Chapter Five

The Question of Commitment

The protagonists of Greene and Joshi continue their search for the meaning of their life and answers for the problems of their crisis of alienation. A reading of the novels of the two novelists reveals the fact that some of their protagonists who remain aloof and uncommitted for sometime, soon under the pressure of love for some one or love and pity for the suffering humanity take a sudden leap and involve themselves with others around and find some kind of prop for sustaining their life.

Greene and Joshi have read Sartre and they know what he has written about commitment. According to Sartre “good faith” means “to play a representative role” (Being and Nothing 60). Sartre implies that only a man who is true to himself makes a constant effort to adhere to it and lives a sincere life. Keeping the prevailing circumstances in mind, he chooses to take a side and commits himself to support it. To Sartre, choice itself is nothing but commitment. The total personality of an individual is shaped by the path of life chosen by him and his commitment to it. If one does not commit oneself and help others one is left to drift away in the great ocean of life.

Sartre adds “choice is possible, but what is not possible is to choose. [One] can always choose but [one] ought to know that if [one] does not choose, [One] is still choosing” (Existentialism and Human Emotions 41). Similar is the case with commitment. Even if one does not commit oneself to anything in particular one still stands committed.

For Sartre, the commitment to choice is binding. Commitment means responsibility. Man is a part of his social, cultural and environmental milieu. In this socio-temporal
existence, he is charged with certain responsibilities and commitments. Both Greene and Joshi have totally grasped what Sartre and others have said about social responsibilities and commitments.

In both Greene and Joshi, human love pulls out the alienated protagonists from their cocoon-like existence and makes them involve themselves with others in life. In Greene’s first novel The Man Within, it is human love that lifts out Andrews’ innate goodness from the mire of his sin, strengthens his spirit and makes him involve himself with the life of others. As Gangeswar Rai puts it, it is human love that “leads him to the state of self-realization and gives him a glimpse of the ultimate source of existence” (15).

Andrews “is made up of two persons” (13). His lower self represents lust and cowardice and his nobler self is “an uncomfortable questioning critic” (29). As Marie Beatrice Mesnet has pointed out Andrews is a split-personality having “an interior division” (45). Andrews who is essentially lustful comes into contact with Elizabeth, “a saint” (The Man Within 57) who is “as holy as a vision” (52). She gives him all that he has missed so far in his life. With her holiness, she burns out all his lust and cowardice and encourages him to go to Lewes and bear witness against the smugglers who ever pursue him. At first, he resolves to act in sincerity, but soon he forgets all about it and on his way to the court, he falls to Lucy, a woman of loose morals, and corrupts himself. He betrays both himself and Elizabeth who has drawn him out from the slime into which he has fallen and made him involve himself in an act that would save him and others. He realizes his folly and cries out: “I’ve wallowed . . . was a fool and I imagined I was escaping, but now I have sunk so deep that I’ve reached the
bottom” (145). “He was hot with shame and self-loathing” (136-37). Andrew does not authenticate his existence by discovering his active inner self. If he is good he would realize his potentialities beyond the passing impulse of the moment by choosing to do what he has been asked to do by Elizabeth. As he is basically bad and lustful, he cannot discover his true self, attend to its inner call and answer it courageously in order to assert his individuality and thereby achieve authentic existence.

Greene shows the redemptive power of a religious kind of love which Elizabeth exercises upon Andrews. As R.W.B. Lewis points out: “the energy that does redeem Francis Andrews is the love of Elizabeth, which combines with the stimulus of danger to give him a glimpse of the ultimate source of existence” (230). With the death of Elizabeth all that is base and lustful in him die and he feels a kind of peace which is beyond description. He “. . . felt happy and at peace . . . his father was slain and yet a self remained, a self which knew neither lust, blasphemy . . .” (The Man Within 182). Now he kneels down and prays to God and he is prepared for any kind of commitment and sacrifice.

In Greene’s novel The Honorary Consul the love for a woman, her child and her husband pulls Dr. Plarr out of his shell of alienation and makes him involve himself in a rebellion that is going on in his country. Dr. Plarr is the son of a liberal political activist who is supposed to be dead or kept in a prison in Paraguay. Like his father, Dr. Plarr is also full of compassion for the suffering poor and whenever he is with his rich patients he feels as though he has left his father’s friends behind “to help his enemies” (166). Dr. Plarr is an emotionally deficient man. He has no ties or loyalties or even very strong desires. He is an unemotional “cold fish” (212) living in
an absurd and indifferent society. He is a detached and passive observer of life, incapable of love, political action, religious belief or indeed anything else except sleeping with his patients. He thinks: “Life is not noble or dignified . . . Nothing is ineluctable. Life has surprises. Life is absurd” (16). He has no care for others because “caring is the only dangerous thing” (237). He avoids love because it demands the responsibility of a lover. Love, to him, is “a claim which he wouldn’t meet, a responsibility he would reuse to accept” (172). During his affairs with his married patients he tries to avoid the expression “I love you” (141). He is always able to find some other explanation for his behaviour with women – “loneliness, pride, physical desire or even a simple sense of curiosity” (142). Even his affair with Clara Fortnum begins clumsily. He seduces her out of cold curiosity and after the act with great relief he thinks “this is the end of my obsession . . . I’m a free man again” (81). When she becomes pregnant he advises abortion. He has no faith in God. He calls God “that horror up there sitting in the clouds of heaven” (224).

Dr. Plarr’s lust for Clara changes into genuine love when he notices Charley Fortnum’s pure love for her. It stirs in him jealously which is the sign of love. Plagued by jealousy, he remarks: “That stupid banal word love. It’s never meant anything to me. Like the word God I know how to fuck – I don’t know how to love. Poor drunken Charley Fortnum wins the game” (251). He admits his defeat which confirms that his lust for Clara has now transformed itself into real love.

Dr. Plarr is not interested in politics. He is not a Communist. He finds Marx “unreadable” (175). Though he is not willing to involve himself with the terrorists and their plot; he is drawn into the vortex of it because of his personal motives. He thinks
that his involvement and commitment will set his father free who is in the prison. His love for Clara who is now four months pregnant by him also sets him in motion. He says: “And besides, there is Fortnum. I can’t help feeling responsible a bit for him. He’s not a patient of mine, but Mrs. Fortnum is” (136). Very soon he learns that his father is dead and he feels like retracing his steps from the abyss of involvement. However, unshaken by the thought of his own death and out of compassion for Clara and the child she is carrying, he walks out of the rebel hideout to face death in an attempt to save Fortnum whom he says “would make a better father than I would ever be” (171). Dr. Plett embraces death out of his compassion and concern for others. As in The Man Within, in this novel also, Greene points out the power of human love which makes even the most detached man give up his aloofness and commit himself to do something good for others.

