CHAPTER III
RELIGIOUS AND SELF-ALIENATION

The concept of self-alienation propounded by Hegel and Marx, are of greatest interest in philosophy. According to them Self-alienation means the process or the result of the process by which a 'self' through itself, through its own action becomes alien or a stranger to itself, to its own nature, and to its body, its feelings, its needs, and its creative possibilities. It is a psychological state of the individual whose disordered behaviour arises from the conflict within himself. The self-alienated man is internally divided, split into two parts that have become alien to each other (Encyclopedia of Philosophy 79). The split is between man's real "nature" or his "essence" and his factual "properties", or "existence". The self-alienated man is not what he is in essence. His actual existence does not correspond to his human essence. While Marx has recognized only one self-alienated self, that is, man, Hegel has recognized two: man and God, or the Absolute mind.

Neo-Platonism asserts that the most important form of alienation is the religious alienation. The soul gets corrupted by matter and turns away from his true divine source, God, Absolute Mind. There is a malaise in the human experience that alienates men from the source of all divine truths and values, which are the attributes of God. When man alienates himself from his true essence he alienates himself from God. Joshi’s protagonists are self-alienated. Since the Indians’ faith in orthodox religion has been shaken due to the influence of the Western religion, some of the Indians display religious alienation.

M. Mani Meitei remarks, "The civilized man's belief that 'God is dead' is the ultimate reaffirmation of the prevailing emptiness and hollowness in the modern world. Civilization has mechanized human personality, and has corrupted his will
making him more and more anti-clerical, anti-religious and materialistic” (Awareness of Worlds 12). Som Bhaskar (LL) has an alienated view of the places of worship. He comments: “Aftab’s dargahs and temples were no less ridiculous for all their claims of commanding a mysterious world, as pretentious and meaningless as the holy bulls of Benares. If there was nothing new under the sun, as he [Aftab] said, there was nothing new in them either,...” (108).

Som thinks critically of the temple festival connected with the ritual of god’s birth, Janmashtami. People with religious orientation engage themselves in such rituals and treat these festivals seriously. They actively participate in the celebrations with devotion and display enthusiasm. When Aftab says, “It is Janmashtami” and invites Som to participate in the celebrations, Som says to himself, “To me it explained nothing” (129). Though he finds himself lacking in the religious fervor he joins with the crowd of men and women jostling towards the shrine to participate in the ritual of the birth of God. Anuradha seeing him in the crowd asks him to hurry up, and says: “There isn’t much time”. Som asks teasingly: “For what? For the Lord to be born?” (129). Som refuses to go with her. Som thinks sarcastically when he hears a tumultuous sound raised by the worshippers along with the sound of ringing of bells, and the blowing of conches: “A chant arose from the multitude which might as likely have been a wail. The god had once again been born” (130). Som criticizes the jaimal ceremony performed by the old man on the verandah of the ‘house of weddings’. He sees the old man talking to himself and reciting something. Then the old man lifts his arms and goes through the mime of garlanding someone. Som narrates: “Fantastic, I thought. The whole city was full of nuts...” (71).

He also criticizes the interest shown by the religious minded people in the enactment of the mythical love of Lord Krishna and Goddess Radha. He questions
why the problems of ordinary people like him are not portrayed through dance and music. When Aftab's slave sings and two of her students practise dance, Som questions: "Weren't there masters who could work out the choreography of my lust for Anuradha unless they considered the love of Radha and Krishna to include all lovers, all lusts, all disappointments" (94).

Som is completely devoid of faith in God; but Som's mother, an orthodox woman, believes firmly that God will cure her of her ailments. She is encouraged to hold on to her faith by the astrologers. Her refusal to take medical treatment and her trust in God for cure while cancer is eating away her lungs angers Som: "She had nodded towards the same wooden Krishna. In a sudden, boiling rage I had swept the gods and the goddesses off the table along with the bottles of nail polish. The acetone had spilled over the green carpet" (69). The acetone spoils the carpet and leaves a large circular stain on it. Som puts the blame on the wooden Krishna. He says: "It is the doing of this wooden creature' pointing out the God where He played his imaginary flute " (69).

The loss of his mother further alienates Som from God. His conversation with Anuradha reveals his religious alienation. He tells Anuradha that his mother died of "Cancer and Krishna" (57). When Anuradha does not understand what he means by Krishna, he explains: "The God. My mother believed Krishna would cure her and flushed her capsules down the toilet. Krishna sat on top of her bureau and smiled and smiled, and smiled until she was dead" (57).

Som's father, like his mother, believes that God will cure his wife. He undertakes a pilgrimage to a holy shrine. Som remembers how the doctor has reacted to his father's deep faith in religion. He is amused at his father seeking a faith cure instead of relying on the efficacy of medicines. Som says: "Exasperated, one day K
had shouted back at him, ‘Don’t be ridiculous. Throw out all those gods and goddesses and she might have a chance’ (22). Som echoes the doctor’s disbelief in traditional religion when he narrates his experience in the cave temples during their visit to the Elephanta Caves along with his father to worship the Gods. His religious alienation is revealed when he says: “We stared at the Trimurti: heavy lipped Brahma; Rudra with snakes and a third eye; Vishnu almost effeminate. Probably, the same troubadour in different garbs, sent to foul up men’s understanding” (23).

Som Bhaskar wishes to know whether Anuradha believes in God and his miracles. When Anuradha replies that she “used to think of God” (23), Som replies that his mother has thought of God, and his wife too thinks of God. Anuradha replies that mostly women think of God than men. Som reveals his disbelief in God and Anuradha accepts Som’s alienated view of God. Som says: " ‘But Krishna never comes,’ I couldn't help mocking. ‘That is true,’ said Anuradha absently. 'Krishna never comes.' "(57-8).

Som is not able to share in the spiritual experiences of Anuradha, when she tells the story of Gargi’s father, who is a suf, a pir. Som says: “Once again, against my will, I was drawn helplessly into the labyrinth of their mysterious world” (60). In the story the son tells his father, the pir that when he is drunk Allah [God] comes to him, and stares at him; but says nothing, and so he drinks. He says that God will speak to him one day. Then he falls sick because of his drunkenness and tells his father that God does not exist. He says: “If he exists let Him give me a sign” (60). The father fervently prays to God to take his life and spare his son’s life. God listens to the prayer of the father. The father falls sick and the son is cured of his sickness. The father tells his son: “You had asked for a sign. God has given it to you” (61). When Som laughs at Anuradha for believing this story of God’s miracle, Anuradha gets wild
with anger. She angrily tells Som: "I cannot argue with you....But let me tell you something. You are wrong about many things. You are wrong even about yourself. You think you know a lot, when, in fact, you don’t" (61).

Anuradha, pointing to the mountains, says to Som, "‘There is a god up there,’ and adds ‘In the mountains’" (126). Anuradha expresses this view based on a popular belief that God resides on mountain peaks, even though it has no authentic evidence. Som lacks the deep faith that Anuradha has in God. So out of his disbelief in God, he makes derogatory remarks regarding the existence of God, as his talk with Anuradha reveals:

‘Rubbish’, I said.
‘There is a temple there. On a hill lined with lepers. You must come with me.’
‘I am not a leper.’
‘I did not mean that. But you must come. God will cure you.’

Som realises that he needs God’s helping hand to make him normal and be rid of his alienation. Yet he is reluctant to accept God. Som thinks, “I understood. Deep inside my heart I knew I was a leper, that I needed a cure. But I refused to yield ground. ‘You are absurd,’ I told her” (126).

Som involves himself in discussions over spiritual matters. Som’s father is ever engaged in the Quest for God. He believes in the existence of the First Cause, the God. He talks of the Creation of the Universe, and its fundamental unity. He wonders that in the universe everything — Birth, Growth, Decline and Death — happens in cycles. He says that the mystics, too, thought that God is behind the Creation of the Universe. His father’s interest in finding out the truths regarding the First Cause irritates him. He cries out in irritation: “But what is the evidence?” (27). His father answers: “Evidence, of course, is important. If only the mystics could offer their evidence of God like the scientists do!” (27). His father answers that since the mystics
do not give evidence for the existence of God, he may run an experiment and try to find out the truth behind this mystery.

Som becomes eloquent in the house of Gargi Mata and talks about evolution. He says that at last the animal shape is evolved, a shape that can shelter “the Spirit, something that hadn’t existed before” (131). Aftab answers that the Spirit has existed at the time of the Cro-magnons, more than forty thousand years ago. Then Som asks if the Spirit is there “what precisely is expected of him....Darwin didn’t say how we are supposed to evolve further” (132). Aftab answers him that people see this Spirit through visions. He says: “It is a matter of visions. There must be men and women who see what you want to see” (132). Som makes fun of Aftab, and his remark angers Aftab, who leaves the place saying that Som is headstrong in refusing to accept his view. Anuradha tells Som, “May be Krishna begins where Darwin left off” (132).

Som is not ready for a discussion with her. He is not interested in believing in the existence of God. He thinks: “But what is Krishna?” I wasn’t interested in Darwin or Krishna, or the spirit of the Cro-magnons. All I wanted was her. I wanted her body and soul, every bit of her” (133). Som has no faith in God from his childhood. His alienation from God continues as he grows up into an adult. Som is more interested in the pursuit of the pleasures of the flesh and less interested in the pursuit of spiritual truths and metaphysical meaning.

