

Traits Of Existentialism In The Character Tess Of Hardy's Tess Of The D'Urbervilles

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Abstract

This study probes into the exploration of the traits of existentialism in light of the selected novel. The approach of the study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. For this purpose, close text reading technique is used for analyzing the primary data that is the novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and secondary resources are taken from books, journals, research articles web pages. The theory of existentialism¹ has been employed as a search light to achieve the given objectives. The study explores existentialism which is a philosophical and literary perspective that focuses on the experience of an individual in understanding the world. It also reveals the struggle and challenges faced by an individual in order to pursue a meaningful life. This study reflects upon the freewill of an individual, valuing self and making choices of his own to lead a meaningful life and accept the consequences of the choices he makes. The work also explores how language in the novel is influenced by the particular thinking pattern of Existentialism.

Keywords: Existentialism, Free Will, Struggle, Freedom, Consequences

INTRODUCTION

Existentialism

The term existence comes from French and from Medieval Latin existential. The word Existence is the key concept in Existentialism. It is used in philosophy in a very special manner. The word existence is used for human existence by existentialists. Soren Kierkegaard primarily used the word existence in a religious sense. His main interest was the liability of man's self-realization (Abbagnano, 2021). Existentialism became popular after World War II and was a well-known movement from the 1930s to the 1970s. The existential philosophers focus on human existence, their emotions, actions, responsibilities, thoughts, meanings, and purpose of life. Existentialism emphasizes the importance of man and an individual and his freedom and responsibility (Sinha, 1955). Existentialists believe that human beings must create their values, thoughts, and choices because these values and choices help them give meaning to their lives. The existential writers state that human beings are free in their life, they have the freedom to choose things and these choices made by humans can lead them to either success or failure. "Man first is, and then he defines

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himself". This shows that first existence of an individual is important after that he can define his essence the way he wants to (Blackham, 1951).

About the Author

Thomas Hardy was a great novelist, story writer, and Victorian-era poet. He was born on 2nd June 1840, in Dorset England. His writings were mostly based on reality. He mainly wrote about marriages and religion. His father's name was also Thomas Hardy and he was an architect by profession. His mother's name was Jemima Hardy and she was a well-educated woman. Thomas Hardy had married two times; his first wife's name was Emma Gifford and his second's name was Florence Emily.

Thomas Hardy got his early education at home from his mother and then joined the school at the age of eight. He learned the Latin language at Mr. Last's Academy for Young Gentlemen in Dorchester. He also learned to work in architecture. As Thomas Hardy was an architect, he moved to London and joined Kings College London. Thomas Hardy wrote many poems, articles, and novels. His first article *How I Build Myself a House* was published in 1865. He wrote his first novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* in 1867 when he returned from London back to Dorset but this novel was not published. In 1871, he wrote a novel *Desperate Remedies* and in 1872, he wrote another novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*. He wrote many famous novels; *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, and *The Mayor of Caster Bridge*. In 1891, he wrote the famous novel *Tess and the d'Urbervilles*.

The setting of his literary works were mostly rural areas like Wessex, England. He belonged to a rural area which is why he mainly wrote about the rural areas. He was also known as the novelist of the Wessex region. Thomas Hardy is also called a pessimistic writer. The environment in which Thomas Hardy built up his life made him a pessimistic writer. He expressed the actual reality of society. His conception of life is tragic. In his writings, we came to know that his concentration was mainly on human suffering that how they suffered by fate. Thomas Hardy's view of life was very melancholic and desperate. Thomas Hardy was a pessimist, he did not hate human beings but hated fate, circumstances that lead to suffering, and a person took his/her entire life to come out from those sufferings.

In the novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy also showed pessimism by considering Tess as the worst-fated girl and how she struggled to give meaning to her life and how she tried to come out from the troubles of her life.

He died on 11th January 1928 in Dorset, England, and was buried near his first wife in Stinsford Church.

Overview of the Novel

In the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the story revolves around a sixteen years old country girl and an elder child of Joan Durbeyfield and John Durbeyfield who lives in the village of Marlott. When John Durbeyfield comes to know from a parson that his family belongs to the ancient Norman family and he is the descendent of that wealthy and noble family, he gets very happy and gets drunk while celebrating his happiness. When Tess comes to know about her father being drunk, she decides to go to her father's place. On her journey towards her father's place, Tess at the rein falls asleep and the wagon crashes due to which the horse dies, the only earning source for her family. When her mother Joan Durbeyfield hears the news that they belong to the D'Urbervilles family and also that their earning source is killed she forces her daughter

Tess to go to the D'Urbervilles family and meet with Mrs. D'Urberville who is a widow and a wealthy woman with a son named Alec d'Urberville. Tess is forced by her mother to go to the D'Urbervilles family and claim kin and help Mrs. D'Urberville and also please her son Alec. Tess feels guilty and responsible for the death of Prince and agrees

with her mother for going to the D'Urbervilles to earn for her family. Tess goes to the D'Urbervilles family and meets with Mrs. D'Urberville and her son Alec D'Urberville. Alec shows interest in Tess but she refuses. Alec D'Urberville gives Tess a job on her mother's poultry farm, and she becomes a poultry keeper there.

Tess refuses Alec D'Urberville scheming attention several times and showed no interest in him but one night she fights with some girls after a party due to which she feels dizzy and almost faints. She is terrified and Alec suddenly comes over there with his horse and asks her to leave that place and go with him and she accepts his offer and goes with Alec on his horse. Alec pretends that he has rescued her from that fight and takes her to a desolate place where when Tess falls asleep, he rapes her. Tess does not love Alec and after this incident, she leaves that place and comes back to her father's home. She suffers from the incident and considers her mother responsible for the incident and gives birth to a child of Alec D'Urberville. She named him "Sorrow". But due to some health issues, he dies soon after his birth.

Tess is living a depressed life after his son's death. She decides to join Talbothays Dairy as a milkmaid. She is satisfied because no one knows about her past. There she meets Angel Clare, a dairyman, and falls in love with him. When Angel Clare proposes to her. She feels happy but she is worried about her past. Several times Tess tries to tell him the truth and to confess about her past, but she fails due to some issues. On the wedding night, when Angel Clare confesses about his past that once he fell in love with a woman and has had a physical relationship with her. Tess feels confident and forgives him. She also shares about her past incident with Angel Clare. When he comes to know that she is no purer he refuses to forgive Tess and leaves her and moves to Brazil and she returns to her family's home at Marlott.

She suffers after Angel Clare leaves her and for the sake of her family, she starts working at a starve-acre farm of Flintcomb-Ash. There she meets with Alec D'Urberville again who is now an evangelical but still tries to entrap Tess and tells her that he will help her family if she accepts his offer. Tess refuses but when she learns that her parents are not feeling well, she returns home and sees her mother recovered but her father dies because they do not have much money to treat their father well.

