

Chapter I

Introduction

The emotions of human beings are the embodiments of human behaviour and the way for expressing 'self' in the refined culture. The individual belief and behavior are the epithets of any culture and the recording of that becomes the perceivable culture of any society. The genre novel takes the credit of enunciating the various sentiments of human culture. According to Srinivasa Iyengar "The novel is a living and evolving literary genre and is trying, in the hands of its practitioners, a fusion of form, substance and expression that is recognizably Indian yet also bearing the marks of universality"(322). The novel is a means of expression for the writer to visualize what he had experienced, seen and heard. The novelist's indulgence of nature, society, his fellow beings and the relationship he has with them encompass the subject of his writing.

Indian English novel is the most effective and acquiescent genre for prognostic expression of social and political issues of the times. It has played a great role with its diversified thematic concerns. The themes include the glory of Indian culture and the heritage, the freedom struggle, the influence of Gandhian non-violence and Civil Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement, the aftermath of the Partition, the growing chasm between the Hindu and the Muslim communities and between India and Pakistan. They also show much concern on the social criticism and social reality as their distinctive apprehension. As the Indian English novelists gave importance to the social and political problems, the novelists' concept of using themes have been shifted from the past to the contemporary reality. They portrayed poverty, hunger, disease, social evils and political problems, hybrid culture and conflicts in the society. These are clearly

evident in the writings of the three major writers R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. Other themes that are included in their writings are Indian rural life, patriarchy, Indian Philosophy, conflict between tradition and modernity and the conflict of the East and the West.

Later the post colonial Indian English novels largely dealt with decolonization, political independence, and the change in culture and society. The novelists explored East and West encounter and emphasized the conflicts that emerged due to the disparate cultures. In Indian English writing, the mentality of the colonized is also portrayed in the attitude of the different Indian characters.

After 1980s, the novelists started looking at an individual's problem, his attitude towards life, his relationship with the family members and the outside world. Thus the focus was more on the search for the 'self'. The post independence novel has the psychological probing of an individual based on the historical and sociological changes. The novelists brought in the themes of loneliness, rootlessness, alienation, identity crisis, boredom and existential struggles of the modern man. Existential problems like absurdity, loneliness, anchorlessness, exile, anxiety and despair constitute the problem of alienation. The contemporary man feels alienated because of the lack of faith in himself, in God, in his fellow beings and detachment of his relationship with his family and the society and his non involvement in the growth of the nation. Alienation has significantly affected the Indian English fiction. The problem of alienation is the theme related to the loss and the quest for one's identity. Vasant A.Rahane rightly points out in his introduction to *Explorations in Modern Indo-English Fiction*, that the modern Indian novel "has become a primary instrument of art to unfold the 'self's emergence' as a historical entity and demonstrate art's dual connection with self and society" (9). He also

adds that the novelist has become “a mediator or reflector on history of modern India as a mode of existence” (9). By focusing more on the individual, the Indian English novelists have been appreciated for their work of exploring human psyche.

Alienation is the major concern of Existentialism. Existentialism is a philosophy which focuses on individual’s subjective awareness of his style of existence, his intimate relationship with himself and his environment. It deals with the existence of human beings who lack meaning and the purpose of their lives. Loneliness is faced by a man who suffers alienation. An individual’s own will and his choice of his ‘own’ world makes him consider the world as meaningless. J.A Cuddon in his *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines it in this manner “The term existentialism means ‘pertaining to existence’; or, in logic ‘pretending existence’. Philosophically, it now applies to a vision of the condition and existence of man, live place and function in the world, and his relationship, or lack of one, with God”(251).

The origin and the development of the philosophy of existentialism reveal that it is quite a classical concept. Aspects of existentialism can be found in Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Socrates asserted the need for understanding one’s own self. Plato and Aristotle put forward the theory of ‘Being and Becoming.’ According to them ‘Being’ is existence and ‘Becoming’ is transcendence. For them ‘Being’ is always considered in relation to ‘Becoming.’ Later many philosophers developed the thought in the nineteenth century. They believed that ‘Being’ is a collective name of individuals and ‘Becoming’ is a temporal change:

Ancient and medieval philosophers’ views about Being and Becoming are believed in modern times also. Modern philosophers are interested in the feature of ‘Being’ and they started to explore the meaning of ‘Being and Becoming’

psychologically. Philosophers and psychologists accepted the Aristotelian theory of 'Being' in relation to 'Becoming.' The existentialist thinkers also think that 'Being and Becoming' are inter-related. For them Being is superior as it precedes 'Becoming'.

Existentialism is a subjective interpretation of life. It is mainly concerned with human existence in totality. The philosophy of existentialism focuses on the problems of human existence with a view of providing solutions. Existentialist thinkers have reinforced the importance of subjective attitude towards life. The characteristic feature of Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence is that the subjectivity becomes the very foundation of knowledge. He calls subjectivity as the core of human existence. The problem of alienation is due to one's own decision to lead one's own life where the person does not have faith in others. The contemporary existentialist thinkers developed the philosophy of existentialism on the foundations laid down by Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard's view of subjectivity is quoted by Mary Warnock is hard to achieve: "the individual loses himself in the mass, and ceases to recognize that 'the knower is an existing individual'" and the three essential characteristics of subjective knowledge according to him are:

First, it cannot be passed on from one person to the next, nor added to by different researchers. It cannot be taught in the class room. Second, what is known subjectively always has the nature of a paradox. Therefore subjective knowledge is identical with faith. For faith alone, and not reason, can induce us to accept paradox. Faith is not an identical, but an emotional attribute. [...] Third, subjective knowledge is concrete, not abstract. This is because it must necessarily be related to the actual concrete existence of a living individual. (9-10)

Existentialism focuses on the problems of human existence with a view of providing solution. So the subjective attitude towards life has been given importance by the leading existentialist thinkers. This subjective attitude of an individual towards his life makes him undergo the problem of alienation which leads to other problems like loneliness, meaninglessness, purposelessness, anxiety, exile and despair.

Existentialism emphasizes on the individual's existence, freedom and choice. The main concept of Existentialism is that 'existence precedes essence'. Man exists and in that existence he defines himself and the world. He wanders between choice, freedom and existential angst. In his book *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, Sartre points out:

First of all, man exists, turns up, appears on the scene, and, only, afterwards, defines himself. If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward will he be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. That there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after thrust towards existence. (15)

Sartre also adds that, "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the true principle of existentialism"(15). This highlights that existentialism is certainly a subjective interpretation of life which is the reason for the problem of alienation.

Existentialism is also a philosophy of freedom and responsibility. It worries the people in all aspects of its culture and civilization. It not only affects an individual but also the public and the society. According to the existential thinkers, this is not absurd or pessimistic or atheistic. It helps in making the human existence secure, stable, authentic

and meaningful. It is a way of life which enables every human being to lead an authentic mode of life by emphasizing on freedom and responsibility. Mary Warnock says that, “Many writers on existentialism see it as, above all, an exploration of human freedom, and a statement of the autonomy of the individual human being.” She also adds that “the appeal of Existentialism has been largely practical, and that people have been fascinated by it because they actually want to put its principles of individual freedom into practice in society and that Friedrich Nietzsche thinks that there is no ideal, no religion and no God. Man is the master of Universe”(132). So The philosophy of existentialism is concerned with the freedom of man. It tries to make the readers free from illusion. It is a committed and practical philosophy.