When Aftab asks him, "...Do you believe in God, Bhaskar?" Som answers, "You know. I don't" (166). Aftab says, "You know the old law: God compensates you for whatever He takes away from you" (166). This becomes true in the case of Som. God takes away Anuradha from him. Her loss is compensated by the gift of the silver statue of God. Anuradha leaves a little package to Gargi with a message to be handed over to Som before her disappearance. The gift turns out to be Lord Krishna himself:
"It turned out to be a little silver Krishna, flute and all. A brief note in her hand reads: "I got this from Gargi. You must always keep it with you" (169).

Som is alien to the strong faith of the people, who despite their weak health and old age, go on holy pilgrimage to temples. They even climb mountains to worship the God in the mountain temple. When Som climbs the mountain to reclaim Aftab's property he is wonder struck to see an old man who has travelled nine hundred miles to die near a lake in the mountain temple. He is carried in a cot by porters, while his sons and grandsons accompany him chanting prayers. The whole mountain echoes the prayers, which they are chanting in immaculate Sanskrit while climbing the mountain. At the mountain temple, the priest sits by the cot performing rituals. The priest after whispering prayers into his ears turns his face towards the mountain. Som is filled with doubts as to what his dying eye saw and wonders: "Did he see the vision of the other world that, like a cosmic magnet, had drawn him over a thousand miles?" (194).

Som gets acquainted with the little boy, who accompanies his grandfather, the old man. The boy asks Som whether he is going to the shrine to take a vow, and then get the "prasad" (187). Som says that his real purpose in going to the shrine is to get his shares. The boy says that his aim in coming to the shrine is to find a special stone—a crystal pebble with a star in the center. When Som asks him what he will do, suppose he fails to find this particular stone, the boy answers: "Even then it is allright" (186). Som feels that this boy's mind is contaminated; because he will "spend the rest of the days searching for a crystal pebble with a star. And become a nut in the process" (187). The boy's search for the stone is a quest, the quest for the existence of God. Som, too, undertakes a similar quest, a search for Anuradha and her properties.
Som says sarcastically, “I want to meet Krishna personally” (172), and that is why he is going to the mountains. Som’s real aim is not a holy pilgrimage. K. M. Chandar says, “…This trip which has neither the necessary faith nor the purity of the purpose, is the opposite of a pilgrimage” (61). Som’s religious alienation prevents him from gaining the personal experience of God; but he realises that God is great. When Dr. Kashyap, the doctor who accompanies him on his trip to the mountain refers to his achievement in acquiring Aftab’s company, Som thinks that this is very simple and very easily accomplished; but what is more complex and complicated, as the labyrinths of Aftab’s haveli, is God: “No, there was nothing simple about this thing. There was nothing simple about Krishna. Had it been so, He would not have survived ten thousand years. He would have died along with the gods of the Pharaohs, the Sumerians, the Incas. Krishna was not as simple as the labyrinths of Aftab’s Haveli” (173).

When Som starts climbing the mountain, the doctor asks Som what is on the mountain. He asks him whether it is a temple. Som answers that there may be a cave. Then he says: “May be just a stone. God knows what” (178). He is reminded of Leela Sabnis and what Descartes has told about God. Leela Sabnis has argued that everything could be reasoned out. So Som thinks, “And I was on my way to reason out Krishna Himself. Descartes should have approved. Of course, Descartes was no agnostic. He granted the existence of God. Since the idea of God existed in men’s minds, he reasoned, it must have been God himself who had put it there in the first place” (179). Som thinks that the children of the West are brought up to believe that they are born with blank minds, and that they are brought up to challenge everything. So those children have grown up doubting everything, and this attitude has spread to Eastern countries. He thinks that this faith in reason has started to collapse. Som
thinks: “Faith in reason was, after all, also faith. Why not faith in a god? Was that what this ass-breaking trip was really about? To know if God existed? Surely, if He could hold shares, He could give other evidence of His existence” (179).

While climbing the mountain, Vasudev, the guide, who takes the pilgrims to the shrine on the mountain, explains that it is faith that brings the worshippers to the temple. When Som sees people, coming in little groups, converging on the mountain, he asks Vasudev whether it is a special day. Pointing to the crowd of worshippers, Vasudev answers: “It is a day for vows. Some come for new vows; others to thank for the old ones” (198). When Som’s doctor asks whether their wishes get fulfilled, he testifies to the faith of the people. He says: “It depends on their faith. Faith can move mountains,...” (198). Som, lacking in faith, intellectually knows that God cures the lepers who believe, and trust in him. When he sees the crowd of lepers on the way to the temple, he is reminded of what Anuradha has said earlier about the lepers. He asks himself: “A hill lined with lepers....Could this be the hill she had in mind?” (199). He loathes the sight of the lepers and he tells Vasudev that he has never seen so many lepers before and he asks him from where they are coming, and whether they get cured through miracles. When Vasudev evades the answer to his question, Som sarcastically answers: “I suppose that depends on ‘faith’ too” (199). Then Vasudev tells him, “There is a tank behind the temple whose waters can cure” (199).

After reaching the mountain temple Som expresses his wish to see the reigning deity of the mountains. The guide says: "There is no deity as such in this temple. Only a flame" (207). The guide gives a scientific explanation of the eternal flame that there is a jet of natural gas, which has been burning in the sanctum of this temple at least for a thousand year. Lack of spiritualism makes him a sceptic and Som quips sarcastically, "And that is your deity?” (207). Som sees the “dazzling blue
flame" (208) shooting from the rock in the centre of a circular room. He ruminates, "This, then, was Krishna, was it?" (208).

Since Som does not pray, and plead God to reveal himself to him, he is denied of the mystic experience. God remains a mystery incomprehensibly to Som, who is utterly materialistic and worldly. Due to his spiritual void, physical passion for Anuradha and greed for the landed properties dominate and take hold of Som. Som swears to grab both: "...if this was God and this was all that was God and if there was no proof that a miracle saved me, then, I was going to take the shares the following morning" (208). Som succeeds in getting all the shares of Aftab except the one, which Anuradha has gifted away to the hill temple. Som swears to get them and challenges God: "Kneeling beside that fantastic flame,...I vowed I was going to reverse the whole thing: I was going to get the shares and Anuradha. No half-assed rigmorale was going to keep us apart" (208).

Som meets Gargi Mata, who hands over the package containing the last bit of Aftab's properties. Som tells her that he is surprised to hear from his doctor that God has saved him through a miracle on the condition that Anuradha should never set eyes on him. Gargi advises him to believe that really he is saved by a miracle. She writes and the note reads: "There is no harm in believing that God exists..." (213). Som wants a proof to make him believe in this miracle. He says: "...I want to believe. But one can't order belief. I must have evidence. You see what I mean? I cannot give up Anuradha, you know that. In the absence of evidence I intend to challenge the whole thing: I want to take not only these shares but also Anuradha. It scares me but I have no choice" (213). Gargi again writes another note to teach him the mysterious ways of God. She writes: "God does not work in this simple manner, God does not seek revenge. Man's vanity (ahankar) brings him revenge enough" (213-14).
Som does not understand the deep message in the note. Not getting a concrete evidence of the miracle, Som decides to take away the shares with him. He answers: “I want to assure you I am not vain. I am not arrogant. I am curious. I want to know. Maybe over-curious but not vain. So, I’ll take these shares with me” (214). Gargi writes one more note, in which she writes that we are like children trying to reach up to a crack in the door to peep into a room. Som wishes that Gargi has explained this note too. Som says: “I wished she had told me what lay in the room. May be she did not know herself. May be, it was better she did not tell me. Maybe I would not have believed even if she had told me. One had probably to rise up to the crack by oneself” (215).

Romi Sahai (SC) also, feels himself an outsider to the faith of the villagers of the Maikala hills and the powers of Billy as a priest. Traces of spiritual alienation are found in Billy too. He narrates to Romi his alienated experience of visiting a temple, when one evening he has gone to the temple to worship God. He says:

I stopped at a temple. It was the hour of the evening aarati. I stood before the idols my hands folded, my head bowed, incense of dhoop tickling my nostrils....What I had hoped to achieve by my visit I do not know. Like most others, I had perhaps assumed that under the conical dome, ... a god waited to redeem me. As I stood there, my eyeballs restive behind the quivering lids, it suddenly dawned upon me that it was all a great waste, that the god who awaited me now was one to which no temples could be built (SC 97-98).

Ratan Rathor (AP) displays religious alienation when he talks about the religious festival Diwali. He refers to it as “the bleak Diwalis” (34). Ratan says that they do not give serious consideration to going to temples and to observance of religious festivals. He says: “And so we come here, in the morning or in the evening, or on Tuesdays, and if that is not possible at least on festival days and if that too is not possible, we send someone in our place, or call the pandit to our home, or send a big donation through the registered post. And thus having acknowledged God’s existence
we carry on, certain that He need not be bothered with the details” (46). Then Ratan presents an alienated picture of God. He says: “God sees all, we say, but having seen, goes His way, twirling His walking stick. He sees all, but does not necessarily at the same time judge. His judgment, we like to believe, comes only in spurts, if it comes at all, and can be influenced with a lump sum. All you need is the wherewithal and a broker” (46).