The story of Brown and Martha in Greene’s The Comedians shows that one cannot be drawn into commitment if one is actuated by sheer lust and not genuine love. The novel is set in Haiti under the dictatorship of Doctor Duvalier, better known as “Papa Doc”. It is against this background the main characters of the novel, Brown, Jones, Smith and Dr. Magiot try to make sense of their lives. When the novel opens, we find Brown, the protagonist, returning to his empty Hotel in Haiti after a long absence of about three tourist seasons. Earlier, he tried to sell it to some one, but now he has returned to it to manage it. He also wants to continue his joyless love relationship with Martha, the wife of Luis Pineda, the South African Ambassador. Brown is nearly sixty years old with very ordinary and unimpressive features. He has worked in several parts of the world and he keeps some of his experiences to himself.
without sharing them with others. His father left Monte Corlo where he was born and his mother led a fashionable life moving from place to place and from lover to lover. Finally she came to Haiti and from the Comtesse de Lascot-Villers, the Count, she got the Hotel Trainon which she subsequently bequeathed to Brown, her son. Brown is also a rolling stone like his mother and he has gone to several countries of the world.

Brown’s concept of life as a tragi-comedy and his rootlessness make him think that life is all sham, a game, a joke. He feels that in such a world commitment to anything will in no way benefit him. It will limit his freedom and in its wake bring him pain and suffering. Like Greene’s Dr. Plarr and Fowler he looks forward to the peace of remaining uncommitted. He says: “I had left involvement behind me . . . I had dropped it like the roulette-token in the offertory. I had felt myself not only incapable of love; but even of guilt” (286). He likes to be “an inhabitant of emptiness”. He does not take sides; he remains uncommitted. He has no roots anywhere, not even in Haiti. He says: “ . . . my roots would never go deep enough anywhere to make me a home or make me secure with love” (223). He envies people like Dr. Magiot who have faith in a life of commitment. His rootlessness has not given him the desire to live amicably with others and find stability and contentment. Brown wants a luxurious hotel, a woman to love and enough wealth, and not the limitations imposed by commitment and involvement.

Brown does not show any deep involvement in his affair with Martha. His affair with her begins very casually. Martha is at the dead end of her marriage and Brown’s love for her does not go further than his admiration of her loyalty in sticking to her marriage so that her child may get proper home. Brown does not take the affair
seriously because it will involve the responsibility of caring and loving another person. Martha’s love for him, on the contrary, is sincere and honest. But Brown has no faith in her fidelity. The bond that unites them is not very strong. They make love in absurd circumstances: under statues and in hotels near empty pools. Their union is never a sweet and a harmonious one.

Martha is always sincere to Brown. But he thinks that she has developed a relationship with Jones. Having become suspicious of her character he asks her the awkward question whether she has slept with Jones. And she in return replies “Yes” (256). It is a slap on his face and he feels sorry for his incapacity to love her deeply and seriously. The fear of the love affair coming to an end grows like canker at his heart. Agitated by jealousy and anger he puts Jones at the head of the guerillas of Dr. Philipot and causes his death.

Joshi’s protagonist, Sindi Oberoi in The Foreigner behaves like Greene’s Dr. Plarr and Brown in his attitude to the women he loves. Like them, he is overruled by what he calls “detachment” which prevents him from striking up any permanent relationship with the women of his choice. Like Brown he is rootless and his “foreignness” makes him think that life is absurd and that no involvement or commitment is possible in a life which is unreal. An analysis of his character and his philosophy of life shows to what an extent he is akin to Greene’s protagonists in his behaviour and his views regarding commitment and involvement.

Sindi like Sartre’s existential creature, pour-soi finds himself in an agonized situation. He is a perennial outsider. By origin he is an Indian. But he was brought up
in Kenya. He received his early education in London and then he went to America for his engineering studies. When he was an infant his parents died in an air crash. It is natural, therefore, that he develops “metaphysical alienation” and behaves in a somewhat strange manner. His predicament is like that of Greene’s protagonists Dr.Plarr and Brown. They have also either lost their parents or they live in a place far away from them. Their life is conditioned by a situation in which they are parentless, homeless and lonely with nobody to fall back upon. Like them, Sindi also drifts aimlessly from place to place in search of an anchorage. To Mr. Khemka he says:

I have no roots. I have no system of morality. What does it mean to me if you call me an immoral man. I have no reason to be one thing rather than another . . . I don’t even have a reason to live. And I am not alone. There are hundreds like me wandering the streets of this city and your industries are disgorging more of them everyday. (139)

Like Greene’s Dr. Plarr and Brown, Sindi is also devoid of emotions, and he has no attachment. All the three have no God; no religion and no values to adhere to. Of all the three, Sindi is more close to Meursault of Camus’ The Outsider. Sindi like Meursault, is fully aware of the meaninglessness and the purposelessness of the life in this world. Sindi says:

Lying there in the bed I wondered in what way, if any, did I belong to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose, unless you could call the search for peace a purpose . . . My foreignness lay within me and I couldn’t leave myself behind wherever I went, . . .
Now I suppose I existed only for dying; so far as I knew everybody else
did the same thing. It was sad, nonetheless. (The Foreigner 61)

He also observes: “Nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone seeming to be
permanent. Nothing seems to be very important . . . Death wipes out everything, for
most of us anyway. All that is left is a big mocking zero” (107).

The awareness of life’s absurdity stirs a very deep sense of anguish in Sindi.
He thinks he can live alone totally detached without having any contact with the
outside world. To Mr. Khemka he says: “I had no social life to speak of. I had only
one life and it could be called by whatever name one wished” (45). At one stage in his
life Sindi even contemplates suicide. He feels sad and unhappy because his education
does not teach him “how to live” (155).

He comes to the conclusion that a wise man should love without any
attachment and without any desire for marriage. His words remind us of the message
of the Bhagavad Gita which says: “But he who controls the senses by the mind, O
Arjuna, and without attachment engages the organs of action in the path of work, he is
superior” (III, 7). Sindi seeks to achieve total detachment in life. But the defect is he is
fully engrossed with his own self which is against the preachings of the Bhagavad
Gita. He rightly observes: “For twenty years I had moved whichever way life had led
me. I had learnt much on the way. I had learnt to be detached from the world, but not
from myself” (The Foreigner 195).