The later existentialist thinkers uphold the view that human existence should be in transcendence. They think that man is a sum of his choice and action. Man is responsible for what he is and what he will be. Existentialism makes every human being to understand that his existence rests on what he is and what his responsibility is. The problems faced by a man make him understand his responsibility for himself and his future. He is not only accountable for his own individuality but also for the society because any action one does affects the rest of humanity. Thus by choosing for ‘self’, man defines the future of entire community.

Existentialist thinkers advise man first to know what he should be or become and by what ways and means, so as to prepare himself for the realization of his aims. Gabriel Marcel in his book *The philosophy of Existentialism* quotes the words of Satire.

Freedom coincides at its roots with the non-being which is at the heart of man. For a human being, to be is to choose himself; nothing comes to him either from without or from within himself that he can receive or accept.

... He is wholly and helplessly at the mercy of the unendurable necessity to make himself be, even in the smallest details of his existence. Thus freedom is not a being, it is the being of man, that is to say his non-being.
(79)

Thus, existentialism is a philosophy that confronts the human situations in its totality to know the basic conditions of man's existence and to establish man's significance for emerging out of those conditions.

The basic tenets of the philosophy of existence are right thought, right choice, and responsibility. It also emphasizes on humanism for the full and purposive life of human beings in the purposeless world. The main aim of existentialism is to make human existence possible and endurable. The existentialist thinkers all dwell upon the question of human existence based on subjectivism. In *Existentialist Thinkers and Thought*, Patka says about the views of Joseph Mihalich:

Existentialism in any type of philosophy that centers its analysis on the factor of individual human existence – the fact of the individual's own existence in a concrete and often hostile world. Existentialism's frame of reference in analyzing reality is the individual's own frame of reference – his own fears and hopes and encounters and crises. Existentialism eschews the abstract and the speculative because these aspects transcend the bounds of concrete experience. (127)

According to them man is a unique being, ruled by his passions and driven by his desire to live in the world in which he is placed. Man is free to think and act according to his choice. He is not free to harm the environment and society around him. But he is free

to have harmonious co-existence with his community. He is responsible for whatever he does. He suffers not because of any external forces, but because of his misuse of freedom and responsibility. Man's future is highly unpredictable. Existentialism is mainly concerned with the problems of man's life, insists on the transcendence of man with respect to his real life. According to Sheikh Mustaq Ahmad,

. . . existentialism, in the strict sense, is not a system of philosophy but an approach to the study of man. Being a purely radical movement, at least in our century (though in the Western world only), it is not only the expression of the moods and experiences of man but also an agonized cry against all the processes of dehumanization, essentialism, objectivization, bad faith, alienation and all embracing intellectualism. (14)

There are two branches as far as existentialist ethics is concerned. They are theistic or Christian existentialism and atheistic existentialism. Theistic existentialists believe in the supremacy of God. They maintain that an individual is inseparable from God, the Ultimate Reality. He has true being in the Being of God. It was developed by the 19th century Danish thinker Soren Kierkegaard. The term 'existentialism' was coined by him to emphasize the importance of authentic mode of human existence. He believed in the existence of the divine power, but he did not believe in the benevolence of the religious practices. He says that man must pursue either 'aesthetic' life devoting him to art, music and drama or 'ethical' life seeking happiness in family, business and profession for a better life. He advises people to experience life for better understanding. This thought was later developed by the French existentialist thinker Gabriel Marcel and the German existentialist thinker Karl Jaspers.

The atheists, on the other hand, do not believe in the existence of God. Atheistic existentialism was propounded by the 19th century German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche. It was later developed by Jean Paul Sartre, Merleau-Ponty of France, Martin Heidegger of Germany, Nicholev Berdiaeff of Russia, J.O.Gasset and Mignel de Unamuno of Spain and Nicholas Abbagnana of Italy. These thinkers deny the very existence of God and soul which have played an important role in human life in the past. The main reason for their disbelief is that these two can never be proved by reason. According to them, the relationship between men and the world may be explained without any reference to such reality as God or Being. They believe that there is only one being, and that is man. Man is a being all in all and superior to all forms.

All existentialist thinkers uphold man as the complete man, the complete master of his biological environment and this material world. His life is inter-related to his biological environment, society and his own inner self. If he works in harmony with his biological environment, society and his 'inner self' and makes the right choice and works accordingly, he may attain self-realization.

Modern man does not believe in the religion oriented traditional way of life, his close connection with nature, community and his 'inner self' which cannot be denied. In olden days, there had been a close bond between man and Nature because Nature is everything, the creator, the preserver and the Destroyer of both animate and inanimate objects, including man. Man had been an intimate part of Nature. So it was impossible to consider him as an alien or other. Man depended on Nature not only for food and shelter but also for happiness. His love of his nature led him to love his fellow beings. He treated nature as his mother. He could not live without her support as she had been considered as an embodiment of life.

In his relationship with nature, man has to resolve whether he should be friendly with nature and achieve self-realization through harmonious co-existence, or remain hostile and be ruined by her malignant forces. Since nature helps man in his sustenance, he should treat nature with love. Existentialist thinkers express similar views as far as man's relationship with nature is concerned. Jaspers believes in the benevolence of Nature towards human existence. He says that nature is a source of food, shelter, happiness, beauty and harmony. He does not deny the fact that nature turns when he goes against her and her laws. Norman N. Greene reiterates the view of Sartre when he says, "nature destroys man as well as aids him" (98).

The advent of science and technology has mechanized human existence, and everything is considered based on its practical utility and importance. As man's dependence on science and technology increases, he becomes more materialistic and forgets the human values. By forgetting the real worth of nature, man has started exploiting her for his benefit. So his harmonious co-existence with her has come to an end. Industrialization and urbanization have disturbed 'Man-Nature' relationship. Existentialist thinkers criticize the misuse of science in every walk of human life. Sartre rejects Jasper's view that nature is not hostile to man unless he is hostile to her. According to Sartre nature does not do anything depending upon man's activities but it is indifferent to human existence on account of his non-adjustment with nature. Due to his interest in the promotion of science and technology, man is alienated from his own self and also from nature. So he turns to his community for his comfort.

Man's alienation from nature deprives him of a natural and harmonious life. As a result he remains in a state of unrest, dread, unhappiness and disappointment. After his detachment from Nature, man turns to society for consolation. In order to make a happy

and peaceful social relationship, man loves his neighbourhood. He understands and trusts them too. He also tries to establish a cordial bond with them in his life.

Existentialist thinkers consider that man's relationship with society as inevitable and that man is unpredictable by nature. They believe that the individual's relationship with society has some conflicts. The three spheres, the subjective 'I', the objective 'world' and the transcending 'society' are inseparable from one another. Jaspers calls this mode of inter-relationship as 'communication.' Sartre in his work *Being and Nothingness* states that man cannot live alone and 'Being-in-itself', 'Being for others' and Being-for-itself all constitute the concept of existence.