Ratan is not able to understand as to whether God shapes the character of man. He asks, “Was graft in His eyes, the same as any other money? And what about the consequences, consequences for what was termed as the ‘character’ of the giver and the taker? Or, was ‘character’ just a myth that I had somehow picked up?” (45). Ratan says that his father has not taught him anything about God. He says: “I doubt if my father had ever given much thought to God. His reality had probably consisted of stepping up to a revolver and getting shot in the chest. If others invoked God, involved him in argument or beseeched him, he let them carry on until they were ready to return to the problems of this world” (45).

Ratan sarcastically laughs at his wife making vows to God. He says that his wife feels happy when his prospects become brighter; but she will never rest satisfied with it. Dissatisfaction drives her to the temple to make new vows. He says: “Yes, that was what her life had been reduced to: Discontent and vows, each feeding the other, an an-ever-mounting spiral, with no end in sight. Of course, I used to pamper her, laugh at her, even at times lose my temper. I thought I was beyond the reach of the fires that seethed within her. I thought I was mature, wise, geared to life’s better purposes. Ha!” (72). Ratan thinks of religion as a stumbling block on the way to achieve material prosperity though his wife fervently prays God to help her husband
to move on to better prospects. He accepts his inability to understand the spiritual fervour of his wife.

Ratan says that he has been taught religion in high schools where he has learned long pieces from the Bhagavat Gita, the holy book of Hindus. He confesses that though he has read them many times he has not understood them. He says that what he has learned in his school days were of no use in his practical life. He says: “In a way it [Gita] is as confusing as the Superintendent’s views on God. It is all very well to talk mystical stuff. But what do you do when you make a mess of things? How do you get out?” (91). He says that commentaries on Gita are available in the bookshops and he has read some of them. The Gita too gives explanation to some of his puzzling questions; but even then he does not understand it.

The temple priest seeks Ratan’s help to see his son successful. Ratan narrates: “His own life, the priest said, had been spent somehow, without much education and without success. But he did not want his son to get stuck with the same foolishness. Here he waved towards the temple. He said I was a man of the world and I would understand” (124). The priest lacks spirituality and he fails to instill spirituality in Ratan. The priest’s desire to seek material prosperity for his son alienates Ratan. Ratan says that from that time onwards he stopped entering the temple.

Ratan says how some people including the Brigadier’s [his friend’s] father make fun of the Panditji, the priest. Ratan also joins with them and teases the priest. Ratan has asked the priest: “What is the point, Panditji,... what is the point in all this mumbo-jumbo? Why do you waste your time? Has the shouting of mantras ever changed the fortunes of men? Or the gayatri turned them to goodness?” (146). The chanting of the gayatri mantra, the prayer, does not make any sense to Ratan.
Mr. Seth, in *Boy with the Flute*, says that his mother has taught him a short prayer consisting of the invocations to various gods ending with a Sanskrit *sloka*. Till the age of fifteen, he has believed in the efficacy of the prayer, and has repeated this prayer during his annual examination, and whenever he was under stress. Mr. Seth accepts that he has drifted away from god, and accompanies his wife to the temple just because his wife insists upon it. About Mr. Seth, the narrator says: “If he still visited a temple occasionally it was only to assuage the fears of his somewhat superstitious wife who had been persuaded by astrologers to perform a certain ritual twice a year so that the considerable wealth that they had come to acquire might be preserved and may indeed grow” (S 49-50).

Sindi (F) does not believe in God. When Sindi’s American girl friend asks Sindi whether he believes in God, he frankly accepts his spiritual emptiness: “She asked me again if I believed in God. I said I didn’t know, but I supposed I didn’t” (35). Since India is a country of temples, gods and goddesses and sadhus, June quips, "I thought every Hindu believed in God" (35). Sindi blames his parents, and reasons out that he not brought up in India and his spiritualism is not inculcated in him in his childhood by his father who is a sceptic. He says: “Anyway I can’t really be called a Hindu. My mother was English and my father, I am told, a sceptic. That doesn’t seem like a good beginning for a Hindu, does it?” (35).

Sindi scorns at the mob of Bengalis crowding in front of the statue of Kali when he sees them in the slide, projected in the house of June, taken during a tour to India by Mrs. Blyth. Sindi sees “A crowd of gesticulating Bengalis jostled in front of a hideous statue of Kali” (74). June’s mother, the American lady reveals her spiritual alienation when she criticizes this crowd of worshippers of Goddess Kali. She says:
"‘One thing I don’t like at all about Hinduism is their nonsense about idols. It just isn’t human’,...” (74).

Sindi cherishes a similar alienated view of the idols of Gods. He finds the “bronze figure of dancing Shiva” kept as a decorative piece of item in the dining room of Mr.Khemka’s house. Though the statue fails to excite him spiritually, he is struck with awe and wonder at the intense beauty of the divine dancer. Religious alienation mars Sindi’s view of God. To him God seems to be unmindful of the sorrows of the humans who keep up appearances and hide their sorrows: “The dance went on unheeding, and yet comprehending all. What did it matter if Babu was dead, and I living merely to keep up appearances” (14).

Karl, an Austrian, Sindi’s room- mate in Boston, too, displays religious alienation and shows his aversion for religion. Karl shouts at Sindi when they are engaged in an argument. Karl shouts: “You Indians and your mealy-mouthed philosophies!” (80). He expresses the view that the Indians are engaged in pursuits of religion, because they are enjoying peace in their country. He asks if the country is ridden by war, who will “go around preaching Bhagvad Gita” (80). Karl again shouts, “Oh, you Indians! You must all be half crazy. What do you think you are, a nation of saints or something?” (82).

When Karl taunts Sindi, Sindi wonders why Karl generalises on all Indians since he is not religious and not a saint. Sindi thinks that not every one can become a saint. He replies Karl that it is difficult to be a saint if one doesn’t have faith in God. When Karl replies vehemently that he has no faith in God, and does not feel the need for one, Sindi feels that, at least, Karl has got faith in himself. Sindi regrets his self-alienation. He feels that he has got faith neither in God nor in himself. Sindi tells Karl: “You have a faith in yourself as a free agency. I have lost even that” (82).
In *The City and the River*, the Grand Master is a self-alienated man, who suffers from religious alienation. He tries to prevent the boatpeople from paying their allegiance to the river, the Goddess Mother. The boatmen refuse to shift their loyalties from the river, which symbolizes God and eternity, to the Grand Master, a man who represents the ephemeral. The Grand Master recollects what his father has told him once about the boat people: “Boatmen are not simple as they seem. They consider themselves to be the children of the river, and to the river, alone do they hold allegiance. They believe, unfortunately, with their hearts, and for their beliefs they are willing to die” (14). The Grand Master complains that the boatpeople do not salute him when he goes out. He says: “Where others always have a ready salute for him the boatmen simply stare out of dark unblinking eyes as though he were a stranger” (14).

The Astrologer tells the Headman that the Grand Master is God’s representative on earth. He says: “…Grand Master is His deputy on earth” (19). The Headman says: “We have no quarrel with the Grand Master and we have no quarrel with you. If it is a matter of allegiance, our allegiance is only to the river and cannot be shared” (19).

The Astrologer explains to the Grand Master why they offer their allegiance to the river. He says: “The river for them, you must understand is a symbol of the divine mother. Of God Himself” (22).

He hears of the Festival of the Great River celebrated by a mighty king in the past. He also hears of the story, which has led to this celebration. That mighty king has sought the advice of a sage as to how to get the gift of wisdom. The sage has asked him to celebrate time, which is immortal, so that the celebration will remind him and his people about his mortality and the mortality of all human beings. The sage tells the king “to worship the great river which was Time’s consort and Time itself” (61). The Astrologer thinks that this festival is celebrated in honour of God, but
the Grand master is ignorant of its real meaning and will not accept it even if he points it out to him. The Astrologer thinks: "There was room in this festival only for the allegiance to the great river,...but this could not be explained to the Grand master who was strong of head" (61).

The Grand Master reveals his religious alienation when he says that he has nothing to fear, and he is not afraid of God. He questions the existence of God and reveals his spiritual vacuity. He says:

Again I hear fear speaking through your words. What are you afraid of? The boatmen? The councillors? God? The boatmen shall soon rue the day they refused their allegiance to me; the fangs of the councillors have also been extracted. And God what is God? Where is He? Does He even exist? He must surely have other things to worry about than intervene in the affairs of this city where we in any case now rule. There is nothing to worry, Astrologer. Be of good cheer and be at peace (219).

He reveals his self-alienation when he says that he hates music. Vasu, the journalist says that the boatmen sing at night on their musical instruments since they are worried over the loss of their unborn children. He says that the boatmen want to display their souls, and he adds: "They want everyone to see how their souls ache since their children were outlawed. They want the Grand Master to make amends" (38). The Grand Master says that he has heard the music first time on the night of the blockade, played by the boatmen on their one-string instrument. He says that from then on he hears the music, and the music seems to come from the stars. He says that he is disturbed by the cosmic music. He says: "It comes from afar, from a spaceship, perhaps, or a dying star. It disturbs me, and yet I am drawn to it I who hate music. How strange....And now it grows louder and louder" (203).

The Grand Master projects himself as God. He dreams, and refers to the prophecy of the arrival of a King to rule the city, and he feels that he may be that King. Referring to the prophecy he says: "The prophecy, I have been told, promises the
coming of a king. But this music disturbs me. I do not know why but I hear within its notes the echoes of a mocking laugh” (203).

