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CONCLUSION
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Anita Desai is one of the most significant of the Indo-Anglian novelists. Unlike the majority of the Indo – Anglian novelists Desai is more interested in her characters than in creating the environment which is used to define the characters. In fact, for Mrs. Desai the background is important only in so far as it reflects the obsessions of her characters. Telling a story is less important than creating characters. Free from political enthusiasm she makes each work of hers a marvel of construction. She uses the medium of English with a remarkable ease which adds a new dimension to the Indo-Anglian novel. Instead of portraying a character in terms of the environment, or defining an individual in terms of his social or caste functions, Desai creates characters and the environment is important only in so far as it enables the reader to understand the character. Moreover, the true artist that she is, she presents each individual as an unsolved mystery. Her first two novels present numerous memorable characters; major as well as minor, are unique individuals living in their separate worlds of problems and passions, loves and hates. An unexpected glimpse is offered into the heart of a character. Unlike many of the other Indians writing in English Anita Desai is not interested in merely telling a story. Her technique is not that of a mere narrator who subordinates character to the main business of telling the story. She is more interested in her characters and the story is of secondary importance. She makes her work something unusual in Indian writing in English. It gives to the novel a poetic depth, a psychological sophistication which were lacking in other Indo – Anglian novelists.
The interaction between the poetic texture and the narrative structure in her first two novels raises the Indo – Anglian novels to a higher level of artistic success. The moment the novel acquires the depth, the dimension and the mystery of true poetry, it can be said to have come of age. A novel like Cry, the Peacock is a perpetual pleasure since on every page of the book we have the rich imagination of the author presenting the glory of the world of nature, its beauty and its colours and these become dramatically relevant since it is the poetic sensibility of the heroine that is transmuting the world in her thirst for life and hunger for living a full life. Similarly, the minor characters, each an island unto himself, understood and frequently misunderstood by the other characters, give a new depth and dimension to the Indo – Anglian novel.

Inspite of many significant achievements of Mrs. Desai the problems of an Indian writing in English remain unsolved. Mrs. Desai’s world is very restricted. It excludes much that is authentically Indian. Her characters are from well to do sections of Indian society. Their problems are psychological or spiritual, not social or economical. They passionately discuss issues like conformity and rebellion, attachment and detachment. But the ordinary problems of every day life are never really touched upon. Since Mrs. Desai’s characters belong to the affluent society they never really have to face the problems of the struggle for existence. Hungers, starvation, poverty, the mute misery of the millions of Indians are never touched upon by Mrs. Desai while it is futile to ask a writer to look at the whole Indian life. This is beyond the ability of any single writer, however great he or she might be – one cannot help noticing the limited area of life that Mrs. Desai explores. From Maya’s fear and superstitions in the first novel, we move to the city of Calcutta where young
men sip their leisurely cups of coffee and discuss metaphysical, spiritual or literary problems. The third novel, *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, takes the reader to England to see the Black Birds in the white men country. In another novel Mrs. Desai takes us back to the upper middle class society. Mrs. Desai writes about characters of this class because she knows them very well and can understand them sympathetically. But these sophisticated ladies and gentlemen constitute a very tiny fragment of the massive Indian society. Desai is very limited but her strength comes out of its limitation.

Yet the unsolved problem of the Indo-Anglian novelist is that of making his characters speak in an alien tongue. Since English is not the mother tongue of most of the Indians, the Indo – Anglian novelist faces insuperable tasks – that of making his characters speak in English and yet make it convincing. Mrs. Desai does not tackle this problem at all. Her characters, because of their social status, education and culture, do speak in English and it does not sound unreal. But, how to make a coolie come alive in the pages of Indo–Anglian novel? Any attempt to translate the speech of the common man from the vernacular into English, runs the risk of sounding quaint, ridiculous or simple banal. As C.Paul Verghese puts it:

> An Indian novelist in English should employ his skill in contriving a dialogue that is at once natural and lively, supple and functional. He may even catch the speech, rhythms and the turns of phrases used by all kinds of people in the village and translate some of the abuses, curses, imperfections and proverbs to advantage. (102)
In view of the considerable achievements that the modern Indian writers in English have to their credit, the kind of patronizing attitude that Ellis Underwood adopted towards Indian English in the late nineteen century is no longer justified. Indian writers in English reveal a remarkable confidence in the handling of English as medium of expression. The Indian writer in English must be allowed his freedom to choose his medium of expression. As Bhabani Bhattacharya puts it:

The concept of freedom will have to include the medium of expression to which the writer, out of his inner urge, commits himself. If is far more difficult to write creatively in a foreign language than in his own. But that must be regarded as writer's own business. (43)

Anita Desai is a novelist of considerable merit and has enriched the Indian novel in more than one way. It is her thematic concerns and technical innovation that have been chiefly responsible for making her “a disturbing and demanding presence in Indo – Anglian fiction” (Rao 50). She is obviously not pleased with the achievement of Indian women novelists for the simple reason that, “they have been content to record and document” (Desai, "Women Writers" 43). In her review of Amitav Ghosh’s The Circle of Reason, she shows her disfavour for the novelists who take interest in “the outer rather than the inner world preferring the social to the psychological novel” (India Today 149).