Alec D'Urberville tells Tess that her husband Angel Clare will not return and tries to take advantage of her problems and offering her a house but she refuses. At last, when Tess has no other choice, she accepts Alec's proposal and starts living with him. Suddenly one day Angel Clare comes back and wants her forgiveness because he realizes that he did not treat her well and now he wants to apologize for his mistakes. But Angel Clare comes to know that Tess is living with Alec D'Urberville as Mrs. D'Urberville. Tess tells Angle that it is too late now and that she cannot go back with him. When Angel Clare hears all this, he leaves the mansion desperately. After Angel leaves, Tess argues with Alec D'Urberville about Angel's return that why you told me lies about his return and that Angel has died. During the arguments, Tess stabs Alec in his heart with a carving knife and Alec dies on the spot.

After this incident, Tess finds out about Angel and they escape and find an empty house for living. They live their happy moments in that house for some days. Soon the police searches Tess's location and arrests her for the murder of Alec that she has committed. Before leaving she takes promise from Angel Clare that after her death he will marry her sister Liza-Lu. At the end of the novel, Tess is hanged for the murder of Alec D'Urberville. And Angel Clare marries Liza-Lu holding hand in hand leaves together, and the tragic tale of Tess ends.

Statement of the Problem

This research focuses on the existential approach that how the main character “Tess” in the novel struggles to give meaning to her life. The research also reveals the struggle of females in a patriarchal society from existentialist perspective. Different scholars have viewed the novel from various perspectives like feminism, social class, gender inequality, character analysis. But main concern of the researcher is on existential traits in the character “Tess”. Through which circumstances, she passes. To which extent she succeeds in her struggle or passes through some crises during her struggle. According to existentialism the concept of meaning is subjective and differs from person to person.

Research Questions

1. What are the existential traits that are to be found in the character “Tess” of Thomas Hardy’s novel Tess of D’Urbervilles?
2. How does the character “Tess” from Thomas Hardy’s novel Tess of the D’Urbervilles struggle to give meaning to her life?

Research Objectives

1. To understand the existential traits in the character Tess that are depicted in the novel Tess of the D’Urbervilles
2. To know about the struggle of the character “Tess” in the pursuit of giving meaning to her life.

Significance of the Study

The research reveals the concept of existentialism. The researcher signifies the struggle of the main female character in Tess of D’Urbervilles. This study reveals Tess’ struggles to give meaning to her life and the circumstances through which she passes during this struggle. The research also uncovers the traits of existentialism in Tess’ character.

Review of Literature

“Literature review is a comprehensive study and interpretation of literature that addresses a specific topic” (Aveyard, 2010).

Existential Meaning

According to Gary T. Reker and Kerry Chamberlain (n.d.), in their article Existential Meaning: Reflections and Directions, existential meanings are created based on their progress or life experiences. People find, strive to find, lose, explore or invent their private or personal meaning in lives. Existential meaning is derived from several circumstances or experiences and is personally or subjectively created and invented by a person. Existential meanings are essentially individualistic and can be further investigated or debated according to a person himself (Reker & Chamberlain, n.d.).

More (2016), in his research Existentialism; A philosophic standpoint to existence over essence defines Soren Kierkegaard, existentialism as the refusal of perfections of reason and a rejection of exclusively abstract concepts (More, 2016). Mussett (2003), in his article, has given the viewpoint of Simone De Beauvoir that, existentialist belief in absolute freedom of choice and the consequent responsibility that such freedom involves, by giving importance to one’s projects that must originate from individual spontaneity and not from an external institution, authority, or person (Mussett, 2003). Webber (2018), in his work Rethinking Existentialism, explains

Sartre’s slogan, existence precedes essence, which introduces a different perspective of existentialism. According to Sartre, a person does not have an essential and limited number

of values that are organized and constructed to achieve. Rather, a person's values structure his or her life from the choices he or she makes in making a meaningful life (Webber, 2018). Mittal (2017), in his article To be is to be: Jean-Paul Sartre on existentialism and freedom adds Sartre's theory of existentialism that existence precedes essence, that we give meaning to our lives after we realize our existence and then take actions to get a life worth. According to Sartre, no God exists to design our life and existence, and give it a purpose but man himself shapes his destiny (Mittal, 2017). Webber (2018) argues existentialism is the ethical theory of human existence that makes life valuable in which freedom is the central part of human existence (Webber, 2018).

The early phase of existentialism is described by Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard. Its second phase is mainly German and refers to the activity of thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, and Martin Heidegger. Its third phase and its most acknowledgeable one is the French version of existentialism that became the dominant philosophical trend between the 1930s and 1970s. Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and especially Jean-Paul Sartre are the most dominant French existentialists (Bolea, 2014). Warnock (1970), wrote on Existentialism in which she says that Existentialism had a great contact with literature. She associated with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and also argued on the deviation of existentialism in Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre's works. According to her, we may not be able to call all the philosophers as existentialists but the term existentialism masks some of the philosophical agility which was brandished in the 1940s and the 1950s. Existentialist always tries to focus on human freedom and prefer people to study the nature of freedom and understand and practice it in their lives. According to some existentialists, man is a matchless appearance in this universe, he is free to choose his actions, he is free to do what he wants and some philosophers show their interest in human freedom in the problem of their free will. The Existentialist tendency is to show people that they are permitted to do their actions according to their choice, they are allowed to spend their lives according to their desires (Warnock, 1970).

Human's Responsibility

According to existentialists, Existentialism is a problem with the existence of human life. Existentialist thinkers over the last few centuries have created some of the greatest works of philosophy and literature, western civilization has ever seen, however, to explain existentialism is quite difficult. Existentialism is not a philosophical system rather it is best viewed as a philosophical movement. This movement arose in the 19th century in Europe. Various reasons for this philosophy capture the attention of the public, it was not only the Second World War and the German occupation of France which fasten the existential affair of freedom, responsibility, and death but it was also literature that captures the attention of the public people" Existentialists look at individuals as responsible for creating their meaning in life. Each individual is wholly and solely responsible for how to cope with the tensions in his life and how to realize his potential and capabilities to resolve his problems in life to make it meaningful for himself in any way (Reynolds, 2014).