According to Jaspers, man's relationship both with his respective spouse and community will be harmonious if it is based on love, compassion, willingness to learn, brotherhood, equality, understanding and adjustment. If man-woman or man-society relationship is based on enmity, cruelty, jealousy, selfishness, mistrust and misunderstanding, it will certainly end in man's alienation from others. Norman N. Greene in his book *Jean-Paul Sartre: The Existentialist Ethic* states that:

Man is in society because he finds himself to be among other subjects, and he is in the world because he is surrounded by objects. Taking the second of these two propositions first, it should be recalled that human consciousness is without content other than that derived from its awareness of the objects which surround it, and that the goal of consciousness is a certain relation to the world. Thus the subject is a certain organization of the world and can only develop by action on the world. Human reality is 'being-in-the-world' and can be defined only in terms of its 'situation.' (35)

Even in sexual relationship the virtues of love, equality, co-operation and sacrifice become indispensable. On the whole existentialist thinkers led by Jaspers conclude that man may succeed in his attainment of self-hood, if he is capable of adjusting and reconciling with his respective spouse as well as 'society'. They believe in the harmonious relationships between man and woman and between man and society are possible and could be successful. But Sartre does not accept this view. He states that man's relationship with his respective 'spouse' as well as 'society' will hardly be successful on account of man's flexible nature and unpredictable future. Man's inner greed, ambition, enmity, disbelief and misunderstanding degenerate his way of life. Sartre, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche uphold a negative view of man-society relationship. According to them, all personal and social relationships are bound to fail and end in man's alienation from society.

When man's relationship with society fails, he stands alone. Thus after his estrangement from society he stands in solitude which may spur him to strive for higher phases of life. Frederick Patka says in his *Existentialist Thinkers and Thought*, "It [Existentialism] is the philosophy of human unrest and life insofar as it involves the process of transcendence from the state of self-estrangement and self-deception to the experience of authentic life which stands for the revelation of the ultimate meaning of existing." (33)

Sartre asserts that man's life will prove to be successful or meaningless according to his choice and action. He states that man must be courageous and confident to encounter his future. According to Frederick Patka,

There is first the experience of freedom, which opens future possibilities in becoming and transcending the preceding stages of existence. These

future possibilities should be met with one's courageous exercise of choice, preference and decision. Through these the existent will dispose or pre-dispose of his lot via the act of projecting himself into the open possibilities of a future profile of existence. This heroic act of throwing oneself into the future generates the experience of anguish, dread and concern. (34)

An alienated man comes to the state of angst, dread, anguish, anxiety and nothingness. His loneliness, despair and anguish finally lead to psychic tumults and tensions. This state of human existence leads to 'self-alienation'. Jean Wahl states "Existence is anxious, not only because it is drawn towards the future, but because it is in the world; and the being-in-the-world' assumes the form of forlornness because experience is pervaded and gripped by anxiety" (24-25).

Existentialism concentrated its attention on the problem of alienation. Alienation has various implications. It includes an extraordinary variety of psychological disorders like ambiguity, dread, despair, anxiety, loneliness, nothingness, isolation, pessimism, absurdism, loss of faith and selfhood, rootlessness and meaninglessness. Kierkegaard does not differ much from the view of traditional thinkers. He emphasizes the need for alienation to restore human destiny of the individuality. Marcel supports him by saying that alienation is necessary to exercise man's freedom and choice. Heidegger and Sartre state that man's existence in the world is fundamentally with others, but active attachment of an individual to others will be an 'arrested mode of existence' as it results in his inauthentic mode of existence and loss of identity. Marcel and Buber state that man must alienate himself from his biological environment and society only to make a better use of the freedom and responsibility given to him to attain self-hood. Man's alienation

from Nature and Society at the psychological level has been considered fruitful in the philosophy of Marcel, Heidegger, Sartre and Buber.

The characteristic feature of existentialism is that man's separation from his biological environment, society and his own self is to read just himself with the actualities of life. This is counter balanced by his will power, heroic action and responsibility. Man even in his trials and tribulations of life achieve self-realization. The process of 'becoming' is more important and essential than 'being' for an individual who is in quest of selfhood. After his estrangement from his biological environment, material world and his own self, the necessary ingredients of human existence such as choice, freedom, action and responsibility come to play an important role leading to man's self-realization. These virtues are interrelated. There is no decision without thought, no choice without decision, no action without choice and no responsibility without action and none of these will be of any avail without freedom. Here freedom which is all in all is identified with choice awareness and selfhood. Sartre states in his *Existentialism and Human Emotions*:

If existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest on him. And when we say that a man is responsible for himself, we do not only mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men. (16)

He also adds that,

When we say that man chooses his own self, we mean that everyone of us does likewise; but we also mean by that that in making this choice he also chooses men. In fact, in creating the man we want to be, there is not a single one of our acts which does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to be. To choose to be this or that is to affirm at the same time the value of what we choose, because we can never choose evil. We always choose the good, and nothing can be good for us without being good for all. (17)

Man has no prior values like thought and destiny but only the existence and the attainment of essence. Nietzsche asserts that man takes on himself the full burden of freedom and responsibility and raises himself to the mode of atheistic and authentic existence. Existentialists disbelieve in the absolute benevolence of Nature and Society.

All existentialist thinkers stress the importance of individual action in deciding questions of both morality and truth. According to them, the personal experience and acting on one's own conviction are essential in attaining the truth. The emphasis on the personal existence and the subjectivity lead to a new stress on freedom and responsibility. The whole responsibility falls on his shoulders. Man makes his own choice, and is free thus completely responsible for his choices. The existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Ahman remarks in his *Existential Aesthetics: A Study of Jean Paul Sartre's Theory of Art and Literature*:

Existentialism deals with the problems faced by man in his acts of free choice which is not the case with religion. Existentialism is undetermined while religion is determined. Existentialism has the potential of absorbing both a theist as well as an atheist which is unimaginable in a religion.

Though the thrust in religion is on human existence . . . it is absolutely devoid of man's acts of free choice. (22)

The man with sublime virtues withstands the maximum amount of difficulties and he is heroic in actions and responsible to his commitments whether good or bad remains the hero, the strongest authentic man of human kind.

After I World War, the existentialist attitude spread and grew everywhere as man started his quest to secure a stable and harmonious existence. This new phase produced a great galaxy of existentialist philosophers, thinkers and writers. Modern existentialism began with Soren Kierkegaard who is regarded as the founder of modern existentialism. He wanted to free people from the illusion of objectivity. According to him objectivity is a tendency to accept rules governing both behaviour and thought. In Mary Warnock's opinion, "Kierkegaard's man of faith is free. He is self-governing. And more than that, his is creative. Nothing on his island is valuable unless he makes it so. If he comes trailing relics of accepted values, codes, or rules behind him, then he is not a moral man. His morality lies precisely in the fact that he is discovering the truth for himself, in inwardness." (13) It is agreed that existentialism derives from the thinking of Soren Kierkegaard, and especially in his books *Fear and Trembling, The Concept of Dread and Sickness Unto Death*. Frederick Patka in his book *Existentialist Thinkers and Thought* talks about the view of Kierkegaard, according to whom "a life, lived only according to aesthetic principles, is humanly intolerable to the individual himself and to the society of those around him" (81). Friedrich Nietzsche's important works are *Zarathustra* and *Antichrist*. The total independence and isolation of free man is found in Nietzsche. According to him the essential truth is that man is making his own choices of values. It enables him to manipulate the world. He exercises his will to power in praising and

admiring those features of the world which help him dominate and master the environment.