Arun Joshi is one of the very few Indian novelists in English who have successfully revealed complexities of contemporary Indian life. Sensitively alive to the predicament of modern man, Joshi has ably delineated
unfortunate consequences of the absence of values and faith in life. In fact, he has been rarely excelled in exemplifying the existential dilemma of the present day world. He has also worked out various dimensions of pressures exerted by the complex character and demands of the society in which modern man is doomed to live. This awareness of man’s rootlessness and the consequent anxiety is the keynote of Joshi’s unique vision of the plight of modern man. His novels delineate human problems rather than issues arising out of ephemeral loyalties. Joshi makes a definite departure from the general trend of Indian novelists in English and his experimentations in themes have added new dimensions to the art of novel. Trilling is of the view that the novel is “a perpetual quest for reality and the most effective agent of the moral imagination in our time” (205).

The Indian novel in English is now an integral part of Indian reality. The development of the Indian novel in English can be traced from its experimental stage to realistic and essentially realistic novels in English came to be written in India for the first time in 1920s. Arun Joshi is one of those modern Indian novelists in English who have broken new grounds. In his search for new themes, he has renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man and has engaged himself in “a search for the essence of human living” (Verghese 124). An outstanding novelist of human predicament Joshi has chartered in all his novels the inner crisis of the modern man. Man fails to perceive today the very purpose behind life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. As it is, the contemporary man finds himself between what to do and what not to do. The present country has seen the dissolution of old certainties and dogmas and, as Paul Brunton observes: “Never before were
so many people plunged in so much uncertainty, so much perplexity and unsettlement” (7). Deprived of the succour of ancient wisdom, which provided the much needed basis for value and meaningfulness in life, the modern man has no substitute for faith and religion except science and information. Thinkers like Aldous Huxley have aptly pointed out that “Ours is a world in which knowledge accumulates and wisdom decays” (124).

The theme of anxiety arising out of the chaos prevalent in modern life, which makes its first appearance in The Foreigner, is more effectively treated in Arun Joshi’s novel. In the novel Joshi makes use of terms and concepts which evoke Indian philosophical thought in one’s mind. It explores in depth the problems of Sindi Oberoi. Sindi is always lonely and ill at ease in the world in which he has to live. He belongs to no country, no people and regards himself as an uprooted young man living aimlessly. At a deeper level, the novel can be viewed as an attempt to plumb man’s perennial dilemmas. It is about things that Sindi wants – the courage to be and capacity to love. Right from the very beginning he is oppressed by a desire to find meaning of life. However, he is convinced of the impermanence of things. In his eagerness to find out the meaning of life, Sindi lives in a strange world of intense pleasure and almost equally intense pain. But he fails to make a satisfactory progress. His sufferings are manifestations of a spiritual crisis which all sensitive people have to face today. His position is that of the dull school boy who always get stuck with the same unanswerable question. He wants peace, a capacity to love and the courage to live. Above all, he wants to conquer pain and death. He is keen on knowing his purpose in life, knowledge of which is essential before he can make earnest effort to fulfill it. He feels always being pushed to
the background not knowing what to do in a given situation. In a mood of despair that envelops his being like water surrounding a fish, Sindi gets his second insight into the nature of life. “Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it” (Joshi, TF 204). In the unjust corrupt world of Mr. Khemka, Sindi gets the opportunity to practice what he has learnt out of his long quest. Now he offers to do something meaningful that is something that can make him forget himself. This in itself would be a step in the right direction. His preoccupation with self seems to be crumbling and gradually he begins to feel sympathy for the labourers working for Mr. Khemka. He is further involved in sympathetic attachment when he visited Muthu’s family. The kind of despair that visits them makes him take over the management of the imprisoned Mr. Khemka’s business. His earlier detachment with the world has now been replaced by a fervent but unselfish attachment. He surrenders himself to the cause of others. Deeply aware of this new orientation in his way of life and thought, he gives a new orientation to his name too, and instead of Sindi he calls himself "Surrender Oberoi" (TF 242).

Billy Biswas too is interested in his own identity. The terrible shock he feels at his degradation intensifies his quest and provokes his flight from a sordid meaningless existence in the so called civilized world. The urge to live like a primitive man in a primitive world, though experienced since childhood and pushed into the background so far, becomes too strong. In a devastating apathy to his own world and his own family he escapes into the vast hilly tracks of central India where the hill tribes dwell in primitive simplicity. In a
minor way this is akin to Siddhartha’s renunciation of his wife and child in search of enlightenment. To Billy it is a movement from darkness to light.

Ratan Rathore of The Apprentice also, before he attains his own individual enlightenment, has to negotiate with life, always “dancing in the shadow of truth, beating about the bush” (Joshi, TA 100). He has an inability to understand the world, the ‘they’ who govern his life and taking for granted before whom he becomes a ‘nobody’ Ratan Rathore always plans to do the right thing but never does it. He accepts a bribe to pass substandard military equipment, resulting ultimately in the suicide of his dearest friend. Clearly, he has travelled a great distance from the raw youth who had returned so bombastically and confidently on the crisis of character. He is caught in the dark recesses of life and is unable to follow the light that is within him. Sometimes he fails to distinguish between right and wrong. He realizes that, in contrast to his father, he is not a good man. The responsibility for the betrayal of his spirit, he knows, lay only on himself. The words of the Sheikh, uttered out of total darkness, provide him a light. Through sorrow, humility and a sense of guilt, Ratan Rathore finds his way out of the labyrinth.