Billy (SC) realizes his self-alienation, and feels that he has allowed his self to be steeped in moral corruption. About his affair with Rima, he says: “It was a sordid business.... I will forever hold himself in contempt for what I did to Rima Kaul....I seduced her. But that is not important. It was the way I seduced her and why I seduced her that still at times can keep me awake the whole of a night" (187). Billy realises that he has alienated himself from his true essence: “It gradually dawned on me that a tremendous corrupting force was working on me. It was as though my soul were taking revenge on me for having denied for so long that Other Thing that it had been clamouring for. ‘Here, you swine, if you haven’t the guts to break away from this filth, well, then, I am going to wallow in it until it makes you sick”(189).

In his letter to Tuula, he expresses his self-alienation: “…we are swiftly losing what is known as one’s grip on life. Why else this constant blurring of reality?” (97). This makes him find out his true identity. He questions: “Who am I? Who are my parents? My wife? My child? At times I look at them, sitting at the dinner table, and for a passing moment I cannot decide who they are or what accident of Creation has brought us together” (97). J.P.Tripathi observes,

“...search for identity is another name for search after discovery of one’s real being. The individual’s exploration of the material universe might lead to the discovery of self. ...In his relationship with the material universe, the individual may feel alienated and regard himself as an outsider, a stranger in the physical would. Certain individuals might feel disinterested in the essence of their being and might be inclined to enjoy existence” (75).

Billy initially is not aware of his real self and when the awareness comes he is alienated from the superficial reality of life. Billy leaves the civilized society and enters the tribal society to lead the life of a primitive. On the night of
leaving the anthropological camp, when he is sitting on the rock undergoing the
metamorphosis, he feels he is losing his sanity. He says, "Layer upon layer was peeled
off me until nothing but my primitive self was left trembling in the moonlight.
Something similar had happened to me once earlier" (SC 121). Billy says that he has
started to think about his identity very early at the age of fourteen, when he has gone
to Bhubaneswar, and attended a night fair with his uncle in a village. He says "...I
could not figure out what excited or troubled me unless it was a sudden interest in my
own identity" (122). He has experienced erotic energy and Billy says, "The shock of
erotic energy was followed by the same feeling of unreality or, as I said, a reality
sharper than any I had ever known. It was a bit like having taken a dose of a
hallucinatory drug, something I realized many years later when I was in Mexico. I
remember saying to myself, even though I was only fourteen, I remember saying:
Something has gone wrong with my life" (125).

Ratan (AP) is a self-alienated man. In Ratan, due to the disorganization of the
self, the self worries about guilt, and loss of his identity. Ratan is disturbed by his
guilt and his moral decline. His moral corruption causes restlessness, and makes him
feel like a leper. He says: "After the restlessness came apathy. And this apathy, this
indifference, grew. Upon me. Inside me. Like a boil. Like leprosy" (66). His ethical
alienation makes him analyse his self. He says: "I had become a scoundrel. No doubt
about that" (70).

M. Madhusudan Rao observes: "His [Ratan's] self-estrangement reaches its
peak when he denies his crime" (156). Ratan says: "It was not that I had had amnesia
or forgotten that I had taken a bribe_ it was just that I had diluted the act with such a
mass of rationalization and pushed it behind so many layers of make-believe that
although I remembered the deed, I did not associate it with myself" (AP 46). Ratan
confesses that it is due to his vanity that he projects himself as a man of honesty. He says: “For twenty years I had made bargains with life, taken a bribe, lied, debauched, and yet I considered myself as good as the best! I behaved as though all those had been peripheral romps, little adulteries of the soul that did not count. There is no end to human vanity, ...to our stupidity” (117).

When Ratan is brought out of the jail for making a confession of his criminal deeds everything seems unreal. He starts questioning his identity. He asks: “Was it a dream, a nightmare, hallucination caused by some poisonous drug? Or, was I not Ratan Rathor, an official of the Government of India but someone else some one born of criminal parents dragged out of the slums of the Old City? If I was not Ratan Rathor, what was I? Was I a thief? A scoundrel? Was I the murderer they said I was? (109).

His friend Himmat Singh points to him that he is “a spineless flunkey” (136). He further says, “You are bogus, Ratan Rathor....Bogus. From top to bottom. Your work, your religion, your friendships, your honour, nothing but a pile of dung. Nothing, he said, but poses, a bundle of shams” (137). Ratan accepts what his friend says about him as true, and he calls himself a “hypocrite” (102). Ramesh K.Srivastava observes, that Ratan is “...degrading himself, thereby alienating himself from his ownself” (318). He further writes, “Ratan Rathor conforms to counterfeit values of civilization at the cost of his individuality. Conformity is the height of alienation from oneself” (320). Ratan refers to himself as a frog in a well and blames society for his frustration, for the purposelessness and futility in his life: “But what can you expect of a frog in the well, of frustrated men sailing about in a confused society, a society without norms, without direction, without even, perhaps, a purpose” (AP 74). This sense of futility and purposelessness mark the life of all the self-alienated protagonists.
Self-alienation fills Ratan with the sense of futility of life. He feels that he leads a life without a purpose and his life is a waste. As a result of this his soul is subjected to torture. He tells his friend, Himmat Singh, how he feels about it: “That is a terrible sensation, my friend_ may God preserve you from it_ the realisation that one’s life has been a total waste, a great mistake; without purpose, without results. There are many sorrows in the world but there is nothing in the three worlds to match the sorrow of a wasted life. All else, thoughts of revenge, of pleasure, of pain, pale before it, are made pointless (140).

Som (LL), also, feels his life insignificant and futile. He observes: “If someone, man or god, had watched my life from a great height, would I have appeared to him like an ant threading through a maze, knocking about, against one wall, then another? (53). Som has a low estimate of his character. He says: “I looked at myself in the mirror: lean, crow-footed, graying. I could not, then, see the hunger but there was the boredom and the fed-up-ness, endless depths of it” (21).

The self-alienated men do not realize that God has created every man to fulfill a particular mission in life. Their frustration makes them think that their existence is trivial and insignificant. Ratan (AP) says: “…I was a nobody. A NOBODY. Deep down I was convinced that I had lost significance: As an official; as a citizen; as a man. How could, then my actions have significance? What significance was there in steering a boat that had no destination or watering a tree that would never bear fruit” (74).

Sindi (F) expresses a similar view when he remarks: “I was considered quite a misfit. My foreign background stood against me. Nobody hated me. I was too insignificant for that sort of thing” (16). Sindi accepts his self-alienation. He says: “They knew I was a nobody like them who only hated himself” (49). His self-
alienation makes him cynical. He says: “I was sure they were laughing at me. I turned around and peered at my reflection in the dirty window glass of a cheap clothing store. I did look rather strange” (6).

Sindi feels that he is born without a purpose and he has lived without a purpose. He tells his friend Karl: “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...Now I suppose I existed only for dying; so far as I knew everybody else did the same thing. It was sad, nonetheless” (65). Sindi always makes a poor estimate of himself. He thinks: “…I certainly thought rather poorly of myself” (141).

Sindi feels that he has wasted his life, and that there is not much to talk of as achievement in his life. He regrets his vegetable life, a life without a purpose. He says: “…twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong place. Twenty five years gone in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievement: a ten-stone body that had to be fed four times a day, ....This was the sum of a lifetime of striving” (98). On another occasion, he self examines himself and says: “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” (207).

To Sindi, the future, too, does not offer any hope of a meaningful life. He says, “And the future? In an ultimate sense, I knew, it would be as meaningless as the past. But, in a narrower sense, there would perhaps be useful tasks to be done; perhaps if I were lucky, even a chance to redeem the past” (234). Sindi realises that because of his self-alienation he has committed the fatal error, which has led first to the death of Babu and then to the death of June.
Sindi analyses his self- alienation and feels that his alienation is born out of his rootlessness. He has felt himself estranged and lonely in America. Sindi does not belong to any one country in particular. His alienation, his sense of loneliness and his estrangement from people, is not due to geographical factors; but is due to his soul. June is right in her analysis of Sindi's character when she says: "There is something strange about you, ... Something distant. I'd guess that when people are with you they don't feel like they're with a human being. Maybe it's an Indian characteristic, but I have a feeling you'd be a foreigner anywhere" (35). Sindi agrees with June's view and says, "My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went" (65).

In India, Mr. Khemka, finding that Sindi is suffering under the weight of a problem, asks him to confide in him. He says: "You must tell me what is bothering you. I might be able to help you" (141). When Sindi refuses to come out with the truth, he asks him, why he looks strange. Sindi is reluctant to accept what Khemka says about him. Sindi answers: "I'm not strange. I am perhaps different from you and your world. My set of experiences has taught me a reality that is different from yours. That's all" (142). Sindi tells Khemka that he has no reason to be ambitious. He says, "I don't even have a reason to live!" (144). Sindi says his motivation in coming to India is to escape from his decayed self: "It meant escape from a bit of myself that appeared the most decayed... I was like a river that hopes to leave its dead wood behind by taking an unexpected plunge over a steep precipice" (181-87).

Mrs. Blythe assesses Sindi's character, and tells him that he is a cynic. She says: "You are just a cynic, my boy. America wouldn't have been what it is today with your kind of cynicism" (108). Sindi becomes cynical when Babu brings trivial problems to him. Sindi suggests that it can be solved by Babu himself by his self-
effort. He says to Babu that he is not interested in listening to his “sob stories” (161). Babu writes in his letter to his sister about the cynicism of Sindi. He writes: “...Sindi is always willing to listen to me, but he is so terribly cynical I am afraid he will make fun of me if I took my small problems to him” (55). Sindi affirms that he is cynical. But when Shiela weeps over the death of her brother, Sindi thinks, “I might have been cynical, but I could recognize pain when it was thrust in my face” (53).