Karl Jaspers is one of the first philosophers to use the term 'existentialist'. He was a man of cosmopolitan outlook and independent thought. He insists on personal and existential communication. Jaspers has affirmed that whatever the approach, method or the fundamental problem is that of discovering whether or not true freedom may be attained by man. Kaufman says, "It is in the works of Jaspers that the seeds sown by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche first grew into existentialism or, as he prefers to say Existenz philosophie" (22).

Edmund Husserl was the founder of the phenomenological school. His major works are *Logische Untersuchungen* and *Ideen*. There were two problems particularly concerned with Husserl. Both of them are connected with the way in which consciousness continues its own world. The first was the problem of time. The second was that of the other people. The questions, How do we know their existence? and what is the relation between transcendental Ego and other persons in the world? are regarded as the aspects of Husserl and Phenomenology in general.

Martin Heidegger, the existentialist had a great influence on existentialism. His work *Sein the Zeith* is the most 'existentialist' of his writings. He attacked on the limitations of the subjective method in philosophy. Another important work was *Holderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung*. *Being and Time* is an existentialist phenomenology designed to reveal how things really are if we think about them, and to open our eyes to our true position in the world.

In Mary Warnock's opinion,

Heidegger contrasts his view of the future with the ordinary man's view by saying that for common sense Time consists of a series of instants, each now, or about to be now, and valued separately. He argues that the future is not a mere set of instants each of which is about to become the present instant, but rather that the existence of future time actually determines, and is logically prior to, present time. (63)

Jean Paul Sartre was one of the leading exponents of existentialism. Sartre's views are determined by his theory of the nature of one existing individual. In *Being and Nothingness*, there are three main emotions or attitudes which he believed. The first of these emotions is anguish, the second one is the feeling of absurdity and the third response is a feeling of nausea in the face of certain characteristics of Beings-in-themselves. He has been thought of primarily as a writer of philosophy. Mary Warnock quotes Sartre's views of existentialism:

Existentialism is an optimistic philosophy, since it inspires people to action by showing them the extent of their freedom to action; and it also shows them that they are responsible not only for their own destinies but for other people's as well. For whatever a man chooses, he chooses for everyone and not only for himself; for the notion of choice entails the notion of a thing's being good, and 'good' means 'good for everyone'. Thus if a man chooses freedom for himself, he is thereby committed to choosing freedom for everyone. (124)

Simon De Beauvoir was a well known feminist and existentialist. Her major work is *Ethics of Ambiguity*. According to her, Existentialism puts humans at the centre of all action. She says that man is free, but he finds his law in his freedom. Fyodor

Dostoyevsky is also a great existentialist figure. His major work is *Notes from Underground*. This book reveals man's inner life, his moods, anxieties and his decisions. It shows that no good society can rid man of depravity. Existentialist themes are also reflected in the works of Albert Camus and Franz Kafka. These themes are also reflected in the theatre of absurd, notably the plays of Samuel Becket and Eugene Ionesco. Traces of Kierkegaard's thoughts can be found in the novels of Walker Percy and John Updike. Various existentialist themes are apparent in the works of Norman Mailer, John Barth and Arthur Miller. Almost all modern writers are aware of the importance of existential philosophy directly or indirectly. They have expressed their views on Man, Nature and Society and their relationship with one another. They have portrayed man's life and his fortunes and misfortunes with a view to delineate man's struggle for existence in a new perspective. Existentialism focuses on the individual's subjective awareness of his style of existence, his intimate interaction with himself and his environment. It emphasizes the existence of human beings, the lack of meaning and purpose in life and the solitude of human existence.

Existentialism is a way of life which enables every human being to lead an authentic mode of life and an ethic for human action and involvement for self-realization. Mary Warnock says, "Many writers on existentialism see it as, above all, an exploration of human freedom and a statement of the autonomy of the individual human being" She also adds that "the appeal of Existentialism has been largely practical, and that people have been fascinated by it because they actually want to put its principles of individual freedom into practice in society" (132).

The portrayal of the existential struggles of modern man was the most dominant theme and it swayed the Indian literary imagination during the late 1970s and it has been

one of the major influences in the evolution of Indian writing in English. It had led to the emergence of distinctive subgenre within Indian fiction in English. Existing social and political themes were replaced by the existential themes and the modern Indian English fiction started exploring the predicament of modern man. It also examined the relationship of man with his society, fellowmen and his own self. The major writers who explored inner conflicts and existential problems of man in Indian English literature are Anita Desai and Arun Joshi.

The existential predicament of woman as an individual becomes the central theme of Anita Desai's novels. She is concerned with the crisis in which man finds himself today. She explores alienation of man from an absurd world, his estrangement from normal society and his fellowmen.

Anita Desai projects a tragic vision in her novels. Her female characters are found in hostile situations. They are alienated from their own self and the society and are unable to fulfil their ordained roles. They face the problems of alienation, isolation and a sense of rootlessness. Desai's novels probe into the dark interiors of the human psyche and they focus on the various forms of loneliness and isolation that assail these characters. She depicts the inner crisis and tension existing in the life of a character.

Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock* is concerned with disharmony in man - woman relationship. Maya is the wife of Gautama, a lawyer. As a faithful and caring husband, he has provided everything Maya needs. But Maya is not happy with him. She feels that Gautama does not understand her fully. Because of this feeling, she feels lonely and frustrated. Even her friends do not offer any solace. Maya is troubled by this existential angst. Anita Desai portrays the alienated individuals Nirode, Monisha, Amla and mother in her second novel *Voices in the City*. Monisha feels lonely even in a joint family in

Calcutta. Nobody in her family tries to understand her feelings and hence she feels alienated and isolated.

Nirode is a person who often shifts from one goal to another. He is a rootless character who feels a sense of emptiness. He feels himself detached from the city of Calcutta. He finds it difficult to cope up with its busy life. He is afraid of love and he sees it as attachment that necessarily involves a sense of loss. His existential search for meaning in life ends in emptiness. He experiences failure as an alienated hero. Monisha also looks for privacy. Amla seeks to find something by attending parties, dinners and dances.

Desai's concern for existentialism is rooted in expatriate experience in *Bye Bye Blackbird*. The novel deals with the existential problems of alienation and rootlessness which bring out the confusions and conflicts of alienated persons. It presents a vivid description of immigrant lives in an alien land. Aditya Sen's nostalgia begins to haunt him and makes him feel fed up. This acquires a dreadful dimension. He considers himself a stranger, a non-belonger. He searches for his identity and sense of belonging. Sorab is another example of an alienated character.

In *Where shall We Go this Summer*, Sita is a sensitive, emotional and middle aged woman. She feels isolated from her family. When Sita lived in a joint family, she felt lonely and is not able to adjust to their way of living and was not able to become a part of this big family. It forces Raman to move to a small flat. Still Sita feels alienated from her husband and children. She suffers mental agonies in isolation.

