Chapter Seven

Summing Up

A comparative study of the novels of Graham Greene and Arun Joshi proves that the main strain that runs through the entire corpus of their works is existentialism. The present dissertation helps one understand that only through a process of comparison and contrast of the themes and the subjects handled by writers hailing from different countries and by overcoming all barriers of linguistic and cultural differences, one can realize and secure for one’s literature and its writers their rightful place in world literature. The comparative study undertaken in this dissertation, besides helping one understand the worth of one writer in the light of the values held by the other, underlies the unity and interdependence of all literary creations and experiences and points out the oneness and the sameness of human emotions irrespective of socio-politico-cultural disparities.

It is encouraging to note that an Indian English writer of the stature of Arun Joshi whose literary reputation has not been so far firmly established despite all limiting forces of his life, educational and social background, not only demonstrates much similar and bold impulses like Graham Greene, a renowned and popular Western writer, but at times, dares to go even further in the analysis of human problems with a rare vision and insight. Most of the present works written on Joshi, study him in isolation and hence his literary merits have not been properly and completely assessed. His distinguishing features as an artist endowed with rare talents,
gifts and a clear vision of life, its problems and solutions, come to the limelight only when he is studied in comparison and contrast with other writers whose name and fame have already been established.

The present study is a highly rewarding mode of research, because as the eminent comparatist H.H. Remak has demanded, it brings to the foreground many “surprising literary nuggets” (“Comparative Literature its Definition and Function” 12) found in both the novelists. These include “elective affinities in theme, problem, genre, style, simultaneousness, zeitgeist, stage of cultural evolution, etc” (27). The study keeps in view throughout the following observation of Remak: “A comparative-literature study does not have to be comparative on every page nor even in every chapter, but the overall intent, emphasis and execution must be comparative” (13). Greene and Joshi had definite reasons to become existentialist novelists. Greene’s early miserable life both at home and at school and the ennui, boredom and frustration caused in him by his early failures in sexual affairs, his encounter with death and violence, his perception of Evil wherever he turned and his readings of the existentialist literary and philosophical works of Sartre, Kierkegaard and others deepened in him an awareness of the existential crisis faced by people who live in a world ravaged by wars, bloodshed, betrayals, terrors and violence of all kinds. As a boy he had manic-depressions and he was psychologically treated for his illness. On many occasions he tried to kill himself by drinking some poison and he even once simulated suicide by putting a revolver to his head keeping the magazine empty. His conversion to the Catholic religion in 1926 through his marriage with Vivien Bayrell, helped him look at life from a new perspective.
Many of the protagonists of Greene’s early novels have inherited his rebellious spirit, fear and despair. They live in a ravaged world known for all kinds of evils and they are ruled by ruthless power-mongers. The result is their alienation from others and themselves, loneliness and helplessness. In his Catholic novels, out of his abundant pity and compassion for the alienated people whom the dehumanized world has made morally depraved, Greene goes out of his way to accord a divine sanction to them. In his later novels like *A Burnt-Out-Case* and *The Honorary Consul*, Greene rightly captures the existential issues faced by people and shows his humanist interest which overrides his religious interests.

Joshi as a boy had none of the bitter experiences which Greene had. However, he had worked with his uncle in a mental hospital in the US and in a few industries in India where he had witnessed personally the existential predicaments of many people. He had seen how people had become evil-minded and materialistic in the Post-Independent India. He had also read the works of the Western existentialists, the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads which are existentialist-oriented Hindu religious works. Like the protagonists of Greene, Joshi’s protagonists also try to have an authentic existence by asserting their individuality and subjectivity and developing genuine human relationships with others around. He also deepens his existential vision of life in novel after novel and as in Greene his humanist note also sounds stronger than his religious strain.

The researcher wants to show that existentialism is not just a philosophical fad, but a life-experience of every man and woman born in this world. So, without having any recourse to the discourses of what Sartre or Kierkegaard or Buber has said about
existentialism and its various offshoots, she makes an attempt to show in the
dissertation that existentialism is a part of human life and it is mainly anchored in
individual human dilemma, beginning with the first man Adam and his wife Eve. The
Bible shows Adam’s and Eve’s sin of disobedience, their alienation from God, their
expulsion from the garden of Eden, their anguish and anxiety, their search in the world
for the meaning of life, their commitment and involvement with their children and
others and their final reconciliation with God.