The search for meaning is more clearly marked in the protagonist of The last labyrinth. Som Bhaskar needs to be assured that all is well. He is very anxious to know what he wants, but the desire to know is labyrinth. He seeks to overcome his hunger by possessing an object, of business enterprise, a woman. The psychologists, whom he consults, fail to give a solution to his problem. Bhaskar’s problem is essentially spiritual and remains outside the scope of psychoanalysis. He can meet his wants and desires through another soul. He believes for sometime, in the powers of the cure of
Dr. Leela Sabnis, a professor trained in philosophy an emancipator of women. But his belief soon fizzes out as Leela is unable to provide any cure. He is in need of some one who inhabits both the worlds. He is in search of some where in which the two worlds combine. Banaras, Aftab, Anuradha and their Haweli, all prove to be bores, and Bhaskar decides to go abroad. His visits to Europe and America are of no avail. In his search of a cure for restlessness, he meets Gargi, the deaf – mute daughter of a Sufi peer who tells him that, “God will send someone who has known suffering” (Joshi, LL 118). After Anuradha has left him he feels dizzy and off his balance. He takes medicines for his fears but nothing happens. The knowledge of his miraculous escape from his heart attack drives him into a mysterious world where he learns of an old man traveling nine miles to die near a lake. Deep inside his heart, Bhaskar feels he is a leper needing a cure but he refuses to yield ground. Though he has sufficient ground for a leap of faith, like Sarah of Graham Green’s The End of the Affair, his scientific mind obstructs any such leap. A man proud of his education, working by logic a man without suffering and humiliation which bring an understanding, Bhaskar needs evidence till the end. After the disappearance of Anuradha when he has a sense of nothing left, he prays for forgiveness. The long and tedious journey of Some Bhaskar helps him to arrive at some meaning. However, despite all his disillusionment and uncertainties Som Bhaskar’s only grip on life consists in his helpless, disinterested love for Anuradha. He pays no heed either to his crumbling business or to his lovely wife and his growing children. The departed Anuradha becomes the core existence, the crystallization of the meaning of his life. His plea to her to plead to God, if there is one, on his behalf is
intensely lyrical. It seems to come from the very depth of his soul. Now he seems to have reached the end of his negotiation with the labyrinth of life and only the last labyrinth, that of death, remains to be gone through and he looks forward to it courageously. Even his agnosticism seems to be lived with affirmations and with the possibility of the dawn of faith. Thus, his groping in the dark reaches an illumination of some sort or the other. His dilemmas are modern, and his affirmations too are personal. But all the same his life seems to restate in modern context the eternal quest for self realization and fulfillment and for a spiritual and cultural identity which has distinctly Indian overtones.

Few Indian novelists in English have surpassed Anita Desai in psychological delineation of the protagonists. Anita Desai herself has written excellent psychological novels which she describes as purely subjective. It is the private vision that she has tried to express in her novels. Her forte is the exploration of sensibility, and her writings reveal inner realities and psychic reverberations of her characters. She excels in delineating human relationships. The most recurrent things in her novel are the hazards and complexities of men–women relationships and nurturing of individuality.

Her earlier novels almost invariably present the plight of introspective, hypersensitive women. The predicament of the modern main is, in fact, Anita Desai’s predominant interest. It may be mentioned that while dealing with her female characters especially their relations with men, their drives and responses and their sexual repressions, Anita Desai has made significant efforts to step out of the main current of narrative devices as developed by the masculine approach. She has tried to look at things essentially from the
women’s point of view. Although, writing for her, is not an act of deliberation, reason and choice, and is primarily a matter of instinct. While going through the novels, one feels how Anita Desai has been at ease while delineating women characters. In the novel *Cry, the Peacock*, Anita Desai brings out Maya’s hypersensitive and highly disturbed state of mind. It is her psychic state of mind that makes her do things against her wishes. She describes herself as “body without a heart, a heart without a body” (Desai, *CP* 196). *Voices in the City* presents an account of weary young women doomed to reside in Calcutta, ‘the city of death’. It explores in a convincing way the inner climate of youthful despair and is permeated by the existential angst. The novelist has delineated Monisha’s psychic life at some length. Her younger sister, Amla, who is an extrovert and possesses an exceptionally sharp sensitivity, seems to be taking initially, all life in her stride. She decides to lead a gay life with the painter Dharma. But her joy is short lived and she begins to realize the hollowness and futility of life. Sita of *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* is definitely more experienced and mature than Maya, Monisha and Amla, but viewed from a closer angle, this marital incompatibility and emotional maladjustment and the problem arising out of them in the case of Sita are not much different. The novel depicts the aching voice in the life of Sita by probing deeper into her life as a woman, a wife and a mother. A highly sensitive over emotional middle aged woman, already saddled with four children and expecting the fifth she feels alienated from her husband and is not able to understand at times the behaviour of her children. Sita and her husband behave as if they belong to different worlds. It is this kind of mental state that leads Sita to the psychic muddle of life and comes to the conclusion
that all human relationships are just a farce. She is disgusted “with the tedium and ugliness of a meaningless life” (WWGS144). This unfortunate state leads her on to the confusion resulting in a split personality.

