CHAPTER - X

BAUMGARTNER’S BOMBAY
- A STREAK OF VIVID MEMORIES
In Baumgartner’s Bombay, Desai’s spotlight is no more on the solitude and the interior landscape of the sensitive women. This shift in her thematic content had its germs in Clear Light of Day. She has changed the direction of her writing in In Custody. She viewed Devan’s situation from a different angle. The alienation of Hugo Baumgartner is different from the alienation of Devan and also the alienation of the female protagonists of her earlier novels. As Swain and Nayak point out, "The alienation here is neither of neurotic and hypersensitive individuals nor of aspiring artists, nor self-sacrificing and self-effacing ladies but of an enemy alien, eager to strike roots.... Hugo’s self-isolation (alienation) is presented on a wide canvas of the variegated, segments of the time-past and time-present."¹

The novel makes a complete departure from her earlier writings. It is as Swain points out “related to the actual and the real, the factual and the historical and not the illusory, fantastic dreamy world of the earlier novels.”² The past is projected through a prism of vivid memories. A streak of ever-present violence and cruelty provides a poignant touch to the narrative. The novelist’s main concern in this novel is to project the problems and predicaments of Hugo Baumgartner all the time. He suffers a lot for no fault of his own. He runs for refuge from nowhere to nowhere. His predicament is universal. His story “follows a text-book pattern of an ancient Greek classic with all its trapping and suffering through vicissitudes in life,”³ as Suresh Saxena says. Anita Desai, in this novel depicts the lonely and alienated condition of Hugo Baumgartner, a German immigrant in India. Although, he has been living in India for fifty years, he can not feel
the sense of belonging at any time. He receives Indian citizenship, yet Indians never accept him as our Indian and so he always longs for his country and for his mother.

Rajiv Sharma says "Just as in Bye, Bye, Blackbird, Anita Desai shows miserable condition of an Indian immigrant in England, so in Baumgartner's Bombay, she depicts the miserable and alienated condition of an alien immigrant in India." The novel focusses alternately on the past and present mainly of the two isolated Germans - Hugo and Lotte, the Cabaret dancer without family and country. The novel narrates in a detailed way the life of Baumgartner from his childhood days in Germany to his death at the ripe old age of about seventy in India. As the novel opens we see Baumgartner living out his final years in solitude in a shabby flat behind the Taj Hotel in Bombay. He lives alone with no one to look after him. Surrounded by his family of stray cats and fading postcards he lives out his final years in familiar solitude and comfortable squalor. The tides of war that swept him from Nazi Germany to the shores of India fifty years before, have left him washed up in the corner of a foreign country among his memories and dreams. Both Baumgartner and Lotte are sailing in the same boat of alienation in an alien country among their memories and dreams.

Though the novel deals with alienation and immigrants' external problems, it is different from Bye, Bye, Blackbird. Adit could solve his dilemma and overcome his alienation by returning to his own country. But Baumgartner's strange predicament is beyond solution. Although he makes sincere efforts to develop a sense of belonging he remains an outsider, 'accepting' but 'unacceptable' in Bombay, as he was in Hitler's Berlin half a century before. He is a real nowhere man, unlike Srinivas of Kamala
Markandaya's Nowhere Man, belonging neither to Germany because he is a Jew, nor to India where he is 'phirangi'. His alienation is inherent, augmented by war-psychosis. He has lived with the knowledge that he is an unwanted alien throughout his life. He finds his presence in India highly improbable. Indira observes "Even after fifty years of his stay in India, he continues to feel 'uncertain' and scuffles and shuffles through the narrow lanes, and alleys of Bombay avoiding the main street as if he did not want to offend anybody by his presence."

He never dared to think of India as his country and never had any sense of belonging to it. He is certain that he is always looked down upon contemptuously by the Indian citizens as a dirty 'phirangi' and there will not be any further rise in his status. So he does not experience either anger or despair at this total rejection from his adopted country. He suffers a double alienation from his native country, Germany and from India which serves at first as temporary refuge from Nazi persecution and eventually becomes his permanent abode. He is a victim of the holocaust which uproots him from his native soil and deprives him of his native sky.

