CHAPTER-1

Introduction:

Who is an individual?

Oxford dictionary defines 'individual' as a person 'considered separately than as part of a group' (Hornby, 2010, 793). A person in his/her totality is an individual who has his/her personal choices, needs, interests and a perspective to look at other things and people. Individuals are accountable for their own actions. They, being singular bodies, hold the sole responsibility of their being, their happiness and their own state of affairs. They are the masters of their own actions. An individual acts according to his/her own ideals and looks for his/her own happiness. To quote Rousseau, "man's first law is that of self-preservation, he first cares those which he owes to himself, and as soon as he has attained the age of reason, he being the only judge of the means proper to preserve him, becomes at once his own master" (Rousseau, 1971, 6). Individuals care for those which concern them. Individuals are the masters of their own lives and thereby, intend to mould their lives the way they want.

Ayn Rand has made a detailed study on individuality and its value in her **The Virtue of Selfishness**. She talks about individualism both as political and psychological concept and her book contains a handful essays by Nathaniel Branden concentrating on the same issue at hand. Branden in his "Counterfeit Individualism" writes "Individualism is at once an ethical political concept and an ethical psychological one. As an ethical political concept, individualism upholds the supremacy of individual rights, the principle that man is an end in himself, not a means to the end of others. As

an ethical-psychological concept, individualism holds that man should think and judge independently, valuing nothing higher than the sovereignty of his intellect" (Branden, 1964, 97). The politics of individualism is in the consideration of the individual as superior to all, superior to the society and its needs and desires are of higher value. Therefore, the concept of individualism is related to the concept of personal space.

What is a society?

'Society' refers to a group formed by individuals who share certain commonalities between them. Irrespective of their personal needs, choices and interests, considering the basic human nature to socialise, the people form a group focusing on the similarities among them which will address the collective good. The members of the society have interactions among each other in order to survive in a better way and this is how a society exists. The purpose behind forming a society is to make living smooth. Since a person cannot produce everything he/she needs by him/herself, therefore, there is always a need of depending on others. This dependency, however, is not just based on exchange of goods and services, it is necessary for human beings to depend on each other for emotional, intellectual, physical and moral support.

Compromise is the very essence of a society's existence. Without compromising one's personal interests, there can be no social living. According to Developmental Psychology, every human being is different; everyone has their own needs, choices and interests. Every person has a different personality; even identical twins. Therefore, to form a society, each and every individual has to let go off some of their habits to be acceptable by the group. The individuals pull back themselves from certain activities

which might be harmful to the group. Thus, they create a different personality which does not represent their totality but is necessary for them to fit into the social group.

Relationship between individual and society:

`Individuals are the constituent of the social group. The interaction and co-existence of individuals is society. The individuals hold back their instinctive behaviour at times so that they appear agreeable to the group. The formation of society requires the submergence of individual needs into collective needs. Together they form certain standards, rules and norms which act as touchstone in measuring the expected behaviour of a person. The norms are meant to be followed, thereby making certain not to create a chaos. The group controls people from showing any disruptive behaviour. And those who do so are either punished or treated differently by the other members of the group.

In earlier times, the groups were formed to fill up individual needs alone. Once the needs were fulfilled, the people used to look for other groups to fulfill their other needs. With the progress of the human civilization, the social nature of human developed and people started forming groups which are long lasting and permanent as to travel around for new group required more time and expenses. The growing urge for permanency in terms of social living is what had resulted in present day society. At present, there are several types of social groups starting from family, school, community, village, state, religion etc. These social groups are consisting of individuals who have certain similarities between them. When the habit of one individual is reciprocated by others and followed, this forms a group. The reciprocity of action determines the creation of an institution. The same behaviour followed over and over again for years is accepted as the norm. It becomes the standard of behaviour which all the members of the group are supposed to follow and obey.