Thus all characters of Anita Desai suffer from a sense of loneliness, alienation and emptiness. Nevertheless, they are also self-conscious of the reality around them. She

brings out a new dimension by bringing out the inward realities of life. She explores the human psyche and portrays its mystery. It is clearly evident in the novel *Fire on the Mountain*. This novel portrays the existential angst experienced by the female protagonist Nanda Kaul. She is an old lady living in isolation. The novel also explores the mental agony of a small girl Raka. Who is haunted by a sense of pointlessness. It also projects the state of a helpless woman Ila Das. Thus the modern individual's problems of alienation, isolation, absurdity of human existence and struggle for survival have become the major themes of her novel.

In *Clear Light of Day* Anita Desai portrays the life of a Hindu family as the history of Delhi unfolds. Bim is the central character of the novel. She is an independent woman. Bim's past memories of the family dominates her existence. She feels betrayed by her sister Tara and lives with her memories in the decaying family mansion. Tara is not able to find out why Bim does not want anything to change.

In *Village by the Sea*, the aspects of existentialism are found thinly. Hari is a young village boy, through whose life, Desai explores the existential predicament of the rural people. The novel portrays the sense of struggle in the life of rural people and their wish to live a perfect life on the earth. In *Custody*, Anita Desai focuses on the existential struggle of an individual Devan, a lecturer in Hindi at Lal Ram College in Mirapore. The novel explores the anguish of a woman whose talents are ignored by the male dominated society. The novel revolves around the character of Nur and Devan and the predicament of Imtiaz Begum, Nur's second wife, who is a victim of male dominated society which refuses to recognize and encourage the talents in a woman.

Baumgartner's Bombay can be called as a novel of absurd. It focuses on the absurdity of Baumgartner's existence in Germany and India. In Germany he is a Jew and

is alienated from the mainstream of life. He realizes that life is nothing but a crisis of pointless activity. This realization of life leaves him aimless and absurd. *Journey of Ithaca* is a fine portrayal of people who struggle to find a spiritual home. The novel gives a picture of Matteo's alienation and his quest for spirituality. He is disgusted with the mundane life of family. So he wants to lead his life as a sage in an ashram. He struggles to find eternal truth. Matteo's existential suffering shows his inability to adjust with his situations and challenges of spiritual life. As an alienated man, he rejects his duties towards his family, the society and his own self. He suffers from the double alienation - alienation from his own self and from the society. Anita Desai's novels focus on the female psyche and the interior lives of the individuals. Her characters are the fine portrayal of the existential problems of alienation, isolation, loneliness, frustration, rootlessness and absurdity.

Arun Joshi is the most significant Indian novelist who writes in English. He is ranked after the great trio of fiction writers R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. His novels are *The Foreigner*, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, *The Apprentice*, *The Last Labyrinth* and *City and the River*. Through his novels he attempts to portray the self-alienated persons who find themselves as 'others' in the universe which is indifferent to them.

The protagonists of Arun Joshi are self-centered characters. Though they are highly educated, they are not able to exist with the natural laws of everyday reality. They violate norms of social life. They indulge in irrational actions also. They are alienated from the materialistic life. They try to make their own destiny in their own way. *The Foreigner* can be read as a quest for self-realization and the absurdity of life. The protagonist of the novel is Sindi Oberoi. Because he finds his life meaningless and

rootless and considers his life as a burden he goes from one land to another with hope. He finds himself in the state of ‘foreigner’ wherever he goes. The main problem of Sindi is finding a meaning in the absurdity around him. This kind of problem is not an individual’s problem only, but also of the whole mankind suffering from cultural estrangement, social alienation and self-alienation in the modern world.

The central theme of the novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is alienation. It is the story of person Billy, who feels alienated from his fellowmen and society. Billy tries to make efforts to be a part and parcel of the society, but fails in his efforts. He joins the world of tribals and finds his identity. He feels established instead of feeling rootless and meaningless. However, when he goes away from that place due to some external forces, he feels alienated. He does not feel homely when he comes back to India. The novel explores the states of hopelessness and rootlessness. The novel tries to project finding one’s roots and exploring human values.

In *The Apprentice* Rathan Rathore, the narrator and protagonist struggles for a career in the corrupt society. The apprentice, Rathan Rathore evolves into a product of the corrupt society in which he lives. He is an everyman of modern times as he loses his identity. All the characters in this novel also undergo existential crisis as they are in search of meaning in their life in a chaotic and meaningless world. The novels of Arun Joshi successfully depict the inner struggle of modern men in the modern society. They are the portrayals of the existential dilemma of the self in the society.

The characters of Kamala Markandaya suffer from sociological alienation in the beginning which results in individual alienation at the end. She portrays the modern man’s quest for identity. Kamala Markandaya presents the inner workings of the minds

of her characters, their personal conflicts and their conflict with the society. She tries to portray them as individuals and their concern with the process of being and becoming.

Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* portrays the life of an Indian peasant woman Rukmani. It projects Rukmani's struggle for survival and her love for her husband, Nathan. Markandaya portrays the mass departure of the people to the city due to industrialization. The new surroundings in the city make them feel alien. She depicts the state of alienation of the people as they get uprooted from their native village. She also portrays the age-old rural way of life. One aspect of the novel is about the individual sufferings due to the loss of identity after their migration to the city. The other is the sufferings which are due to their migration from India to alien lands. Nathan is not able to survive in the city, because he feels rootless and everything seems to be alien to him.

The Nowhere Man deals with the predicament of a lonely man Srinivas in an alien land as the novel explores his inner struggle. Even after staying for half a century in England, he undergoes the crisis of alienation and loss of identity as an immigrant. Markandaya portrays the cultural and political settings which create these crises.

Possession also presents the loss of identity in a foreign land. The central character of this novel is Val. He is alienated not only culturally but also psychologically. Caroline Bell, an English woman takes him to the West and moulds him into a man and an artist. As he has been uprooted from his spiritual and cultural heritage, he suffers from a sense of rootlessness. He feels that he is transplanted into the alien milieu. In *A Handful of Rice* Kamala Markandaya explores the protagonist's dilemma at a sociological plane. The protagonist Ravi seeks his fortune in an Indian city rejecting the life of a peasant. But he does not accept this. His failure to adapt to the city's environment makes him angry and this leads to his despair.

Nayantara Sahgal a well-known writer in the English language is also a political analyst. Her women question the accepted set of values. They rebel against the existing moral codes and social norms which deny them their freedom. In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Saroj, the protagonist, involves in the struggles for equality. This struggle is an existential struggle against the chauvinistic society. The novel also makes an attempt to explore the Indian psyche from the socio political and personal levels of existence. *The Day in Shadow* presents the society with its political masters, business people, bureaucratic machinery, social evils, journalists and thinkers. It discusses the problem of rootlessness. This is symbolized by Simrit and Raj. It also presents the predicament of women. The novel revolves around Simrit, her divorced husband Som and her friend, Raj whom she marries in the end. In *Rich Like Us* Sahgal portrays the life of an individual with the background of history. She highlights the predicament of a young woman government officer during the period of emergency. Sahgal's central theme of the novel is the existential predicament of an individual.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala deals with the social and economic problems of the present world. She also reflects the physical, psychological and emotional stress of women. Her novels are about human beings in love or in marriage. *A New Dominion* and *Heat and Dust* are stories about European women who come to India in quest of spirituality but end up with frustration.

