. But, when we consider the variety of probable human suffering, becomes very tough to deny that to live is to suffer, as long as we do not imply that to live is only to suffer. However, it is not so clear that we can say that to live is to experience joy. For it seems quite obvious from my knowledge which is related to me by others, that it is far easier to suffer than to find joy, peace, or happiness.

As we have seen that there are many kinds of psychological and physical suffering. With these two kinds of suffering Nietzsche added another, that is, the suffering we experience due to our suffering. For an example, the condition of someone, who is not being able to walk around because of the pain from a sprained ankle. Such difficulties and supplementary suffering are significant. However, according to Nietzsche, the most pressing problem is the manner we experience when we cannot find a purpose or meaning for our suffering. Nietzsche wrote that man's problem was not suffering itself but the problem consists in the question '*why do I suffer?*'. Indeed, Viktor E. Frankl says, "in some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of sacrifice...That is why man is even ready to suffer, on the condition, to be sure, that his suffering has a meaning"¹¹. For Nietzsche, lack of such meaning creates a suffocative void which leads to nothingness or nihilism.

Nietzsche has always been given central importance to the meaning of suffering. For him, it is the meaning of suffering that has been the problem, not suffering itself is the problem. When we see his writings, we found that there are two possibilities for

giving meaning to our suffering. The first possibility concerns a religious ethic. According to Nietzsche, a religious ethic views suffering as undesirable and it eventually utilizes dishonest and harmful means to give a meaning for human suffering. On the other hand, the second possibility concerns with the affirmation of all aspects of life as a sheer act of will. It also involves giving meaning to suffering through recognizing its necessary role in human growth, flourishing and greatness.

For Nietzsche, avoidance of suffering is not the proper attitude. We always look for the possibility of desiring the elimination or reducing of suffering. There may be different ways that might try to do away with or avoid suffering. In Buddhism, we find direct expression of the notion of abolishing suffering. Buddha put forward the four noble truths that, “life is suffering, that ignorance is the cause of suffering, that suffering can be eliminated, and that the Eightfold Path is the way to eliminate suffering”¹². Buddhism supposedly offers a way to achieve a freedom from suffering which is ultimately to be found in enlightenment and the cessation of the cycle of births and deaths. However, Buddhism also tries to grow happiness and the cessation of suffering caused by such things as illness and death even before enlightenment takes place and Nirvana is found. This kind of attitude is also found in Christianity. Regarding Christian’s general attitude toward suffering, Nietzsche makes a radical observation,

God created man happy, idle, innocent and immortal: our actual life is a false, decayed, sinful existence, an existence of punishment- Suffering, struggle, work, death are considered as objections and question marks against life, as something that ought not to last; for which one requires a cure- and has a cure. From the time of Adam until now, man has been in

an abnormal state: God himself has sacrificed his son for the guilt of Adam, in order to put an end to this abnormal state: the natural character of life is a curse, Christ gives back the state of normality to him who believes in him: he makes him happy, idle and innocent¹³.

So, suffering is to be overcome, abolished, or at least eased in this world. According to Christianity, through redemption we will be free from suffering and united with God in the next world. For Nietzsche, every individual is responsible for her/his own suffering. He believes that every sufferer naturally seeks the cause of her/his suffering and the sufferer seeks a guilty upon other whom the sufferer can vent herself/herself in an attempt to relieve the suffering. According to Nietzsche, "Quite so, my sheep! Someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it- you alone are to blame for yourself"¹⁴.

2.4.3. Jean Paul Sartre

Jean Paul Sartre, the famous existential thinker has divided existence of human beings into three types- Being -in -itself, Being-for-itself and Being-for-others. Among these modes, Being-for-itself indicates man who is conscious. According to the philosophy existentialism, man is struggling to understand her/his life and also want to make sense of her/his existence in order to understand the true nature of her/his being. As a pioneer of existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre says that "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world and defines himself afterwards"¹⁵. Man is struggling to define herself/ himself after find out her/his existence in the world. According to Sartre, human being is not only the being by whom negations are disclosed in the world. Moreover, she/he is also a being who can take negative attitude towards herself/himself.

In this regard, Sartre introduces the concept of nothingness that is not produced by human being in itself. It has to be given at the heart of being so that we can apprehend that particular type of reality. Sartre says, "Man is the being through whom nothingness comes to the world"¹⁶. Nothingness cannot be produced by Being-in-itself. It has to be given in the heart of Being. Moreover for him, nothingness does not nihilate itself. It is nihilated. According to him, "there must exist a Being of which the property is to nihilate Nothingness. The Being by which Nothingness arrives in the world is a being such that in its Being, the Nothingness of its Being is in question. The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness"¹⁷.

According to Sartre, a man in anguish can experience nothingness at the best. Anguish is a state of confusion arises when an individual in her/his pursuit of being becomes aware of her/his responsibility and also of her/his inability to shoulder the responsibility. Thus, anguish is the mode of freedom. Sartre identifies the anguish with what Kierkegaard described as the anguish of 'Abraham'. For Sartre, if we do anything or become anything it is fundamentally not because we have to, but because we want to. This is a harsh thought and in the face of it we suffer anguish. It is the agony of knowing that everything is up to us.

Sartre is the most systematic existentialist who gives much importance to freedom and the individuality of man. For him, man is absolutely free and therefore she/he has to face the risks and responsibilities of her/his decisions. As a free human being, man can choose an act and is also responsible for the result of her/his act. There is no one to help her/him in making own essence and situation. Therefore, due to risks which are involved in her/his choice, she/he is anguished. Because of this mental state, she/he continuously

suffers from tremendous ethical anxiety. Moreover, for her/his own freedom to choose and act, man has to face many difficulties which create suffering in her/his life and that helps to realize inner nature (that is subjectivity). Sartre also pointed out that in taking decisions in one's own way, man should not feel the fear of authorities which means that we have to go without having any God. And this idea proves him to be an atheist.

2.4.4. Martin Heidegger

Heidegger is not concerned with man and her/his personal and ethical interests. He is basically concerned with the problem of Being. But being of entities is not an entity. So, being must be exhibited in its own way. Such a way is essentially diverse from the way in which things are discovered. The meaning of being also demands that it should be conceived in a way which is of its own. Therefore, for Heidegger the question is, '*in which entities the meaning of Being to be discerned?*'. Heidegger thinks that such an entity is '*Dasien*'.