Billy (SC), too, is cynical, and Shyam M. Asnani, commenting on Billy’s cynicism remarks, “His [Billy's] cynicism borders on insanity so much so that he now questions his being, his parentage and his relation to his wife and child” (A Study 71). This self-alienation makes the protagonists cynical, and the religious alienation prevents them from nearing God, and pleading God to guide them and lead them through their personal problems, and to the problems of the others living around them.

The biological changes, which take place during adolescence, affect the psyche and cause alienation in children. Sindi (F) speaks of how he was a different type of adolescent. Sindi concludes: “I had started adult life as a confused adolescent, awesomely engrossed with myself, searching for wisdom and the peace that comes with it. The journey had been long and tedious and still was not over” (234).

Billy’s (SC) mother narrates an incident, from Billy’s boyhood. She says that, when he is a boy of fourteen, he has attempted to run away from home. When Billy’s mother refers to this incident of his boyhood days, he snaps at her: "Do you have to talk about that, Mama?" (51).

Another important cause of self-alienation in these protagonists is their poor health and their sickness. Som (LL) suffers due to heart ailment. He is often confined to bed. Dr. Kashyap takes his cardiograms and prescribe medicines for him. Som thinks: “This illness has turned many things topsy turvy. One thing badly turvy is my
sleep routine" (10). His doctor says that his blood is full of chemicals. Som thinks: "Chemicals or no chemicals, I have become a nuisance" (10). During his sickness his mind wanders. Lying in bed he feels the sense of void affecting him day and night.

Sindi (F) suffers due to asthma. He says he is allergic to hay dust and says to June that it is a genetic disorder, which he has inherited from his mother. June hints that his asthma is the physical symptom of a mental problem. She asks him, "How do you know it's not some sort of mental disorder, ... a psychosomatic problem?" (38). He gets irritated at June's remark. He says: "You Americans ! Every illness is a mental disorder" (38). Sindi says that when the asthmatic attack came "I realized how foolish I was. Vain and foolish like a peacock. I turned my face towards her and suddenly was overcome with an almost unbearable wave of self-pity. Illness and physical pain had drained my will and I felt like crying" (39). Sindi accepts that his disease has affected his psyche. He says: "I felt depressed, what with the illness and so many drugs. Lying there in the bed I wondered in what way, if any, did I belong to the world..."(65).

Kalpana Wandrekar notes, " Like Srinivas in The Nowhere Man, Sindi has a diseased psyche. Whereas the overt symptom of it in Srinivas is the leprosy, in Sindi it is 'asthma'. Asthma is a disease, which is considered an allergy. What is Sindi allergic to? Love, life, or self? To a certain extent it is all the three that he is allergic to....It is symptomatic of a psychic disturbance...Like the disease asthma, Sindi's alienation is deep rooted and is in his system itself" (82-83).

The sickness and the death of the parents, too, affect the psyche of the protagonists. Ratan (AP) feels disturbed by his mother's illness. She suffers due to tuberculosis. Ratan finds her confined to bed, always coughing and spitting blood.
Ratan asks: "Have you ever lived with someone tubercular? You are lucky you haven't. It is like living with Death" (9).

Ratan says his father's death has spoiled his view of life and he is not able to enjoy it: "...all the ingredients of a happy youth appeared to me veined with a secret doom that, like a time bomb, could any moment reduce them all to dust, just as within seconds it had reduced my father to dust" (19). His father's death shocks him, when he is shot down by police, in front of his very eyes, for participating in a procession. His whole family suffers because of the death of his father and life becomes bleak for him: "After my father's death things were bleak. The three of us were left alone in that little house: I, my mother, and her illness." (17).

Som (LL) feels the loss of his mother during the formative period of his life. He remembers the moments of tender love experienced with his mother. One winter he paints her nails for her. He feels her wasted fingers hard as pencils and her fingers frighten him: "I could feel through the skin the shape of the bones like the bones of the skeleton that stood in the physiology lab at school. I had started out of a whim and out of love but I was glad when the manicuring was over" (69). His mother passes away when he is in his teenage, and studying in America. Som hearing the news of the death of his mother, feels an emptiness in his soul: "I nodded, keeping back, not tears but a great roaring hollowness" (25). T. Padma remarks:

"Som's tragedy was that something fine and innocent died in him along with his mother. The rage and hatred that welled up in his heart against god-men created an emotional block in his nature and made distress and cynicism an integral part of his life. His father's insomnia and fanatic faith in "first cause" forced him to consciously resolve to fight against ending up as a sad decrepit old man" (34).

His mother's death upsets him as it upsets his father. He recollects his childhood experience: "...when she was young and not ill, she came out from the bath
in a robe and sat before the mirror while I brushed her hair. She kissed me on the ear and called me a beautiful boy. When she died, my father put a telescope on the roof and, to kill his insomnia, started to track the stars” (66).

Som loses his parents quite early in his life. When his father dies of heart attack, he is twenty-five. The thought that they are alive makes him lead a normal life. After their death, the loss of his parents creates a deep sorrow and a feeling of 'void', a sort of emptiness in him: “I had not even got over my mother's death. Or my father's, or the oppressive turbulence of the voids that never let me alone” (109). Som is of the opinion that the death of his parents will definitely affect his psyche. He wonders whether others who lose their parents undergo a similar experience. He thinks of how his friend Leela Sabnis will have felt at the demise of her father. He feels her hopes and her future plans will have been upset by the death of her father. When he meets Leela, after her father's death he asks her: "You were quite attached to him, weren't you?" and " Is that why you left teaching?" (111). His deep sorrow has marred his view of life and has created alienation in him.

Som is forever filled with the sense of frustration. V. V. N. Rajendra Prasad observes Som “seems to comprehend life only in terms of alienation, aridity of feeling, and a sense of inner frustration” (Self as Labyrinth 126). He says: “Hunger of the body. Hunger of the spirit. You suffer from one or the other” (LL 11). This hunger of the body and the spirit creates inner disharmony in him. He is troubled by a feeling of void. Som says: “It is the voids of the world, more than its objects, that bother me. The voids and the empty spaces, within and without” (47).

He feels that he wants something; but he does not know what it is. Som says: “...I had conducted my orchestras of discontent” (12). This discontentment creates the feeling of emptiness, the sense of void in him. Som says that when his headmaster's
wife informs him that his mother’s funeral is over. Som says he was “...keeping back, not tears but a great roaring hollowness” (25). Som says: “...the voids beating upon me in a thick bombardment” (75), and “the voids were upon me, pulling and pushing” (76). He further says that he has been muddled by voids (77).

He tells Leela that the voids make him sick. He tells her: “I hear this song way up in the sky. All the time. I want; I want; I want” (78). Som is confused by his doubts and he does not know what he really wants. Som expects a miracle by which he will come to know about himself: “If only one knew! If only miracles were to take place, as of old, and one could suddenly, irrefutably, know. Without nagging, enervating doubts. I want. I want. If only one knew what one wanted. Or, maybe, to know was what I wanted. To know. Just that. No more. No less” (53).

Som shares his psychic problem with Leela Sabnis, his psychiatrist friend. He asks her to tell him what the matter is with him. She analyses his problem and says that Som is a neurotic and angst ridden man. Her diagnosis is:

“You are much too high strung. Without reason. You are a neurotic. A compulsive fornicator. You are always playing games with the world. You are lonely on the one hand. On the other, you have built a shell around yourself. To protect yourself. Against your feelings of inadequacy. You are bored, bored stiff in your little shell. And when you get nowhere you get vengeful, angry, all the more querulous with that someone who put you on the planet in the first place” (80).

Leela Sabnis suggests that it is “a problem of identity” (112). Then she says that he can neither take his identity from the Brahmin caste to which he belongs nor the identity of an extended joint family. She says that what he wants may be “a mystical identification, identification with a godhead, as most Hindus want, sooner or later” (113). When Som denies this she tells Som “You haven’t got the stamina for that, I know. You haven’t got the faith.
Som seeks solution to his psychic problem in pornography. He says when Leela “made love, the confusion momentarily lifted. But immediately after…as she stood there looking down at me, the confusion descended in one roaring storm” (78). Leela asks him: “A man so successful, so intelligent, why should such a man be so confused …” (79). He finds in Leela’s affair a temporary relief and not a permanent solution. Som says that their affair fizzled out after six months. Leela gives a reasoned explanation regarding their affair. She says: “In the world of matter we had fed on sex and now we were satiated. In the world of the spirit we still enjoyed conversation. The two worlds, by her lights, did not meet, could not meet” (82). Som says: “What I needed perhaps, was something, somebody, somewhere in which the two worlds combined” (82).

When he meets Anuradha, Som believes that through Anuradha, he may be able to overcome his psychic obsessions. He tells Anuradha that may be it is Anuradha that he wants. Som thinks to himself: “I knew I wanted her” (58). Anuradha replies: “ ‘It is not me you want’ ‘I know. You want something. You badly want something. I could see that the first time we met. But it is not me. That, too, I can see. I told you so in the dargah’” (58-9). On another occasion Anuradha chides him and says: “You don’t want me. You don’t know what you want. You don’t know what is wrong and you don’t know what you want” (106). Som replies that he knows what is wrong with him; but Som is not able to say what it is. He feels that he is not able to organize his thoughts. He says: “I am dislocated. My mind is out of focus. There is something sitting right in front of me and I cannot see it” (107).