In *Heat and Dust* the central characters Douglas and Olivia belong to the same social background though there is no good relationship between the husband and wife. Douglas fails to understand woman's psychology. The house of Douglas does not offer Olivia peace of mind as there is no love and emotion between husband and wife. Douglas lives in his own world and fails to understand the feelings of Olivia. Olivia becomes the

victim of boredom and everything looks alien to her. *Esmond in India* portrays the experiences of two girls who are misguided by the new tendencies in the society and end up in hopeless disillusionment.

Chaman Nahal's first novel *My True Faces* made him famous as a novelist. But his next novel *Azadi* bought him great fame. It deals with the theme of Indo-Pak partition. He portrays history, politics and society and he satirizes them bitterly. Chaman Nahal is an outstanding Indian English novelist who has portrayed the real middle class India. He shows that life is worth living with all its challenges. Nahal's first novel *My True Faces* exposes Hindu homes which are dominated by religion and tradition. It also explores the misery of life. This novel deals with the disharmony in the marriage life of Kamal Kant and Malti Meena. Traces of anguish are found in Kamal. He suffers pain, anxiety and depression because of the different backgrounds of tradition and westernization. This contributes to psychological realism in the novel.

Sunrise in Fiji is about the individual, society and country. The novel portrays forty five years of life of Harivansh as well as the country's development during this period. Through the character Harivansh, Nahal depicts the country where growing materialization and the gradual spiritual degradation are found. Nahal views life in all its totality. He sees life in its achievements, joys and sorrows and problems.

Bharathi Mukherjee's novels focus on the status of immigration and the feeling of alienation. Herself as an expatriate and immigrant, Mukherjee portrays the struggles that the immigrant undergoes. Her novel *Jasmine* focuses on an illegal immigrants struggle to find her identity in the USA. The story of Jasmine is her journey towards her self-realization of various dimensions of existence. In this novel the characters Jyoti and Jasmine try to become complete individuals and attain self-realization through making

the right choice. At the young age, Jyoti is helpless. Her future holds only widowhood and exile. She is not afraid of her situation and thinks that she can win all battles and establish a strong identity. After the murder of Prakash, Jasmine attempts to reshape her destiny and make it the foundation of development of her inner potential.

Bharathi Mukherjee takes up the problem of Indians living in the west who cannot adjust themselves in an alien land. The novel *Wife* revolves around the characters Amit Dasgupta and his wife Dimple. Amit devotes himself to money-making. Dimple who wishes to come to America finds it difficult in America. She longs for the motherland and is not able to forget life in India. She feels that her own body looks alien. Dimple is not able to live in two worlds which are opposite to each other – the one is her motherland and the other is the land where she has come to live in.

Sashi Deshpande is well known mainly for her portrayals of the existential dilemma of contemporary women who are caught between the traditional role given to them by society and the desire to establish their individual identities. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is a psychological novel. It portrays the nature of the darkness that is seated in the mind of the individual. Emotions of hatred, frustration, lovelessness and anger grow in and around this darkness and cause despair to the victim. Saru is the central figure who finds life miserable not only at her mother's home but also in her husband's home. After the death of her brother her mother asks her why she is alive and he dead. She understands how parents discriminate between male and female children. She alienates herself from her loveless parents.

Roots and Shadows is concerned with quest for selfhood. It portrays the problems of existence. Deshpande has portrayed Indu's inner struggle to discover her real self. She suffers from loneliness. *That Long Silence* portrays the predicament of Jaya. She is

presented as tornself – between what she was before marriage and what she is after the marriage. She is a dutiful wife and satisfies Mohan's expectations. Her husband Mohan could not understand her feelings and as a result she was torn within . Jaya tries to break her own silence and other women. At the end of the novel, after a period of exile, Jaya decides to break her silence.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's works are partially autobiographical dealing with the immigrant experience. Her book *Arranged Marriage* is a collection of short stories of women from India caught between two worlds. In *The Mistress of Spices* the central character Tilo provides spices, not only for cooking but also for the homesickness and alienation that the Indian immigrants experience. Gita Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* explores the struggles of a woman who wants to preserve her identity. The novel examines the multiple existences of Indian women who suffer and sustain life through their struggle and self-realization. The protagonist of the novel Devi strives to come out of her loneliness in a male-dominated world which treats her only as an object.

V.S.Naipaul has earned a reputation as one of the most gifted writers of the twentieth century. Naipaul through his novels explores the relation of colonialism to the loss of cultural identity. Naipaul's *In a Free State* is concerned with issues of freedom for the individual and decolonized world. He also portrays exile and alienation. The theme of exile is also seen in *The Mimic Men* where Ralph struggles to negotiate his identity. He projects that colonization and migration are responsible for alienation. His major themes are alienation, mistrust, rootlessness, loss of identity and self-deception.

Amitav Ghosh's novels are woven out of careful observation of characters from the surrounding and history. In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh deals with the issues of identity

crisis. *The Circle of Reason* portrays the existential angst and turmoil of modern man. The author examines man's desperate efforts to elevate himself from his own condition.

Anjana Apachana has achieved a place for herself as an existentialist with her novel *Listening Now*. She brings out the inner emotional world of her characters who struggle against the absurdity of life. It also expresses a woman's search for self and to establish her own values in the world. Anjana presents a true picture of modern Indian women especially middle class women who suffer due to their existential thinking. The protagonist Padma is a modern woman who always feels that she is an outsider living in her own world. She makes constraints for herself within her mind.

Shoba De is an eminent Indian novelist who explores women's issues through her writing. The novel *Second Thoughts* deals with the problems of a monotonous marital life of a young girl. It reflects the despair in contemporary urban India. Rajan dominates Maya and it throws her into the world of loneliness. Maya faces neglect, lovelessness and complete disregard from her husband like many other women of her times. In all her novels, Shoba De portrays an intimate side of urban woman's life and also reveals her plight in the present day society.

Rohinton Mistry's novels are culture-specific and community oriented. He portrays all the concerns of the modern Parsis who experience the feeling of insecurity. His novels and short story collections deal with the characteristics of middle-class Parsi life and show how the characters struggle between modernity and tradition. The other issues dealt are alienation, fear of death, family problems, economic hardships and spiritual questions.

In such a Long Journey Mistry deals with the Parsi community in India. The novel gives a detailed picture of the life of Gustad and his family in their apartment in Bombay. *A Fine Balance* describes the extreme poverty and shows the bond that develops between four main characters during the period of Emergency. The novel presents a Parsi widow who strives for independent existence, Young Maneck Kohlah who undergoes the problems of existence and Ishwar and Omprakash's struggle for survival in a hostile world. Ishwar and Omprakash decide to migrate to Bombay after the murder of their entire family and become exiles by choice. Dina also displaces herself from home to assert her individuality. Maneck is also displaced from his home in the hills to the college in the city.

Upamanyu Chatterjee is one of the major writers of existential credo in India. His protagonists represent the modern face of upper class Indian experience. They are not only rich but also well educated. Upamanyu Chatterjee focuses on the interior landscape of his characters in all his novels. However, his portrayals have not left the external context of his characters completely. His narratives incorporate the subtle nuances of the shift from external to the internal, the outer to the inner, the social to the private. His works try to etch out the fractured interior landscape of an individual's mind as a progressive shift from the exterior to the inner within this seemingly hostile world.