In the light of what she finds in the Bible, the researcher analyses a few ancient
as well as modern literary works, both Western and Indian, and a few myths in order
to develop a behavioural pattern discernible in a number of alienated figures. The
pattern includes certain well-marked stages like man’s alienation from himself and
others, his quest for meaning, his active involvement and commitment in life and his
final reconciliation with God and life. As the present age is known for a marked
decline in spiritual values, the researcher finds that in many of the contemporary
literary works, the last stage is at times taken up by what is called “humanism” which
in simple terms means human religion insisting human values like love, affection, pity
and compassion for others. In Greene also one finds the Pauline doctrine of the
extreme form of human love, a willingness to save others through one’s own
damnation. While commenting on the character of Scobie, G.S. Frazer in his The
Modern Writer and his Word says: “. . . by what one knows of the rules of [the
Church] he ought to go to hell, but he is intrinsically a much ‘nicer’ person than most
of us” (134). “One of the philosophic concepts of Sartre is that the “self” of man
comes into existence only when man establishes a relationship with others . . .”
(G. Sree Ramulu 9).

Some of the Hindu religious works also show how man gets himself separated from God and identifies himself with the objective world and becomes sinful and sensuous. They also show how the alienated “self” which goes in search of its realization finally reaches Brahman [God] through devotion, selfless service, commitment and love of humanity. This behavioural pattern which seems to be similar to the one found in the Bible gets itself reflected in a number of Hindu philosophical works, myths, puranas and epics.

The researcher also discusses the findings of Joseph Campbell and Theodore H. White who had analyzed a number of legends, and myths, and pointed out that the exile-heroes in literary works pass through almost similar well-marked stages.

Thus, the dissertation proves that existentialism which appears to many as a cliché because of its philosophical trappings, is a concrete and real experience ingrained in the life of all those who become victims of the existential crisis. The in-depth study made in the Second Chapter of the dissertation provides one with a fresh impetus for further exploration of the different stages seen in the movement of the alienated heroes. The analysis of the behavioural pattern of the alienated “self” made clear in the Chapter will certainly add to the understanding of the existential vision of the two novelists under study.

Greene and Joshi show in their novels that people experience alienation because they have to live in a totally ravaged world. As a result, they lose their God-
given virtues of innocence, individuality and freedom of choice. In their depiction of
the alienation of man from his surroundings and himself, both the writers have used to
a great extent their own personal vision of life, their life-experiences and their own
disappointments and disillusionments. Both the novelists have seen a world totally
corrupt given to all kinds of evils, revenge, betrayals, aggression, revolution, rebellion,
war, violence and bloodshed. Greene’s novels The Man Within, The Name of Action,
Stamboul Train and The Comedians picture a world which appears to be a veritable
hell torn asunder by all these evils.

In Greene, images of evil accumulate so fast that critics say that Greene has
painted a “Greeneland” which is a variant of Eliot’s Wasteland. His protagonists who
live in a land known for human meanness and misery become part of its setting and
acquire all its evils. Joshi also shows a sordid and a squalid world. But unlike Greene,
whose vision of life encompasses the entire world, Joshi’s vision is limited to the Post-
Independent India and one or two European countries. Though his seedy images do
not come crowding as in Greene, they also present a world which is terrible and
horrible enough to develop in people a sense of rootlessness and meaninglessness.
Joshi’s Sindi living in such a world carries within him a number of voids. Billy has to
follow “the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end” (The Strange Case 8). Joshi’s
The Apprentice shows how independent India has become a breeding place of all
kinds of vices.

In their novels Greene and Joshi show how the alienated people quite easily
lose their innate and inborn innocence, individuality and freedom of choice. Greene’s
Andrews, Dr. Czinner, Pinkie, Major Scobie, the Whisky Priest, Pyle etc live in places
of squalor and misery known for heat and dust, sin and suffering, despair and death.
Quite naturally, they are deprived of their primeval innocence, authenticity,
individuality and their freedom to choose their own course of life. They come under
the control of others and lose their independence. Joshi’s Babu Khemka is too
innocent to fit well into the American situation. He refuses to accept the American
cultural values. He cannot also accept the orthodox Hindu values of his father. He is
well-caught in a situation in which he loses his innocence, independence and his
freedom to choose his own way of life. Joshi’s Sindi, Billy and Som Bhaskar are also
well-trapped in their situations in which they lose their authenticity and individuality.