Sindi’s love for June is based on his sense of detachment. He wants to possess
her, but he is not willing to marry her. “I was afraid of possessing any body and I was
afraid of being possessed, and marriage meant both” (105-106). Debating on the necessity of marriage, Sindi comes to the conclusion: “Marriage was more often a lust for possession than anything else, . . .” (66). June Blyth is “. . . a beautiful, benign, sensual, affectionate American girl . . .” (Pandey 46). She gives herself abundantly to him as she wants to be of use to someone. She “was one of those rare persons who have a capacity to forget themselves in somebody’s trouble” (The Foreigner 112). Shyam M. Asnani in his “A Study of Arun Joshin’s Fiction” comments: “She is essentially so uncomplicated a person that whenever she sees somebody in pain she goes straight out to pet and nurse him rather that analyzing it a million time like the rest of us” (275).

June is like Greene’s Sarah Miles and Major Scobie who are full of human love and whose involvement with their lovers is based on pity and compassion. Sindi says: “We made love with the strange fierceness that was as excruciating in its pleasure as it was painful” (The Foreigner 123). Time and again she asks him: “Let’s get married, Sindi. For God’s sake, let’s get married” (124). But no argument of her convinces him and he sticks himself to his strange conviction of detachment. He tells her: “Marriage wouldn’t help, June. We are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within. You can’t send two persons through a ceremony and expect that their aloneness will disappear” (124). He further tells her: “I can’t marry you because I am incapable of doing so. It would be like going deliberately mad. It is inevitable that our delusions will break us up sooner or later” (124). He adds “You can love without attachment, without desire. You can love without attachment to the objects of your love. You can love without fooling yourself
that the things you love are indispensable either to you or to the world. Love is real only when you know that what you love must one day die” (171).

Sindi’s indifference and his constant harping on his odd principle of “detachment” alienates June from him and she moves to Babu Rao Khemka who loves her in all sincerity. At the same time, being an Indian born to orthodox parents, Babu has his own moral inhibitions. He wants to embrace and enjoy the free life of America, yet he cannot leave behind the age-old Indian values of finding chastity and fidelity in women. Though he loves June intensely and decides to marry her, his orthodox and conventional Indian morality prevents him even to have any physical relations with her. On the other hand, June is an American girl who prefers a free sexual life. When she tells Babu of her earlier relations with Sindi he “suddenly grows pale” (173), calls her a “whore” (173), hits her in the face, leaves the flat and commits suicide by driving off blindly in his car.

A deep sense of affliction scourges Sindi and finding his position unjustifiable, he is seized with the sense of guilt and remorse, “mauvaise foi” [self-deception due to unethical action]: “I had presumed that I could extricate her from the web of her own actions; that I could make her happy by simply standing still and letting her use me which ever way she wished. Nothing could have been farther from the idea of detachment. That was a fatal presumption” (196). Detachment becomes “a bogus garb” (Pandey 51). It now dawns on him: “Detachment at the time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it. The gods had set a heavy price to teach me just that” (The Foreigner 192). As O.P. Mathur says: “The feeling of nakedness in the hands of existence grows
with every passing day and a strong urge overtakes him again to roam about the streets of the world” (New Critical 42). He wants to “start life anew” (The Foreigner 175). After much careful planning he comes to India, the land of his ancestors.

Siddhartha Sharma calls Sindi “a hypocrite” and “a selfish man” (20). “Sindi’s attitude to life and love is in total disregard of the values of human relations, which lead to his obsessions with non-involvement” (20). Asnani aptly puts it: “pleasure without involvement and love without possession are the values that condition the attitude and overall vision of Sindi” (New Dimensions 64).

When looked at closely Greene’s Dr. Plarr and Brown and Joshi’s Sindi seem to be “hypocrites” to a certain extent. All the three use “detachment” as a false garb to enjoy the maximum of life without any real attachment and involvement. Like Greene’s characters, Sindi can also sleep with any woman in any place without having any sense of burden and responsibility. All the three do not want to be possessed by any woman. Dr. Plarr alone has the saving grace of genuine love for Clara at least at the last moment when her life is in danger. Brown and Sindi are hard nuts to crack. On no account, they will come out of their self-created shell in which they live all alone without any attachment with others. What unites the three is the streak of jealousy in their character. One is reminded of the question that Brown puts to Martha, Dr. Plarr’s jealousy for Charley Fortnum who possesses Clara and Sindi’s excessive love making with June who being unable to forget him confesses all her relationships with him to the man who is getting himself ready to marry her.

Scholars have tried to find both philosophical and Hindu religious dimensions in Joshi’s novel The Foreigner. Some have even attempted to read in it the much
discussed “the East-West Encounter” theme. But what appeals very much to a careful reader of the novel is the plight of the lonely individuals who drift along the roads of the world without any sense of direction and purpose. Tapan Kumar Ghosh has aptly touched the most vital part of the novel when he says: “There are moments in the novel when the author seems to suggest that Sindi’s rootlessness, purposelessness and consequential sense of loneliness are not his problems alone. They are the symptoms of a malaise that affects an entire generation” (52). Viewed in this perspective, Greene’s protagonists Dr. Plarr and Brown and Joshi’s Sindi are the products of the modern socio-cultural conditions and the present world of gross materialism. They are the representatives of the modern men and women who are essentially self-centered and egoistic. They have conspicuously missed the important dimension of the sense of belonging. They are exactly like the members of what David Riesman has called “The Lonely Crowd”, the members of which are devoid of moral and spiritual values. They have lost themselves in the wilderness of their instinctual pressures. The two novelists have artistically presented the plight of alienated and dispossessed souls which are ever on the rise in almost all the parts of the world today.

Violence and brutal killing that take place during a war or a rebellion also make the protagonists of Greene and Joshi lead an authentic life stirring up in them pity and compassion for the suffering humanity. As an ardent champion of the individual, like Sartre, Greene is attracted towards individual’s freedom of choice and his engagements. Sartre advocates freedom which alone is the reality. According to him “. . . there is no determinism – man is free, man is freedom” (Existentialism and Humanism 34). Greene’s protagonist Fowler in The Quiet American is a highly
individualized character. He is a sophisticated European having a lot of emotional restraint. Living in Saigon in the fifties, Fowler reports about the Vietnam War. He remains uncommitted not only in politics but also in other spheres including religion, human relations, war, and social controversies. “I have no politics”, he says (129). He says again and again that he is only a reporter and so he has no involvement. As a reporter in a place where war is going on, he thinks his business is to see reality quite objectively and write reports without any prejudice. Like Minty in Greene’s England Made Me, he drinks, eats and scamps his work. He lives like an exile without any ambition, totally detached from the prevailing situation. He decides not to get himself involved in the political struggle between the Colonialists and the Communists, because he is not interested in politics. His attitude of detachment is the result of his firm conviction: “it had been an article of my creed. The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them love, let them murder, I would not be involved . . . I took no action, even an opinion is a kind of action” (The Quiet American 28). Deeply concerned only with his personal freedom, he is against committing himself because commitment means limitation and sacrifice of his hard-earned freedom. Like Greene’s Dr. Plarr, Fowler hates Communism as it deprives individuals of their freedom to think for themselves and forces them “to believe what they are told” (95). When Pyle tells Fowler that people do not want Communism, the latter heartily agrees with him. Seeing the violence perpetrated by the loyalists, Fowler denounces all “isms” and even God.