The concept of '*Dasien*' literally means 'being there'. The term '*Dasien*' may be examined into '*Da*' and '*Sein*'. '*Da*' means 'There' and '*Sein*' means 'Being'. Therefore, '*Dasien*' signifies the 'There' of a human being of 'Being there'. Heidegger introduces the concept of '*Dasien*' to elucidate the manner of existence of human being which can be described as the 'Being-in-the-world', a being that has been in the world as inseparable from it. It is the essence of '*dasein*'. Thus, it can be said that "the essence of '*dasein*' is its existence"¹⁸. Here, existence implies characteristics of objects. It is called by Heidegger as Being-present at hand. It means human reality is not something which is just given. In its very Being, '*dasein*' can choose itself and win itself. It is to be stated that "by its choice,

dasein had necessarily opted for one possibility and ruled out others”¹⁹. Through his concept of *Dasein*, Heidegger developed a new element in the idea of subjectivity. *Dasein* was always characterized by what he called ‘mine-ness’, the radical individuality of selfhood. That means *Dasein* was always mine or yours.

According to Heidegger, *dasein* is the genuine self. He has rejected the notion of philosophical or transcendental subject. Moreover, he gave a distinction between ‘*Ontic*’ which means daily existence and ‘*Ontological*’ which means the aspect of *Dasein* in which it asks the question of Being. For Heidegger, *Dasein* is ontological because it asks question about Being. It is not a subject. It removes the distinction between ‘subject’ and ‘object’. It can be defined as ‘being-in-the-world’ that cannot be distinguished from its existence in the world.

Here, Heidegger introduces another concept that is care. He characterized *Dasein* as ‘Care’. The inner, moral struggle of the *dasein* is the expression of the existential ‘care’ or concern which constitutes *dasein*’s inner being. Actually, care is the structure of the mode of one’s existence that exists with the expectations, such as what will she/he be in a world. Authenticity and inauthenticity are the modes of existence of *Dasein* which refers to man’s relationship to herself/himself. An authentic man is one who has an adequate understanding of herself/himself, i.e., who she/he is. But, an inauthentic man is the one who refuses to see herself/himself and act blindly. But these are the possibilities of *dasein*.

Here, he introduces another concept that is called ‘dread’. In this regard, Heidegger owes much to Kierkegaard’s concept of dread. The concept of dread was analyzed by

Kierkegaard in order to penetrate to the deepest layer of human feeling. Heidegger also used this concept in the same purpose. For him, dread is such a concept which brings to human being its proper freedom. It is such a mental state which has got no definite object for its source. So, a person in dread can think nothing definite. Man in dread can have an immediate experience of Nothing or Non- being which brings sufferings in life.

2.4.5. Maurice Merleau- Ponty

Merleau- Ponty is a radical French Existential Phenomenologist who has too often vied as the shadow of Jean Paul Sartre, refuses the views of Descartes, Husserl and Heidegger on existence. Merleau- Ponty holds that the human existence is not essentially knowing or thinking, but it is living and valuing. Going against Sartre and Husserl he argues that it is not consciousness, but the human body that is intentional through ‘motility’. It is because our bodies are ‘Being in the World’ rather than merely matters in the world. Actually, it is a kind of perspective from which human being perceives, judges and values.

Merleau-Ponty adopts a notion of freedom which is less Cartesian than Sartre’s notion of freedom. He rejects the view of Sartre’s Absolute freedom. It is true that one is free, but to be always free is not to be totally free. According to Merleau- Ponty, one must act in accordance with her/his motives and interest as well as in obedience with her/his situation and facticity. Moreover for Sartre, one is always free to transform her/his own chosen tolerance of pain and fatigue. But, Merleau-Ponty draws attention to the fact that this transforming for-itself does not operate as if I had no yesterday. That means transforming our pain or suffering does not abolish the suffering itself. Refusing Sartre’s famous contention that ‘existence precedes essence’, he insists that “a theory of freedom

must recognize a sort of sedimentation of our life: an attitude towards the world, when it has received frequent confirmation, acquires a favored status for us”²⁰.

2.4.6. Emmanuel Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas is one of the new modern philosophers who does not only take the question of suffering into consideration, but also makes it central in his philosophy. Levinas proposes the provocative theory of the uselessness of suffering. For him, suffering makes no sense; it has no intrinsic teleology, no justification and is of no use. However, in quite another context, Levinas tries to describe it as “the subjectivity of the subject as vulnerability. That means as being open to the wound, as an exposition of the other, as a substitution of the other’s suffering, as being a hostage for the sake of the other”²¹. It is to be stated that being a subject means being prepare to suffer for the other. Suffering is as it were at the core of human subjectivity. Here, the question is, *‘how could this be understood if suffering is in itself of no use?’*. Or, *‘Does it mean that useless suffering could be useful ‘in the end’?’*. Indeed, Levinas is of the opinion that ‘suffering in the other’ is useless and senseless, but ‘suffering in me’ means my suffering for the sake of other person’s suffering is useful and makes sense. For Levinas, suffering can be useful only in the ethical relation. Now, the question for Levinas would be how is it possible to transform suffering which is senseless or useless into useful suffering. As he ask, *‘What is the criterion of this usefulness?’*²². According to Levinas, ‘my own suffering’, for example, sickness, ‘loss of my job’ etc are not really for the sake of the other person. So, these kinds of suffering are useless. If it is true then another question arises that is there really no sense and no meaning in my suffering apart from its relationship to the other. Most of the cases where we find any meaning in suffering are

usually of our own suffering that contributes nothing to the other. According to Levinas, suffering is intrinsically meaningless. But it can take on meaning in 'my suffering' for the suffering of the other person.

The concept of suffering has been discussed by Levinas in almost all of his major works in its several forms, for example, depersonalization, solitude, the enchainment of the self with itself, fatigue, pain, sorrow, sickness and death. Levinas describes the human experience of suffering as, "suffering is, like all lived experience, a given in consciousness"²³. Suffering is surely given in consciousness, but this given does not allow itself to be brought into unity. In other words, we can say that it is something that we cannot make into synthesis. Perhaps, we can try to think or imagine about it but we cannot assume or accept it. It can be stated that,

The sensation of suffering of suffering is, too much " in a quantitative sense, viz., ,, too much" to be endurable with our sensuous capacity, but because it is ,, too much" in a qualitative sense, viz., ,, too much" to be integrated into meaning. Being too much, viz., the excessiveness of suffering, or suffering as an excess, as something exterior, something other than what I know and what it is, means,, unassumability²⁴.