Through her themes, characterization and images about confinement and lack of freedom, Anita Desai has raised pertinent questions regarding the status and role of women in society. Anita Desai’s young women long for freedom. They are irritated by the sheltered overprotected life reserved for them and discriminative attitude adopted towards them not only by the society but also by the family. Women are not treated at par with men and the males are entitled to a privileged treatment everywhere. The freedom, which they can always take for granted, is denied to women. Even Maya who does not seem to be sufficiently mature and intelligent, is not unaware of this kind of treatment. Even towards the end of the novel, she is seen moving about “like a being that is hunted” (CP212). Maya’s experiences in life are such that she comes to have the feeling of being tired, not quiet alive. It is no wonder that during all these years her sense of helplessness deepens. The entire novel is imbued with meaningful suggestions about her identity crisis. Similarly, Monisha who is far more intelligent is even unhappy on account of the denial of freedom to her. Her father, her husband, his impossible family and more particularly the aggressive mother in law, all are hostile to her individuality. The crisis of identity that Monisha faces is really pathetic. The ideals of non-involvement and self effacement are very good as philosophical concepts. But what people like Monisha really need is the essential congenial environment characterized by freedom for their development. We find Sita desirous of being free and disconnected with a woman’s life. Her desire to be free is
manifested in her fascination with the foreigner, whom she meets on the road side. She is ever eager to escape from her unhappy surroundings by slipping through the fishermen’s net like her mother. Sita always has the feeling of being tied with a chain, she feels suffocated in the surrounding in which she finds herself and reacts against petrified dullness of the main land and her husband’s house. She starts smoking and wearing in a style which is hostile to the society of which she is a part. All this she does with a view to create shocks and suspicions in her husband’s mind.

The repression, prohibition, exclusion and domination of Desai’s woman characters can be analysed in terms of the dynamics of power – knowledge pleasure. They join together to penetrate and contract the individual’s private pleasure, desires and behaviour. Anita Desai has conveyed her women characters fundamental dependence on men very effectively. Her women sometimes do attempt to assert their independence and self – sufficiency, but their quest for identity is frustrated at significant junctures. Some of them do raise a cry of protest occasionally but that does not change their lot. Power and sex are two well known deployments of interpersonal relationships. The latter is assigned an important place in Desai’s novels. The deployment of alliance comprises systems “of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions” (Foucault 93). Most of these have a constraining effect upon women. No woman in Anita Desai’s novels, however, not even Amla, has been fortunate enough to free herself from the shackles of femininity. Her male characters are invariably much older and follow the middle path of life. They represent the sovereign father figure. The women, on the contrary, are
highly sensitive and over emotional. Emotionally starved they develop a kind of fixation for surviving parents. Sita remains under the constant spell of her father and governed by father fixation. Monisha is under the gravitational pulls of her mother. Nirode plainly reminds Monisha of her mother complex. This obsession with the father / mother figure is chiefly responsible for these sensitive creatures dissatisfaction with life.

Probably the most pathetic figure is Maya. Right from her childhood, she has regarded the world as a toy specially made for her, painted in her favorite colours and set to dance to her favorite tunes. On account of her upbringing and pampering by her father, she has always been a wayward and high strung child. Desai’s women character’s attitude is also controlled by fantasy. The conflict between the real and the fantastic makes the life of these characters all the more miserable. The life of fantasy compensates for the harsh realities of life. As Maya herself admits, “Her childhood was one in which much was excluded, which grew steadily more restricted, unnatural even” (CP 89). The life of repression affects the very source of their thinking and behavior. Anita Desai deals with sexual repressions of her characters such as Maya and Monisha. Sexuality represents woman ness and selfhood and is a significant aspect of a woman’s experiences. Although Anita Desai has been extremely tongue – tied in delineating this aspect of her characters and there is very little ‘sextacy’ or what Foucault calls the “hysterization of women’s bodies” (105). There are subtle references to intimate relations between the two sexes and complications arising out of them. It is a pity that few people treat those sensitive women properly. It may also be noted that most of these women are childless or alienated from their children. This fact
makes their lives even more unbearable. Anita Desai has tried to do full justice to her characters and despite all her limitations, has succeeded in her attempts. Elaine Showalter, talks of the three phases of the emergence and growth of feminine tradition, which is the phases of "limitation, protest and self discovery" (13). Anita Desai's work is directly related to the third and the final phase. Her novels contain evidences of her awareness of various problems pertaining to women, which she has tried to tackle from a psychological point of view. The solution presented by her may be muted at times, but significance of her efforts can hardly be denied.