In his private life also, Fowler is uncommitted. Like Dr. Plarr and Brown and Joshi’s Sindi, he has no God, no religion and no moral scruples. Like them he also
picks up women and soon leaves them and feels no real attachment to them. “... his truth is temporary” (119). He lives with Phuong because she gives him physical comfort, prepares his opium pipe and drives away the loneliness that engulfs him. He has no real love for her and he has no care for “her damned interests” (59).

Fowler refuses to be moved by the tales of suffering and death. Trouin tells Fowler that “one day something will happen. You will take a side” (151). Mr.Heng, the Chinese Underworld operator also tells Fowler that one cannot avoid involvement always. He says: “sooner or latter ... one has to take sides. If one is to remain human” (174). Thus, being surrounded by people who are involved in some action, after a certain period of time, Fowler becomes weary of simply remaining as a mere spectator. He understands that he cannot be at ease “if someone else is in pain” (117). With a touch of pain and anguish he notices the dead bodies of soldiers floating in a canal. He says: “The canal was full of bodies ... The bodies overlapped: one head, seal-grey, and anonymous as a convict with an unshaven scalp, struck up out of the water like a buoy. There was no blood. I suppose it had flowed away long time ago ...” (51-52).

On another occasion when he hears the cries of a mortally wounded soldier, he feels that he is responsible for causing him his pain: “Then I heard a low crying begin again from what was left of the tower ... I was responsible for the voice crying in the dark: I had prided myself on detachment, on not belonging to this war, but those wounds had been inflicted by me just as though I had used the sten ...” (113). Fowler’s compassion and pity for the suffering and the dead can also be noticed in his
reaction on seeing the dead bodies of a mother and her child. His heart melts in pity and he says in pain:

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\ldots \text{they were clearly dead: a small neat clot of blood on the woman’s forehead, and the child might have been sleeping. He was about six years old and he lay like an embryo in the womb with his little bony knees drawn up} \ldots \text{. There was a gnawed piece of loaf under his body. I thought, ‘I hate war’. (53)}
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Pity for the victims of war draws out Fowler from his hideout and makes him involve himself with others and fight against the terrorists. He enters into a pact with a local Communist who arranges the murder of Pyle who has been a menace to human life in Vietnam. This act of Fowler is not political, it is rather personal and it comes out of his pity and compassion for the suffering people. He also gets back Phuong not for sexual gratification but for companionship in old age. He feels “\ldots sex is not the problem so much as old age and death” (104). Lawrence Lerner is wrong when he says, “Fowler is jealous of Pyle who stole his girl” (“Love and Gossip” 136). It is not Fowler’s love for Phuong that causes the death of Pyle, but it is his intense longing for peace that motivates him to do away with Pyle who is responsible for the death of a number of innocent people. Fowler now admits that his peace depends upon the peace of others. Fowler’s involvement and commitment in the human situation is caused by his deep human love which comes out of his immense desire to save the poor from the hands of those who are violent.

Greene’s Maurice Castle who figures in The Human Factor is also driven to act and commit himself when he finds his freedom as well as the freedom of others who
live with him is threatened by people who engage themselves in violent revolts. Castle and Colonel Daintry rise up against the bureaucracy which restricts their freedom and prevents them from living a personal life. To start with, Castle is a veritable burnt-out case like Querry, and like him he ends up with showing his immense love of humanity by accepting human commitment. He suffers from the feeling of separation from the people around him and in the office he is supposed to work with his “mouth shut like a criminal” (22). Castle longs to experience a sense of security which he once enjoyed while he was being carried from his ward to the operation theatre in a hospital, “... with no responsibilities to any one or anything, even to his own body” (115). He prefers inaction like Fowler and the other protagonists of Greene and Joshi who practise “detachment”. The following passage quoted from the novel makes this very clear:

    Everything would be looked after for better or worse by somebody else.
    Somebody with the highest professional qualifications. That was the way death ought to come in the end, he thought, ... He always hoped that he would move towards death with the same sense that before long he would be released from anxiety for ever. (115)

He wants nothing out of life except “... a permanent home, in a city where he could be accepted as a citizen, as a citizen without any pledge of faith, not the city of God or Marx, but the city called Peace of Mind” (107). Like Fowler, Dr. Plarr, Brown and Sindi, Castle has also no God and no ideological affiliations. He says: “I left God behind in the school chapel, but there were priests I sometimes met in Africa who made me believe again – for a moment – over a drink” (107). Again like the other protagonists of Greene and Joshi, Castle has also “no politics” (13). He says that he
cannot believe in Communism which does not have “a human face” (107). He asserts: “I don’t have any trust in Marx and Lenin any more than I have in Saint Paul, . . .” (107).

Soon Castle is drawn out to commit himself. His involvement is complete when he becomes a “naturalized black” (119) by marrying Sarah. He is full of love and sympathy for the people who are engaged in cultivation in the African desert. He promises to be with them: “He would not die fighting for apartheid or for the white race but for so many morgen . . . subject to drought and flood and earthquakes and cattle disease, and snakes . . .” (152). Admiring a white farmer in Africa, Castle tells his wife: “he was one of those who will have to die when your people take control . . . I meant of course our people” (151).

Castle is also drawn into action seeing the violence around him. Instead of joining any political party, he realizes his human responsibility and helps the poor farmers in cultivating their land. He has no faith in any abstract political philosophy or ideology. He has created for himself the personal way of life out of the void of nothingness all around him. As Gangeswar Rai points out: “Through him Greene Stresses the significance of discovering the human in the very heart of the bewildering social hierarchy, personal meaning in the midst of the impersonal absurd” (97). Castle’s kinship with the other protagonists of Greene and Joshi is self-evident. Behaving in almost a similar manner, these protagonists clearly bring to the fore the existential vision of the novelists under discussion.