So, suffering is unassumable and it is unassumability itself. Moreover, suffering according to Levinas, has a categorical ambiguity. Because, in one hand it is a quality that gives a certain sensation and on the other hand it is a sensation that is not possible to make into a synthesis. In other words, it can be said that suffering is impossible to integrate into the whole of meaning. That means it is not something which is possible to

be either integrated or assumed. Rather, it can be said that suffering is something which is non-integrability itself or meaningless in itself.

2.4.7. Albert Camus

Albert Camus is one of the most famous French existentialist philosophers who has little faith in rationalism and opposed the systematic philosophy. He has given importance only to the personal experience of the individual being. According to him, suffering is something which teaches us to live life with suffering. It is not a problem for which we have to search way to overcome from it. Rather, we have to face it and accept it and have to live life in suffering. He opposed the view of Kierkegaard that suffering can be overcome through leap of faith. For him, faith in God is like committing suicide. Here, it can be stated that “Kierkegaard turns to faith in God as a path of redemption from meaninglessness while Camus rejects faith in as a form of intellectual suicide and cowardice”²⁵. Camus argues that suffering is an inescapable reality and we should not try to overcome it by depending on something supernatural power (God). He regarded Kierkegaard’s concept of faith as suicide because faith in God means accepting our failure to live our life. For him, suffering teaches us to realize ourselves through which we can know how to live life.

According to Camus, every individual has the power to struggle with suffering without taking the help of God. Suffering gives us the strength to carry on our life with suffering. Actually, Camus failed to understand Kierkegaard’s idea of ‘knight of faith’. He finds some lacking in this idea which lefts the courage to accept life with ‘pain’ and ‘sadness’. Moreover, he opposed Kierkegaard’s view of complete eradication of suffering through ‘leap of faith’.

2.5. Søren Kierkegaard's Philosophy and the Concept of Suffering

Søren Kierkegaard as a theistic existentialist philosopher believes in the existence of God. According to them, at the deepest level of human existence we encounter God. God is often regarded to be the deepest subjective truth and for realizing this truth man has to suffer or to understand the meaning of suffering. In theistic existentialism, the conception of human loneliness is not fully accepted. Man is not completely abandoned in this universe. By a 'leap of faith' man can stand before god. Through faith, man can overcome suffering. It is true that there are many existential obstacles in our lives that cause suffering. But, to overcome suffering we have to realize and must have faith in God. Before going to understand the concept of suffering in details, first we have to give an overview of the philosophy of Kierkegaard as an existentialist thinker.

2.5.1. Kierkegaard's existentialism: An overview

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard is acknowledged to be one of the most important thinkers of the nineteenth century. He is also known as the father of modern existentialism. Kierkegaard's philosophy is not really a philosophy in the real sense, but rather theology of philosophy or a religious philosophy. He has protested against dominant rationalistic thought of the 17th and 18th centuries. As an existential philosopher, Kierkegaard viewed that genuine philosophy starts with existence that has personal character. Regarding man as an 'existent', he introduced the concepts such as fear, despondency etc.

Kierkegaard felt that to exist is to struggle and act in the world of men. The basic idea of Kierkegaard is that personal existence cannot be comprehended in a system as George

Wilhelm Hegel describes. Hegel has tried to express the whole world in a way of rational system. But, Kierkegaard stated that no one can know her/his place or purpose. Each person must choose irrationally to the direction of her/his own existence. An individual's existence is never be a complete or final one. On the other hand, a system is always a finished individual product and final. According to Kierkegaard, "Existence constitutes the highest interest of existing individual, and his interest in his existence is interest in his reality"²⁶.

In Kierkegaard's philosophy, existence is a criterion of reality and thus he shifts the problem of being from abstract to concrete, from being in general to particular human existence. Kierkegaard has criticized Hegel for totally ignoring the individual. According to Hegel, there is a rational synthesis of the subject and the object and of being and thought. He identified logical with the ontological. On the other hand, Kierkegaard has put forward the view that existence or actuality is something which is fundamentally different from a rationally conceived possibility. He stated that existence is actual and not possible. In fact there cannot be an identity of subject and object. By Possibility, he means the realm of 'non-existential' or as a sphere which exist for thought alone. Therefore, possibility is an essence or ideal which may be conceived or reflected upon. On the other hand, 'reality', for Kierkegaard is that which actually exists. Therefore, Kierkegaard has distinguished concrete existence from possible existence.

The starting point of Kierkegaard's thought is the concrete situation of man in the world. He is more interested in existence of man as a particular individual. The roots of this thought is found in the philosophy of St. Augustine who is known as the predecessor of existentialism. In his philosophy, we have found the subjectivist trend when he asks

the question, “*What then am I, O my God, what nature am I?*”²⁷. This question is an existential question relating to the inwardness of the individual. Augustine holds that God is to be realized through inwardness that is independent of all external sources of information. According to Augustine, men have a divine spark within herself/himself that seeks union with God. Therefore, Augustine has stated that man as an individual person is the subject of the study and not an object or a universal being. But Kierkegaard has gone to a further step and developed the idea of subjectivity. The reality of the individual became the pivotal point in Kierkegaard’s philosophy because of which the problems of truth and subjectivity arose.

Regarding this truth and subjectivity, Kierkegaard argued that truth consists neither in attaining objective knowledge but in subjective knowledge. Moreover, Kierkegaard says that ‘truth is subjectivity’. Kierkegaard rejects the notion of an ideal universal truth. For him, truth is existential that truth is truth for me; it is for the individual for the subject. For Kierkegaard, truth and reality must be discovered in subjectivity. According to Kierkegaard, suffering is the highest subjective truth. Here, question arises that why it is subjective and not objective. Before going to answer this question, it is very important to know what subjective truth and objective truth is.

2.5.2. Objective truth

Traditionally, objective truth attempts to understand the truth of existing via specific criteria or theories that are used for assessing true or false propositions. In case, it can be stated that, “the standard definition of truth used today is the ‘correspondence theory’, which requires statements to be verified or proven by the facts- judgments

statements or propositions are correct or true only if they factually match the object or situation they are referring to”²⁸. A statement can either be true or false. There are no degrees or graduations of truth or untruth. In all such systems truth is something that occurs only within the perimeter of specific ‘rules’ or ‘conditions’ that are used for its assessment.

Objective truth provides only factual or theoretical information about things in the world. But this manner of interpreting reality creates an artificial but fundamental rift between an apparently isolated ‘subject’ who is ‘knower’ and an apparently independently existing realm of objects that are ‘known’. The objective thinkers’ task is to deal with what is in mind only in relation to what is outside of it.