Society is a multilayered structure where people belonging to different strata are given different standards of behaviour. For example, men are expected to behave in a more rational manner whereas women are always associated with emotions. An educated person is expected to display civilised characteristics and an uneducated is accepted with his primitive roles. This process of assigning certain code of conduct is the starting point of stereotyping. The behaviour of the people belonging to different strata is pre-determined and they have to fulfill those expectations. Stereotyping, thereby, functions as a major power within the society.

However, we cannot deny the role that society plays in the life of its members and to humanity as a whole. Human being is the supreme animal capable of bringing changes to the environment- physical, natural, economic, social etc. Man is capable of ultimate actions due to its reasoning and thinking capacity. Therefore, if their actions are not controlled and directed in a proper way, the world will be in chaos. The restrictions on human actions are not intended to bind them but to make the world a better place to live in. In the words of J. S. Roucek, "If society can be said to have any object in controlling the individual, it is to help him, to assimilate the greater possible amount of the group's culture in the shortest possible time" (Roucek, 1956, 35). Society provides people with an environment to develop and exercise their power in a constructive way so that they themselves as well as the society can be benefited. The role of society in the development process of human is undeniable. An individual, capable of higher actions, when united with other human beings can bring immense changes to the world. Society not only controls people's primitive behaviours but provides them with a better perspective as well. The relationship between individual and

society is of interdependence. Individuals, with their proper acts bring development to the society and society in turn provides them with better opportunities.

The question of struggle:

So far the existence of society is concerned; it is the individuals who have to make it possible through required compromises and efforts. The compromises that an individual makes in this process sometimes might make him/her to feel that his/her personal space has been compromised to some extent. Therefore, it becomes very much likely to witness an individual struggling with the society. Since society has already established certain preconceived norms regarding its members' behaviours, some individuals might find it an unnecessary restriction. As the individuals can not behave the way they want, they might feel that the society is denying them their rights. In such situations, either the individual decides to go against the society so as to proceed on his/her own pursuit without having due regard to societal conventions or to struggle in order to get the society's approval and acceptance or to accept passively whatever the society has to offer. It is interesting to note that society is nothing without its members "there is no such thing as society; there are only persons" (Harold, 329). Therefore the struggle is actually against the people who make the rules, but the people who made the rules themselves are individuals. Therefore, this struggle is between an individual and a group of individuals whose personal views may differ at times.

A society is defined by its rules, regulations, values and mannerisms and all the individuals of the society must follow them. Therefore, to become a self-reliant individual in a society is not an easy task. When an individual has different ideas and opinions from society, conflict occurs. Individual versus society refers to this type of

conflict when an individual does not want to conform to or yield to the social rules and mannerisms and decides to live on his/her own terms. To quote Harold "The conflict is not actually between individual and institution but between one individual with one set of interests and another individual with another set of interests. Desires are urges felt by persons, not by institutions. Wishes are functions of persons, not of groups. Values are appreciations experienced by persons, not by a social organism. When an act satisfies the desires of one person and those of like tastes, it will prove objectionable to other with different tastes. Herein is the cause of conflict" (Harold, 329). The conflict arises due to the different types of desires different people have.

Society is not a living organism by itself; it is the people who make it alive. On one side there is a single individual and on the other, there is a group. Since society outnumbers every single individual, it becomes the dominant class and tries to exercise its power over all its members. "It is the impingement of one personality upon another personality. Customs, processes, institutions of themselves affect no control. They do not exist apart from persons. Rather those who observe customs, those who participate in social processes, those who belong to institutions, exercise the control" (Roucek, 1956: 31). It is not necessary to mention that all the members of the society have to face, in some ways, the domination of the group. This domination can be termed as social control. Since it is an institution, social control is managed through the making of laws, norms and regulations which all the members must obey. The activities of individuals are determined, restricted and controlled by society. In the words of Jacek Szmatka, "Society constituting a certain whole determines activities, attributes of its individuals. Hence, the dependence of individual phenomena on the social ones is

unequivocal: individual phenomena are determined by social phenomena" (JACEK, 41).