When we look back at the past life of Baumgartner, we find him as a young German, who comes to India for starting a new life in timber business. He was forced to leave Germany fifty years ago when the violence had broken out during Nazi-Germany. His father Herr Baumgartner was a wealthy furniture dealer. He was a man of authority, pride and status in Berlin. The area where they lived was patronised mainly by the Jews. During the time of Nazi Germany, the Jews migrated to other parts and the business of furniture came to a stand still as the Aryans took furniture from their own shops and dealers. There was violence one night. Hugo's father was taken by force by
some men and disappeared from Berlin. Returning from Dachau after a fortnight, he
died leaving him and his mother all alone. This isolation made him leave his country.
After the death of his father, the furniture shop was sold to a gentleman from Hamburg
who was a friend of Hugo’s father. Hugo stopped going to school. He had to work as
an accountant in their sold-away furniture shop because of financial crisis. The owner
of their former shop advised him to go to India to do timber business and start a new
life. So he came to Bombay and got nothing but loneliness and isolation in the new
atmosphere. Being a foreigner in India, he had no company and suffered isolation.
Ironically, he was thrown in a ‘whirlpool’ of isolation and frustration. In Bombay he
met Chimanlal who gave him a valuable introduction to an associate in Calcutta to start
his business. So he left for Calcutta.

Hugo stayed in a hotel on Middleton Row in Calcutta. He got himself associated
with timber business and Lotte, the cabaret dancer in a hotel. She had been his
childhood friend in Berlin. In course of time they revived their friendship. Hugo’s life
in Calcutta did not remain peaceful for a long time. When the Second World War had
broken out, he was arrested and taken to detention camp in Ahmednagar and was kept
there along with other aliens from all over the country. He was kept there as a captive
for six years. The expectation of bright future and happiness in the business got totally
blurred as the lonely prison life threw him in a state of isolation. The atmosphere in the
camp was not healthy and peaceful. The tension between the Jews and Nazis persisted.
The Nazis ran camps in collaboration with the Britishers and the Jews declined to work.
It made Hugo more isolated. The weariness of time hung heavily on his heart and he
wanted his release.
In the internment camp he feels lonely and helpless because the atmosphere in the camp is tense. Consequently he feels isolated and does not share his agony with others. He alienates himself from others who want to be his companions. He becomes an introvert due to his lonely youth and unhappy childhood. He always feels unconsciously the need of parental love and protection and thinks of his mother country and childhood.

Baumgartner's life in prison was the most important period of isolation in his life which gradually sucked the life spirit. His vision of new life got totally blurred and he was thrown in bewilderment. The conflicts between the Nazis and the Aryans in the prison reminded him of his old days in Germany. The scene of conflict in the prison enhanced the alienation of Hugo. "The habits of an only child, of an isolated youth in an increasingly unsafe and threatening land and then of a solitary foreigner in India had made Baumgartner hold to himself the fears he had about his mother, about what was happening in Germany allowing it to become a dark monstrous block. It seemed to him he shed nothing, that-like a mournful turtle-he carried everything with him; perhaps it was the only way he knew to remain himself." 16

The isolation in his life increased further due to his sitting idle in the camp. Every moment came to him with emptiness and the heavy weight of time hung heavily upon his heart. He eased his isolation by remembering either the days of the past or by keeping himself under the illusion of thinking about the background of the lives of other prisoners. The nostalgic feelings become prominent when he begins to recollect his past days in Germany: "It was as if his mind were trying to construct a wall against history wall behind which he could crouch and hide holding him to a desperate wish that
Germany were still what he had known as a child and that in that dream country his mother continued to live the life they had lived there together" (p.188). In the camp the only communication that Hugo actively longs for is from his mother who has remained in Germany. His familiarity with a few other prisoners gave him consolation that he was at least not alone. With them he could pretend he was not solitary.