Som asks Aftab what he wants, whether he wants drugs, or indolence. Aftab points out to Som that while Som does not know what he wants, he knows at least what he wants. Aftab answers: "A peaceful death, that is all I want. You don't even
know what you want. You are being torn apart by your own doubts. Your doubts are the wolves that are going to eat you up” (164).

Som asks an astrologer whether he can tell him what he wants by reading his palm. The astrologer says: “It is a girl friend that you want. A premika” (103), and then he adds that he will not get her. The astrologer writes the remedy for this in a paper and passes on the message to Som. The message reads on like this: “You should do this mantra jap one lakh times” (104). Som views the astrologer’s suggestion as something foolish. Som thinks: “The interview had ended on the usual silly note” (104).

Leela finds the prescription for the mental maladies in the philosophies of Descartes and Spinoza. She says that Descartes suggested cure for his alienation in intuitions and faith in God. Then she quotes what Spinoza has said regarding this. She says: “Didn’t he say both matter and spirit embraced in God, and flowed from Him?” (81). Som refuses to accept this view out of his religious alienation. Som is caught in the labyrinth of lust, greed and fear of death.

Sindi (F) makes a long list of things that he wants, when Sheila asks whether he has not got any reason to live, and whether there is anything that he wants. Sindi answers: “There were things I wanted, only I didn’t know how to get them. I wanted the courage to live as I wanted; the courage to live without desire and attachment. I wanted peace and perhaps a capacity to love. I wanted all these. But, above all, I wanted to conquer pain” (146). Then he adds: “I first want to know the purpose of action” (146). He has tried many ways to escape pain; but has not found any.

Ratan (AP) confesses that he often suffers due to emptiness, the sense of void in his soul. He refers to “a void, incidentally, that has harassed me many times” (51). Like the other protagonists he too suffers due to a sense of want. He wants to get
respect and wants to be of use to others. He says that though these wants of his seem
to be simple it is difficult to get them. He asks: “Who has not wanted them? Yet how
few manage it. Simple things like that. Things as basic to life as air and water. And so
difficult to get!...Or we do not know how to get them? (19).

Those self-ali enated men is afflicted by a fear psychosis. They suffer under
various kinds of fears. Fear lies deep in the subcon scious mind of men who labour
under its torturous grip. Billy (SC) says that he has experienced fear through  out his
life. He questions himself “…what it was that he had been afraid of all those years....
For all his so-called courage, he thought, he, even he, had been afraid, afraid and
foolish squandering the priceless treasure of his life...” (141). He says that he has
developed a fear of his own self. He says: “...I had grown terribly afraid of myself,
some part of me. I thought terrible things might happen unless I did something
drastic” (182).

Billy fears that he may be forcibly taken back to the civilized society. He says
that once the civilized people come to know that he is alive they may try to reclaim
him from the tribal people and that this will be dangerous. Billy comes to know that it
is his friend who is posted as the collector of the district in which he lives. Even after
knowing this Billy abstains from meeting him, and renewing their friendship. He
explains that this is because of his fear. He tells Romi: “I was afraid. I didn’t want to
establish a link, any link, with the other world” (150).

Ratan (AP) sees the cause of his disquiet in his fear of the future. He says the
fear of “the unknown ominous FUTURE” (19) has haunted his dark dreams. He tells
his friend, “...what are we more afraid of than the future, its blind and unlit tunnels? It
was the future that had loomed before me, like a mountain range, a series of question-
marks, now sharp, now dim, but always there, a little contemptuous, waiting to be
crossed” (19). Ratan suffers due to various kinds of fears in his life from time to time. He remembers the fright he has experienced while participating in his father’s freedom movement procession. He says: “Have you ever had the feeling that you were choking? Well, that was the kind of freight I had” (11).

Ratan is filled with the fear of his crime, and the fear of being caught by his superiors. He says: “...it is the getting caught and not the deeds themselves that we are really afraid of” (76). He is not afraid of going to prison. What Ratan fears is the loss of his self respect if he is caught, and put in prison. Ratan feels that the worst fear is the fear of madness. He says: “There is no fear like the fear of madness. All other fears are common to men and can if you have the luck, be shared. Those who descend into madness descend alone. Immobilised, fuddled, tongueless, ununderstood, laughed at. Thus I sank. Like a stone” (129).

Ratan just wonders at his fears: “My fears, my fears! My life an endless torrent of fear. Some heaped upon me; others invited. Invited by my delusions_ but how could have I known? I am no wise man. And here was this terrible fear, sent by someone, the same someone perhaps who had spoken to me earlier” (129). Ratan makes an observation that life is just panic and nothing else. He remarks: “We are all so keen to get involved, start doing things. No wonder we never learn discrimination. And without discrimination life is panic. Panic and foolishness” (23).

The psychic fear of Sindi (F) is his fear of involvement. His detachment has resulted in the death of Babu. Sindi is afraid of the memories of the painful events of the past. Sindi says, “Fear does make people superstitious. I tried to understand why I was afraid. It was nothing physical. They couldn't put me in prison. I feared something much worse_ the abominable hands groping and probing into my own soul, ripping dry scars open and dipping into old wounds” (50). He says: “…it was the hurt
of memories and not physical pain that I dreaded” (152). Sindi also suffers due to the
fear of loneliness. Sindi says that June echoes the fear of loneliness, which is in his
heart. He says: “I could feel the fear vibrating in her voice. The fear of loneliness. The
fear of having to start once again. It almost caught hold of me, too” (133).

The most torturous of all fears, in man, is the fear of death. Mr. Seth (S) is
seized with the fear of death when he is in the prime of his life enjoying success, and
material prosperity. The narrator tells about Mr. Seth: “He could not trace the
beginning of it. It seemed to have grown with his success like an incubus hidden away,
the layers of his consciousness” (50). The protagonists are terrified of death, and
darkness. Som’s (LL) feeling of insecurity caused by the loss of his dear mother
causes in him a fear of death. Som’s doctor tells him: “Something happened to you
when your mother died. I think you lost your nerve” (203). He tells Leela Sabnis: “I
was mortally afraid of death. May be in the arms of my lovers’ I found a brief respite”
(74). Seeing the graveyard, while going around the dargah with Aftab and Anuradha,
Som is filled with the fear of death. Som says to himself: “There was nothing I
loathed more than I loathed the sight of death and here, amidst the cenotaphs and the
gravestones there was death with a vengeance” (15). Som is frightened at the sight of
the funeral pyres on the Manikarnika Ghat. He says: “The smell of burning flesh and
bursting of bones, gave me one big shaking down before I got hold of myself....What
filled me was the dread, cold sweat and a familiar turbulence” (45-6)

Fear lurks in the soul of Som. He suffers from many kinds of fears. He says
that whenever he comes down the lift he is afraid that the electricity may fail, and he
may be left hanging between two floors. He says that he is tormented by various fears,
and lists out the fears in his mind:

“Of late, my fears, real or imagined, had exponentially increased. I was
afraid of elevators, bridges, motorcars, sea breeze, electric switches,
burglars, canned food. In short, there was nothing I was not afraid of...I took medicines for my fears but nothing happened. I knew medicines would change nothing. In my heart, I knew my fears had nothing to do with my body or with my nerves. I was afraid, I knew, because Anuradha had left me” (153).

Som blames Anuradha as the cause of his fears and his mental depressions, which accentuates his self-alienation.

Mr. Seth is “dogged by this primeval terror” (S 53), and the fear makes him sad and depressed. He calls this fear a curse, and asks whether this is the reward for his brilliant career. He asks whether wealth or education will give him a remedy to get rid of this curse. Mr. Seth says: “What made him sad _and worried_ was the disturbing premonition that he might be face to face with a situation that may have no solution, that, in brief, his case might be hopeless. So far life had presented him with few insoluble problems and he rebuked himself for his despair” (53). The fear, that he may not be able to solve his problems, makes Mr. Seth feel depressed.

Depressive tendencies are found in all self-alienated men. Som (LL) realizes that he is not a cheerful man; but a sad and weary man. He says: “...I was a worn-out weary man incapable of spontaneous feeling” (14). When Som goes around the house of Aftab, he is startled by the reflection of his own figure in the mirror. He says: “...I was startled by an apparition. Careworn, holding a cigarette in one hand, it looked as though for many centuries it had lived in that bleak house. I stared breathless, realizing, suddenly, that I was staring at my own image” (32).

Referring to Azizun's song, Som tells that it created a feeling of despair in him. He says: “Floating about the dark air, they carried with them their particular dementia, their frightening power to push men into despair, from despair to decadence and, thence, into madness and death (54). The Grand Master (CR) hates to hear the music of the boat people. It sounds as a wail, a sad cry. The Grand Master says sadly, “This
is silly. Silly and superstitious” (48). He continues to listen to the music, which has slowly settled into a concert, but says finally, “I don’t like music and I don’t listen to it” (48)

The smell of the perfume used by Anuradha makes Som (LL) sad. When he comments about the smell, “It is marvellous but terribly sad-making,” Anuradha points out to him that his mental make up is that of a sad man. She answers, “You are a sad man.” (56). Som feels sad when he hears the song of an old man singing a Bhojpuri ballad in a voice of sadness. This sad song touches Som, and brings out the sense of loneliness in him. Som finds it hard to control his emotions. He says: “I was only aware that I stood far from home, in a most desolate place, from where there could be no rescue” (102).