A French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre emphasized man's absolute freedom and established existentialism as Humanism. Sartre is the most well-known person who accepted being called an 'existentialist'. His most famous and important works that best explain the concept of existentialism are *Being and Nothingness* (1943), his novels and plays including *Nausea* (1938), and *No Exit* (1944). Existentialism according to him is a philosophy that focuses on an individual's freedom, choice, and existence. It focuses on the question of human existence and believes that there is no God or any superior force that gives a meaningful life to people. This philosophy believes in the power of human beings and their actions for a purposeful life. Humans define their meaning and purpose of life

without any omnipotent. Hence, to overcome this nothingness by taking action and finding meaning in life one must have to embrace existence. Thus, Existentialists believe that individuals are entirely free and must take personal responsibility for themselves (although with this responsibility comes angst, profound anguish, or dread). Therefore, it emphasizes actions, freedom, and important decisions of life that keep a person beyond the absurd condition of humanity (which is characterized by suffering and unstoppable death) (Cogswell, 2008).

Existential Atheism

Santosh Kumar Pal (2003), in his analysis by the name *A Critical Analysis of Sartre's Existential Humanism*, describes Sartre's play *Lucifer and the Lord (Le Diable et le bon Dieu)* that, Sartre throws all burden on the individual's shoulders. His existential atheism is depicted in clear words through the mouth of the protagonist, Goetz: I tried to make myself a pillar and carry the weight of the celestial vault. I'll tell you a secret; heaven is an empty hole. He says: God is loneliness of man. There was no one but myself. I alone decided on the evil and I alone invented God. It was I who deceived, I who made miracles. I who accuse me today, I alone who can absolve me, I, the man. In the presence of God, man is nothing. Further added There was no omnipotent, there is no evidence to be witnessed, but I can witness everything in my presence and can witness your body parts. How real you have become since He no longer exists. Thus, in Sartre's human universe, man is portrayed as self-transcendent in his freedom of choices. Man is powered with total freedom, along with the unavoidable responsibilities of the whole world. Sartre's existential humanism put every man in control of himself as he places the entire burden and responsibility of existence over a man's shoulder (Pal, 2003).

More (2016), argues in his article that, Existentialism claims that philosophy should be linked with the life experiences of an individual and should be a philosophy worth living. The existentialist philosophers concentrate mainly on the inner experiences of the individual. Therefore, for an individual, the person is the real Philosophy, therefore should start from one's inner knowledge, one's own experience, which must be considered as evidence (More, 2016). In Roubiczek (1964), it is said that Existentialism believes in an individual's personal experiences therefore, this existentialism is considered the philosophy of Being, a philosophy of acceptance, confirmation, and the refusal of reason and to think Being. But then a question arises, does man's existence have an essence? To answer this question Sartre presented a famous dictum "existence precedes essence", which indicates that there is no predefined essence to humanity except what it makes for itself. Sartre further adds that Man first is only afterward is he this or that. Man must create or find for himself his essence after he realizes his existence (Roubiczek, 1964).

For some existentialists, Man lives in a Godless Universe, in which he realizes himself through his existence and the free will and action he performs to make his life meaningful. The freedom of man throws an individual into responsibilities and anxieties. Sartre claims that reason alone was not enough to understand life, but an individual's emotions are also to be looked for. Existentialism is a subjective interpretation of life that differs from person to person. The interpretation of life is concerned with existence in its totality in which only individuals' experience is real. Sartre rejected the idea of people who accept their faith without taking any steps to achieve their life purpose, which he termed as 'living in bad faith'. According to Sartre, people who move only for a particular kind of work or live in one city live in bad faith.

Mittal further expressed Sartre's perspective, In *Being and Nothingness* which explains the concept of bad faith through the example of a waiter who is so absorbed in his job that he does not consider any other opportunity or the possibility of being a free human in his life and is cling only to his job. Sartre believed in the exploration of several responsibilities

coming in life, and that we alone are responsible for our freedom of choices without making any excuse (Mittal, 2017).

Anxiety and Freedom

Bhandari (1998), in his research, *Existentialist Perception of the Human Condition: With Special Reference to Sartre*, explains the philosophy of Sartre that there is a bond between the feeling of anxiety and freedom. He believes that existence demonstrates in the choice of actions one performs, anxiety, and freedom of will. Our past experiences do not determine our present and we struggle for our future through the freedom we express in our lives. Our existence makes it possible for us to live a life of freedom and that freedom leads us to the purpose of our life. Struggling for Existence means separating oneself from the absurd world and understanding oneself and realizing that I am not the same as the objects of the world and through my freedom, I determine my future. In this manner, an individual build up his future but the future is uncertain and he has no escape from anxiety and despair. Sartre is of the view that among many paths we choose one and as we are not always in the position to choose all the other opportunities coming our way, thus we end up in great despair and anxiety. Higher the responsibilities higher will be the anxiety which is deeply related to our existence (Bhandari, 1998).

In Larkin's collection of poetry, the truth to see life is with a clear-eyed realism.

Larkin used existentialism to provide man's dilemmas in the modern world as devotedly as possible. He dealt with the problem of pessimism, which is another way to recognize existentialism, thoughtfully in his poems *Deception* and *Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album* as well as his other poems in the *Less Deceived*. In his poems, the individual is shown alienated and in need to choose and act to design his fate. This feeling increases anxiety that is triggered by the consciousness that man is alone in a godless universe with no moral values or standards to guide him. From

Sartre's point of view, by showing man's flaws, Larkin can be said to contribute to the creation of a new awareness of man's reality. That is required for a man, the delicate creature condemned to be free and anxious in his contradictory situation (Sharma, 2016). Paule (1982), in *The Existential Concepts of Time, Death, And Choice In The Poetry of Philip Larkin*, says that, like Sartre, Larkin struggles for an authentic life without expectation. He finds meaning in personal choices and his free will. Larkin is greatly influenced by Thomas Hardy in his deterministic views, that is making efforts for preserving the experiences for their own sake (Paule, 1982).

Pink's (n.d.), research *The Spectacle of the Struggle: Existential Themes in the Work of Samuel Beckett*, explained Samuel Beckett's perspective of existence in *Waiting for Godot* is sub-titled a tragi-comedy. All Beckett's works, however, are desolate but have gallows humour. Beckett's humour is almost always laughter in the face of the absurdity of existence. In an absurd world, that is a world where there is no ultimate institution to give meaning to our existence, all we can do is cling to a meaning we have invented for ourselves. In an absurd world, every individual must invent their meaning for existence. The opening lines of *Waiting for Godot* illustrate the dilemmas of, in Heideggerian terms *Geworfenheit* or *Thrownness*, the fact that we always find ourselves already amid existence (Pink, n.d.).