Baumgartner’s isolation in the prison represents his loss of hope and joy in everything. The whole world becomes purposeless and meaningless to him. The sense of disgust is indicated in these lines: ‘Baumgartner sighed, shuffled, smoked, slapped at mosquitoes and wondered when it would be cool enough to go inside and sleep’. "At the end of the day when his alienation from India is complete, he appropriates his maternal endearments, the linguistic remnants of a former identity to sustain his life" as Elaine Ho says.

Baumgartner’s alienation in this world renders him unable to have any interaction with people around. Unlike other internees he is unable to unburden himself to his fellow inmates at the internment camp. Repeatedly humiliated, insulted and bullied, he feels mortified and retreats into his shell like a ‘crab’ or a ‘turtle’ and remains there safely. His experience in the cave, which was probably a temple of a nameless, ‘an ancient and primitive’ god underscores the nature of his existence in society whether it is Berlin or Calcutta or Bombay. It is a mutual rejection that is involved in his relationship with society. The society doesn’t accept him nor does he remain in the mainstream of society and feels relieved at his prevailing condition. In his cloistered existence, ‘if he became aware, from time to time that the world beyond the curtain was growing steadily more crowded, more clamorous and the lives of others more hectic.

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more chaotic, then he felt only relieved that his had never been a part of the main stream' (p.211). Always, somehow he had escaped the main stream. The same kind of interaction had taken place between him and the "presence" in the cave. When Baumgartner squeezes into the cave he finds blackness, silence and a complete absence of explanatory text: "No voice, no song not even a dim inscription". The shrine inside is as Jude Newman observes, "unnamed, unexplained: the figures forth the absence, silence and untold horrors of the letters, the night into which Muttty disappeared." 8 Baumgartner had decisively rejected the call of 'death' which lay 'there in heap' because he would not have it so. But once out of the cave, he had the feeling of having been rejected, having been as Subhash Chandra feels "expelled from some royal presence."

Whenever Baumgartner feels incompetent to handle any situation, he regresses into his childhood. He longs for familiar surroundings and appearances. The war-time conditions disturb his mind to such an extent that he fails to maintain the tyranny of solitary thought. His escape into Roth's friendship in the camp provides him an affinity with his past life. Even his fellowmen find it amusing to see him with Julius. In Roth's company, he feels happy as he has someone "to alleviate the burden, the emptiness, the tedium of the waiting days". Life without Julius or Schwarz seems difficult to cope with even in India. His friendship with them is a device to show others that he also belongs to someone. It is an unconscious attempt to overcome his feelings of alienation and loneliness: 'He began to fear the time when he would no longer be in the company of Julius or Schwarz or the others in the camp who had become so familiar. It was not that any of them regarded him as a friend, it was that with them he could pretend he was not solitary...Outside he would be that a man without a family or a country. He could not
stifle his unease..." (p.133). His friendship with Lotte, the cats of colaba and the Turonie youth-all are also in a sense, attempts at self-actualization but in each initiative, he is a fiasco. As Swain and Nayak say, "Accepting...but not accepted that was the story of his life. A wandering Jew in all his life he belongs to none and though involved and associated with many he is not identified with any." 10

Absolute freedom in the world especially in India causes existential anxiety for Hugo. The camp life entices him as this is a sort of safe shelter for him. He feels thankful for the protection of the British run camp. Although he is sick with sorrow, restlessness, frustration, boredom and lifeless monotony of the camp, he feels "at least it was a refuge, even if temporary." 11 Apart from the daily routine of the camp duties nobody forces on him anything. He begins to brood on his identity. The roots of his colonial exile reach deep into his process of identity formulation. His German culture, which at once alienates him provides him with a model for alienation. His cultural alienation takes corporeal form and forces him to re-examine consciously by his Germanness.