Greene and Joshi also deal with “familial alienation”. Their characters are
controlled by their parents or they have some problems with their partners. They,
therefore, drift away from their families and lead a cocoon-like life. Greene’s Andrews
and Anthony Farrant are spoilt by their domineering and brutal fathers. Pinkie is
psychologically affected because his parents totally neglect him. James Wormald is
mentally upset because his wife has deserted him. Arthur Rowe’s mother’s image
haunts him till his death. Scobie goes astray and falls in love with Helen Rolt because
of the indifference of his wife. He betrays his wife and God and commits suicide.
Dr.Fischer is angry with everybody because he thinks that his wife has struck up
relationship with Steiner.

Joshi’s protagonists live in Indian patriarchal societies. Hence, in his novels the
fathers become the centres of authority and they dominate the whole scene. Babu
Khemka suffers because of his domineering father. Sindi’s trouble is that he has no
parents. Ratan Rathor cannot follow the idealism of his father. Billy suffers because of
his father, mother and his wife. Som Bhaskar is a womanizer and a drunkard like his grandfather and a rationalist like his own father.

The protagonists of Greene and Joshi who suffer owing to discord and disharmony in families move about in a state of homelessness, friendlessness and they are doomed. In portraying “familial alienation” Greene’s vision transcends all borders and boundaries. Joshi, on the other hand, has in his mind the existential crisis that is being experienced by the post-Independent Indian people and the inter-cultural development that is now spreading far and wide in the country.

The protagonists of Greene and Joshi wander through the mazes and the labyrinths of the ravaged world and go in quest to find some meaning and anchorage for their life. Both the novelists point out that revolutions, political agitations, all “isms” like Communism, social institutions, Welfare Associations, Capitalism, Industrialism, love, lust, sex and married life fail to give any solace and comfort to the questing self in the modern world. They are of the opinion that all these deprive man of his essential individuality, authenticity and basic humanity. In both the writers, love and lust create havoc and married life becomes a tragic emotion. They also concur that man’s quest for meaning in the primitive world is bound to end in failure. Greene’s Querry and Joshi’s Billy run into the forests to find the meaning of life. But the civilized world intrudes and crushes their desire of living in the primitive childhood-world of innocence and having kinship with nature and primitive cultural values.

During their search for meaning in life, the protagonists of Greene and Joshi come out of their hideout and engage themselves in some kind of commitment. Both
the writers know well what Sartre and the other existentialists have said about commitments and responsibilities. Sartre, for instance, has said that no man can avoid commitment and remain uninvolved. Commitment leads the protagonists of the two novelists to a state of self-realization and gives them a glimpse of the ultimate source of existence.

In both the novelists, love plays a major role in pulling out the alienated protagonists from their exile, and makes them involve themselves with others. Elizabeth’s love for Andrews makes him shed all his lust and cowardice and he goes to Lewes to bear witness against the smugglers. Dr. Plarr is drawn out from his exile by the love of Charley Fortnum and his wife Clara. Greene’s Sarah Miles and Joshi’s Anuradha in praying to God to save their lovers from death during times of danger and ill-health show that both the novelists believe that love does not always degenerate into mere lust, but at times becomes selfless and even divine in its character.

Compared with Joshi’s women characters, Greene’s women are more bold and domineering as they are able to stand on their own legs because of their economic independence. In one sense, they may be called “existential feminists”. Sindi gives up his “detachment” when he hears about the death of June Blyth. Both the novelists assert that lust prevents people from committing themselves. Brown’s lust for Martha is a classic example. Scobie’s lust for Helen Rolt spoils his relationship with his wife and God.