Hardy and Existentialism

Diniejko (2014), in his article, explained Hardy and existentialism that, Hardy viewed man primarily from the existential if not existentialist point of view. The elements that are combined by Hardy's existential perspective are his concerns with human existence in metaphysical terms. Hardy like other existentialists is of the view that man is sent to this world by chance. Hardy's novels foreshadowed existentialism in modern literature,

although he was not familiar with the works of existentialists. For Hardy, the search for self, self-realization, and self-awareness is like other existentialists. He believes in the idea that a person should search for his or her own life and that personal freedom exists in self-awareness. According to Hardy, the more we are conscious of the human situation and experiences in life the more we are free and independent in our choices and freedom, and the deeper the impact of our consciousness of restrictions imposed by the external world. The consequences of these restrictions are the conflicts and contradictions in various aspects of the world. Hardy in a letter, (The Later Years of Thomas Hardy to Edward Wright, gave the interpretation of one of the dilemmas of existentialism, free will versus necessity or determinism in a letter to Edward Wright, later reprinted in his autobiography, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (1892-1928):

The will of a man is [...] neither wholly free nor wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it), he is not individually free; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is an equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as a performer's fingers are free to go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when he talks or thinks of something else and the head does not rule them [125].

The musical metaphor used by Hardy communicates that human exists as unimportant and tiny atom in the vast universe, however, can attain personal freedom which carries great importance for the individual (Diniejko, 2014).

In the work of Ying Peng (2021), Existentialist Themes in Thomas Hardy's *Jude, the Obscure* different existentialist views are explained. According to existentialists the universe is meaningless or absurd and a man living in this absurd universe is lonely and painful and he should not be forced for anything in his life i.e. any obscure forces. According to Karl Jaspers, A man is the sum of his choices. It means man is open to a future that he determines by his choices and his actions; he is free in his life decisions. In this work, Peng has discussed the existentialist themes in the novel. Hardy is not an existentialist but he is similar in his beliefs to the existentialists. He also emphasizes freedom of choices and actions in a man's life. Just like the hero in the novel, *Jude*, chooses a meaningful yet dangerous and difficult life for himself and gets separated from his friends and peers on this journey. Despite what happens to him, *Jude* comes out to be the master of his destiny; he acts as he thinks. *Jude* has realized the importance of free choice, though all his efforts end up in vain. Like an existentialist, he refuses to cooperate with the chaos and chooses to be completely responsible for himself and everything, for his choice implies a grave and ceaseless struggle to become a real person; that is, a significant being worthy of making a choice that will influence the future of mankind. The fact a poor young man like *Jude* can go to university today proves this point. *Jude the Obscure* is not considered a novel of existentialism, but it invents the conditions of humans in this insensible world. Though Hardy is not an existentialist in the sense that Sartre is, that is, an existentialist who through his works explores and explains the existential outlook and gives a better understanding of his philosophy towards human life. Hardy through his own words has best explained the concept of existentialism which is far advanced in his time. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy has created an awareness and thoughtful response to the sufferings and dilemmas of humans that define his religious and spiritual values. However, this cannot show that Hardy is the initiator of existentialism but it proves his capabilities to move forward toward modernism in the age of naturalism (Peng, 2021).

Peng (2021), in his article *Tess's Freedom in Thomas Hardy's Tess of The D'Urbervilles*, says that *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is typically a deterministic novel by Thomas Hardy where *Tess's* freedom is merely a dream which is not fulfilled in the novel. However, from the lens of Sartre's philosophical concept of freedom, *Tess* is a free bird despite the tragic circumstances in her life, in the whole novel, *Tess* is aware of her state in life, and struggles against the natural flow of things through constant choices (Peng, 2021).

It is evident from the above literature review that a lot of work has been done on the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by many researchers and scholars. Those scholars and researchers have discussed different perspectives in the novel and viewed it from different dimensions but no one has analysed it from an existential perspective. The research study analyses the struggle of the character Tess and her freedom of choice for a meaningful life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology carried out by the researcher to explain the methods used for the study.

Nature of the Study

This research study uses the pattern of qualitative research methodology and is descriptive in nature. The researcher has utilized this method to answer the research questions and has enlightened the objectives of the study. The researcher has dissected the novel for analysing and exploring Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* from an existentialist perspective by applying existentialism theory. The researcher examines the main character Tess and her struggle for pursuing a meaningful life and also shows her freedom of choice in life.

Theoretical Framework

This research uses existentialism as the theoretical framework of the study. It uses the main tenets of existentialism as the searchlight to analyse the text of the novel. Existentialism is a philosophical movement that arose in a post war scenario. The whole philosophy is based on the concept that "existence precedes essence" which implies that there is no intrinsic meaning to human life and human beings must find their own meaning in life.

Human beings living in this world have experienced a great number of things:

face different kind of anxiety, search for answers of many questions, the nature of hidden realities, search for the reason of hidden dread and have to live against the external pressures. Existential philosophers mainly speculate about such things. They bring such things to the front and search for the reasons, explanations, justification, and solutions. Existentialism is a person-centred philosophy. Though not anti-science, its focus is on individual's pursuit of identity and meaning amidst the social and economic pressure of mass society of superficiality and the conformism (Flynn, 2006).

Data Collection

There are two ways for collecting the data related to the topic. First, the primary source for collection of data is the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The lines have been selected from the novel and are analyzed through textual analysis. Second, the secondary data has been taken from the web pages, articles, journals, books and researches related to existentialism in order to support the information given by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The researcher uses the close text reading method for analyzing the selected lines from Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Close reading is an attentive, critical analysis of a text that concentrates on significant details or patterns in order to unfold a deep, precise understanding of the text's form, craft, and meanings (Burke, n.d.).

The researcher also uses the method of textual analysis in order to analyse the text of the novel thoroughly for better understanding and exploring various interpretations according to the specified topic. Similarly, various sections from the selected novel are highlighted which vividly display the struggle, freedom of choices and decisions making of the protagonist Tess. The researcher keeps in view only the character Tess in the novel

from existential perspective and finds out different traits of existentialism in her character. Textual analysis is a methodology that involves understanding language, symbols, and/or pictures present in the text to gain information regarding the text and understanding the meaning of text subjectively (Allen, 2017). It is a phrasing utilized for various exploration strategies, which is used for deciphering, portraying, and understanding of the subjective exploration of the content.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Traits of Existentialism

There are several traits of existentialism which are present in the main character, Tess in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* that are discussed below.

Freedom of Choice

The start of the novel shows the miserable conditions and poverty of the Durbeyfield family and that Tess, being an elder child of her parents, strikingly reveals the struggling conditions of her family. It also shows the different traits of existentialism where Tess makes certain choices to get a meaningful life for herself in this great struggle. When her mother tells Tess about the connections of their family with the ancestors of D'Urbervilles, a noble family, and of claiming kin. Tess refuses her mother's decision of claiming kin which shows her free will.

I shouldn't care to do that," says Tess. "If there is such a lady, 'twould be enough for us if she were friendly-not to expect her to give us help (Hardy, 1891, p.43).