Joshi’s Ratan also finds violence and brutal killing that is going on around him and he commits himself to serve the people. As a matter of fact, Ratan himself is
responsible for the creation of violence. The battle with China is lost. It claims the lives of hundreds of people. Ratan’s friend, the Brigadier runs away from the war-field. On his first visit, Ratan finds that the Brigadier is normal but when he visits him the second time he is informed that the Brigadier has had a nervous breakdown and so he is admitted in the Military Hospital. He is on the verge of insanity. When Ratan reaches the hospital, he finds that it is impossible to see the Brigadier. He tells his people that he is his close friend. But their observation is: “Great friends . . . were usually the most harmful” (The Apprentice 92). What they say is true. Ratan is mainly responsible for all the troubles of the Brigadier. In the hospital Ratan is very much moved by pity and remorse. The sight of the Brigadier shakes him completely:

She led the way into the room. It had a large window in one wall.
Through the glass of the window we could see the Brigadier in the verandah. He was rocking, rocking, rocking. What was the matter? I asked his wife again. She said they were not meant to disturb him. I asked if he was not well. He was all right, she said. But she did not think I should disturb him. The two of us watched the sick man in silence. He was shaved and his hair was combed. His night-suit was crisp and clean, his dressing-grown elegant as ever. And yet it did not add up something, some priceless essence that I had known and recognized for forty years, had vanished. (99)

Ratan “was horrified” (100). He watched the Brigadier “with a sense of doom” (100). Now it is for the first time in his life, after the death of his father, he feels pity for another suffering human being.
I had felt the pain of another as my own, the first being the time when my father was shot. Yes, I had felt – and can still feel – I had felt that bullet in my chest; I, too, had spun around and, then, I had felt the second bullet in the hollow of my back. And standing there by the glass window I felt as though it was not the Brigadier but I who was rocking through some dark dungeons of the world. And, you know, wading through this dark I did something that I had almost forgotten how to do: I prayed. (100)

Ratan who is responsible for all the miseries of the Brigadier is now praying for his health moved by pity, sorrow and affection. Once again, we are reminded of the prayers made by Sarah Miles and Major Scobie for the sake of others. Like Sarah Miles, Ratan also does not know how to pray. But both mumble out a prayer and make an appeal to God. Ratan says to God almost exactly what Sarah Miles says:

To put in more precisely, I did not actually pray. I did not know who was to be prayed to and how. What I did was I said things to myself, some part of myself that I had not spoken to in a long time. For example, standing there, reeking of liquor. I said to myself: I shall be good. I shall not be greedy. I shall not be afraid. I shall be decent”. (100)

Ratan makes a bargain with God. Sarah prays to God that if He saves the life of Bendrix, she will give him up for ever. Ratan promises to God “. . . if my friend were cured. It was a bargain . . .” (100-01). It is interesting to note that both Greene and Joshi move along the same line while dealing with the question of commitment relating to their alienated figures.
Once Ratan witnesses in the police station a small boy who has murdered a woman whom he served and who had “done him untold favors” (101). The scene completely uproots and changes Ratan’s attitude to life:

In a dingy hall, smelling of bats, strewn with tables, I sat amongst pimps, prostitutes, burglars, pickpockets and murderers. I must tell you about a murderer. The station that had been a pretty humdrum place until then came suddenly to life when he was brought in. It was as though a stranger from an unknown land had arrived. For one thing he wore chains around his ankles . . . . They started to interrogate him . . . . At one point the inspector nearly jumped out of his seat and shouted: Have you no shame? . . . . And he slapped the boy several times. (101- 02)

Finding the plight of the boy, Ratan identifies himself with him. He finds it “impossible to disengage” (102) (emphasis added). He feels that he himself has committed a murder. Ratan’s anxiety and grief increases when he is arrested and “pushed into a narrow cell” (106). In the police station, the S.P accuses him of so many things and Ratan finds a chance to repent. He understands that he is “a liar” (105), a crooked murderer, and one who has “taken a bribe” (105). He speaks out his reactions as follows: “. . . but I was shattered. My eyes smarted with tears of shame. My vision turned giddily and my legs trembled. Feeling my way along the wall I sank on to the stool” (108). A fresh wave of terror passes over him and he feels like crying. He actually cries. But the lower self in him (which Greene’s Andrews has) does not allow him to confess the truth to the S.P. Soon he becomes angry and he tells himself that they cannot touch him as they have no evidence against him. He tries to justify
what he has done. In the past others have also taken bribes. “I started, presently, to recall all the scandals of recent times. I went over them one by one, leisurely, with a desperate hunger, . . . I thought with satisfaction of a recent fraud executed by the scion of one of the country’s first families; the arrest of an Inspector-General of Police for accepting bribe from a racketeer, . . .” (108).

The very next moment his conscience encourages him to confess. He says that he will write it down and give it to the S.P the next morning. He writes it and tears it. He hears that the Brigadier has shot himself in the head and died. The death of the Brigadier terribly shocks the inner self of Ratan. Joshi presents death as an instrument of self-realization. According to Tapan Kumar Ghosh “The Brigadier’s death served as a catalyst that shocked Ratan out of his moral inertia and initiated the process of inner transformation in him. He was jerked out of his self-complacency, pseudo-security and illusions and was confronted with the responsibility of his gruesome crime” (112). The death of the Brigadier finally leads him to self-realization and giving up all his former evil habits he turns over a new leaf in his life and becomes a servant of man.

During his student days, Ratan gets a chance to lead a committed life after having seen violent scenes of death. Ratan’s father, being a Gandhian joins the Independence struggle giving up his vocation as a lawyer. Once he takes out a political procession. There has been tension in the little town for weeks. The great leaders are in jail. The Collector prohibits all processions. Ratan’s father disappears for a week and when he comes back, he gives a call for a hartal [general strike] and a procession. Ratan watches the procession from the house of a friend. Though he is frightened, he
is “sucked in to the crowd” (The Apprentice 10). Ratan describes the terror and violence caused by the “butcher police” (11). They throw tear-gas shells everywhere. “There was panic. I lay on the ground, hysterical. Through the stampeding legs I could see the tear-gas squad, goblin-like, on the shop-front, throwing, throwing, throwing” (11). A black wave of mounted police falls upon the crowd.

An angry cry went up from the crowd like the siren of a scuttled ship. The procession fell back . . . . As the horses advanced he [Ratan’s father] knelt down. So did the crowd, man by man, row upon row. The horsemen advanced flailing their clubs. My father and the crowd knelt before them, their bowed heads covered with their arms. The horsemen rode upon them crashing their clubs with all their strength. (11)

Ratan finds blood in his father’s hair, eyes and forehead. The men are soaked in blood. Tears run down from Ratan’s cheeks “induced by the gas or by a great sorrow” (12). Finally his father moves forward only to be shot down by a sergeant. Ratan describes the violent scene and the brutality of the soldiers: “My father took another step. Then, if you can believe it, . . . they shot him. They shot him in the chest and again, as he spun around, in the back” (12). After his father’s death things look bleak. Ratan says: “The three of us were left alone in that little house: I my mother, and her illness” (16). The people for whom his father has squandered a lifetime have forgotten him within a year.