Violence and brutal killing during a war time or a rebellion make the protagonists of Greene and Joshi lead an authentic life stirring up in them feelings of pity and compassion for the suffering people. Greene’s Fowler in The Quiet
American, to start with is indifferent to what is going on around him. He refuses to be moved by the tales of suffering and death brought to him by his friends. Finally, his heart melts seeing the dead bodies of soldiers floating in a canal. He thinks that he is responsible for their death. Castle in Greene’s The Human Factor also leads a similar uncommitted life. He too practises detachment like Fowler, Dr. Plarr and Sindi. He has no God and no politics. He hates Communism which has no human face. His involvement is complete when he becomes a “naturalized black” by marrying Sarah. Seeing the violence around him, without joining any political party, he just helps the poor farmers. In the midst of the impersonal absurd he discovers the meaning of human existence.

In Joshi’s novel The Apprentice Ratan, the protagonist, becomes responsible for the death of hundreds of people and his best friend, the Brigadier. The sight of the Brigadier shakes him completely and for the first time in his life after the death of his father he feels pity for another human being. He even prays to God to save his life. This is an extreme form of human love. He reminds us of Greene’s Sarah Miles and Major Scobie who pray for others. Like Sarah, Ratan also makes a bargain with God. It is interesting to note that both Greene and Joshi move along the same line while dealing with the question of commitment.

Greene and Joshi are against violence and all kinds of “isms” which work against human values of love and compassion. They are of the view that any commitment should be motivated by the individual’s personal desire and not by any abstract political ideology. Father Rivas, Dr. Magiot and the Lieutenant in Greene’s The Power and the Glory fail because of their connections with the Communist
political ideology. Ratan’s father fails because he blindly follows Gandhian idealism. In Joshi’s novel The City and the River the Grand Master and his Advisors behave like Greene’s Lieutenant and they fail in carrying out their promises.

Greene and Joshi have great admiration for people who selflessly serve others in the society. Greene might have learnt it from the Bible and Joshi from the Bhagavad Gita which talks about Nishkama-Karma – doing one’s work without expecting any fruits. Both acknowledge that one should be the servant of all. It should be noted that their emphasis is on humanism and on humanitarian concerns. In other words, both the novelists condemn those who do not commit themselves to the service of others. Jones in Greene’s The Comedians changes his roles to avoid commitments. He is devoid of emotion, passion and attachment. There is violence and brutal killing everywhere and he coolly says to himself “it is the same everywhere”. He remains deliberately uncommitted. Brown in the same novel also remains uncommitted, while his friends are all involved in the lives of others. He says that he has left involvement behind him. Greene has understood well the changing situations in modern life which make people live without worrying about loss or gain, pleasure or pain, death or life.

Joshi has also great aversion for people who do not commit themselves. The protagonist of his short story “The Home Coming” returns home after winning a war. The soldier is totally encapsulated in his private shell of loneliness without any involvement and commitment. Joshi does not give any reason for this. However, one has to derive the meaning of the story from what one sees and hears from the narration. It is interesting to note that both the novelists emphasise 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).

While reading the novels of Joshi one has to remember that unlike Greene, Joshi always has in his mind his Hindu religious background and the Post-Independent Indian political and social situation. Compared with Greene, Joshi is a more religiously conscious novelist with the social awareness of contemporary India which is now facing multi-cultural situations. Greene, on the other hand, is more concerned with the moral and the spiritual anarchy that is prevalent throughout the world.

Greene and Joshi in their works show their preference to humanism to religion. As pointed out earlier, in their works very often “humanism” overrides religious values. The alienated heroes of both the novelists, finally come back to life and accept humanity after learning the meaning of life through some kind of spiritual experience. Greene’s inspiration to do this might have come to him from the Bible which says that to save the depraved humanity God sent his only begotten son into the world. The Bible also reiterates that there should be the same love relationship between man and man as the one that exists between God and man. The Church has now realized the problems of the suffering humanity and it has come forward to make adjustments within itself to humanize it. In Hinduism also, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, and his disciples, particularly Swamy Vivekananda and philosophers like Dr.S. Radhakrishnan insist on the need for humanizing Hinduism so that there may be more possibilities for alleviating the sufferings of the sinful humanity.
Greene’s Whisky Priest is a “hunted, shameless renegade priest” (Zabel 282). He is a liquor-addict and he is immoral. Yet, Greene assigns him the highest mark of heroism, not by presenting him as a dogmatic Catholic priest, but by making him a victim of human love. His love for the common people is enormous. He also finds the face of God on the face of everyman and woman, whether good or bad. In his humanitarian concerns for the poor and the suffering, he is Christ-like. He starts as a spiritualist and then becomes a depraved and lapsed Catholic Priest and finally turns to be a humanist and thereby earns the needed sanctity and divinity. Father Rivas, a Catholic Priest, becomes a rebel, marries a woman, shows his compassion and concern for people who are about to be killed. Like the Whisky Priest, he too finds God’s image in man and believes that God too has his own evil side. The superior in *A Burnt-Out-Case* says that those who love others are alone Christians. He and the Priests in the novel are more interested in their service to man. Scobie’s human love triumphs over his love for the Church, its rites and rituals and God, the creator. He says that he is born to suffer for others. There is something Christ-like in Scobie’s love for others. He too finds God in man. Sarah Miles’ prayer to God and her bargain with Him to save the life of Bendrix during an air-raid is the expression of the highest and noblest form of humanism that triumphs over everything physical and carnal.