When Tess's mother insists her to go to the D'Urbervilles family and ask for help and make her fortune she refuses the suggestion of her mother at first place because she is not going to ruin her free life due to her mother's decisions. She being a free young girl wants to enjoy her freedom and fill her life with whatever colors she wants to paint in her life. Therefore, she replies her mother that she does not care for anything or any wealthy old widow and that if she is our family member only this thing is enough for us but we should not expect from people with such wealth to survive. She refuses the worldly richesness and prefers her own choices and free will to live her life. This point shows one of the principles of existentialism, freedom in her life to make her life meaningful in this absurd world.

I suppose I ought to do something I don't mind going and seeing her, but you must leave it to me about asking for help. And don't go thinking about her making a match for me _ it is really silly. I'd rather try to get work, she murmured (Hardy, 1891, p.44).

Tess, the protagonist of the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is a sixteen years old rural girl who tries to stable her life and also her family conditions. After a great unexpected accident of the death of Prince, the horse, the only earning source of Durbeyfield's family. Tess feels guilty and considers herself responsible for all the bad happenings. When her mother Joan Durbeyfield hears that Prince, the horse, is killed and also the news that they belong to the respected and wealthy family of the D'Urbervilles, she forces her daughter to go to the D'Urbervilles family and ask for help from Mrs. D'Urbervilles (a wealthy widow) and gives Tess the suggestion of claiming kin, marry Mrs. D'Urberville's son, and make relations with them easily.

The above-mentioned lines highlight, when Tess tells her mother that she does not care for anything, to go to D'Urbervilles' family only to please the lady and her son and makes relation with them. For the first time she takes a step for herself and also for her family to stable her family's miserable condition and agrees to the suggestion of her mother, although, she is free to refuse her parents decision and impose her will but she does it for herself and her family in order to change her poverty into fortune and to support her family and also to come out from the guilt of horse killing the only earning source of her family, The Prince. There lies a responsibility on the shoulder of Tess and with that responsibility she decides to make some changes for her future and good thoughts come her mind for her

good future. Though she is a young beautiful girl who wants her life to be as successful and a purposeful therefore, she decides to treat her life gently and hardly at the same time, for which she agrees to the suggestion of her mother to claim kin. Yes, she is insisted by her mother to claim kin and make relations with D'Urbervilles but there is still room for her choice. She is not forced by anyone but it is through her sweet will that she chooses to visit D'Urbervilles' family and claim kin.

In spite of the unpleasant initiation of the day before, Tess inclined to the freedom and novelty of her new position in the morning when the sun shone, now that she was once installed there; and she was curious to test her powers in the unexpected direction asked of her, so as to ascertain her chance of retaining her post (Hardy, 1891, p.70).

When Tess goes to D'Urbervilles' family, she meets with Mrs. D'Urbervilles and her son Alec D'Urbervilles. She finds a job of poultry keeper at Mrs. D'Urbervilles poultry farm. These lines highlight Tess's freedom. She in her freedom of choices confronts a new position and is excited for that. She wants to show her abilities and takes a chance to give meaning to her life and come out from the miserable conditions going on in her life. She struggles for new positions to instill her powers and skills. This shows her freedom of will and power where she is the only mean of making her life benefitted and nobody is involved in it neither human nor God. According to existentialists in this absurd world every human is his own guardian and supporter and there is no entity, who is responsible for whatever you do, whatever you choose and whatever you decide for yourself, but an individual himself. Same is the case with Tess, she is the one who is ready to do any good to live a better life which shows her freedom of choice and these actions lead her ways to get a meaningful life. She has made clear choices in order to remove the absurdity of her life and is ready to face its consequences.

I have said so, often. It is true. I have never really and truly loved you, and I think I never can." She added mournfully, "Perhaps, of all things, a lie on this thing would do the most good to me now; but I have honor enough left, little as 'tis, not to tell that lie. If I did love you, I may have the best o' causes for letting you know it. But I don't. (Hardy, 1891, pp. 92, 93).

When Alec D'Urbervilles rapes Tess, she shows more hatred toward Alec and tells that he should leave her alone and that he should not bother her life any more. She tells him that she needs nothing from him and that he should not need to do anything for the sake of her family's betterment and that he does not need to do favors for them.

The above-mentioned lines show that Alec D'Urberville even after he rapes Tess, teases her and ask her if she loves him or not but Tess replies every time with rejection that she does not ever love him. She gives him a very clear answer that even telling lies can do good to her but she being a determined woman refuses his love time and again and shows hatred towards him even more. She does not mind telling him lies and can take advantage of it, but she never does, that also shows her authentic being. She is true in her words and actions and because of that she is having an authentic existence. According to her, she can be a liar to take advantage from Alec's wealth but she still has her honor left, she tells him the truth and that truth is clear enough that she does not have any affection toward him. All these comments of Tess for Alec shows that she is not afraid to tell the truth and she is free in her words and her actions. She does not care about what people thinks of her and bravely confronts every situation that has made her life troubled. This shows the deterministic side of her personality in taking decisions, making choices and utilizing free will in life. This shows that her life is not guided by some arbitrary values or divine source. On the contrary, she is in the driving seat of her own life and drives it in the direction in which she wants to drive it.

Self-Realization

Tess during her struggle and freedom of will realizes her true self and hopes for her better future and good fortune. She passes through such bad fortune that can lead toward her destruction but she accepts her ruined soul and through that she moves toward the phase of self-realization which is the one of the main concepts of existentialism. At moments, in spite of thoughts, she would reply to their inquiries with the manner of superiority, as if recognizing that her experiences in the field of courtship had, indeed, been slightly enviable. But so far was she from being, in the words of Robert South, “in love with her own ruin,” that the illusion was transient as lightening; cold reasons came back to mock her spasmodic weakness; the ghastliness of her momentary pride would convict her, and recall her to reserved listlessness again (Hardy, 1891, p. 98).

Tess comes back from Alec D'Urberville family and leaves her job there. Tess thinks herself able to give Alec back the answer for whatever he has done to her but she would not do such things because of her honor. The above-mentioned quote of Robert South's shows that when a person passes through such an extreme situation in life, he lost everything including pride, identity, honor and virginity but still loves his own self and accepts his ruined soul, it points toward self-realization which is the key concept in existentialism theory. It shows that Tess passes through such a bad fortune from which a person would not be able to come out and survive but still she never let herself down and starts living with that ruined soul and is in love with herself even after her dreadful feelings condemn her. It shows a trait of existentialism where she tries to remake her injured soul and heals her wounds for her own life's sake. She survives even after the accidents. In the novel, Tess tries to live a good and peaceful life and make it meaningful for herself through her actions and takes tries to take stand for her life in the absurd world.