Objective truth completely ignores the essence of living things. For instance, an objective truth or observation about a dog will be based entirely upon objectively intelligible general information such as , its size, weight or color, physical composition and history, descriptions of its behavior and potentials and its similarities or differences to other entities. In the meantime, however, the dog’s actual existence, its existing essence, primordial source of all its attributes is completely ignored. In the realm of objective truth, the dog now exists only as thought or idea. It has no longer any physical or concrete existence. In other words, the dog in a sense has disappeared and what is left is an abstraction of the dog, not the reality of the dog. That’s why objective truth is based wholly upon the representation of existence. Therefore, objective truths or thoughts about reality are merely conceptual approximations or possibilities of concrete existence and this is definitely not existence itself.

Another significant point is that objective approach to understanding reality is that ultimately we can never be rationally certain of anything. Since what we know is either based on facts derived from historical information, or on logically derived data received through our senses. We can never be certain about the truth of any objective knowledge. Moreover, we can also never be certain about which we acquired through personal experience because there is no way of proving to ourselves that the information is still correct.

According to Kierkegaard, objective approach to matters of personal truth cannot shed any light upon that is most essential to our lives because it ignores the essential significance of the individual existence of the 'knower' or 'subject' from which questions of personal truth arise and for whom such truth matters. Kierkegaard asserts,

All essential knowing pertains to existence, or the knowing whose relation to existence is essential is essential knowing....all essential knowing is therefore essentially related to existence and to existing. Therefore, only ethical and ethical- religious knowing is essential knowing. But, all ethical and all ethical- religious knowing is essentially a relating to the existing of the knower²⁹.

These essential truths of our existence, described by Kierkegaard as being our ethical and or religious values, are rooted in the essence of who we are. Our actual existence and our human values do not have objectively measurable properties or characteristics. My existence is 'hidden' from other people's view, but it exists inside me, not outside of me. That is why no one else can ever know the truth of my existence.

In Kierkegaard's view, only I (God) can know the truth of my existence. According to him, "if a person does not become what he understands, then he does not understand it either"³⁰.

2.5.2.1. Kierkegaard's rejection of objective truth

Kierkegaard has opposed the conclusion of both the rationalistic and empiricist tradition of truth that is 'truth is objective'. According to Kierkegaard, "objective truth is like a joke at which one laughs not because he has understood the joke but because the other man says so"³¹. By this example, Kierkegaard wants to show that truth is subjective in nature. If truth is to exist, according to Kierkegaard, it should be appropriated by an existing individual. Truth is the appropriation process in which the universal or eternal truth is apprehended, realized or actualized in an individual's consciousness. Truth consists in the process of double reflection between thought and action- thought moves towards actualization in the existing individual and the action of individual consciousness moves towards the apprehension of thought. From this process of double reflection results what has been called the dialectical tension between the appropriating and apprehending individual and the thought so apprehended. Thus, we are led to the idea of the paradox of truth in Kierkegaard's philosophy.

It is true that truth is a general term, but it is understood only in particular. So it can never be only an abstract entity. According to Kierkegaard, truth can only exist in and for the individual apprehension. There is no such thing, except perhaps, ideally, as 'objective certainty.' For example, 'God exists'. The truth of this statement cannot be objectively established with absolute certainty. But an existing being can feel the moral

concern to go ahead and act on it with faith and passion, and actualize its truth. Kierkegaard says, "...in the full consciousness of its uncertainty he, nevertheless, acts, and which is objectively uncertain (perhaps his ideal is an illusion) is subjectively assured of realization in his own existence. This is what it means to appropriate an objective uncertainty with passionate inwardness"³². Thus, according to Kierkegaard we may not deny objectivity (from ideal stand point of view), but we neither can affirm it, except in and through faith and passion experienced by an individual.

2.5.3. Subjective truth

By subjective truth, generally we mean that it is varied from person to person, it is not eternal. Since, it depends on individual's own experience. It is completely differ from objective truth. Kierkegaard clearly accepts the relevance and necessity of objective truth for the study of subjects such as history, mathes or science and he would not deny that it plays an important role in certain matters of daily survival. According to Kierkegaard, this way of presenting truth is also existentially apathetic in the sense that it does not shed any light on man's inner relationship to existence. Unlike subjective truth, it cannot deal with human values such as the nature of freedom and moral or spiritual insight.

Therefore, Kierkegaard strongly criticizes all systematic, rational philosophies for their futile attempt to know life via theories and through the assimilation of objective knowledge about reality. For him, this can only produce 'truths' that supply a strictly narrowed outlook on life that has little to do with one's actual experience of reality. Detached or observational modes of thought can never comprehend human experience. It is to be observed that,

Truth sentences are merely true sentences, but the primary ground of truth is in actual existence which resides in the living process of existence itself, as it is unfolding- existence and living humans are not ‘completed entities’ available for categorization, so rather than being the relationship between a subject- knower, human truth is something that is continually occurring³³.

For just as a tree cannot truly be appreciated or understood when it has been uprooted and removed from its place of growth, so Kierkegaard asserts that a human being cannot find truth separate from the subjective experience of her/his own individual existence, which is the fundamental essence of who she/he is, defined by the values that determines her/his way of life.

As we have seen, for Kierkegaard the truth is subjective in nature. It is neither conceptual nor objective. An idea is true not because it is meant to be true but because one can have insight of it. Thus, an idea to be true, it must be subjectively apprehended. And this apprehension of truth is also known as inwardness or subjectivity. Here the subjective determination of truth does not mean that it depends on subject’s mood, which is varied from subject to subject. Rather, this subjective determination of truth is eternal in nature. But, eternity is the characteristic feature of the objective truth which is opposed to the subjective truth. Here, the problem of paradox has risen. This is known as the Kierkegaard’s paradoxical nature of truth. And this ‘paradox of truth’ is vital to understand Kierkegaard’s idea of subjectivity as truth.

2.5.3.1. Kierkegaard's concept of subjective truth

According to Kierkegaard, truth is man's true, essential nature which is treated as something to be actualized. It is not important for Kierkegaard to know what one's essential nature is, but rather, that one actualize it, by achieving the appropriate inner state. As thought plays a very considerable role in this process which Kierkegaard calls 'subjective reflection'. For Kierkegaard, "subjective reflection turns its attention inwardly to the subject, and desires in this intensification to realize (i.e., actualize) the truth."³⁴

There are two approaches to the question of truth. One is 'what of thought' and other is 'how of thought'. That 'how' is the subject related to what she/he thinks. It can be said that,

The minute we do this, we see that there is a kind of relationship of which we may say with absolute certainty that the individual who is in this relationship to an object is in the truth. If a man, knowing no better, worships an ideal, but does it with absolute sincerity and the whole passion of his being, he is nearer to the truth than the enlightened individual, who has a current knowledge of God, but holds this knowledge at second hand and remains unmoved by it. With this ethical, personal kind of truth in mind Kierkegaard boldly proclaims his thesis: truth is subjectivity³⁵.