Arun Joshi's fictional world reveals man confronted with his own self. His search is directed at the unknown region of uncertainty. This effort of his makes him a great artist of psychological insight, while reading Joshi's novels; we come across moments when we are haunted by doubts and questions. There is something that attracts out attention and then grips. Arun Joshi goes deep into the inner recesses of human psyche where he finds instinct and impulses at work. He seeks a process of the apprehension of reality which leads him to the core of truth in man's life. He realizes man's uniqueness and isolation in an indifferent and hostile world. In his search for man's rightful place in the world, he has renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man and has engaged himself in a search for the essence of human living.

The most common problem that modern man faces today is the problem of meaninglessness and this state of meaninglessness has its roots in man's psyche. Arun Joshi's protagonists Sindi Oberoi, Billy Biswas, Ratan Rathore and Som Bhaskar search for meanings in life and the problems they are faced with are more psychological than anything else. They fail to pursue
the purpose of life and the relevance of their existence in a hostile world. Thus, the psychological states through with these protagonists pass add to their problems. No emotional problem is more threatening today than the pervasive source of meaninglessness. All the male characters in Joshi’s world are seen fluttering in a dark world full of uncertainties. Among many other problems that Joshi presents in his novels, he appears to show serious concern to the crisis of faith arising out of the rootlessness and meaninglessness in the life of all his chief protagonists. Most of his characters have their own faith and beliefs but get confused when confronted with people, with opposite sets of faith and belief, interact vehemently leading to the crisis of faith which they suffer from. They strive hard to come out of this crisis and try to find the meaning of their life. Joshi tries to explore that inner mind of his character in all his novels. Living in an era of rampant materialism and individualism, his protagonists are unhappy people. Their material prosperity, academic achievements and artificial life style fail to lead them to a state of peace within and calm around. Sindi Oberoi, Billy Biswas, Ratan Rathore and Som Bhaskar are anxious, depressed and dependent people who are painfully aware of the mess they are in and are oppressed with the sadness of living. In their struggle for survival, they find themselves in a wilderness where they do not find meaning and purpose in their existence. There is no peace, nothing to keep them within the pattern of everyday living. In such a state they seem to undergo the crisis of faith where they strive for the meaningfulness in life. Their problems thus border on the psychological ground.
Anita Desai discusses in her protagonists the sense of alienation which owes its origin in the disturbance in the marital life which consequents in the rootlessness of the protagonists like Maya, Monisha and Sita. Desai’s range extends to the problems of the rootlessness in women society and at the same time a sense of revolt is also to be searched out in the disruption of the psyche in the modern world. In *Cry, the Peacock*, Maya feels disgusted and alienated as she is not able to cope up with her husband Gautam who is diametrically opposed in temperament. Gautam is prosaic and pragmatic whereas Maya is romantic and sentimental. Gautam is more obsessed with the mechanical life of the modern society in which he has imprisoned his soul within the four walls of self-centeredness paying no attention to the sentimental concern of his wife. The alienation of Maya is rooted essentially in Gautam’s philosophical detachment and his imperviousness to the ‘beautiful yet tremulous’ beauty of the natural world and his gross unconcern over the basics of life. That is why Maya shows her disgust and says without roots one cannot grow to any height.

In *Voices in the City*, Nirode, Monisha and Amla are the product of marital discord of their parents. Nirode felt alienated right from his early childhood when his father was partial to his elder brother Arun. Monisha is married to Jiban; a man of her father’s choice, completely unsuitable to Monisha’s tastes and inclination because he belonged to a respectable middle class family. She reaches the height of alienation as a result of incompatibility in married life and so ends her life through flames. Nirode, a sensitive individual, finds himself alienated from his parents. Unsuccessful in life, he realizes that aloneness is his sole natural condition. Amla too is sensitive like
him but is an extrovert, charmed by Bohemian life, gets infatuated by an artist Dharma, but later realizes the futility and hollowness of love and life. All these three characters are doomed to suffer alienation and rootlessness, yet they remain attached to their own soil. In Bye-Bye, Blackbird Dev and Aditya find themselves alienated in London because they are called ‘Wogs’, and are discriminated at the London docks. Aditya’s sense of alienation is all the more heightened when he finds himself discriminated even by his British in-laws with whom he is related. Even Sarah, his British wife suffers from the sense of alienation and loneliness. Due to this she tries to avoid the sight of her British relatives. She finds herself in a very quaint situation in the company of Aditya’s Indian friend and fails to understand their provincial jokes. She also tries to avoid coming into contact with shopkeepers and other people because she does not want herself to be identified and called Mrs. Sen. She experiences the height of alienation and she gives expression to it thus, “It was her English self to which she must say good bye” (Desai, BB 221). The peak of Aditya’s sense of alienation is expressed thus: “I have got to go home and start living a real life. Whatever it is, it will be Indian; it will be my natural condition, my true circumstances” (204). The highly alienated Dev even resolves that he should return to his own land, however abject and dull, where he has at least a place in the sun, security, status and freedom. In Where Shall We Go This Summer? Sita too suffers the height of alienation in her in-laws house where she finds temperamental incompatibility, with all the people living around including her husband and children. She feels as if she were a cripple with crutches and repeatedly comes to the realization that her marriage and in fact all human relationship are just a farce. Suffering from
acute sense of alienation and painfully distressed at the tedious and ugliness of life she escapes to Manori to look for her roots where she has spent her childhood.