Stereotyping is another important aspect which may create an urge in an individual to stand against the society. Stereotype is the barrier between an individual and his/her freedom. Since there are certain pre-conceived norms, the individuals are viewed through a particular lens. Everyone is supposed to behave in that particular manner which is set by the society. This creates a hindrance when the person simply wants to remain himself/herself with all his/her innermost feelings. Sometimes the individual finds it impossible to follow the expected which might be a threat to his/her personality. However maintenance of social structure relies on the stereotypes. As it has been known, society is a hierarchical multilayered institution. The responsibility is divided among the people. So, a person of a particular social stratum has to maintain the behaviour which is appropriate to that class according to the societal rules. People of all the strata are bounded by society to play the roles assigned to them. A person who does not display the 'required' code of conduct becomes the odd one. The individual is not free to choose and thereby, lives under the compulsion of displaying certain behavioural characteristics attached to his/her role. It restricts individuals' movements and hooks them within a cage of artificiality. This artificiality becomes a part of their lives and they are no longer free to express what they have within themselves.

However, society is not always to blame because along with putting restrictions, it also helps in making an individual a better social being. In fact, in post war society, where there is a constant increase in crime along with the ultimate advancement of technology and weapons, the need to control human behaviour is on demand. Moreover, at present times, when social media has reached every nook and corner of the world,

man cannot live outside society. Each and every step taken by an individual is out on the social platform; therefore, the role of society in shaping one's individuality is worth consideration. Moreover, the person who is not involved in social activities is considered strange in society. Sometimes, the rebellious nature of an individual can be threatening to the society. The individual's rejection of the societal conventions may challenge the integrity of the society, due to which, sometimes, the society takes a step in order to remove or suppress the threat. An individual not considering the society's importance might ignite other individuals urge to fight which will end up in anarchy. A world without rule and order is anarchic "orderliness is a primary requisite of human society" (Roucek, 1956, 35). Therefore, the role society plays by restricting human actions is important. However, too much interference by the society is uncalled for. The necessary rules are acceptable but defining and delimiting each and every act of an individual is what makes society look possessive. The society even goes on to set conventions regarding human emotions and dictates how to express and where not to express emotions. This extension of intervention makes the society unimpressive for an individual and there starts the fight for personal space.

The co-existence of the duo is not always so smooth. Individuals have their personal needs and choices; and it might result in conflict with the needs of the society. The struggle of individual with society is imminent. The struggle might have different faces like struggles of women against patriarchy, rich versus poor, racial struggle or it could be in any form. Just like the forms, the purpose of the struggle can be different like seeking identity, asserting individuality, fighting for rights and justice etc. The function of a society largely depends on how its members act. Since its function is to make social life suitable for all, it becomes necessary to restrict individual activities.

The submergence of individual needs for greater good may confuse the individual regarding their stand in the society. They are denied what they had acquired naturally. In the words of Dewey, "the growth of corporateness is arbitrarily restricted. Hence, it operates to limit individuality; to put burdens on it" (Dewey, 2015, 56).

Men live fragmented lives while making balance with society because within society, they can not be fully themselves. They have to be self-conscious all the time and are torn between what they are and what they have to be in other's eyes. They have to make choices that are very much related with others' views on them. It is interesting to quote at this point that "society has men in prolonged contact with one another and always looking ahead to an indeterminate future… 'Each man begins to look at others and to want to be looked at him'. And ultimately this leads to each man's living outside of himself and in the opinion of others" (McArdle, 270). This is the pressure an individual has to go through after being a part of the society. The growing contact with each other affects the people in a manner that they become socially inclined. From self-reliance, they migrate towards the reliance on other's opinions. The longer the association, the greater the social inclination. They start to seek other's opinion which results in their loss of self-fulfillment and self-confidence. Giving too much attention to others' opinion regarding one's own life makes a person dependent on others. Thereby, his/her actions will start to be guided by others' which will adversely affect his/her individuality and sense of self.