A resolution which had surprised herself had brought her into the fields this week for the first time during many months. After wearing and wasting her palpitation heart with every engine of regret that lonely inexperience could devise, common sense had eliminated her. She felt that she would do well to be useful against to test anew sweet independence at any price. The past was past; whatever it had been, it was no more at hand. Whatever its consequences, time would close over them; they would all in a few years be as if they had never been, and she herself grassed down forgotten. Meanwhile the trees were just as green as before; the birds sung and the sun shown as clearly now as ever. The familiar surroundings had not darkened because of her grief, nor sickened because of her pain (Hardy, 1891, p.106).

The lines highlight Tess's deterministic side after a period of great despair and worst conditions. In the lines it is shown that Tess inexperience and harsh realities of life leads her life toward a new change which is her choice. If she is changing her life and healing her wounds with the passage of time, it shows she is completely ready to stand still and forget the dark past which like a passing cloud never returns. The term “sweet independence” shows Tess's freedom of will and choice. Here it also shows that she herself admit her independency and freedom therefore, she wants to test her powers and once again starts her freedom of decision making and choices at any price. She is independent in her life decisions and freely welcoming new changes in life because she does not let any worst moment ruin her life that shows the existential trait in Tess's character. The setting and weather described by the narrator is also showing optimism where with Tess's decision of starting a new start is synonymous with the green trees which are standing still as they were before; the birds are also cheering her up and singing songs to make her mind for new changes as she was before. Same is the case with the clear sun and familiar surrounding which helps her in thinking about new changes to her life. It shows that all the universe wants her to be a free creature of nature as ever.

Decision Making

The decision of marrying Angel Clare is one of the most successful decisions of her life that she makes. Tess, without considering the consequences of her decision blindly listen to her heart and for her own life's sake takes major decisions of her life. Tess had never in her recent life been so happy as she was now, possibly never would be so happy again (Hardy, 1891, pp. 145,146).

When Angel Clare proposes Tess for marriage, she gets confuse at first. She wants to marry him but her horrible past haunts her. Several times she tries to tell him about her past but due to certain reasons she does not gather courage to do it. The above lines show Tess's happiness about hearing Angel's proposal. In her entire life she was not as much happy as she is at that time. She wants to marry Angel Clare and to come out from her miserable life and to enjoy the sweets of life. Here again she has decided to get her a meaningful life by marrying her favorite Angel, the love of her life. She thinks about herself and her life that shows how desperately she wants her beloved in her life. She, being a non-virgin girl, struggles for every little happiness that she thinks she deserves. The decision of marrying Angel Clare is one of the most successful decisions of her life, although its consequences are not pleasant in first place but it is

Tess's life, where whatever she chooses it is for her own sake and she decides to live her life the way she wants. This also shows one of the traits of existentialism in her character.

From this day she forced herself to take pains to avoid him - never allowing herself, as formerly, to remain long in his company, even if their juxtaposition were purely accidental (Hardy, 1891, p. 158).

These lines highlight Tess's struggle with her own emotions when she falls in love with Angel Clare but she never wants to let her honor down in front of him because he does not know anything about her dark past. That is why she tries to avoid him instead of being in pain of her own emotions. She tries not to spend too much time with him onward. This is also her choice to leave Angel and keep distance and ignores him and never go near him in any case. She firmly decides and does not pay heed to anybody. She is ready to swallow the bitter medicine of pain. She prefers pain over her relationship with Angel. She is willingly and painfully choosing her decisions and ready for its consequences. According to existentialist, every individual is a life changer from one point to another. If Tess makes decisions and shows her free will it is totally acknowledgeable because she is painting her life with different colors in different ways to make it purposeful and full of meanings. This is the reason that she is named a creature of nature who is trying and struggling for finding a purposeful life. She truly fits in the philosophy of existentialism because of her decisions making in her freedom of will and choices.

The struggle was so fearful; her own heart was so strongly on the side of his – two ardent hearts against one poor little conscience – that tried to fortify her resolution by every means in her power. She had come to Talbothays with a made-up mind. On no account could she agree to a step which might afterwards cause bitter rueing to her husband for his blindness in wedding her. And she held that what her conscience had decided for her when her mind was unbiased ought not to be overruled now (Hardy, 1891, p. 193).

When Tess's dilemmas and conflicts between her mind and heart grows regarding her past story, she starts making different circumstances for how to tell Angel about her past. She is fearing the day of separation with Angel, therefore, for that reason she is struggling by exercising different tactics and situations to make him stay with her because she loves him unconditionally. The above lines show Tess's struggle for making her life meaningful and significant. Tess is ready to express her past in front of Angel. She has decided to lighten her heart and the load of her past in front of Angel but she thinks about her relationship with Angel, which she in no mean wants to break or separate from Angel. She has made her mind to tell Angel about her past which shows again that she herself is responsible for the consequences of her decisions. She is trying to throw the load of her past from her

shoulder and wants to start her wedding without any lie. She does not want to deceive her husband at the beginning of her wedding.

If it is sure to make you happy to have me as your wife, and you feel that you do wish to marry me, VERY, VERY, much –.
(Hardy, 1891, p. 208).

These lines throw light on Tess's decision when she really wants to marry Angel Clare with whom she has fallen in love with. Her heart wants to accept his proposal but at the same time her mind does not allow her to agree with her heart's decision and tries to remember her past. Here she is in conflict between her heart and mind decision. She is in continuous struggle with her own emotions, either to accept his proposal or reject.

These lines highlight Tess's acceptance of Angel Clare proposal and finally Tess decides to marry him. In these lines Tess asks Angel if he truly wants to marry her and he replies yes, then she accepts his proposal for which her existence in the absurd world is following the essence and she chooses between her heart and mind the power of her heart wins and takes step for having a happy life, for which she is struggling. She is holding the string of her life in her hand and this is the reason she freely accepts the proposal of Angel. The decision of Tess marrying Angel necessitates yet another difficult decision. She worries about her past exposure in front of Angel Clare which she wants to tell him but at the same time she fears the day. She faces the dreadful feelings and anxiety of how things will work which shows her an existential character. She is afraid of her efforts which she has made all in her life. She is anxious about her future as well and about the moment when her past story would reveal. But she prepares herself for everything, being a free existential woman.

She dismissed the past – trod upon it and put it out, as one treads on a coal that is smouldering and dangerous (Hardy, 1891, p.211).

When Tess accepts the proposal of Angel, she leaves her past behind and takes a step toward a happy life. She precedes her life and tries to forget about her past that shows that she is freely diminishing her past again and wants to start a new phase of her life. She is immensely happy and thinks that her struggle is finally over for a life she wishes for and that now she would enjoy her life joyfully without letting any hardship come her way. She is ready for the consequences of her decisions. She decides to throw her miserable past out that haunts her every time she thinks of it but still she is ready to get up again and shows her freedom in life in the form of making new decisions.