Instead of taking refuge in fiction, Baumgartner eschews tale-telling and silence becomes his response to events in the camp. When the Jews refuse to shout 'Hail Hitler', 'Baumgartner gratefully joined their silence. He realised at that instant that silence was his natural condition'. Although silence can be a weapon, to submit to the finality of silence is to conform the nihilism of Nazism. Mutty, his mother has also been silenced, no more letters have arrived from her.
Baumgartner’s prison life with the end of the war ends. He met his old friend Habibulla to continue his timber business. Meanwhile communal riots had started very seriously especially in Calcutta. It became very difficult for Habibulla to continue his business. In addition to the communal riots Bengal was affected by famine. So it became very difficult for Hugo to continue his business. He remained in isolation with his last savings. Habibulla advised him to go back to Bombay. He came to Bombay and met Chimanlal who let out a small flat to him at a reasonable rate behind Taj Hotel. He started transport business and also found a new work at the race track in Bombay. Once again he met Lotte here after so many years. Lotte had a false marriage with Kanti Sethia to avoid the prison life and to get Indian nationality.

Just like Baumgartner’s, Lotte’s story had been a tragic one of isolation. Now she has lost her youth and charm. Kanti’s sons by his former marriage treated her with hatred. She was left all alone in Bombay, waiting for Kanti to visit her once in a blue moon. At every step Lotte was also made to suffer and live an isolated life in Bombay. Both the isolated characters now being old, consoled each other. Their reunion symbolises hope, promise and self-awareness. It alleviates the anguish of their solitude. During her moments of isolation Lotte would confess to Hugo that they should have returned to their country long back instead of living in India as isolated Indians. Their life in India made no sense and it made ‘a meaning to the meaningless’. Even after living here for such a long time both of them felt isolated and cut off from the main stream of Indian life.

Besides Hugo Baumgartner and his lover-friend Lotte, there are others both Indians and foreigners, who remain outsiders and who are alienated for various reasons.
They are trapped by circumstances and they are victims of forces beyond their control-social, political and above all psychological. The pre-war conditions in Germany, the aftermath of the war, the partition of India and the post-independence degradation of values seemed to have affected their psyche. Whatever may be the nature of the problems the loss of personal identity, the sense of hopelessness and the fear of insecurity are alike for them all. They represent the condition of modern man who according to Edmund-Fuller, "suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin but for inner problem... a conviction of isolation, randomness, meaninglessness in his way of existence." The worst sufferer however is Hugo. Despite his long stay in India, Hugo Baumgartner feels lonely and incapable of dealing with Indians. Language is the first major barrier in his way to develop friendship with Indians. He remains uncertain of 'which language to employ' and 'German no longer sufficed and English was elusive. He gets bewildered to hear many languages as languages sprouted around him like tropical foliage' (p.82). The disharmonies that ensure are often rendered as miscommunication or inability to communicate. Desai interweaves his German origin and his subsequent alienation from the cultures and societies he encounters. The peculiar physical appearance of Hugo, his extremely light complexion, easily set him apart from the natives. He is conscious that people look at him with awe and wonder. Therefore he tries to remain aloof: 'It required an effort, an almost physical effort to crack it, to break through the liquidity and flow and shift and kineses of language'. He thinks of himself as 'an old turtle trudging through dusty Indian Soil'. Like Nirode in Voices in the City he moves to a state of alienation where "aloneness alone is the sole natural condition. aloneness alone the treasure worth treasuring."
Farrokh, the proprietor of ‘Café de Paris’ is prejudiced towards white people. His prejudice makes Hugo feel humiliated. He pretends ignorance to cover up his shame. To survive in an alien land only ‘ignorance was what he had made his own. His helplessness forces him to accept the disgusted “crowds and smells and noise” of Colaba streets without any protest, without any question. It ‘no longer seemed fantastic and exotic; it was more utterly familiar now’.