Thus for Kierkegaard, subjectivity is indicated by the intensity of passion which one holds to an object. And this intensity of passion is subjectivity.

It is to be noteworthy that for Kierkegaard, subjective truth is the highest truth that is available for mankind. By 'subjective truth', he does not mean that a belief is true simply because one believes it to be true. Instead, he is referring to the subjective experience of being, or living within truth. Subjective truth is something called existential truth because it is essentially related to one's actual existence. For example, "what is god? It is not a man. One cannot see Him. And if God is trans-empirical then it is as meaningless as waste-paper in a basket"³⁶. But God is an ever accepted entity, a goal of a religious man. It has no objective importance, but it is within man. It is not an idea of mind (that means it is not an abstract truth), rather a felling of heart. And this is the subjective element of every truth, which Kierkegaard repeatedly asserted.

For Kierkegaard, the acceptance of truth is the passionate commitment. Therefore, Kierkegaard has defined truth as passionate. Here, passion is not only temperamentally changing emotion but it is the acceptance of truth in its full depth. It cannot be determined objectively. Here, we may add the famous example of Kierkegaard Philosophy of Death. It is to be observed that,

Death is a very common term for people that we often see in TV, in Newspaper etc. One can easily think of death without any awe and dread. Since, it is a common matter. But it is not easy to overcome one's feeling of death in relation to near or dear one. It is heart touching news for a person whose mother or father or any closest relation is death³⁷.

Here, the experience of death is not a conceptual idea but a living dreadful experience which causes anxiety, tension, dread and fear within the man. Thus, the

concept of death has meaning in subjective background. No one can deny its passionate effect. It is rather meaningless in objective term.

Kierkegaard does not reject the truth of objective sciences. The truth of objective science is true in its part. But it cannot be applied to philosophy. For Kierkegaard, philosophy is not rational, conceptual interpretation of human mind. It is the lingual expression of the life of a thinker. The thinker exists in her/his thought. She/he should never be a mere spectator and a neutral person in her/his thought- expression. But, she/he lives in her/his thought which means that the thinker is within her/his work. And this is her/his existential interpretation of the thinker. It cannot be understood in objective context. According to Kierkegaard, “the paradoxical character of the truth is its objective uncertainty; this uncertainty is an expression for the passionate inwardness and this passion is precisely the truth”³⁸.

So, for Kierkegaard, the nature of truth is neither analogous to epistemological nor metaphysical. Rather he regarded truth neither as finished nor final (as the epistemologists are viewed) nor as an abstract or objective manner (as the metaphysicians are viewed). Objective knowledge is accidental knowledge. Since, it fails to make the inward relationship between truth and existence. The reality of human individual is not outside of an individual but, it inheres in the individual. Truth for Kierkegaard consists neither in attaining objective knowledge nor in static type of relation. It lies in Subjectivity. It implies that truth is not something that is outside of an individual as an end product. Rather, it is to be realized within the subject. It is to be assimilated in inwardness. It is never final, since it is always an inward quest. That is why it cannot be expressed through fixed category of thought. We general people are confused with the

very meaning of subjectivity. That is, it depends on subject's mood. But, actually it is not. Rather, this subjective nature of truth is eternal in nature.

2.5.3.2. The nature of subjectivity

It is already clearly mentioned above that truth for Kierkegaard is subjective, not objective. He also stated that one cannot accept the truth only because it is meant to be true. An idea is true because one can have insight of it. It must be subjectively apprehended. This existential apprehension of truth is inwardness or subjectivity. Here, the question is that what the word 'subjectivity' means. Or, what is its' nature.

Kierkegaard investigated the term subjectivity with a new meaning which is different from the classical or Aristotelian tradition. It is basically an idealistic or neotic subjectivism. For him, subjectivity is the essence of the spiritual life. It is a state of freedom and moral responsibility. Subjectivity refers to the process by which the individual approaches what she/he thinks and so brings the truth into existence. The true nature of human being is subjectivity. The subject is an existent being as interacting with other persons and things.

According to Kierkegaard, man is free to choose. Her/his choice is not suppressed. Thus, freedom of choice makes man responsible for her/his decisions. When she/he chooses, she/he knows the risks and feels the dread of responsibility. The essential characteristic of subjectivity is unfettered freedom of making decisions and choosing the good against the evil. If this unfettered freedom is once denied the spirit of man then man becomes completely objective, which is conditional and governed by the Laws that are not of her/his own chosen. The point is that if the self is governed by its own nature and

by its own laws it cannot live genuine moral life which is the authentic life. Here, the phrase, 'its own nature' does not mean anything objective, external or universal since each person is unique in one's own self and this uniqueness of a person is her/his subjectivity.

Kierkegaard regards subjective truth as the highest subjective truth available to mankind. He is referring to the subjective experience of being, or living within the truth which is an inward activity of experientially exploring and discovering truth of one's own self in the process of existing. It is a process of becoming, a direct personal involvement in the living moment- by- moment process of unfolding reality. This is why subjective truth is sometimes called existential truth because it is essentially related to one's actual existence. Existential truth cannot be grasped thematically. It is the disclosure of the very being of the individual. Truth lies not in 'what' but in 'how'. The 'what' implies theoretical enquiry and a conceptualization and 'how' implies infinite striving by the individual. As Kierkegaard puts it,

The objective accent falls on WHAT is said, the subjective accent on HOW it is said....At its maximum this inward 'how' is the passion of the infinite, and the passion of the infinite, is the truth. But the passion of the infinite is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity becomes the truth³⁹.

Objective truth is concerned with the facts of our being, whereas subjective truth is about our way of being. For whom we are, our way of being and the significance our existence has for us can only be understood within the context of the unfolding process of our life in terms of our values that determine the choices and decisions we make. And it

is impossible to experience this objectivity for the reason that the 'existing individual', who is the basis of the subjective truth, cannot be separate from herself/himself and observe her/his existence from an outside vantage point. According to Kierkegaard, only God has access to objective truths about my existence.