Thus through the study of Anita Desai’s novels we find that they come in the instance of the continuous revelation of the expressions of the protagonists. Her characters suffer from rootlessness and loss of identity and this loss is the byproduct of cultural alienation or social alienation. In the midst of such a crisis, all these protagonists desperately start a quest for peace, harmony and a meaning in life to regain their identity which they essentially trace in their own soil and culture.

Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner* unfolds the story of Sindi Oberoi who is a foreigner, everywhere, physically as well as metaphorically. He is an alienated person, rootless, luckless in a mad, bad, absurd world. He belongs to no country, no people and regards himself, “an uprooted young man living in the latter half of the 20th century who had become detached from everything except himself” (164). This reflects his height of sense of alienation. He suffers the crisis of faith as his previous experiences in love have frustrated him and taught him to remain detached. But this detachment becomes the cause of death of his Indian friend Babu and American girl friend June. Later he learns that detachment lies in getting involved. Arun Joshi’s *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, is a study in the total alienation of its protagonist. Billy Biswas is from the modern bourgeois Indian society. He has all the material comfort and luxury and the best that a life can give yet he is not happy because of a primitive urge within himself and this has been troubling him since his adolescence. This makes him feel lonely and alienated even from his wife and
children. He becomes interested in anthropology instead of engineering. And once on an anthropological trip to the hills with his students, he disappears in the Sal hills in quest for peace and harmony in response to the crisis arising out of faith.

In Arun Joshi’s *The Apprentice*, Ratan Rathore finds himself lonely and alienated in the corrupt civilization when he is made to face the world in search of job after his father’s death in the freedom struggle. So he becomes an apprentice to the corrupt civilization and adopts the way of the world to earn his livelihood as he comes from an impoverished middle class family. In pursuit of his career and position he becomes indifferent towards people around him. He keeps even his morality aside and supplies defective weapons to the Defence Forces during Indo–China war for a large sum of bribe resulting into retrenchment of his brigadier friend who dies of an attack. The death of his friend causes mental conflict and agony. Once again this remorseness ignites the sense of alienation and aloneness as he finds himself an alien in the society. He alienates himself by identifying himself with the evil doers. So out of penance for his sins, he decides to wipe the shoes of the congregation before the temple gate on his way to office and confesses his guilt in the Ancient Mariner’s style: “He prayeth well, who loveth well”

Arun Joshi’s *The Last Labyrinth*, too is built around the theme of human loneliness and perennial search for a meaningful stance in life. Despite all material comfort and prosperity Som Bhaskar finds himself lonely and suffers from a void within. He suffers from alienation of the self. Som confronts the dilemmas and contradiction of his own being. Frustrated within himself he finds this world alien. For him life becomes an eternal journey from
nothingness to nothingness living to an existential dilemma. In pursuit of a
definite meaning in life he gets trapped in the same problem without finding an
answer to his quest: “I hear this song way up in the sky. All the time I want, I
want, I want” (78).

In all the four novels that we have discussed, it is clear that almost all
the protagonists suffer from a sense of alienation, not knowing what to do and
where to go. Arun Joshi has been to the west for higher education and so is
much under the influence of the western experience. His protagonists of all
his four novels are the products of the modern world which has rightly been
called the age of alienation and “an age of lost values, lost mean and lost
Gods” and the modern man is doomed to suffer the corrosive impact of
alienation (Daiches 24). His protagonists are men of the urban society
enjoying all material comfort yet they feel alienated and lonely. Their
loneliness and alienation is not geographical but psychological. The
protagonists suffer the conflict of faith or belief leading to crisis of faith which
results into their sense of alienation and loneliness. The protagonists suffer
from the agony of alienation and desperately quest for peace and harmony to
seek ultimate solace. His novels are attempts to create and preserve the self
in a disintegrating world. Like all novelists Arun Joshi reflects the society,
which brings out the agonies of the modern world. The novels as the outcome
of literature also embody the lucid form of the ideas that affect the people like
a “soothing balm” for the injured world. It has been the aim of the novel as a
form to create a human world full of meaning. The impact of modern
psychology on the novel explores the relation between psychological world
and models of individual personality, of the relations between the artist's
personality and the aspect of the world. The modern relevance of Arun Joshi becomes more novel and demanding in a larger canvas because he deals more with individual behaviour than with individuals themselves. Understanding an individual is essentially rooted into his own soil and background and emotionally attached to his own culture and home.

Anita Desai is more interested in the interior landscape of the mind than in social and political realities. In her fiction we find her protagonists making concerted efforts to discover the meaning and purpose of life. Most of her protagonists are women characters and they are all fragile introverts. Maya in Cry, the Peacock, is always obsessed with death. She is often haunted by an astrological prediction. The prediction is that their marriage is going to end in its fourth year with death of either wife or husband. Maya fails to establish any effective communication with her husband as he is unsentimental. Since she has no children, this takes her away even from her husband into the world of isolation. Her isolation becomes total when she tries to murder her husband in a fit of insanity. The symbolism of the peacock suggests that the dance of joy is the dance of death. We find Maya looking for a meaning in life and trying to understand the intricate issues of life, so as to discover the reality of life in order to relate. In Voices in the city, Desai tries to portray isolated individuals. These individuals are Nirode, Monisha and Amla. The two sisters Monisha and Amla are rebels against the traditional middle class life. They are always longing for creativity and self expression but each comes to grief. Nirode drifts as a Bohemian. Monisha commits suicide and Amla is heart broken. Thus the tension caused by the concern for
existentialism of these three characters continues to cover the pages of the novel.