In the name of our love, forgive me!" she whispered with a dry mouth. "I have forgiven you for the same!"

And, as he didn't answer, she said again _

"Forgive me as you are forgiven! I forgive you, Angel (Hardy, 1891, p. 249).

When Angel Clare confesses his past sins, Tess also gathers some courage to confess her past in front of Angel Clare. Tess forgives Angel Clare for what he had done in the past but Angel Clare does not forgive Tess for her past. She requests him for the sake of their love and happy lives to forgive her as she forgives his past but he refuses to forgive her.

Tess in order to make her life easier and happier with Angel, shows her free will to forgive Angel for whatever he has done in the past and she through her freedom of choice decides to forgive Angel. Nobody is forcing her for anything but she herself reaches that level to struggle for her life and make it meaningful for herself and live happily. According to existentialists when an individual is thrown into the absurd world, he is free to take his life's decisions and is completely responsible for everything he does and make his life meaningful for him (Mittal, 2017).

During the interval of the cottager's going and coming, she had said to her husband-I don't see how I can help being the cause of

much misery to you all your life. The river is down there. I can put an end to myself in it. I am not afraid." "I don't wish to add murder to my other follies," he said. "I will leave something to show that I did it myself-on account of my shame. They will not blame you then (Hardy, 1891, p.254).

When Tess after confession is not forgiven by Angel Clare. She tells him that he is a kind and good-hearted person and that she does not want to put him in any miserable situation because of her that is why she decides to end up her life in this river and makes him free from this relation. She is brave enough and wants to take such a horrible decision of death to prove her love for her husband.

In existential theory, we came to know that a person gives meaning to his life through several ways either by struggling in life like through several chances, circumstances that make better consequences or put his life to death. Therefore, here Tess decides to choose death for herself, which is one of the principles of existentialism, because she struggles a lot for a happy life but it does not work for her. Tess is ready even for death which shows the freedom of decision in her life.

Authenticity

Tess, being an authentic and loyal woman tries to reduce the sufferings of Angel by showing her authentic side. She being a loyal wife makes herself responsible for everything in her life and swallows the pains and griefs of separation from her husband and prefer him over her life.

I want to leave you, and go home (Hardy, 1891, p. 267).

And I shall not stay here. Though I didn't like to initiate it, I have seen that it was advisable we should part-at least for a while, till I can better see the shape that things have taken, and can write to you (Hardy, 1891, p.267).

When Angel Clare does not forgive Tess and pays no heed to the efforts of Tess then Tess decides to leave him to overcome his sorrows. This step of leaving him is really painful for Tess but as it is clear from the novel that Tess is free to take any decision about her life then she also takes this decision and separated from Angel Clare for the sake of their lives and according to the decision of Tess, she wants to fix the cracks come in her love life and for that she needs to leave Angel to give him space and time to think about their relation once more and reunite again.

That was all she said on the matter. If Tess had been artful, had she made a scene, fainted, wept hysterically, in that lonely lane, notwithstanding the fury of fastidiousness with which he was possessed, he would probably not have withstood her. But her mood of long – suffering made his way easy for him, and she herself was his best advocate (Hardy, 1891, p. 276).

These lines highlight Tess innocent nature that if she is clever and cunning then she would not decide to go home and leaves her husband but due to her past which is full of troubles it is helpful for Angel Clare that she is leaving him calmly without creating any scene. She is ready to endure the pain as well as she passes through the rest and she would continue her struggle till her last breath for her life. It shows her veracity and authenticity towards the others and she is the only one who decides the fortune for herself and is responsible for everything she does to shape her life and colors it with meaningfulness and significant by her own hands and choices. It also shows her free nature of decision making for herself which is the main tenet of existentialism.

After again leaving Marlott, her home, she had got through the spring and summer without any great stress upon her physical powers, the time being mainly spent in rendering light irregular service at dairy-work near Port-Bredy to the west of Blackmoor

valley, equally remote from her native place and from Talbothays.

She preferred this to living on his allowance (Hardy, 1891, p.296).

After Angel's separation from Tess, she leaves her home again for herself and her mental peace because she suffers a lot during the journey of her life in the hands of her fate, family and everybody she encounters. Tess suffers in the hands of her beloved people the most, like parents and husband, and that is the reason she tries to escape from all the troublesome situations and decides every time to leave her home for making change in her life and in search of finding a meaningful life for herself to live. Here again, she leaves her home for living a life of her choice and thus she preferred to make money for her family by her own support and not by her husband's allowance. It is also showing her freedom and is fulfilling one of the existential traits in her character, who is always in struggle for her purpose of life.

But I don't care!" she said, "O no – I don't care! I'll always be ugly now, because Angel is not here, and I have no body to take care of me. My husband that was is gone away, and never will love me anymore; but I love him just the same, and hate all other men, and like to make 'em think scornfully of me (Hardy, 1891, p. 304).

These lines throw light on the intense love of Tess for Angel Clare that she cuts her eyebrows, wears an old gown, takes a handkerchief and tied it on her chin and half on her cheeks for the purpose not to look attractive to any men. She does not care about anything except for her husband, Angel Clare. All that she does as to look ugly is also showing her freedom of will and authenticity. She is free to do whatever she wants to do with herself and her body. She tries to satisfy herself by taking these steps for the sake of her love that either Angel would love her or hate her but she would always love him as ever. She does care about what Angel has done to her, to love her or not, but she considers it her responsibility to love him even more and not raise her eyes in front of other men and ignore every single man for Angel. Therefore, she deforms her physical appearance to look unattractive in front of other men and structures herself in an authentic being.

Still Tess hoped. She had a conviction that sooner or later the magnanimity which she persisted in reckoning as a chief ingredient of Clare's character would lead him to rejoin her (Hardy, 1891, p.311).

These lines throw light on hope of Tess. Still, she believes that her patience would be rewarded somewhere in future. The way she calmly endures all the hardships of her life would be rewarded soon. And she would be meeting once again with her husband Angel Clare and they would live happily. Here hope after all these troubles clears that she still continues her struggle for the sake of her life by waiting her good fortune and for her husband.

You will not marry me, Tess, and make me a self-respecting man?" he repeated, as soon as they were over the furrows. "I cannot." You know I have no affection for you (Hardy, 1891, p.341).

These lines are about Alec D'Urberville when he comes back in Tess's life and tries to tease her and gives her surety that he truly loves her and wants to marry her. Tess, being a free woman, refuses his proposal as she does in the past, and tells him that she has no love for him in her heart. This also shows her power and strength of freedom.