The violence which Ratan witnesses with his own eyes and the death of his dear father draws him out from his aloofness and he decides to commit himself to do something to his people. For a time he toys with the idea of following his father. His
father has shown him a way of life that will help him overcome his panic and display his heroism. Late at night he keeps awake for hours gazing at the star-filled sky thinking of “India” (18). In the meantime processions, batons, tear-gas and guns go on. “Month after month young men were sucked into the turbulence – to be imprisoned or shot down, or disappear underground. Every now and then someone I knew was imprisoned, maimed, or killed and for days afterwards I felt burdened as though in some way I had been responsible for the killing” (19-20).

According to Sartre when one feels that he is responsible for the sufferings of others, he naturally becomes an engage and involves himself with the life of others. Sartre points out that man acts not in a socio-personal vacuum, but rather in a context of concrete situation in which he himself is necessarily involved. Greene’s characters Captain Trouin, Whisky Priest, Scobie, Dr. Plarr and Fowler feel that they are responsible for the sufferings of the people who become either victims of war or brutal men known for their atrocities. Fowler, for instance says: “I was responsible for that voice crying in the dark” (The Quiet American 113). When Joshi’s protagonist Ratan says that he feels “responsible for the killing” (The Apprentice 20) he participates in the human situation by committing himself to human action and comes within Sartre’s concept of the existentialist who is first and foremost a humanist.

In Joshi’s novel The City and the River also the Boatmen and the brick people commit themselves to act after seeing the violence perpetrated by the City people. Through their commitment they become existential characters in Heideggerian and Sartrean terms. According to Heidegger, “. . . genuine existence is existence which dares to face death” (266). The River people in the novel mock at the threats and
danger hurled at them by the Grand Master and his associates. They refuse to have any affiliation with him. Their Headman who is a woman symbolizes courage, strength and commitment to freedom. The Headman has to lose her eyes. The Boatmen under her leadership oppose the Grandmaster and all his repressive laws. Every night some of them are sent to the prison which is called the Gold Mines where they are incarcerated, fired upon and killed, but they do not buckle under. The old man called Patanjali is arrested as a substitute of Master Bhoma. Patanjali’s boldness can be seen in his answers to the queries made by the police officer Dharma. When Dharma tells him: “You only have to apologise and you will be set free”, Patanjali boldly replies: “But why should I apologise? I have done no wrong. Rather the Grand Master should apologise for making such absurd rules” (The City 26). The other Boatmen are equally bold. They are all imprisoned in the horrible Gold Mines and are killed. Yet, they do not surrender to the Grand Master and his associates. They have their authenticity in the Sartrean sense of the term. Sartre has said: “For the secret of a man is not his Oedipus complex or his inferiority complex: It is the limit of his own liberty, his capacity for resisting fortune and death” (qtd. in Subhash Chandra 270). They all stand together and “protect the authenticity of the self against the determining categories symbolized by power of the State, the military bureaucracy, and constricting social institutions” (271). They all stand together and they are committed to the idea of getting their freedom from the Grand Master and his coteries.

Joshi, like Greene points out the need to lead an authentic and committed life whatever be the corrupting influences that operate in our society. As Anup Beniwal says in his “The City and the River: A Critical Review” in his last novel Joshi has
widened his canvas “and the crisis of an individual has been replaced by the socio-
political and existential crisis of the ‘City’ and by implication of the whole humanity . . .” (274). In this novel, as observed by Mukteshwar Pandey, “Arun Joshi is dealing with the universal predicament of modern man who is attacked from all sides from varied forces that are working all the time to weaken him” (150). Joshi suggests that all must stand together and commit themselves to fight against socio-political evils and powerful men who try to destroy human civilization.

Both Greene and Joshi are against violence and all kinds of ideologies. With regard to dogmas and ideologies Greene says through his Fowler in The Quiet American: “Give me facts” (95). Both the novelists point out the callous disregard to fundamental human values of love and compassion displayed by some people who profess socio political ideology. They pretend to uphold the values of human love and exhort people to join hands and fight against all the powerful agencies that work against human progress.

Again, Greene and Joshi are of the view that any commitment should be motivated by the individual’s personal desire and not by any outside abstract socio-political ideology. Greene’s Father Rivas in The Honorary Consul is a case in point. Father Rivas has been aspiring since childhood to become a fearless abogado to defend the poor and the innocent. He joins the Church as a priest. But he finds it hard to come to terms with the God-abandoned world of suffering and cruelty. He finds that the teachings of the Church are irrelevant to the problems of the present day world. Driven by compassion and a sense of justice he organizes a rebel group and lays a plot against General Stroessner. Greene points out that his plot fails because he is a
criminal both in the eyes of the State and the Church. He is a revolutionary who has
abandoned the Church and has entered into an alliance with a right-wing military
dictatorship.

The Lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory* also fails because of his affiliation
with a political ideology. He stands for materialism and authoritarianism and is
symbolized by his revolver. He is a symbol of the secular power of the State. He is an
agnostic and he is opposed to the Church, the priests and the religion. His mission is
to get the State rid of the priests. True to the character of an officer of a totalitarian
State, the Lieutenant by training and by habit is suspicious of others and he is able to
catch hold of all the priests in the State. He advises the villagers:

> You’re fools if you still believe what the priests tell you. All they want
> is your money. What has God ever done for you? Have you got enough
to eat? Have your children got enough to eat? Instead of food they talk
to you about heaven. Oh, everything will be fine after you are dead,
they say. I tell you – everything will be fine when *they* are dead, and
you must help. (*The Power* 74)

This advice shows the Lieutenant’s condemnation of the priests and the Church and
also his humanism and his concern for the poor. Despite all his strong sense of
devotion to his work and his desire to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the
needy by establishing a society based on materialism, the Lieutenant is a failure. He is
without purpose and without faith. He is dedicated to a vision of a society which is
secular but tyrannical and Godless.
... the lieutenant’s world is built on the assumption that there will always be good men to perpetuate his idealism. If such men do not turn up, there is no protection against corruption, distrust, self-interest and persecution which are the corollaries of a godless materialism. The priest’s world, however, is built on faith which goes on amid the corruption and temptations of the world”. (Kulsherestha 92)

Dr. Magiot who figures in Greene’s *The Comedians* is another idealist who fails. He has great faith in the political ideology of Communism. He is a committed character “who would rather have blood” on his hands “than water like Pilate” (286). He believes “in the future of Communism and in certain economic law” (176). He is disgusted with the rule of the dictator and he believes in a palace-revolution, “a purge from the people” (233), a mass revolution which will destroy the rule of the autocrats. In fact, all the rebels in the novel who are committed to the Communist ideology fail in their attempts. They are unable to bring about any appreciable change in the situation. The rebels kill a few Tontons Macoute and finally they themselves are killed. “Poor souls, they don’t know how to fight. They go waving their rifles, if they’ve got them, at a fortified post. They may be heroes, but they have to learn to live and not to die” (233).

