ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the philosophy of existentialism which holds great significance in Indian English literature of the postmodern era of global and intercultural scenario. Indian English writers like their western counterparts have explored this philosophy in an extensive and exhaustive manner. The identity crisis of modern man, his experience of meaninglessness in life, confusion of traditional values, exercise of will and freedom, flouting of reason and rationality are some of the tenets of existentialism which are extremely imperative to empathize with in order to study the psychological behavioral pattern of individuals which form the main focus of study of existential writers.

The present thesis is a critical analyses and comparative study of Anita Desai’s novels, Cry the Peacock and Fire on the Mountain; Arun Joshi’s novels, The Foreigner and The Strange Case of Billy Biswas and JhumpaLahiri’s The Namesake and The Interpreter of Maladies from the existential perspective. Chapter one centers on the changing paradigms of Indian English fiction. It also presents an introduction to the philosophy of Existentialism with reference to Soren Kierkegaard, the father of Existential philosophy and other prominent philosophers of existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre, Martin Hiedegger, Albert Camus and others. Chapter two draws a comparative study of the selected works of Arun Joshi, Anita Desai and JhumpaLahiri taking into consideration the prominent aspects of Existential Quest, Alienation and Isolation and Existential Angst. Chapter three critically examines the psychological impact of existentialism in the protagonists of the selected novels, their existential angst, sense of loneliness and alienation. Chapter four focuses on the style and techniques adopted by the three selected novelists to unravel the plot and bring out the identity crisis of the characters in the selected novels. Chapter five sums up themes of the previous chapters and evaluate the fictional works from the existential perspective. Characters that are entangled in the absurd situations constantly trying to find meaning in life are often misunderstood and considered abnormal aberrant in society. The study can enable us to have a better understanding of such characters and prevent several unfortunate incidents like loneliness, alienation and detachment, depression, madness and suicide.