Baumgartner, learns such attitude of quiet resignation and acceptance during his childhood. Just like earlier characters of Desai, Hugo’s childhood experiences and interactions in the family have been frustrating. He finds the different temperaments of his parents reflected in the house-hold objects. His father always preferred costly things whereas his mother selected those things which contained living quality that ‘prevented the rooms from becoming showrooms’. For Hugo his mother was an epitome of grace, beauty and sensuous aspects of nature. The emotional quality in her fascinated him. Hugo oscillates between his father’s decorum and the gracefulness of his mother. The predominant role that parents play has much impact on the mind of children in different ways. According to Erich Fromm father “is able to give...love and guidance to the boy, which...is most important function of a father. If mother-love represents the natural world, father-love stands for the other pole of human existence - the world of thought, discipline, and adventure”.

Baumgartner’s father fails to infuse trust and confidence in him. He never likes to take him for an outing. The boy is very much disappointed when his father refuses to take him to the race-course along with him. This inconsiderate behaviour of his father
makes him feel contempt for his father. His confidence and faith in his father gets shattered. Hugo's father does not prove to be a worthy father because he does not inspire and infuse confidence in the boy. As a boy Hugo feels extremely cut-up when his father does not take him to the horse-race inspite of his persistent pleadings: 'When he left the apartment, dressed for the races... Hugo moved, with a roar. He ran to the window and beat on the glass as if to break it, so that his mother had to hold him away even if she were kicked and beaten' (p.34). This indifferent behaviour of his father fills his heart with a sense of contempt and his confidence in him is shaken. His father's cruelty and indifference nip his happiness and freedom in the bud. His father's cruelty makes him feel disgusted, frustrated and lonely. Although his mother sings sweet songs, they do not give peace to his lonely being. According to Ignace, "self-alienation starts in early childhood where there is lack of physical or emotional intimacy or where the parents were over anxious or over-ambitious, the child started moving away from his self-because it did not seem good enough to be loved. He moved away from what he felt and wanted." Thus Hugo slowly moved away from his father into the lap of his mother as a boy.

The novel also deals with interpersonal relationship. The relationship between Hugo and his father is very weak. His father doesn't give him any chance to move with him freely even as a boy. The existentialists believe that human relationships make people unhappy and miserable. The novelist shows how the mother is a prisoner and the son is a prisoner, and how the strong husband and father imposes his will on them. Hugo looks at his mother 'with the hatred of one prisoner for another'. His mother can show off her disgust and frustration by singing the songs with 'ineffable sweetness'. But
Hugo is too young to find a vent for his frustration and disgust at his father's cruelty towards him. At such moments, his mother's song makes him sad. 'Yes, that was what was wrong', he shivered, 'the sweetness always ended in a quiver to draw together and produced tear drop' (p.29).

Baumgartner always loves his mother's company. When he goes to Grunewald with his mother, he finds himself free from the 'masculine atmosphere created by his father'. His mother also feels free and happy enjoying the beauty of nature. The sudden change in his mother in the lap of nature makes Hugo realise 'a rift, a break between his parents'. This rift affects him so deeply that in his later life he can neither mix up with his fellowmen nor can marry any one.

Baumgartner's experience at school whether meant for Christians or Jews fill him with fear and anxiety. Even at school he feels like an insignificant outsider. At the Christmas party in the school he feels insecure, unwanted and uncared for. His parents forgot to send the gift to him on this occasion and this neglect on their part forces him to retreat into his own thoughts as he sensed 'he did not belong to the radiant, the triumphant of the world'. The memory of such unpleasant interactions does not fade from his psyche. In the Jewish school children remarked 'Baumgartner is dumb, has a nose like thumb' makes him uncomfortable and inculcate in him a fear of strangers. He alienates himself from the students of his school. It is also in the Jewish school that he recognises consciously the alienation and displacement that will constitute his identity. The incomplete schooling creates problems for Hugo. He misses the most important aspects of social interaction at different stages in school apart from job opportunities.
He realises the school had an element of robust reality that appealed to him that he had been learning to deal with and even enjoy and that he missed in the hushed pallor of his own home.