Once Aftab taunts Som, by his question: "What do you know of sorrow?”, when they are standing amidst the burning ghats of the Manikarnika. Aftab does not realize that Som, too, gets his bouts of sorrow. Som says: “How wrong could he [Aftab] be. I had sorrows that did not let me breathe” (109). Aftab, the minor character, as self-alienated as Som, feels that nobody takes serious note of them if they confess their problems: “If we cry we are clowns. If we don’t we are scoundrels. And yet we suffer like anyone else. We dull-brained, disorganized bastards suffer the same as anyone else” (165).

The mood of depression prevails, when Som is confined to bed after his massive heart attack. Anuradha’s desertion causes him despair. Som says: “During those last minutes of consciousness,…I had fallen into a bottomless pit of despair, like a shipwrecked sailor sinking into the ocean” (144). Dr. K tells him: “These drugs are depressing the hell out of you” (144). Self pity worsens his mental condition. He tries
to calm himself: "I straightened up against the pillows, swallowed, put away all self-pity..." (144).

Som is of the opinion that everyone has his share of grief. Som is reminded of his father who has been struck by melancholia at the loss of his wife. Moreover Som's father feels disappointment when he is not able to find the eternal truths about the First Cause and the truths behind Creation. Som thinks: "Perhaps it was not disappointment but creeping melancholia. Everyone has a way, a short-hand of grief" (155).

Som reasons out the cause of his depression. Then he arrives at the conclusion that his affliction is due to the genetic factor. He has inherited it from his father in the same way as some diseases are inherited by the children from their parents. Som says: "While I lived I made a fool of myself. For K, for Geeta, for many others I have become a pain in the ass. So where was I at? And why? Why else if not for the afflictions bestowed upon me by my genes. I was in deep trouble. And I knew it" (157).

Disappointments caused by his early love affairs increase sadness in Sindi (F). He tells June, "Even after several years, somewhere in the labyrinth of my consciousness the wound still bled. I felt sad and perhaps showed it" (72). June recognizes the self-alienation in Sindi. She asks him: "Why do you look so sad?" (27).

Sindi feels the same about Babu. He hints that Babu feels depressed due to self-alienation. He says: "At our second meeting I sensed something eerie about Babu. I didn’t realize it then, but later I discovered what it was. His eyes gathered a peculiar haunted look whenever he was depressed" (20-1). Shiela says to Sindi: "You are the saddest man I have ever known. I don’t know what’s the matter with you ..." (148).
Sindi never involves himself in merry making. He feels that all the days are the same and there is nothing special in any particular day. When June is curious to know how he spent his last birthday, and questions Sindi regarding this, Sindi is not able to give an immediate answer. Then he recollects that he has spent his birthday drinking liquor. He explains to Karl, "Birthdays always depress me; I don't know why" (76). Khemka's troubles and Shiela's sufferings increase his sadness. Liquor fails to lift up his spirit. He says: "...I became calmer but the sadness remained... I had a drink and then another. But my depression only worsened" (215).

Sindi says that his pessimistic attitude to life is responsible for his sad moods and sad thoughts. He compares his pessimistic world with the happy, optimistic world of the West. He says the Americans enjoy freedom and happiness, which is denied to the Indians, who lead a life full of restrictions. Sindi tells June that the Statue of Liberty stands for the liberty that the Americans enjoy. Sindi tells June: "But in my world there are no statues of liberty. In my world many things are inevitable and what's more, most of them are sad and painful. I can't come to your world. I have no escape, June. I just have no escape" (134). Sindi wishes to escape from his painful past. Sindi is in dire need of freedom, freedom from the pain of fear—the fear of suicide and death, freedom from his aloneness and estrangement and freedom from his physical pain.

June tells him, "you are a queer person" when Sindi says, "...it is good to be reminded once in a while how miserable one is" (34). June finds Sindi "sitting hunched over your [his] drink, expressionless, watching the world" (35). Sindi answers, "We all have our masks" (36). The estranged protagonists do not wish to reveal their emotional turbulence. They put on masks to hide their diseased psyche. The self-alienated men segregate themselves from the crowd and brood over their sad
plight. Sindi observes: “It is remarkable how you can be in a crowded room like that and still feel lonely, like you were sitting in your own tomb” (24).

Sindi refers to his dull and serious moods. June makes efforts to make him come out of his moods and makes him talk and laugh. Sindi says: “She pulled my ears and poked me in the ribs, trying to make me laugh. She said I had been silent all evening and I must laugh now. Then she wanted me to smoke the pipe” (110). June appreciates his solemn nature. She says: “You look so solemn when you are smoking a pipe. I guess that is what I love about you__your solemnness” (110)

Romi (SC) finds the symptoms of self-alienation in Billy. He refers to the “dark, unscrutable, unsmiling eyes” (19) of Billy, and says that only Tuula has a clue to the workings of the mind of Billy. Romi talks of the sorrow stamped on his face. He says: “His eyes shaded in the darkness, wore a tortured, almost haggard, expression. His forehead was furrowed, and I thought his lips moved silently in the half-light as though he were talking to himself” (44). Romi comments at the strange behaviour of Billy: "He seemed duller than most dull men that I usually met. It was virtually impossible to keep the conversation going....It was as though some part of him had gone on strike. All my words simply sank upon his listless mind without so much as causing a ripple. Gone was the staggering intelligence, the spectroscopic interests, the sense of humour....the Billy Biswas I had known was finished, snuffed out like a candle left in the rain” (70).

Romi feels depressed immediately after joining duty in the Collectorate of Jhansi. He says: “...I found myself feeling constantly harassed or depressed or both....To make matters worse, the Collector, my immediate boss, was a man of unusual reticence and did not apparently believe in the value of words, any words, to alleviate the loneliness of men” (57). Billy refers to his depression, which resulted in a
sleepless night. He says: “My brief elation was followed by a severe depression. I stayed awake most of the night, listening to the drumming” (125).

Ratan’s (AP) self- alienation makes him feel depressed. He weeps when he remembers his humiliation, and says that the bitter memories make him weep. He tells his friend: “It is our humiliations, my friend, and not the conquests that dominate our memories. And there are memories whose sting neither time nor words can heal. They burrow in the body of your soul, like maggots, wriggling, mocking, green forever” (22).

Ratan narrates how his wife has taken him to see a doctor to cure him of his depression. When medicines fail to cure him she tries faith cure. Ratan does not get any remedy for his depression. He says: “Oh yes, we have been to see a doctor. Not one but several doctors. And for every doctor that we have visited she has visited two astrologers. The doctors give her pills, the astrologers horoscopes. But things are where they were” (91). Then Ratan asserts: “It is not easy to cure the sadness of men. I know that now” (91)

Darkness suits the temperament of The Grand Master, the self- alienated protagonist of City and The River. He hates sun light and usually works only after sunset till dawn. Yogeshwara, the narrator says, “The study as such was always kept in a state of maximum tolerable darkness. The darkness soothed the Grand Master’s nerves and also helped him think” (55).

Their self- alienated heroes suffer due to insomnia also. Ratan longs for a sound sleep without dreams. He tells his student companion to whom he narrates his story that “to sleep is a privilege not given to all. As long as you can sleep all is well” (8). Ratan talks of his sleepless nights. He says: “I had seen sleepless nights before: at the inn; in my room; even as a boy….There are nights when you are worried and you
cannot sleep,...Apart from all these are the nights of humiliation, nights when you are ashamed of something, ashamed of yourself, when the darkness is full of insults, pointing fingers and mocking laughter” (49).

Ratan feels restless and depressed and wakes up in the middle of the night. He suffers due to insomnia and tries to wake up his wife. He tells her: "Wake up, I said, I have something to tell you. Then I realized that I had not been speaking at all, that, in fact, I had been unable to speak. This further increased my panic” (49). He spends a sleepless night and undergoes mental torture.

Sindi (F) expresses the same view and says that he is not able to sleep when he has a troubled mind. He says: “Things have a way of bothering me much more at night” (194). Billy (SC) talks of his insomnia to Romi. He tells Romi that he “read late into the night, unable, for some reason, to sleep. This in itself was nothing unusual” (58). Billy says he spent many sleepless nights thinking of his guilt. Romi refers to his insomnia and says that he spends his sleepless nights reading books. He says: “...in the middle of the night, while Situ [his wife] slept and I suffered from insomnia, that I walked into the little closet that passed for my study and read them” (96).

Som (LL) too suffers from insomnia. Som says that his doctor has suggested many remedies for him to get sleep. Som has tried sleeping pills, tranquilizers, and warm baths. These remedies fail to cure him of his insomnia. He says that his wife will sit with him till midnight. Then after sending her, he says, he will “sit and moon” (10) from midnight till three in the morning. Som says that he does not seek the help of God to get sleep as every one is wont to do to get sleep. Som says: “If I believed in God I could pray, maybe run a rosary through my fingers. But that’s out. Sitting
around, I get into arguments: with the living and with the dead, with myself. And I have had enough of the world’s arguments” (10).