Whatever an individual does, he/she is never free from the social conventions unless and until he/she totally cuts off from all and becomes a 'stranger'. All the individuals are the product of social relationships and it is the society that polishes an individual to make him/her perfect. By attaching with society, an individual gains a kind

of 'civil liberty' which makes him/her better than his/her earlier state. In the words of Dewey, "Assured and integrated individuality is the product of definite social relationships and publicly acknowledged functions. Judged by this standard, even those who seem to be in control and to carry the expression of their special individual abilities to a high pitch are submerged" (Dewey, 2015, 51). Therefore, in a person, who lives a social life, there will always be traces of societal influences. There is no turning away from society; in fact, it is the society that helps an individual to be an integrated person, to develop and to grow.

At present times there is no way but to be social. In this growing age of social media, social outlook is considered as a part of life. The people who do not have any social response are considered socially awkward. It would not be wrong to note that "individuals who are not bound together in association whether domestic, economic, religious, political, artistic or educational are monstrosities" (Dewey, 2015, 78). Therefore, all the people are always bound to be social otherwise said to be awkward. Not only the individuals are expected to be social but also are supposed to follow the societal enforcements. The question of personal choice and liberty gets upper hand in such situations and a person ends up being a puppet suppressing his/her reality for the sake of outer approval. Thus, his/her personal happiness remains at stake and his/her disposition too gets a touch of social inclination.

It must be noted that society is a little far away from the natural instinct of human behaviour. The society is, undoubtedly formed by people but its existence lies in the conventions it makes. It brings order to life through those conventions "the social order is a sacred right which serves for the basis of all other; yet this right comes not from nature, it is founded on convention" (Rousseau, 1971, 4). Roucek emphasizes the

artificiality of these conventions and writes "The system of rules, conventions and requirements which make up the orderliness of human society is artificial, arbitrary sometimes not altogether defensible. In all societies, it has been, and in ours can only be, maintained by the vigilant and insistent exercise of control" (Roucek, 1956, 36). These conventions have become so deep rooted in human lives that all the people have somehow embraced this authority over their ego. Becoming united submerges their personal choices with collective intents.

Along with the wish to act on one's own will and its denial due to collaboration, the question of individual happiness is what starts the brawl. Yielding to a group very often requires personal sacrifice. No doubt that collaboration inculcates moral values in one, but the chase for personal happiness remains forever. The immediate reason for an individual's stance against society is seen when he/she cares less for the communal life than his/her personal life. "The problem of the individual and society is most keenly and urgently experienced as the problem of happiness. … The yearning for happiness, however obscure and confused, is never extinguished and keeps the individual in perpetual conflict with society" (McArdle, 267). The expectation to get happiness on personal level can not be diminished by the societal pressure.

Within the society, men' life is caught up between their urge for own happiness and their expectation to fulfill societal demands. They live under constant pressure and hence, the game of society and individual becomes an imminent issue. Down the ages, there have been many literatures produced which speaks of such struggles of individual fighting with society. *Huckleberry Finn* is one fine example. Rousseau's Confessions is an elaborate representation of the aforesaid issue. The concern in this dissertation is to point out, examine, analyse and evaluate the game of individual versus society in *The*

Stranger by Albert Camus and *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison. No doubt that these two novels do not share the common socio-cultural background, but there, in both the novels, the condescending attitude of society and rebellious nature of the individual can be detected. The background of the novels will be discussed in the respective chapters that are focused on each of the novels.

The struggle of an individual with society is a very interesting topic to deal with. Submerging one's need and interest for the greater good may sometimes bring a feeling of insecurity to an individual. When an individual decides to go against the society, he/she might not believe in what the majority believe. Society exercises social control over individuals which can be intimidating to some of them. Therefore, some of them decide to go against the group at the cost of everything it takes. This is the issue with both the novels. In *The Stranger*, the protagonist does not care much about social conventions and lives up to his own ideals. On the other hand, in *Invisible Man*, the protagonist runs from places to places in order to get recognition which he ends up miserably. The issue in both the novels is the same but the ways dealt with by the authors are different. In this study, the focus is to consider this issue in both these novels.