Being cut off from the outer world, he becomes immensely attached to his mother. So he gets sentimental, when his mother decides to stay back in Germany. His helplessness torments him. To make his mother and himself cheerful he says, "And when I am in India, I will make a home for us... I will have servants for you... and bring you gold oranges." His deep affectionate feelings towards his mother "suggestively reveal the desire of a lover to make a comfortable home for his beloved. Throughout his life, he is unable to recover from his fixation and so he never feels attached to any other lady and does not marry anyone. His profound love for his mother motivates his entire life. When he loses her, his life becomes aimless and he is shorn of any ambition or dream. He almost stops living life and what he does is to pass the time,"13, observes Kajali Sharma. But when he reaches India, he is overwhelmed with the feelings of alienation and loneliness. The very absence of his mother makes him feel lost. On the very first day in India he wished "to have a hand settled on his wrist, lead him."

Unfulfilled desires and dissatisfaction were the main aspects of his life before war. By the end of the war Baumgartner's isolation takes a different shape. He was freed from the prison but could not continue his timber business. The pre-partition violence kept him shut in his apartment in Calcutta. Now his alienation is caused by the socio-political situation in India. He remained fear-engulfed. He tries to seek for a company. The communal riots created the problem of security. The scenes of killing and death
created a fear and shock in him. Fear stricken as he is, he alienates himself from society and shuts himself in the room. The war between Hindus and Muslims was an endless and eternal one in Calcutta. Insecure and terrified he decided to leave Calcutta for Bombay. According to Prof. Swain, "Religious frenzy and communal strife shocks him into a searing awareness of his lone plight." He reached Bombay, the stoppage in his journey through emptiness. He experiences misery and bitterness caused by political upheavals first in Germany and then in India. For him Germany is destroyed and ever since he had come to India he has not been able to get any information about his mother. So he feels more a citizen of India. He finds Calcutta suitable to mourn his loneliness and suffering. The partition of the country depicts his inner drifts and the place seems to echo his thoughts and feelings. Prof. Swain and Nayak observed, "He remains an alien, the perennial outsider in a world torn asunder in the fire and fury of communal riots. Wherever he goes, he is the 'Nowhere Man', the castaway whose life is rocked by alienating forces. He can neither grasp nor grab. Nor can he identify with these inscrutable forces that propel him from one state of existence to another." 

The life around Hugo Baumgartner is not only empty but is positively degenerating and disintegrating. The house in which Hugo lives and its surroundings symbolise his existential alienation. The house is decayed with 'a gap in the wall where the gate had once been...the wall had crumbled and in many places disappeared allowing beggars, cattle, stray dogs and the vendors of the whole locality to wander in and set up wherever they found space' (p.174). It is a place where even the living appeared to be dead: "There were always rows of supine bodies, covered with white sheets so that they had the appearance of corpses in their shrouds but were only people lying in rows
outside the house and its once gracious, now decayed portico'. It is a city where the inhabitants love 'sorrowful' songs. No garden can sprout here in spite of continuous efforts. Baumgartner "finds himself surrounded forever by a dysphorean world." as Subhash Chandra observes.

In Bombay he is still an empty wanderer with loss of identity, the feeling of estrangement and isolation and persisting sense of alienation. Lack of social acceptance leads him to a sense of insecurity inherent in all human relationships. He receives a more severe jolt at the hands of his friend, Chimanlal's son. The boy dismisses without giving a thought to his father's association with Hugo in public and private life. When he asks for the race horse the boy demands for legal proof. Hugo feels deprived of faith and confidence in his relationship and tells: 'Your father and I, it was just an understanding, a friendship'. Frustrated with life, he loses interest in life "As nowhere he could get recognition of his simplicity, sincerity and honesty, hopelessness and despair surround him and he is left alone to put up with an unsatisfying present and unknown future." as rightly said by Mrinalini Solanki.