Upamanyu Chatterjee comes under this group of writers who portray the existential struggles of modern man. As a social realist, he portrays the real world of decay and disintegration and his protagonists are antiheroes. In his conversation with Sunil Sethi, Chatterjee says, "I see the decay all around me; it's a way of looking at the world and it's there in all my books" (37). Chatterjee portrays the dark side of India. As

a vocal spokesperson of postmodernism, he depicts the postmodern condition of the loss of meaning and the disappearance of traditional and moral values of life.

Chatterjee was born in 1959 at Patna, Bihar and studied English literature at Delhi University. His education is the main reason for his love for English language. While studying in school, he wrote a play caricaturing the school rules and regulations in those days. In conversation with Sagarika Ghose, Upamanyu Chatterjee says “I speak in English and write in English and am totally comfortable with that.” (Times of India) Then he joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1983. His professional life marked the beginning of the literary career and it was the source from which he created his characters. He lived as writer in residence in 1990 at the University of Kent, United Kingdom. Currently he serves as Joint Secretary of Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board.

All his experiences as administrative officer and his study of literature helped Upamanyu Chatterjee portray the condition of modern man. His protagonists are antiheroes who struggle hard to live their life in the society which they feel they do not belong to. Being westernized in their mind, they are not able to lead a happy and peaceful life. They face problems like cultural hybridity, displacement, absurdity, frustration and alienation.

Chatterjee’s first novel *English, August: An Indian Story* was published in 1988. It was a great success. In this novel he depicts the Indian bureaucracy and the bureaucratic life led by the bureaucrats. The protagonist of the novel is Agastya Sen who feels that he is a misfit for the post because of his urban consciousness and anglicized background. His second novel *The Last Burden* was published in 1993. In this novel he portrays the Indian middle class family where the values are breaking up. *The*

Mammaries of the Welfare State was published at the end of 2000. It is a sequel to *English, August: An Indian Story*. In this novel, the author focuses on red tapism. In this novel Agastya Sen looks pessimistic; *Weight Loss* was published in 2006. It portrays sexual and spiritual degradation of modern man in the contemporary society. *Way to Go* published in 2010, is a sequel to *The Last Burden* also deals with the disintegrating family life. *Fairy Tales at Fifty*, published in 2014 gives a clear picture of the horrible pointlessness of reality.

English, August: An Indian Story is a novel about young civil servant Agastya Sen. Agastya joined Indian Administrative Service and is sent off “for a year’s training in district administration to a small district town called Madna” (EA 1). The novel is also called a satire on the bureaucracy. The protagonist of this novel Agastya Sen is not able to accommodate himself to the new place. The main reason behind this is his urban life and English education. He smokes marijuana and reads *The Bhagavad Gita* and *Marcus Aurelius* in the secrecy of his room. When Agastya departs for Madna, his friend Dhruvo warns him that he is not the type of a person to succeed as a bureaucrat. As he says, Agastya also is not able to concentrate on his works, he finds life boring and absurd during his sojourn in Madna.

Agastya feels restless and decides to escape from Madna and also his job and hence flees to the big city to take a job in publishing. But he returns to Madna and continues his work. Again he struggles hard to survive in Madna. He leaves the place on leave and goes to Delhi looking for an executive position in a private company. At the same time his friend Dhruvo resigns his job as an executive and prepares to take up the IAS exams. Both of them try to understand their own selves as they are not satisfied with whatever the position they take up.

C.Sengupta says that, “English, August; An Indian Story is a subtle metaphor of contemporary youth’s quest for self-realization” (110). In this novel the author portrays the predicament of an educated modern man. On the other side it portrays the administrative services of India. This novel projecting the inner struggle of the protagonist is an exceptional one among different works of fiction of the 1980s.

The Last Burden depicts the Indian middle class family which sees familial ties as a burden. This novel focuses on the family relationship - the relationship between father and mother, the relationship between the two sons and between the elders. Due to the fast changing socio-economic scenario and the longing for modernity in the society, the relationships and values become a burden destroying one’s individuality.

The central character of this novel is Jamun. He is a bachelor and stays away from his family. When his mother Urmila is hospitalized, he returns home and decides to stay at home for some time. During his stay a quarrel ensues between the sons and their father regarding the mother’s expenses for treatment. There is yet another reason for Jamun’s stay; Kasturi, an old friend of Jamun is bearing his child even though she is married to another person. Then Jamun decides to go to the town where he works. Later, Jamun agrees to take care of his father when Burfi, Jamun’s brother passes on the burden to Jamun. This novel can also be read as a journey from rootlessness to maturity. Chatterjee uses the technique of flashback and flash-forward to project these ideas. The novel is a powerful portrayal of the Indian middle class family where the family members reject the moral values and their responsibilities.

In *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* Agastya comes back as an IAS officer; but his attitude to life and the place Madna remains the same. The novel focuses on the corruption prevalent in the society and as Nandan Lal says, “The camera zooms in on the

faceless, cynical bureaucracy that is panting very hard and milking the state very dry – and this takes care of the action” (20). The protagonist Agastya feels that life is very dull and he finds himself alienated. At the beginning of the novel itself Agastya is found searching for proper accommodation. He is not satisfied with what he is and where he is. He is bored of his routine work and becomes involved with Daya who runs an advertising agency. Though she offers him a position he remains devoted to bureaucracy. As he is frustrated with his routine work and the place, whenever he finds time and chance, he escapes from Madna. He grabs the opportunity of escaping to France when a training programme is arranged.

In *Weight Loss* the story revolves around the character Bhola and his sexual obsession. Bhola even from his young age itself is ruled by his sexual urge for men as well as women. Throughout his life he goes after the vegetable vendor Moti. All the decisions taken by the protagonist are because of his sexual urges. The world which Chatterjee portrays looks like an unreal world but it is believable.

It is very hard to believe the other side of India where one can find moral degradation and spiritual degradation. India is a nation which is proud of its cultural heritage and which believes in moral values, purification and spirituality. However, these values are not considered important by modern youths. When a child is born to Bhola he is very happy; but a near death experience of his child brings a change in him; overcome by love for his child, he wants to lead a peaceful life with his wife Kamala.

Way to Go is a sequel to the novelist’s earlier work *The Last Burden*. It is the story of Jamun, the central character in the novel and his father, Shyamanand who is in his deathbed. The major part of the story deals with Jamun’s struggles with the sudden disappearance of his old, half-paralyzed father. The novel also brings out the past

remembrances of his family, and friends who have left them. The rest of the story revolves around Jamun and his interaction with the people around him.

The book illustrates the fact that every person who seems to have a normal life actually has many dirty secrets within him. The author highlights the reality of the family life. The most important part in the novel is the relationship between father, son, the problems they face living together and their need for each other. The book has large amount of depressing and agonized thoughts about life and death and the futility of life in general.