Greene’s characters who are committed, suggest that attempts to fight out evil through organizations, idealistic convictions and political ideologies prove ineffective. In an evil land, good and harmless cannot be achieved through ideological commitment which is irrelevant and absurd... commitment to a course of action without direct personal and
emotional experience is meaningless and proves disastrous.

Commitment is meaningful when it is motivated by deeper personal
forces rather than the abstract vision of the future”. (Gangeshwar Rai
86)

Joshi too has a similar view. Some of his characters who are politically
motivated or who pursue some kind of idealism fail in their commitments. He also
shows that only those who are driven by some personal convictions alone succeed in
their commitment. Ratan’s father blindly follows the Gandhian idealism of achieving
Independence for India by following *ahimsa* [non-violent methods]. He was “patriotic
and courageous” (Gopal Reddy “The Apprentice” 223). He “was a strange man . . .
strange even to look at. More than six feet tall” (The Apprentice 7). His mother “was
short and dark tubercular . . . spitting blood” (7). There were days of poverty; “there
was no money and every night my mother spat blood. Every night, night after night”
(8). His father could earn money and look after his family. He “. . . had been a lawyer,
a successful one as such things went” (8). But he “abandoned his practice” and gave
“away most of his wealth” and they “had no means of living” (8). He started attending
Gandhiji’s meetings and carried with him a handbill which had Gandhi’s smiling –
mournful image on it. He considered Mahatma as “a man of suffering” (8). He did not
speak much, but meekly followed the Gandhian way of life. When he is shot dead by
the police all his idealistic dreams are shattered to pieces and the family has a very
tough time. Ratan realizes that “there were no ideals to die for”. “His father’s idealism
thus appears to be ‘stupid and meaningless to Ratan. His faith in existence is
undermind” (Madhusudan Rao “The Hindu Existential” 155).
In Joshi’s novel *The City and the River* the Grand Master and his Ministers form a totalitarian type of government and boss over the River people who are religious and God-fearing. The theme of the novel as in Greene’s *The Power and the Glory* is: whether man should owe allegiance to Power or to God. In Joshi’s novel the Grand Master and his coteries behave like Greene’s Lieutenant in *The Power and the Glory*. The Grand Master and his Councillors are socially superior. Sitting at the top of the Seven Hills they administer the City. Their seats vary in height according to their status, with the Grand Master living on the highest hill. The middle class people live on a comparatively lower ground in pink brick buildings. The Boatmen live along the river bank which is the lowest in altitude. “This symbolizes man’s attempt to climb up higher and higher in the Great Chain of Being” (qtd. in K.M. Pandey 122). The irony is that the level of authenticity of all of them varies in inverse proportion to the social position of the different categories of inhabitants. Like Greene’s Lieutenant, the Grand Master also gives the people a number of promises and comes out with a number of plans for their welfare. For instance, he declares the Era of Ultimate Greatness. He says it is for the welfare and prosperity of the City. But in truth he announces it to consolidate his own position and to pave the way for the realization of his dream of becoming the king. His ministers are aware that they are in the wrong, yet they are very faithful in implementing their Master’s plans. The Minister of Trade, the Education Advisor, the Master of Rallies, the Astrologer, the Commissioner of Police, the Commander of the Army, General Starch etc have no nerve to question the Grand Master. They faithfully follow an ideology which has no socio-political basis. They are motivated by some sort of greediness or over-vaulting ambition, in grabbing all the powers of the city in their hands. Joshi is highly censorious of the attitude of these
power-mongers. Finally, “a great flood occurs and devours all” (Lokesh 128). As Tapan Kumar Ghosh suggests: “. . . the city could have averted the tragedy if the Grand Master and his men rose to the occasion, tried to know the truth and see themselves with the eyes of the citizens . . . They forget their ‘dharma’ and, . . . they choose only to crush them under their heels” (167). The Ministers do not defy the Grand Master and destroy his falsehoods at their very roots and join together and commit themselves to save the people from the engulfing waves of the flood. The behaviour of the power-crazy Grand Master and his friends suggests that they do not have any commitment to a course of action and they have no personal interest in the welfare of the City and its people. This is in agreement with what Greene has done in some of his novels in which characters fail because they do not have an inspiring sense of responsibility for others.

Greene and Joshi have great admiration for people who are devoted to their duty and those who do selfless service for the betterment of humanity. This has significant religious overtones both in Christianity and Hinduism. Once a rich man came to Jesus and asked him as to what he should do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17). Jesus told him to give away all his wealth to the poor and then follow him taking up the cross. The young man “was sad at that saying and he went away griev ed: for he had great possessions” (Mark 10:21-22). In the battle of Kureshestra, when Arjuna is asked to kill his cousins, the Gowravas, he is overcome by sorrow and distress. Lord Krishna teaches him about *Karma-Yoga* which is God-realization through disinterested action. He teaches him that man should give up his desire for the results of his action, but carry out his actions without any expectations. He teaches
Arjuna what is generally known as *Nishkama-Karma* which is definitely “activistic and not ascetic” (David 67). Viewed in human terms, this is impossible and no wonder that Lord Krishna’s advice makes Arjuna despondent.

The way of the “cross” and the way of the *Nishkama-Karma* underline the need for the evenness of mind and dispossession, both of which are possible only through self-denial and a desire to serve selflessly for the welfare of humanity. Jesus once said “. . . whoever of you will be the chiepest, shall be servant of all” (St. Mark 10: 44-45). Swamy Vivekananda also makes an identical exhortation: “May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only god I believe in, the sum total of all souls. . . my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races . . .” (Swahananda 95).

Having been well grounded in Christian theology and in the teachings of Bhagavad Gita, both Greene and Joshi try to create characters who are duty-conscious and who selflessly serve others through total commitment. They denounce those who do not have any commitment at all. Greene’s Jones in *The Comedians* is uncommitted. To escape commitments he changes roles. On many occasions he chooses to live a frivolous life in preference to a serious one. An actor’s life means the loss of real identity, yet he prefers it to only one particular life style, or a steady profession. He does not care for established codes of conduct, values, wealth and position. Even his assuming the rank of a Major in the army is only to put up a pretence, to camouflage his real identity. He prefers not to sink deep into the confines of involvement and commitment. Commitment to no cause, he thinks, is the way to escape responsibility. Jones is without emotion and passion and he has no attachment to those who love him.
He does not even like to leave the place which does not offer him any safety for his life. There is violence and brutal killing everywhere and he convinces himself saying “it is the same everywhere”. In such a political climate he thinks it is good to stay where he is and remain having no commitments.