In *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*, the tension intensifies in the heart of Aditya Sen as much as that he begins to long for Indian landscape of vastness, wilderness, sunrise and sunset. His initial Anglo-phobia is ultimately aggravated by his newly experienced Anglo-phobia as he feels disenchanted with the life in England. His nostalgia acquires a dreadful dimension. It becomes an illness, an act in him. It begins to suffocate him and make him feel fed up. He considers himself to be a stranger, a non-belonger. He moves in search of belonging. Sarah is another example of this disease and proves to be an existential character. She wants to know her real identity and therefore she questions herself with Keatsian flavour used here and there. The novel appears to be highly evocative. Anita Desai’s *Where shall we go this summer?*, describes the cruelty and colourlessness of urban life. It marks a return to the autonomous world of inner reality. When Sita is with child again she panics at the thought of bringing a new one. She runs away to a small island to avoid the harsh reality. Her sudden captivation comes as an anticlimax. Sita, a sensitive, emotional and middle aged woman feels alienated from her husband and children. She undergoes acute mental agonies. She silently suffers in isolation because of her sharp existentialist sensibility and explosive emotionality. The novel is her angst and ennui of her anguished soul. Her mental makeup consists in her inwardness, introversion and the resultant psychic odyssey. Her trip to Manori is nothing but a retreat to her childhood. In fact, it is a trip of self discovery and recognition of reality. Her memories of past and uncertainty of the future have created a sense of
dismay and disgust in her heart. Her withdrawal into the island is indicative of a need for love. This kind of love rises above the self and makes no claim. It is this kind of relationship which she wants from Raman, but she does not achieve the goal in her life. At this stage, she is left with no option but to accept the fact that she is a woman unloved.

What the novelists of the post modern period endeavor to represent is the psychological experience of which the self is an integral part. Hence the psychological interpretation of the modern people by man of literature provides a method of presenting character outside time and place, in the sense that it separates the presentation of consciousness from the chronological sequence of events, and second it enables the quality of a given state of mind to be investigated completely. The Impact of modern psychology on the novel explores the relationships between the social world and models of individual personality, of the relations between the artist personality and the aspects of the world. The modern relevance of the novelists like Anita Desai becomes more novel and demanding in a larger canvas because she in her works of art stresses group dynamics more than individual behaviour. She projects the individualistic competitive pattern in her novels exploring the modern dilemma in materialistic society. In yet another respect the high degree of social and experimental awareness on the part of these modern novelists enables us to correlate social and intellectual background to the nature of literary pre-occupation of the twentieth century. Thus we find the modern man suffering from the crisis of alienation, loneliness, rootlessness and loss of identity. This is how the personal revelations are transformed into artistic wholes. Moreover, as we move from one novel to the other novel of
Anita Desai, we get tuned to the personality traits of the authors and learn to accept moments of crisis and the manner of resolution. Mrs. Desai’s marital discord and search for identity make up one long sequence that chart her quest for identity in a disintegrated world.

Arun Joshi’s view of human predicament assumes an existentialist pose when he pinpoints that, identity; human contact and meaning are all contingent on a willingness to concede the basic facts of his existence. He is critical of the modern man who adores only material progress while plunging down deep into a spiritual abyss. Like Wordsworth he is extremely sorry how and why man cares only for his worldly advancement and never thinks seriously of his spiritual deterioration. He reveals an insight into the inner dilemma of his characters and has pointed out the absurdity of existence which is made perceptible in a social context. His characters spell out the absurdity of the human condition where in the modern man is a part of the world of his own making, of his own choice. The central experience of Joshi’s novels is crisis – sometimes a crisis of emotions and sentiments as in The Foreigner and The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, sometimes a crisis of ethics and allegiance as in The Apprentice and sometimes a crisis of consciousness as in The Last Labyrinth. His characters throughout their life try to seek the meaning of life in the meaningless world. They are “the lost lonely questers” (Thakur 155) after the absurd in the dark night of the soul, in the dark recesses of existence. Arun Joshi honourably withdraws from the outer social reality and engages himself totally towards the exploration of the human soul, the inner psyche of the modern man. All his heroes are both picaresque and pilgrims – picaresque in their wanderings and pilgrims in their search for
meaning of Karma, for the life force, for atonement and for the ultimate truth. His characters are essentially seekers and questers. The central theme of his novels is expounded in The Last Labyrinth: “Hunger of the body, Hunger of the spirit. You suffer from one or the other, or both” (Joshi, LL. 11). Sindi Oberoi in The Foreigner is the quester after absurd wants with a void in his soul. He continues wandering through the maze of his existence, attempting to discover the meaning of his life. Billy Biswas in The Strange Case of Billy Biswas is concerned with his search for the potential divinity that is there in latent form in his unconsciousness. It is this ‘other thing’ for which he continues his quest: “That other thing was, and is, after all what my life is all about” (189). Billy’s becoming a primitive is a step towards his spiritual awareness, his existentialist quest for meaning and values in life. It is this quest, this doomed existentialist search that ultimately drives him to the doors of death. Joshi, through Romy, describes Billy’s quest so beautifully:

If life’s meaning lies not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in those dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish for ever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun, then I do not know of any man who sought it more doggedly and having received a signal, abundant himself so recklessly to its call. (8)

In The Apprentice, Ratan out of an acute sense of alienation and a quest to understand the meaning of life undergoes the sternest apprenticeship in the world. Symbolically, he starts at the lowest – wiping the shoes of the congregation and thus begging forgiveness of all those whom he has harmed. He believes that polishing the shoes of the devotees will cleanse the filth enveloping his soul, will purge him of his vanity and will bring an absolute
humanity and genial acceptance of life. He pleads that there is nothing wrong to make a second start: “One must try and not lose heart, not yield, at any cost, to despair” (Joshi TA 149). His existential decision to recover the lost self through an act of penitence makes him an affirmative kind of existential figure and the personal value he discovered for himself surely lend meaning to his existence.

Joshi’s Sahitya Akademy Award winner novel, The Last Labyrinth, depicts a fascinating exploration of the turbulent inner world of a millionaire industrialist, Som Bhaskar, whose mystical urge is presented in his careless longing for the vitals of life and existence and who is relentlessly driven by undefined hungers which he unsuccessfully seeks to satisfy by possession of an object, a business enterprise and a woman named Anuradha who becomes more and more the centre of his entire existence. He is in quest of knowledge and is always guided by reason, not by faith. He is curious to know the secret of life and tries to probe into “that core of loneliness around which all of us are built” (Joshi, LL 54). He is convinced that all the problems can be solved if one has knowledge. But surprisingly enough, his dilemma is not solved by his thirst for knowledge; it is rather aggravated by his intensely rational approach. It is Aftab who very plainly gives him the right directive and reminds him: “I told you, you are different. You don’t understand us. You work by logic, by your brain. You are proud of your education but you are empty of understanding” (LL 217).

Joshi seems to suggest that the unwavering faith is the right substitute for rationalism. The mystical Indian way of life characterized by Geeta, Gargi, the Sufi peer, Aftab and Anuradha can administer trust and faith in the
tortured soul of Som. Gargi holds that suffering and sacrifice cleanse the soul of all impurities. Now Som notices the change coming over him. He discards Leela Sabnis, the embodiment of reason and pines for Anuradha, the motivator into the world of belief and faith. He discloses his agonies before Gargi, Anuradha and Aftab. All of them have their answer to his quest and cooperate by extending a helping hand to him towards realization. There is a gradual development of Som’s soul on the lines of faith and trust. His journey towards the temple at the mountains to encounter Krishna symbolizes his attempt towards reaching his soul. The dirt and filth hindering from having visions of God are being cleaned by his suffering. Suffering and humiliation bring an understanding that helps in solving the problem of life. The novelist, through The Last Labyrinth seems to suggest that the labyrinth of life can be resolved through unqualified faith, trust, and intuition and open hearted prayer to God that help in leading a really peaceful life.

Thus, it can be said that, both Anita Desai and Arun Joshi have skillfully delineated in their novels, the problems and plight of alienated individuals caught in the crisis of changing society. Desai discusses in her protagonists, the sense of isolation which owes its origin in the maternal life which culminates in the rootlessness of the protagonists like Maya, Monisha, Sarah and Sita. We find her at her best in highlighting the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women tortured by a humiliating sense of neglect, of loneliness and desperation. The existential problem of the alienated self finally emerges to be the central theme of her novels. She represents assets of new attitudes and themes associated with the modern man and woman. In the first two novels we find Anita Desai presenting her
characters in a situation beyond their control, but in the last two novels the problems of the alienated self have been confronted and resolved in a positive way.

Arun Joshi is a novelist who can be said to belong to the tradition of existentialist writers like Camus, Sartre, Kafka, Marcel, Jaspers, Buber, Beckett, Sol bellow, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and such others. "His characters are in search of their lost selves, their identity like one who experiences dehumanization as despair" (Tillich 142). Joshi like other existentialists is deeply concerned with man’s feeling of alienation and anxiety in life. But he differs from the western existentialist writers in the sense that in him the existential dilemma, the anguish of alienation and the absurdity of situation never remain the final predicament. His central motive is quest and all his characters are questers and seekers. This can be found in Som's cry for grace when he tells Anuradha that she is his soul and this is nothing but “a cry for grace, a belief in God” (Prasad 117). The novel explores the relevance of God to man and affirms that the world belongs to God. The final message of Joshi seems to be that the only solution to life's problem lies in complete surrender to God's will. He seems to be more drawn towards Kierkegaard's line of philosophic faith, a metaphysic of hope which is very much akin to Hindu thought that is essentially optimistic and never finally tragic. It so appears that it is the Hindu vision of life that offers solace and consolation to Joshi’s mind and art.
Work Cited