Upamanyu Chatterjee is a fairly recent novelist. Comparative studies have been done on him like Abu Bakr's thesis on "Nationalist Consciousness in the Novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, Amitav Ghosh and Upamanyu Chatterjee". "Human urges, Existential Fears and Evasive Silence in the Fiction of Upamanyu Chatterjee" has been done by Dusyant Kumar. Nidhi Nema has analyzed the "Ironic vision in the Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee". "A Discourse Analysis of the Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee" has been done by Dr.G.M.Shriaskar. "The Theme of Ennui in Camus's *The Outsider*, Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Chatterjee's *English, August: An Indian Story*" has been done by Kathiresan, B. "Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee: A Study" has been done by Cirasala Naganna and "Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee : A Study in Major Themes" has been done by Bhiya Lal Vishwa Karma. Other comparative studies are: "Contemporary Sociopolitical Situation in the Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee and Vikram Seth" by Dhyaneswar Tukaram Holker, "People Pawns and Politics: A Study of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English, August* and Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*" by Purude Ashwin Manik and "Representations of Landscape in

Rajarao's *Kanthapura* and Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August: An Indian Story*" by Praveen Sharda. The present study focuses on the journey undertaken by the major characters in the process of which they are able to attain self-realization.

The novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee receive critical acclaim from many critics. A.K.Singh's article on *English, August: An Indian Story* is a significant one. He points out how Agastya's background becomes a powerful alienating force and how that has created displacement in Agastya. Sanjay Kumar in his article talks about the theme of exile that runs throughout the novel. According to Nomratha Mogral, Upamanyu Chatterjee is the most representative novelist of the present day as his novels reveal anxiety about modern identity.

Pradeep Trikha's article on *The Last Burden* emphasizes how the author probes into the mysterious working of the human mind and projects the complex problem in the contemporary society. He says that Chatterjee's concerns are disintegration of the family, discontinuity of the tradition, conflict between the generations and several other issues which result in the isolation of an individual. According to Mohan Ramanam, *The Last Burden* is remarkable for its cynicism. C.Sengupta's article shows how the novel presents family ties as burden. According to Namratha, the protagonists of Chatterjee's novels suffer from "acute alienation from their post-colonial milieu being too modern. Agastya's picaresque as IAS officer in E.A. and Jamun's neumonic journey as son at his mother's dead-bed in TLB are journey of modern exiles in their own land seeking after self discovery" (46).

Uma Mahadevan Dasgupta points out in her article "The Return of August" that his characters' obsession with sexual acts with the domestic help carries on from *English, August* via *The Last Burden* into *Mammaries of the Welfare State*. Rochelle J.Almeida

says that the corruption of the Indian Civil Service is satirized as the ‘steel frame’, and its running of the welfare state. Bruce King writes about the novel *Weight Loss* that Chatterjee’s India lacks shared values or consistency of actions and morals. Nandini Lal calls *Weight Loss* as ‘Satyr’s satire’.

Priya Savor in her “Book Review: *Way to Go*” says that the novel is relevant to many of the people because it highlights the fact that each and every one seems to lead a normal life but they actually hide a lot of dirty secrets within him. Veturisarma in his review “Neither Here Nor There” says that the book has excessive amounts of thoughts about life and death. Nisha in her article “*Way to Go: A Critical Study of Tradition-Modernity Conflict*” says “Death and Departure are, as the title suggests, central to the book.”(82)

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s five novels *English*, *August: An Indian story*, *The Last Burden*, *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*, *The Weight Loss* and *Way to Go* have been taken for this study. This study focuses on Chatterjee’s heroes’ journey from a sense of alienation to an urge towards escapism and finally finding out their own solution through a positive involvement in the compelling realities of life in the contemporary society. This is an attempt to define man’s quest for identity and his attaining selfhood in life. Each and every individual is impelled by a search for himself and both internal and external factors lead to self-realization. Chatterjee in his works attempts to discuss the importance of man’s identification of the self to bring out the social evils prevalent in the contemporary society.

The researcher proposes to study the select novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee and to explore the modern man’s journey who by experiencing the problems of identity crisis, cultural conflicts, existential loneliness move towards the destination of self-realization.

While studying these issues, postcolonial concepts like hybridity and mimicry, feminism, identity, self-realization and a few aspects of existentialism are dealt with by way of references.

Hypothesis:

Man creates conflict and feels lonely; hence he finds himself as a misfit in the society. When he tries to overcome his problems, his journey towards self-realization begins. This study is an attempt to analyse the works and characters of Upamanyu Chatterjee with the message of bringing about a change in the society through a positive attitude in the minds of the people.

Thesis Statement:

A man's journey towards self-realization and his search for himself have become important aspects in the contemporary society. This study attempts at analyzing Upamanyu Chatterjee's protagonists who undertake such a journey as they are bound to perform different roles in the society.

Objectives of the study are:

- To explore the socio-cultural problems due to the impact of colonialism
- To analyse the problem of identity crisis in the modern society
- To study the protagonists as antiheroes in Chatterjee's novels
- To assess the existential loneliness and alienation of the major characters who try to attain self-realization
- To draw out conclusions through the study of characters who accomplish self-realization by understanding their different roles in the society.

To Upamanyu Chatterjee, man's quest for self-realization is attained by his discovery of the inner self. This journey of self-realization progresses with man's realization of his relationship with the world around him.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's psychic insight into the nuances of a contemporary man's life is evident as he presents a microcosmic picture of an individual confronted by the external forces and by the internal conflicts. The study proposes to bring out the view that the realization of oneself can be achieved not in isolation but through relationships with others and by understanding one's own responsibility. Hence there is a need for building significant relationships based on love and understanding and by affirming to tradition and culture not only in the family but also in the society to lead a purposeful and meaningful life.

The present study is divided into six chapters including introduction and conclusion. Chapter I – Introduction gives a brief outline of Indian English fiction and the major themes like identity crisis, alienation and absurdity dealt by the writers and the way they have portrayed the inner struggles of modern man. It also gives a glimpse of existentialism and deals with the contribution to the field of Indian English fiction, a short note on the background of the writer, his works, themes, and his place among the Indian writers with the review of literature.

Chapter II – Socio-cultural Problems studies the problems that arise due to westernization, hybridity, mimicry and the prevalent social evils like corruption, misuse of power and loveless relationships and the erosion of values. Chapter III – Identity Crisis deals with the impact of western culture and the resultant loss of traditional and familial values leading to loneliness, frustration, despair and lack of warmth in relationships.

Chapter I V – Moral Degeneration studies how the protagonists instead of being heroes become antiheroes with their untruthfulness immorality and rejection of traditional and moral values. Chapter V – Existential Loneliness studies how the protagonists who represent the modern man fail to appreciate or have the qualities of love, faith, understanding, adaptability and selflessness. The failure to understand others and his own self leads to alienation. This withdrawal of man from society, family and his own self taken and used in the right sense makes him analyze his own self.

Chapter VI – Conclusion deals with man struggling to know his own self. The process of becoming makes him understand what is freedom and how he should make use of it to choose and act so that his responsibility as a true man can be realized and carried out in his different roles as son, husband and father and finally as a true human being in the society.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels continue to throw light on the complex role of his characters. The present work attempts to study aspects of displacement, alienation, anchorlessness, westernization, detachment and responsibility in the family and their effect on an individual in the contemporary society. The study attempts to establish Upamanyu Chatterjee as a realist and a writer with a social purpose committed to social change by depicting the life of the modern man.