A similar character of this nature is Brown who figures in the same novel. He also remains absolutely uncommitted. Brown can appreciate innocence and goodness, admire courage and commitment in others, but he cannot have any involvement with others. He loves Dr. Magiot and Joseph, but he does not get involved in the realities of life as they do. He lives uninvolved and refuses to form community with others. He represents all those who lead a detached life within the shells of their own creation unmindful of what is going on in the outside world. Brown has no family, no country, no home, no belief, no allegiance, he is l’homme seul. He himself says: “The rootless have experiences, like all the others the temptation of sharing the security of a religious creed or a political faith, and for some reason we have turned the temptation down” (The Comedians 279). At the end of the novel, after reading Dr. Magiot’s poignant letter, Brown explains his own nature: “I had left involvement behind me, . . . Once I might have taken a different direction, but it was too late now . . .” (286).

Greene has great aversion for people like Jones and Brown who altogether avoid humanity. Greene has grasped well the changing situations in modern life. People lead an uprooted life without worrying about loss or gain, pleasure or pain, death or life. There are people who are ready to accept anything which life offers them and they are not horrified by any dangerous situation. They just play role after
role, roam from place to place never finding any promising city and any person with whom they can share their burden of life.

It is surprising to note that Joshi also lashes at people who avoid involvements and commitments having become victims of the changing situations in modern life. In his short story “The Home Coming” Joshi deals with the story of a survivor of war who fails to establish meaningful contact with others. The story bears some similarities with a shot prose-piece by Kafka entitled “Home-Coming”, and also, to some extent, with the story “The Soldier’s Home” by Ernest Hemingway. The “Home Coming” is about the loneliness of a man, who like the narrator in Kafka’s story, returns home to discover himself as a stranger. As in Kafka, the speaker here is also anonymous. While in Kafka the narrator is the first person “I”, in Joshi he is the third person singular “He”. The use of the third person and the past tense lends a peculiar objectivity to the story. In Kafka the place of arrival and the place from which the narrator returns are kept vague. But in Joshi’s story, the protagonist is a young military officer who returns form Bangladesh war to his house in a metropolis in India, most probably Delhi. At home, he finds everything changed and he is not able to relate himself to the altered situation and this results in his estrangement. The devastating experience of the war and what he now sees at home are juxtaposed and this increases his sense of alienation.

The first sentence of the short story which reads: “Since he returned from the war things had not been quiet the same” – sets the tone. He is the son of a successful businessman and he goes to the war with all the romantic illusions and dreams of a young man. But the experiences in the war-field – the inhuman atrocities committed,
the horrible genocides, infanticides and the beastly sexual assaults on women etc have changed him thoroughly. He comes home after the war is won. But he is joyless. His mother proposes to conduct his marriage. But to him marriage has no purpose: “What was the meaning of one man’s marriage; one man’s life. He had been wondering what life was all about. Who, he had been thinking, could possibly be running the world. Such thoughts filled his head with confusion as he sat about or played cards or went out with his father for a game of golf” (Joshi The Survivor 99).

He tries to share his thoughts with someone. But nobody comes to listen to his stories. He finds everyone, both at home and outside, has changed. “He had a sister. He used to know her. Now she had changed. He couldn’t put his finger on it. But she had changed” (99). There is great contrast between what he has experienced in the war-field and what others know about it from the safe distance of affluent drawing rooms. The glossy young men and the “arty-arty girls” talk about the war from what they have read in the newspapers and the magazines. They are ignorant about many things which have happened. Again, many things they say are incorrect. He remembers many things very vividly. The nightmarish experience of the gruesome deaths of his fellow soldiers and the other evils he witnessed in the battle-field are ever green in his memory. Whenever he is alone these things keep “swirling about his head” (The Survivor 104). He has many sleepless nights and he sits in the bed and tries to make sense out of the things that have happened. At the same time, life outside is busy with parties, movies and dances. But he is totally encapsulated in his private shell of loneliness without any involvement and commitment. He has returned home, but he has no mind to be one with his surroundings and do something for the
neighbours who may need his help. “He is left lonely, estranged and, despite his striving, unrelated to the end” (Ghosh 206). There are no indications in the story to prove that the war has affected him psychologically. As a matter of fact, he has to be happy and joyful as he has done his best in the war and won it at the end. But there is something in him, may be some superior complex feeling that he knows more than what others know which prevents him from relating himself to others. As M.G. Hedge observes there is no “emotional or moral involvement” (204) on the part of the protagonist and he “remains non-committal and the reader derives “the meaning” from what he sees and hears . . .” (204).

Like Greene, Joshi also castigates those who are callous, indifferent and inhuman without having any participation and involvement in the life of the people who live with them. From the above study, it becomes obvious that some people do not at all commit themselves despite the chances they get for commitment. There is a streak of dishonesty in them and as pointed out above, they ultimately succumb themselves to an inviolable existential mode. Human love is not possible in the case of those who are intensely selfish like Jones and Brown and the narrator in Joshi’s short story “The Home Coming”. Both the novelists have great admiration for those who commit themselves and establish healthy contacts with others through human love. Again, both the novelists have no faith in any human organization or loyalty to any political ideology and idealistic convictions which can bring about any change in the attitude of people so that they may have direct and personal involvement with the suffering humanity. Both, wholeheartedly uphold the view that violence and rebellion perpetrated in the name of Communism or any other political ideology or love of
power which corrupts human love completely cannot give people the feeling that they themselves are “responsible” for the sufferings of people. It is interesting to note that a number of characters of Greene and Joshi come across situations in which they feel that they have inflicted wounds on others and they alone are “responsible” for all the painful sufferings and miseries caused. Both have shown quite unmistakably in their works that one should lose one’s life for the sake of others through absolute and total commitment so that “one would lose nothing again for ever” (The Quiet American 44).

The above study also illustrates that Joshi is an existentialist with a difference. Any discerning reader would notice that Joshi always writes from his Hindu background and the Indian socio-political climate of his period. This is not to deny that Greene does not bring into his works his religious views. But, being an Indian and a Hindu, Joshi is a more religiously conscious novelist with the social awareness of contemporary India and the problems resulting from the bi-cultural situation in the country. Hence, while dealing with the question of commitment, he has in his mind the present day disoriented and diseased Indian society with its ubiquitous corruption, “crisis of character” and its defiance of the sanctioned values of moral and religious traditions. Greene, on the other hand, is concerned more with the moral anarchy and the spiritual decay that is prevalent throughout the world. While Joshi’s vision is local, Greene’s vision is universal.