Critics believe that Greene has inverted the catholic dogmas to ease his own inner spiritual tensions or to solve some personal problem. The truth is that Greene had never taken the Catholic religion very seriously and that he became a Catholic just to marry a Catholic woman. Another facet of the truth is Catholicism has helped him look at human existential problems from an entirely different perspective.
Joshi is also a Hindu religious novelist, but what is at the center of his works is the existential man’s sensitive soul inching its way towards self-realization through human love and affection. A close reading of his novel The Foreigner reveals that the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi, practises “detachment” not in the sense of what one finds it in the Gita. He thinks that he can become a yogi [a spiritual man] by practising “detachment”. But in truth, he acts out of lust. At the end, he surrenders his “detachment” and involves himself with the lives of the poor labourers out of pity and compassion. He ends up as a humanist par-excellence.

Joshi’s Billy is also a sinner-turned saint. His raping of Rima Kaul and his relationship with Bilasia prove that he is primarily lustful. Joshi makes a yogi and an avatara [incarnation of God] of such a man and endows him with miracle-making powers. He resembles Greene’s Whisky Priest and like the latter he moves from place to place healing people, performing miracles and serving the suffering and the needy. After his death, Billy’s friend Romi while highlighting his humanist concerns observes: “...what we had killed was not a man... but some one for whom our civilized world had no equivalent” (The Strange Case 236). Joshi’s Ratan Rathor has a bitter experience when he comes to a temple. The priest there tells him that he is willing to bribe the authorities who have stopped his son’s payment. Ratan is perplexed by the problems of his life. But, finally, as advised by the Sheikh he becomes “useful” to so many people. He sits outside a temple and cleans the shoes of the congregation. He is not bothered about what goes on inside. He serves people in the most humble way and expiates all his sins. In doing such a work he is happy and he says that the youngsters in India should learn lessons from the follies committed by
the elders. Like Greene, Joshi also reposes much faith on humanity than on a conventional and orthodox religion.

Beyond doubt, Greene when compared with Joshi, has a wider canvas and scope, and a profound aesthetic vision of life. His language and literary devices are more sophisticated. He is a prolific writer and a lot has been written on him by scholars and critics of great stature. Joshi has only five novels and one volume of short stories to his credit. Yet in dealing with the various offshoots of existentialism and in shifting his points of view to present a rounded and a holistic vision of the existential situation of man, he is not second to his Western counterpart. What is impressive about Joshi is his concern for the Post-Independent Indian society. Yet, in many places his vision of the existential crisis of man expands and enlarges and he comes very close to Greene in his treatment of love, sex and marriage, Evil and Good both from the religious and the philosophical point of view and in his emphasis on the need for selfless commitment to the human cause.

A comparative literary study of the present nature is highly rewarding for only a study of this kind alone can bring out in ample measure the native writer’s merits. The researcher has felt personally that in certain areas, Joshi’s perspective is much wider and clearer than that of Greene, because the social situations he presents in his novels are realities well-known to Indian students. Though evaluation of this type is a fallacy and against all good literary taste, this passing observation is made here with the view to providing an incentive to the lovers of Joshi and to the comparatists in the offering. A comparative study should not have a private motive; it must by all means enrich “the totality of mankind’s intelligence . . .” (S.V. Subramanian 262).