Although, Baumgartner loses all hopes of relationship and survival, he responds to the finer human instincts of love, compassion and fellow feeling. Withdrawn from the society of humans, he finds happiness and comfort in the world of animals. Prof. Swain and Nayak say, "With the passage of time the cats that haunt the alleys of Colaba, homeless, forlorn and love torn like himself flock around him, accentuating his estranged plight. Their presence is awe-inspiring. Identifying his unfortunate lot with the cats Hugo desires a social certitude and value." His family consisting of himself and the cats, abounds in affection. In order to feed the cats he collects the stale food remains from Farrokh's 'Cafe de Paris'. "He does not mind being a lowly person virtuously begging
for food for his cats. He is not bothered about the epithet, ‘Billiwalla Pagal’. He is indifferent to the contempt he is held in by the people in Hira Nivas, including the chowkidar of the building,” observes Subhash Chandra.

Insipe of his familiarity with each and everything externally, he finds himself a stranger. He had ‘lived in this land for fifty years... yet the eyes of the people who paused by glanced at him... and all said Firangi, foreigner’. Insipde of his absolute sincerity and his uncommon capacity to identify himself with those who come in contact with him, he remains an alien, a firangi in a foreign land. This stamp of Firangi makes him always isolated. According to Ignace. “The feeling of being lonely in a crowd, of being a stranger among strangers can be experienced on a daily basis in rush hour crowds... many feel lonely and lost in the crowd and sorry for themselves. Others may seek and like the feeling of being submerged in the mass of being unknown among the unknown.”2 The Indians in Bombay would not accommodate him and he could not establish contact and understanding with them. The paradox of “accepting but not accepted” hurled him in the deep abyss of isolation from which he could never come out and ‘In Germany he had been dark - his darkness had marked him the ‘Firangi’. In both lands the unacceptable’.

The passage of time, and old age intensified his feelings of loneliness. He has experienced both the feelings of self and cultural alienation. As Victor George observes, "Alienation from self is a tragic condition even though it seems common enough to be considered normal for those who are severely alienated. The loss is usually obvious. Their feelings range from apathy to grinding despair...”23 Nobody pitied him or nobody tried to know his plight. No doubt, Lotte gave him company temporarily, but he remained a lonely figure left all alone and isolated. According to Mishra and Dubey,
"The blows and buffets, agonies and frustrations, estrangement and loss of identity shatter all the hopes and aspirations of Baumgartner who is thrown into existentialist situation - alienation." 4 Ironically he was thrown in a whirlpool of isolation. The novelist writes, 'He felt his life blur, turn grey, like a curtain wrapping him in its dusty felt'. He always fought with the despair and isolation of his life bravely and did not commit suicide to get over. The end of his isolation was his death. The pitiable and almost tragic life of Baumgartner reminds us of the life of Sisyphus. Hugo continues to live even in adverse and hostile circumstances. He never had any idea to put an end to his life. His predicament is akin to the existential predicament of Sisyphus. Sisyphus is superior to his fate. Baumgartner learns to live with indifferent and absurdly cruel surrounding and goes on rolling the rock of life. He is aware of his desolate condition. As rightly said by Suresh Chandra, he "has no illusions of a rosy future as against his sordid past and humiliating present."5 But he remains unbent in his desire to go on living.

The more Baumgartner tries to forge his own origin, his own country and the people, the more he finds himself involved with them. The past becomes an obsession with him. He feels lost in this discourteous world. Ignace feels that "... an individual feeling lost and powerless in the infinite and insensitive universe, a stranger in the world may look for protection, warmth and recognition in the society of his fellowmen. World alienation may bring about social alienation."6 Hugo's social alienation, cultural alienation and self-alienation ultimately lead him to world alienation. So he does not permit even Lotte whom he loved once to intrude into his life and habitat. But it is strange that Kurt, his murderer wins his sympathy. It may be that Kurt reminds him of his father who 'had a light hair of that kind'. It may also be that Farookh asked him to take the boy with him from his hotel. There is always a clash between his inner longings
and outward pretensions. He pines for his childhood country and family where he could satisfy his sense of belongingness, but outwardly he poses that 'he did not need the pack'.