Objective of the Study:

The study focuses on to find out the elements of the struggle between individual and society. The objectives of this study are:

1. To point out the traces of the struggle between individual and society in the two novels.

2. To find out the causes of this struggle.

3. To locate the route of the struggle or to locate how this struggle is carried out by the protagonists (individuals) in the novels.

4. To analyse the struggle and to find out how the writers have resolved or have not resolved the struggles in the novels.

5. To unveil the question of authority of the struggle in both these novels.

Methodology

This study is based on library work. In order to get insight of the topic, deeper reading of the key texts is done. The elements representing individual versus society are taken out from both the novels and are analszed in individual chapters. One chapter will be dedicated to display how the struggle between individual and society is similar or different in these two novels. The resolution of the struggle in the novels will be discussed in the last chapter by referring to the earlier chapters.

Data Collection

The primary data will be collected from the key texts i.e. *The Stranger* and *Invisible Man*. The secondary source will cover other referential books, journals and previous research works.

Scope and limitations of the study:

In the course of research, it is not possible on the part of the researcher to deal with each and every aspect of the topic outside the key texts in the limited time frame.

Therefore, the research needs to be limited to a certain area of study. The limitations of the study are:

1. The present study is restricted to library work only.

2. The study covers only two novels as key texts- **The Stranger** by Albert Camus and **Invisible Man** by Ralph Ellison.

3. This study does not cover existentialism or absurd school of philosophy related to the novels.

4. The background study is also done but its use is depended on whether it supports the study or not.

5. To make the study more relevant, some other books, journals and research works are also studied.

Literature Review:

Many research works have been produced on Albert Camus's *The Stranger* focusing on the hero, the existential and the absurd theme of the novel. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is not a virgin text either. This very novel by Ellison has been considered for its socio-cultural background and its anti-hero. However, there is no such research work which deals directly with the topic that has been chosen for study. Along with the earlier researches done in the novels, there are certain articles, journals and books which have helped in the pursuance of this research project. However, the inclusion of all of them is not possible; therefore, the most relevant sources are discussed below in brief.

- "Influence of surrounding on Human Behaviour in the Major Works of Albert Camus: a Critical Study" by Hitendrakumar Maheshbhai Patel tells us about how the surrounding has a huge role to play in shaping and molding human behaviour. He has covered natural, social and moral surroundings in his thesis and has related them with the actions and events in Camus' literature. Maheshbhai Patel also has written how these surroundings contribute to Meursault's behaviour and actions in the novel *The Stranger*. In terms of natural surroundings, he has identified a close connection between nature and Meursault. He has written that Meursault responds not to human world but to nature. In the Arab's murder, he has pinpointed the nature's dominance over Meursault.

  Furthermore, he has explained various reasons why a person chooses to be alien in the modern society and has considered World Wars, Industrialization as some of the significant reasons. He wrote that since society runs through creating meanings, it also tries to give meanings to Meursault's actions. He also has provided us with a character analysis of Meursault and has associated him with up rootedness, un-committed ness, rebellion etc.

- "Individual Struggle in the Absurd World with special reference to the works of Albert Camus and Samuel Becket" by Bhagyalakshmi Das starts with an introduction to absurd. Bhagyalakshmi has written on how the orthodoxy of habit makes people absurd. She has written about the individual struggle on the face of death and calls Meursault's death as his downfall. She has considered Meursault as an innocent and sincere hero who

is trapped within an uncomprehending society. She has presented an analysis on Meursault as an absurd hero and also has differentiated an absurd hero with a normal hero.

- "The Search for Identity in Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin" by Annie Margaret P. analyses the issue of identity in terms of the socio-cultural background of the works of these writers. She has presented a detailed analysis of the formation of a person's identity and has identified mother as one of the most important elements in this regard. Regarding *Invisible Man*, she has written about the endeavor of the protagonist of creating his identity with an interaction with both Black and White society. She furthers her study by analysing the novel in terms of Ellison's personal life and has written that he took the advantage of his position in creating a character having a struggle of identity creation.