So, it is impossible for us to analyze our own existence in any deeply meaningful way. Unlike objective truths which are final or finished conclusions, truth of my existence is a living, subjective experience that is always in the process of becoming. So it defies all conceptual accounts. Any attempt to make one's own existence, the object of her/his thinking would result only in a conceptualization of her/his experience. Kierkegaard says, "the subjective thinker is continually in the process of becoming. The objective thinker has already arrived"⁴⁰.

The process of existence is a never ending process that cannot be contained in a conceptual framework. But when it is eventually completed by 'death' then it is no longer existence. Therefore, from the viewpoint of the rational and the human process of existence is an elusive phenomenon, a complete paradox. Kierkegaard writes,

When subjectivity, inwardness, is truth, objectively defined, is a paradox, and that truth is objectively a paradox shows precisely that subjectivity is truth....The paradox is the objective uncertainty that is the expression for the passion of inwardness that is truth. The eternal, essential truth, that is, the truth that is related essentially to the existing person by pertaining essentially what it means to exist is a paradox⁴¹.

By subjectivity or inwardness, Kierkegaard does not mean something introspective reflection on our own mental and emotional states which is merely the mode of detached contemplation. Instead, by subjectivity he is referring to active involvement that is manifested by passionate self- commitment to one's innermost moral or spiritual commitments. Passion is the utmost idiom of subjectivity. According to Kierkegaard, "the highest form of subjective knowing is passion. At this highest, inwardness in an existing subject is passion, the passion of the infinite is the highest truth"⁴².

Even though Kierkegaard gives absolute priority to subjective truth for dealing with matters of moral and spiritual or religious truth, but he is not denying the existence of 'objectively' true moral and spiritual truths. He points out that these truths can only be truly known and are only of use when they have once become inwardly appropriated through subjective experience. An objectively moral truth is merely an approximation and a possibility of a reality that has no concrete existence. Its' being only comes into existence when it is expressed through the passionate commitment of inwardness. In other words, understanding only takes place during the actual process of experiencing, not through an intellectual knowing. This experience of inwardness arises out of the state of deep silence. Alexander Dru argues that "only someone who knows how to remain essentially silent can really talk- and truly act" Silence is the essence of inwardness, of the inner life"⁴³.

As we have seen that truth and reality must be discovered in subjectivity. Here the question of how we can become subjective is raised. When we come to the point of becoming subjective, it raises another creative question for man's authentic existence.

For Kierkegaard, any attempt to plunge oneself in collectivity is a flight into inauthentic existence which is a state of 'being outside oneself'. The collectivity represents crowd mentality and forces the individual to sink into general mediocrity. Kierkegaard holds that,

The submergence of the individual in the mass is by the 'leveling-process'. The 'leveling-process' is done through the collective power which emphasizes the abstract over the concrete, the public over the individual. It is an abstract mathematical exercise in which a certain number of people are taken to equal one point⁴⁴.

Becoming subjective is to become authentic. The authentic combat is waged by the single individual. When we call someone authentic, it does not mean to play role that is expected from her/him in definite capacities to fulfill the demands made on her/him as a student or a teacher or whatever she/he may be. Actually by authenticity, we mean that the individual is ceaseless in rising above dogmatism or conformity to an abstract formulation of rules and obligations. It is characterized by 'my-ownness'. That means the individual seeks to become oneself and works out a life of her/his own. Acts demands of me by external norms are not mine. Hence they are inauthentic.

The term authenticity cannot be analyzed as an epistemological concept. It is striving to become oneself without categories which are often false. Therefore, it cannot be exemplified. Any attempt to know authenticity is to commit an 'ontological error'. The error lies in mixing up a descriptive quality with a mode of striving. Authenticity is not a descriptive notion. It is not an attribute or property of the individual. The notion of

authenticity can be used in a non- ideological way. It is not a code of conduct, but a way of life.

The meaning of authenticity becomes more explicit if we analyze it with reference to Kierkegaard's three stages in the development of life, aesthetic, ethical and religious. These three stages are progressive steps from the aesthetic to ethical and through the ethical into religious. Actually when Kierkegaard talks about existence it could properly be only in these three spheres. For him, man does not exist 'metaphysically'. Kierkegaard put it as follows,

These three existence- spheres: the aesthetic, the ethical, the religious. The metaphysical is abstraction; there is no man who exists metaphysically. The metaphysical, ontology, is but does not exist, for whom it exist it is in the aesthetic, in the ethical, in the religious....⁴⁵.

2.6. Three levels of existence

According to Kierkegaard, every individual being is solely responsible for giving meaning to her/his own life. He maintained that there are many existential obstacles and distractions including despair, angst, absurdity, alienation and boredom. These obstacles bring suffering in an individual's life. According to Kierkegaard, inspite of these obstacles, the individual live their lives passionately and sincerely and make their own life meaningful. He distinguishes the life of an individual into three stages, aesthetic, ethical and religious. He regarded religious stage as the highest stage. If one is to understand Kierkegaard's dealing of suffering, she/he has to first understand that Kierkegaard always discusses it from the point of view of these three above mentioned

stages. In these three stages, the individual has to struggle for attaining true knowledge about their life and also tries to find out their existence in this universe. Each stage with its own characteristics represents a particular philosophy of life.

2.6.1. Aesthetic Stage

The aesthetic stage is the stage of momentary pleasure. It deals with sensuous and immediate. At this stage, man is just motivated by the desires. At one moment, she/he chooses one thing and at another moment she/he chooses something different. She/he is making her/his present by fulfilling the previously experienced desire. But, when a desire is fulfilled, then it is no longer a desire and this fulfilling present desire opens a door for desire of a another new object. So, this stage is the stage of temporal and momentary pleasure.

From aesthetic point of view, suffering has no significance for human existence. The main point for this stage is pleasure and success. Hence it's characteristic philosophy of life is the fortune and the varying ways of understanding the pleasurable are all that is required for human existence. Accordingly, suffering has no aesthetic value. It is identified as simply misfortune and tribulation in daily living, and is accepted as a difficulty that "will soon cease to hinder, because it is a foreign element" to one's existence⁴⁶. The aesthetic view of life, therefore, pays no concentration to the actuality of suffering. As a result, it fails to think about the role of suffering in life. For it, suffering is a threat to human existence.