When at last, the self-alienated man gets sleep, his sleep is disturbed by dreams. What is in their subconscious mind is revealed through their dreams. Som’s fears are revealed in his dreams. He says: “And I dreamt I was in a labyrinth. The walls of the caverns were damp, the ceiling low. I was alone” (82). He talks of “the terrible loneliness of my [his] heart” (23), and tells that he is disturbed by it in his dreams. He says: “Even my dreams are not free of them. Strange murky shapes float through their tangled web. Animals and wheels of fire and brilliant suns blazing away in dark starless skies, I see myself grotesque, naked, my face distorted as if in a funny mirror” (23). The fear of darkness and death are revealed in his dream. Som says: “I dreamt I was in a narrow alley at the end of which a shroud lay. Tall houses stood on both sides of the alley…. The alley and the houses were deserted. I knew who was under the shroud but could not recall his name” (105).

Som tells his doctor: “There is a dream I keep having. It is something about flying…. I am flying towards a mountain… Even though the sky is black and there is no sun, the mountain glows. From within as it were” (159). Som dreams of his plane crashing against the mountains. Som continues to narrate his dream. He says: “I look at the mountain and let out a shriek… It is very close and blinding and enormous and absolutely frightening. I say to myself: it is only a dream…. Sitting on the bed, I shuddered involuntarily” (160).

When in sick bed, Som’s sleep is disturbed by this dream “of the plane and the mountain and the terrifying crash” (204). Som says that till now he has refused to believe people, when they talked about their recurrent nightmares. He views his nightmares as a sort of punishment. He says: “For me it was not a nightmare any more
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but a depressing chore; a kind of punishment, something like the fatigue that soldiers
are sentenced to" (204). Ratan (AP), too, narrates how his sleep has been disturbed
due to nightmares when he is confined to sick bed. He says that he is "hounded all
round the clock by nightmares" (31).

Sindi (F) says, "An asthmatic's sleep is full of bad dreams" (40). He narrates
one such dream. He says: "...I was on a ship with another passenger whose face I
couldn't see. We were heading for a beach at an unbelievable speed....The prow hit
the beach and I could hear the propellers gnaw at the sand. I tried to walk off but my
hands were glued to the rail.... I tried frantically to free my hands. Then I woke up"
(40). Sindi describes his hallucination when he is sitting in his bed on one hot summer
afternoon. He says: "The room dissolved in the heat and I was sitting in the middle of
a desert waiting for a prophet. I suppose it was just a hallucination of my mind under
the heat but at the moment it all seemed very real" (215).

Billy (SC) gets dreams and hallucinations and he is not free of them. He says:
"...the hallucination_ I don't know what else to call it_ came back in an
overwhelming flood" (134). He says that his hallucination gives him "the same odd
feeling of being in a place other than where I was, in a place very, very old, at times a
wilderness, at other times full of strange primitive people" (180). In the beginning he
thinks that he gets hallucinations under the effects of alcohol; but later he finds out
that "hallucinations would occur without any apparent stimulus whatever" (181).
Once when Billy is hospitalised after an accident he is given a heavy dose of
pathedine. Billy says: "That was when this hallucination business really got out of
hand. I enjoyed it at the time_ you always find such hallucinations pleasurable at the
time_ but I came out of it very depressed and really shaken up" (181).
Billy tells Romi about the dream he has dreamt when he has gone with Meena for a picnic: 
“...it was that wretched dream that blew up the whole works the next day. Well, it is an odd dream” (59). Then he starts narrating the dream. He says: “It had the usual abracadabra of dreams: lights and shadows, mist, a lot of floating bodies and that sort of thing....What is important is this: I am sitting with somebody that looks like George. A man, whose face I cannot see, floats by” (59).

Billy dreams many number of dreams. He refers to them when he says: “Ever since I had left Dhunia’s home, rather left Bilasia, I felt as though I were passing through one of my numerous dreams. Or, as though all else had been a dream and I had just woken up” (119). The village headman, Dhunia says that what we cannot see with our naked eyes, we see in dreams. He says: “You see what you can when you are awake, and what you cannot see when you are awake comes to you in dreams” (161). Billy says that he is frightened by one of his dreams. He says: “I fell almost immediately asleep. An hour later I got up sweating. I had had a dream, a dream so erotic, the like of which I did not know could still be conjured up by my unconscious” (120). Billy says that the dream always upsets him. He says: “The dream upset me all over again” (120).

The self-alienation of these men makes them desperate and they fear they have gone mad. Sindi (F) says: “...a strange desperation grew upon me....The strain grew so great that I almost lost all ability to think logically for any length of time. Often I suspected I was going mad” (137). Sindi thinks that people may think of him as a mentally deranged person because he behaves as one on some occasions. When a traffic policeman asks him whether he is looking for something Sindi asks him whether he has seen God. Then Sindi thinks: “The policeman must have thought I was nuts” (221).
Billy (SC) tells Romi that it is at Topeka, the hospital for the mentally deranged people that he has come to understand the mentally ill. He says: "What interested me, I imagine, was the simple fact that here were people who looked at life from a totally different point of view...most of the people in these institutions are not stark raving mad which is the common idea of the mentally ill" (19). Billy calls himself a nut and engages in self-interrogation. He says to himself: "You are some kind of a nut, aren't you, Billy Biswas" (131).

Billy after deserting the anthropological camp, enters the forest, and sits on a rock wondering at the transformation he is undergoing. He thinks that he has gone mad. He says:

'I have gone mad. There is no doubt about it'. He had heard of such things happening to explorers, mountaineers, anthropologists, but for all his tortured awareness of his conflicts, he had never imagined that such a thing would happen to him. How could it? He was an anthropologist, but he was not the kind of nut that the others had been. He was married, had a child. Besides, he was a semi-businessman, he wasn't just some hairy-fairy academic... The thought of his wife crossed his mind. Screw her, he thought. Screw them all. All I want is this stinking brew, this forest and these hills, these filthy men and one of these women...You had to be crazy if you didn't (138).

These self-alienated men drown themselves in liquor to get rid of their depressive moods. Som (LL) tells Anuradha that he drinks "To lift up my (his) spirits" (125). Sindi (F) laughs only under the influence of liquor. When Sindi's friend, Karl falls sick, Sindi laughs, not knowing how to react. Sindi says, "...I didn't know whether to laugh or help him. I laughed, I guess" (77). It evokes wonder in Karl, and makes him comment at the way Sindi laughs. He says, "I didn't know you could laugh, too'. To him Sindi replies, "I can if I'm drunk enough" (77).

Ratan (AP) asks what do people do when they are depressed, restless and disturbed. He thinks of the suitable answer to this problem. He says: "Some pick up cudgels and tear down what disturbs them. They are few, very few indeed. My father
was one such. The rest? The rest throw in the sponge. Like me. It is easier to throw in
the sponge, my friend, to swim with the current” (66). Ratan confesses that he has not
taken any effort on his part to get rid of his neurosis but has resorted to liquor. He
realizes that liquor does not help him. He says: “Six bottles of beer are no match for
the cowardice of men” (66).

Joshi’s protagonists are under a false hope that the carnal pleasures may
alleviate their mental agony and frustration. Ratan seeks temporary solution to his
problems and approaches a guide to take him to a woman. Ratan says: “I picked on
one and told him what I wanted. He was not surprised: perhaps many like me, in
similar panic, had passed through his hands. Indeed he seemed to have been expecting
me, as a guide awaits the trainload of travellers to a ruined city” (88). His visit to the
brothel fails to soothe his strained nerves. He says: “When I came out of that place,
for the first time in my life, at quite some length I thought of death. Yes, DEATH.
One never knows what emptiness lies within one and which, when the time comes,
one would fill up with muck” (89).

God fails to help them when the protagonists are frustrated and feel desperate
because of their religious alienation. So as a final solution to their self-alienation, and
religious-alienation, the protagonists think of ending their life by death. They seek
relief for their affected nerves in death by suicide. Som (LL) confides to Anuradha
about the suicidal thoughts present in his mind. He tells her that he has been dreaming
and listening to himself. When Anuradha asks what he has heard about himself, Som
says: “I heard that I should kill myself” (106). Som says that he is horrified because
what he heard is true, and that he is not able to resist this suicidal thought. The Self-
alienated men think of suicide as the final remedy to end their alienation. Som
periodically checks whether the gun is ready at hand for use. When Anuradha deserts
him, not able to bear the pain of his tragic love, he makes an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide by sending a bullet through his temple. Ratan's (AP) friend commits suicide because the poor quality army equipments have failed to function at the last minute.

Mr. White (F), the Professor confirms the view of the woman participant, during a discussion on the plight of the Indian students in foreign countries, that the Indian students in America feel very lost, and some of them even commit suicide because "the strain of adjustment on certain people proves unbearable" (50). The feeling of insecurity creates in Sindi suicidal tendencies, when Sindi has been living with his uncle at Nairobi. Sindi tells his uncle: "I was contemplating suicide since I was tired of living" (174-75). June's absence makes Sindi desperate, and when he is in a desperate mood he receives a letter from June. Sindi says he "grasped her letter with the ambivalent eagerness of a desperate man who had suddenly been offered a gun to kill himself" (169). Sindi implies by his comparison of a letter to a gun that desperate men look for gun to end their desperation.

Besides socio-cultural alienation, and religious alienation, self-alienation drives the protagonists to be alienated from some aspects of the economic and political life. The next chapter will present in detail the economic and political alienation of the protagonists in the novels of Arun Joshi.