- "Stereotypes and Social types in Ellison's Invisible Man" by Russell W. Nash deals with the protagonist's struggle to convert himself to a socially acceptable type. Social type has been explained as an important factor in understanding relationship in a social system. The writer has considered the novel as a social protest and at the same time has called it a 'comic epic' for its simple protagonist. The protagonist has been looked at as a simple, innocent man who, due to his simplicity falls prey at the hands of the powerful. The writer has also accused the protagonist for not acting on own terms but to follow other's ways. In this article, this novel is called a 'counterstatement to the stereotype of racial bigotry.'

- "Camus's The Stranger: the Silent society and the Ecstasy of Rage" by Harry Slochower is about the failure of society in finding a 'meaningful quest'. The author has taken Meursault's non-involvement as a weapon in exposing the failure of the society. The author has analysed Meursault's decision not to get involved and has written that this attitude of the protagonist is an answer to a society which doesn't care about an individual. Since the society doesn't proceed in making of an individual's life, Meursault replies in his own way to the society.

- "Camus's Meursault: the Only Christ the Modern Civilization Deserves" by Eamon Maher is an account of why Meursault is considered as the 'Christ' by Camus. Maher has proceeded to unveil the 'nastiness' of the society which has been concealed. Maher has written that since the society is the corrupt and selfish one and is entertaining fake values, Meursault stand as the only Christ the society deserves. No doubt that Meursault doesn't believe in God but he is the type of person who can exercise in this selfish society.

- *Ralph Ellison a Collection of Critical Essays* edited by John Heresy contains several essays by several prominent critics who have analysed Ellison's Invisible Man not just in the light of racial discrimination but beyond it. Saul Below has claimed that in the novel, Ellison has created 'a true middle of consciousness for everyone'. James Alan McPherson has quoted some fragments from Ellison's mouth and has asserted that Ellison always considered himself not just of Black culture but belonging to a blending of both. There are several other essays in this collection which look

at the novel as an individual's quest for identity rather than confining it to the racial experience.

- "The Individual and Society: an Emerging Philosophy" by Harold Saxe Tuttle suggests that the chief reason behind the conflict between an individual and a group is the different tastes and desires of different individuals. He also has said that if there were no different tastes among individuals, 'the problem would not exist at all.'

- J. S. Roucek's **Social Control** is a detailed book on the changes that are brought about by social inclination. It shows that man is essentially a social being which can not exist without society. By unveiling the various modes of social control, this book tends to give us how an individual is restricted or guided by society in each and every aspect of his/her life starting with his/her personality.

- Albert Camus's **The Rebel** is another interesting book which details down the history and development of rebellion throughout. This book lets us know how and why rebellion starts at an individual level and it specifically points out that when a person realises his/her essence in the world and starts to be loyal to him/her, there begins the rebellion.

- J. J. Rousseau's **The Social Contract** deals with the changes that occur when an individual comes within the social contract. This book basically deals with the political nature of social inclination. It lets us know that when an individual comes into contact with a group or society, he/she receives certain authorities but loses those which he/she had enjoyed in the 'state of nature'.

- Laurie Spurling's ***Phenomenology and the Social World*** contains a chapter on society which gives an understanding of how the structure of society is formed. It also lets us know that in a social structure, man's position is just to play the roles assigned to him/her. The concept that 'institutions are intergenerational' is elaborated in this book which tends to reveal the concept related to the existence of society.

- John Dewey's ***Individualism, Old and New*** gives a detailed study of the concept of individual and its development covering up the lost of old individualism and emergence of new individualism in American society.

- Ayn Rand's ***The Virtue of Selfishness*** is an interesting book which digs down the root of the concept of morality and points out that the concept of morality is flawed. Selfishness is a virtue rather than a vice because self sacrifice brings 'mutual resentment than pleasure'. This book gives an interesting insight into how being selfish is essential for a living.

- "Rousseau on Rousseau: the Individual and Society" by Ann McArdle is an article that deals with a brief study of Rousseau's Confessions. It gives us insights regarding the concept of 'civilized man' and the 'uncivilized or primitive man' as written by Rousseau. The article also shows how a person who lives on others opinion ends up losing one's individuality.