2.6.2. Ethical Stage

The ethical stage refers to conventional morality, i.e. expected roles and obligations. The person makes a choice in conformity to universal norms. The aesthete is indifferent to the moral questions and refuses to commit herself/himself to any permanent relationship which demands obligations, such as marriage, friendship etc. But, the ethicist finds significance of life by fulfilling her/his social obligations. Marriage is defended as the example of this type of life.

From Kierkegaard's understanding of the ethical point of vision, it is equally clear that suffering is relevant to existence, but it is considered as an experience that can be avoided by pleasing the moral obligation of life. The distinctive philosophy for the ethical is that obligation and the presentation of it are the goal of human existence. By conferring upon duty the position of the uppermost absolute, this philosophy discharges the importance of the role of suffering in human existence. As a result, Kierkegaard thinks that it does not help one to understand the importance of suffering itself for genuine human existence⁴⁷.

2.6.3. Religious Stage

At the stage of religious, Kierkegaard finds that suffering is always fundamentally associated to human existence. The distinctive philosophy of this stage is the relationship between oneself and the highest good, namely, eternal happiness. According to this view, the presence of suffering is an indication of the close and accurate relation between oneself and the absolute and infinite goal of life. Moreover, for Kierkegaard, suffering is the highest subjective truths which can be understand only in the religious stage. This

stage is the stage of highest subjectivity because only in this stage, a subjective individual can understand the highest subjective truth.

2.6.4. Suffering- the highest subjective truth

It is already noteworthy that for Kierkegaard, truth is subjective. Truth always lies in subjectivity, not objectivity. Subjectivity is an inward process of knowing oneself. According to Kierkegaard, subjectivity means the real or inner nature of man through which she/he commits himself before God. This inner nature of man is free. She/he can freely choose anything. The concept of freedom is co-related with the concept of subjectivity. If we are not free in ourselves then, we cannot understand or realize ourselves. As a free human being, we can choose and act and also take responsibility for this act and the result of this act. This self-consciousness of an individual makes her/him aware of her/his separation from God. Because of which she/he realizes her/his guilt and has suffered for this. And only by the grace of God, man frees himself from this suffering and attains her/his highest aim. Kierkegaard divided the life of an individual into three stages, aesthetic, ethical and religious. According to Kierkegaard, we can overcome from this suffering only in religious stage which is the highest stage. And suffering as a highest subjective truth can be understood or realized only in this highest stage. For him, only religious person can grasp the highest subjective truth that is suffering. A religious person is able to understand that suffering is an essential aspect of her/his existence. Kierkegaard pointed out that a subjective individual can attain eternal happiness if and only if she/he is able to understand the meaning of suffering. In the process of discovering this subjective truth, the individual becomes more aware of her/his own objective uncertainty.

As we have seen that ethical life is distinguished from the aesthetic life. According to Kierkegaard, aesthetic life is pleasure seeking, it is full of romance. But, a life of pleasure leads man towards satiety. Despair, repentance and pain are the consequences of aesthetic mode of living. Thus, he stated that it is necessary for man to show what she/he ought to become. So here, aesthetic life becomes transfigured when the ethical point of view is accepted by the individual. This ethical life is different from aesthetic life by freedom of choice. In nature, there is no choice. Here, man chooses her/his own destiny and to that extent she/he is free. But Kierkegaard thinks that a moral man acts according to the Eternal principles which are the part of the moral nature of man. Hence, even in ethical life, there is no choice and freedom. True choice begins when the individual chooses her/his own self without any eternal corroboration of a moral law. The self lives a concrete life and the individual exists, chooses, decides and acts. No eternal law can help in this exercise. Therefore, an existing individual must accept the full responsibility of her/his decisions and actions of her/his past and present. They must become hopeless and rely on their self rather than on any decisions imposed on them by reason or the collective will of the masses. So, the decision is to be of the individual and no one else. Moreover, if she/he has to shape her/his own destiny herself/himself, then she/he must completely surrender herself/himself to the will of God in all humility and with fear and trembling. Her/his own confession of her/his weakness and sin can be the only guarantee of her/his strength. It is to be believed that God helps the weak and sinner and those who approach Him in fear. In Kierkegaard's thought, this is the religious commitment which can transfigure the aesthetic and the ethical modes of

life. These modes are not to be eliminated since they pave the way towards this ultimate transfiguration or what we may call spiritualization of life.

It is to be noteworthy that in religious stage, one can realize that she/he has to understand suffering for attained eternal happiness. Suffering for itself cannot effect the development that is necessary for an authentic humanity. Kierkegaard maintains that Eternity must be added. He holds that it is only from the help of Eternity or Eternity aid that all of life's suffering can turn into a moment when compared with the vastness of Eternity. This moment of suffering which he describes as "the 'once' of suffering," is a "passage way" to an eternal triumph. That means suffering possess such a revolution in a man's life that she/he is brought closer in conformity with an eternal happiness.

Kierkegaard holds that the experience of suffering is neither harsh nor terrible, but is in fact an occasion for joy. The only thing is that it is capable of being a blessed and eternal remembrance of having experienced suffering "once." This is the joyous suffering because it is really the material for man's highest happiness. Kierkegaard emphasizes the earning of suffering "once" by pointing out that the opposite to an eternal happiness is an encounter with the terror of nothingness ceaselessly, and that to stay away from the suffering is to be plagued eternally by this emptiness and to be littered by the thought that one has shattered her/his life on things that cannot be remembered eternally. The gratification of the pleasurable and sensual is not an actual joy, it is only temporal. This type of enjoyment is agreeable in the instant. And for eternal remembrance, it simply does not exist. In comparison to an eternity of nothingness, the "once" of suffering is undeniably a comfort and event of real joy. This is Kierkegaard's "Gospel of Suffering". That means suffering with Eternity's aid is a comfort and real joy.

Similarly, Nietzsche also holds that the concept of suffering is harmonized with the concept of joy. In Nietzsche, the question ‘why is there suffering in this world?’ as a demand for a justification of the phenomenon of suffering receives the most paradoxical answer. Suffering is, as it were, the matter of life. Its accurate explanation lies in the opportunity that it gives to the will of power which is a moving force of life. To display its marvelous strength in accepting sufferings as the true reality has to fight it and to affirm life in spite of it. For Nietzsche, the most intense suffering coincides with the most intense joy.

2.7. Conclusion

Existentialism is considered as a genre of philosophy which pleads for the freedom of choice and subjective element in human attitude. From Kierkegaard to Merleau-Ponty, the existential thinkers shared concerns and problems that constitute a distinctive philosophical orientation. The concept accepted by all is the problem of human- existence in particular. Generally, all existentialists’ thinkers accept Kierkegaardian notion of subjectivity.