Again, she rejects Alec's proposal for her own sake. This also exhibits the philosophy of Sartre of existence which is followed by essence of her life. First, she accepts her being and after that she shape her life with the responsibilities that lies upon her shoulders after taking steps in her life. Tess shows her love for Angel in front of Alec and bravely accepts the consequences of her words as a free woman. Here

existentialism theory vividly explains Tess's situations and free will to speak anything and does anything without any fear that once again she is struggling both emotionally and

physically. She struggles to save her life from Alec D'Urbervilles because she is aware of his bad intentions and that he is only pretending his affectionate nature towards her.

Knowing very well that he did not harass the other women of the farm as he harassed her out of spite for the flooring he had once received she did for one moment picture what might have been the result if she had been free to accept the offer just made of being the monied Alec's wife. It would have lifted her completely out of subjection, not only to her present oppressive employer, but too a whole world who seems to despise her. "But no, no!" she said breathlessly; "I could not have married him now! He is so unpleasant to me (Hardy, 1891, p.344).

When Alec D'Urberville continuously harasses Tess only and not the other women in the farm, Tess being aware of everything that Alec is only after her but not the other girls of the farm and through which he has surprised her and has received a spot on her character. The narrator says about Tess's thoughts that, whenever Tess reminds of the incident with Alec she imagines for a moment if she would have accepted being Alec's mistress her conditions would have changed from poor to a wealthy oppressed woman (in the hands of fate) but, she does nothing like that and believes in her choices to live her life the way she wants to live. She is grateful for not being the wife of Alec because she hates him. Here again she chooses her sufferings over a comfortable life and refuses to be the wife of a wealthy stable man. This shows the traits of existentialism in the character Tess where she being aware of the consequences of her choices still chooses to live in sufferings than a blissful life.

Don't mention my little brothers and sisters – don't make me break down quite!" she said. "If you want to help them-God knows they need it-do it without telling me. But no, no!" she cried. "I will take nothing from you, either for them or for me! (Hardy, 1891, p.362).

The lines above show Tess's refusal of the help and support of Alec D'Urberville. Alec is a very clever and cunning man who tries to trap Tess through her weaknesses. He tries to entrap her through her family needs which is her weakest point at that time and he offers he would take care of her family as well as Tess's, if she accepted his proposal once again but, Tess replies requesting that do not do anything for them. She strictly rejects the offers of Alec that she is not going to take any help from him in any case. She being a free individual is subjected to her own meaning of life and she is continuously struggling for that. She denies the comfortable life in the form of being the mistress of Alec and accepts her poverty which is her choice. She is not forced by anyone not even Alec. Alec is trying his luck to have Tess as his mistress same is the case with Tess who shows her freedom of choice and refuses his proposal that satisfy the philosophy of existentialism.

Consequences of the Decisions

After making bold decisions Tess is ready to face the consequences of her decisions. She is determined to accept her-self and makes her mind prepared to overcome her hurdles and sufferings and decides for her as a free woman and bears the consequences whole-heartedly.

I thought as I ran along that you would be sure to forgive me now I have done that. It came to me as a shining light that I should get you back that way. I could not bear the loss of you any longer-you don't know how entirely I was unable to bear your not loving me! Say you do now, dear, dear husband; say you do, now I have killed him! (Hardy, 1891, p. 414).

These lines throw light on the incident in which Tess takes a horrible yet successful step for her life and also for her Angel, and kills Alec D'Urberville with a knife. She escapes from that place and follows Angel Clare and tells him that she has killed Alec. Here Tess is conscious of her freedom of decision making and actions she performs for getting a better and meaningful life for her. This also shows the concept of existentialism where she being a struggler, struggles for her happiness and tries to find meaning to her life. She does not fear of death and bravely confronts the obstacles coming her way. In other words, Tess's consciousness of her position in life is the consequence of her free choice and it is a proper

beginning for recognizing her-self, without which it is totally impossible for Tess to choose or act accordingly. After that she enjoys almost four to five days with Angel Clare happily. She knows better about her tragic end but still she wants to live with Angel forever. She takes such a bold step and finally gives meaning to her life after a great struggle.

At the end Tess is hanged for the murder of Alec which is the result of her own decisions to make her life meaningful and purposeful and she succeeds in her struggle and happily prepares herself for the consequences i.e., death

Discussion

From the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, we come to know that how Tess, the protagonist of the novel, tries to give meaning to her life. How Tess passes through certain hardships, troubles, and fears in the struggling period of her life in order to find meaning to her life.

The focus is on how Tess find herself entrapped in the being. How she tries to put value and meaning to her life in her absurd existence, how her choices affect her life with consequences. We also come to know that how she entraps in the web of dread and anxiety. How she never loses her hope. According to Kierkegaard, an individual is responsible for his own life and gives meaning to it. Tess, the protagonist of the novel never remains passive in the face of life and tries in the whole novel to shape her life through certain bold actions. She passes through many hardships in this struggle but till her last breath she does not seem to lose hope. It shows that the choices taken by individuals in order to give meaning to his/her life are not influenced by the arbitrary values of society and religion. Instead, the individual has to take responsibility for whatever choices he/she makes.

CONCLUSION

Existentialism is the philosophy of life, which considers the reality of life as meaningless and absurd. It stresses the importance of the choices made by an individual and considers it vital in determining the course of one's life. This philosophy is recurrently evident in the novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy. The character Tess is portrayed in a manner that resonates with the idea of existentialism. Furthermost, the causes and effect connection of the novel also adds to the same theme in this research.

The primacy of the theme of existentialism is established at the beginning of the story when the narrator introduces the protagonist of the novel i.e., Tess Durbeyfield. Her life is explained as the life story of those girls who are seduced by a flirtatious man and left with a spot on their characters. The narrator creates an atmosphere of lifelong struggle and miseries through the vivid exposition of such events and sets forth the tone for further expansion of this theme.

Furthermost, the character Tess is explained as the struggler who finds herself struggling against the extreme conditions offered to her by life. Also, she has to make choices that are vital in determining the course of her life. Another striking trait of existentialism in the protagonist of novel is that she finds herself alone and without any help from divine or worldly entity.

The character changes the situation of her life through the choices like the one taken by Tess. She takes separation from Alec by murdering him and becomes Angel's beloved wife and all she does for herself to have her husband, Angel, back in her life forever. The events also portray the way Tess finds herself without God under challenging situations and have to deal with things individually. The character Tess along with others and events of novel show the absurd nature of human life. It shows that life has no inherent meaning to it at all. The way people shape their lives come down to choices made by them. Life is absurd in its sphere and can be made meaningful by humans only through conscious struggle.

Thus, the study concludes that the author has painted a world full of existential crises and characters conforming to the existential philosophy of life in the novel. He has let all the creatures of the mini world that he has created to find the meaning of life for them and to bear the consequences of whatever decisions they make during the course of their lives.

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