Søren Kierkegaard occupies an important place in the history of Western philosophy whose philosophy does not articulate the spirit of his age and of the ages that followed but also answers some of the fundamental questions of philosophy. He supported the view of Socrates that “know yourself before you can know anything else”⁴⁸. But the question is how you can know yourself. In the process of knowing, one becomes an object, and the true subject escapes. Therefore Kierkegaard said that ‘to be

oneself is to know oneself'. Being oneself is all that a person can do. But, being oneself what one is, this is the greatest truth and religion.

Regarding the concept of suffering Kierkegaard holds that suffering as a subjective truth teaches man to know oneself or to know the inward man. It is one of the existential modes of individuals which make man to know the existence of oneself in the universe. He thinks that the individual can be free, creative and truly her/his own authentic self when she/he accepts own pains and suffering and also accepts own guilt through ethical and religious commitment. As we know that by eating the fruit of wisdom, Adam separated himself from the being of his lord, and committed the original sin and suffered. By his complete surrender to Him alone, he could regain his true self. Thus, Kierkegaard philosophy of subjectivism asks and answers the most fundamental and vital questions of man's life. This is the only answer to the modern man whose individuality is being crushed under the wheels of machinery and the socio-economic systems of her/his age.

As we have seen though different existentialist philosophers who have given different views about suffering, but they all agree on the view that suffering is an inalienable part of our life. This truth has already been established long before by Gautama Buddha that 'Life is full of suffering' that nobody can escape from it. Thus, suffering is an important part of our life. Nobody can deny it. To deny suffering is to deny our own existence. In other words, we can say that 'I suffer, therefore I exist'. So, suffering has a very significant import in our life.

Notes and References

- ¹ C Robert Solomon. *Existentialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. xi.
- ² Ibid. xii.
- ³ Arthur Schopenhauer. *The World as Will and Idea*. Vol. II, London: Everyman Paperback, 1951. 20.
- ⁴ D. Shukla. *Subjectivity in Kierkegaard's Philosophy*. Meerut: Mansi Prakashan, First Edition, 1987. 17-18.
- ⁵ Albert Camus. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. UK: Penguin Books, 1965. 16.
- ⁶ Sujata M. *Suffering*. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1976. 31.
- ⁷ F. Nietzsche. *The Gay of Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufman. New York: Vintage Books, 1974. 108.
- ⁸ S. Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. D.F. Swenson and W. Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968. 226.
- ⁹ Sujata M. *Suffering*. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1976. 70.
- ¹⁰ James Scott Johnston and Carol Johnston. 'Nietzsche and Dilemma of Suffering'. *The International Journal of Applied Philosophy*. Vol.13, No.2, 1999. 187-192.
- ¹¹ Victor E. Frankl. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Third Edition, New York: A Touchstone Book, 1959. 11.
- ¹² K. Mizuno. *Basic Buddhist Concepts*. Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1965. 106.
- ¹³ Dalai Lama. *Ethics for the New Millennium*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1999. 4.
- ¹⁴ F. Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Ed. Walter Kaufman. Trans Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. 224.
- ¹⁵ J. P. Sartre. *Existentialism is a Humanism*. Trans. W. Kaufmann. Cleveland: World Publishing, Meridian Books, 1956. 28.
- ¹⁶ J. P. Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. H.E. Barnes, New Delhi: Philosophical Library, 1956. 24.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. 23.
- ¹⁸ M. Warnock. *Existentialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970. 88.
- ¹⁹ C Robert Solomon. *Existentialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 120.
- ²⁰ Richard K. *Twentieth- Century Continental Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1994. 95.

-
- ²¹ Y. A. Kang. 'Levinas on Suffering and Solidarity'. *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*. 59ste Jaarg, Nr.3, September, 1997. 485.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ E. Levinas. *Useless Suffering, The Provocation of Levinas: Rethinking Other*. Ed. Robert Bernasconi & David Wood. London & New York: Routledge, 1988. 156-157.
- ²⁴ Y. A. Kang. 'Levinas on Suffering and Solidarity'. *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*. 59ste Jaarg, Nr.3, September, 1997. 490.
- ²⁵ Daniel Berthold. 'Kierkegaard and Camus: either/ or?'. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. Vol. 73, Issue 2, 2013. 138.
- ²⁶ S. Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. D.F. Swenson and W. Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968. 278-279.
- ²⁷ Indu Sarin. *Kierkegaard: A Turning Point*. Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1996. 12.
- ²⁸ Michael Watts. *Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007. 79.
- ²⁹ S., Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. D.F. Swenson and W. Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968. 166.
- ³⁰ Michael Watts. *Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007. 81.
- ³¹ D. Shukla. *Subjectivity in Kierkegaard's Philosophy*. Meerut: Mansi Prakashan, 1987. 169.
- ³² S. Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. D.F. Swenson and W. Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968. 169.
- ³³ Michael Watts. *Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007. 82.
- ³⁴ Richard S. 'Kierkegaard on 'Truth Is Subjectivity' and 'The Leap of Faith' '. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 2, No.3, ISSN: 00455091, March, 1973. 301.
- ³⁵ Bretall R. *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. USA: Princeton University Press, First Edition, 1946. 14.
- ³⁶ D. Shukla. *Subjectivity in Kierkegaard's Philosophy*. Meerut: Mansi Prakashan, First Edition, 1987. 183.
- ³⁷ Ibid. 182.

-
- ³⁸ S. Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. D. F. Swenson. United States of America: Princeton University Press, First Edition, 1944. 149.
- ³⁹ Indu Sarin. *Kierkegaard: A Turning Point*. New Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1996. 38.
- ⁴⁰ S. Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. D. F. Swenson. United States of America: Princeton University Press, First Edition, 1944. 73.
- ⁴¹ Ibid. 171.
- ⁴² Ibid. 166-169
- ⁴³ Alexander D. and Walter L. *The Present Age*. London: Oxford University Press, 1991. 49.
- ⁴⁴ S. Kierkegaard. *The Present Age in Kierkegaard's Anthology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945. 260-261.
- ⁴⁵ S. Kierkegaard. *Stages on Life's Way*. Trans. Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945. 430.
- ⁴⁶ H. Abraham K. 'Kierkegaard's Conception of Evil'. *Journal of Religion and Health*. Vol.14, No.1, January, 1975. 63.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid. 63-64.
- ⁴⁸ D. Shukla. *Subjectivity in Kierkegaard's Philosophy*. Meerut: Mansi Prakashan, First Edition, 1987. 28.