Baumgartner’s friendship with Lotte is again an attempt to escape. Both develop mutual understanding. Lotte never tries to probe into his personal life and into his past. He keeps a distance from other Europeans in Bombay because their queries remind him of his past, his Jewish background and the humiliating circumstances from which he tried to escape. He is very particular about his private affairs. He prefers Indian acquaintances. He feels more at ease with them.

Hugo Baumgartner uses withdrawal as a means to escape unpleasant interactions from the beginning of his childhood. He is an inhibited child. He can never be free with his parents to trust them with a free expression of his feelings and thoughts. In his adult life he is unable to interact freely in the social world around him. M. Solanki believes that he "nurture the negative impulse to run away from the past." 27 He worships loneliness and isolation to such an extent that he is afraid of any human presence around him at times. His docile nature makes him tolerate everything and live silently in solitude. But when the situation becomes intolerable, he doesn’t hesitate to show his anger and frustration. His helplessness and loneliness make him suppress his aggressive tendencies at times. He bears everything mutely. His inner conflicts take the form of a war. But his struggle is between his real self and his idealised self. This conflict develops in him a self-destructive attitude. There is no outlet to his agonies as he does not disclose his problems to anyone. He worries a lot about the plight of his mother. He blurs reality by reading and rereading his mother’s letters till he arrives at an important
conclusion that nothing matters, nothing makes sense: "Germany there, India here - India there, Germany here." It is all "impossible to capture". He sees "the reality of his lonely existence. He has remained a vagrant at everything in life," as Usha Banerjee says.

With regards to Lotte's isolation and alienation, her later life in Bombay expresses the intensity of her existential alienation. After the death of Kanthilal Sethia, her isolation is greatly aggravated in her old age. Her helplessness, frustration, and agony drive her to choose her only companion in the country wine and broken Hugo whom she had met in Bombay by chance. She pathetically confesses, "Mostly I am alone. All alone". She has none except Hugo in her isolation just as Hugo has none except her. Their isolation is the outcome of their uprootedness from their own past, culture, tradition, society, and milieu. Now there milieu is no way out from isolation for them. Both of them have to be there, but there is some difference in the enduring human situation they face in their last years and at the end of the journey of their life. Hugo gets released from his existence when he is murdered and meets death. Mishra and Dubey say that "The existentialist's view that death is the only release from the enduring human condition is fully realised in the case of Hugo. But Lotte is left alone, all alone and isolation, a tragic figure and a pathetic case."

The heightened sense of social and cultural alienation of these characters and their outsiders' predicament can be gauged by incidents that happened. Habibullah suffers insecurity and fear in his homeland due to communal tension. Hugo is puzzled by the entire drama of communal frenzy. Chimani's son after his father's death disposes Hugo as if he were his father's servant and not his business partner or friend. On the other hand Jagu and his family are rendered homeless by natural calamities.
Lotte is deprived of her flat and other comforts by Kanthi’s sons, after his death. All these characters are alienated and they feel that the world is alien to them. With some Indians like Farooq and Habibullah in Calcutta, Hugo develops abiding friendship. But the cruel ironies and difficulties of life, and in the way and he continues to find himself a lonely man. Shashi Khanna says, “inspite of his absolute sincerity and his uncommon capacity to identify himself with those who come in contact with him, he remains an alien - a phragi - in a foreign land.” The story of life brings out the fact that fate seems to have marked him out as one who is condemned to a like of alienation. The pathos of the situation is in the fact that by nature and temperament he is a sociable man, but Fate seems to be obstinately obstructing him at every step. Inspite of his best human qualities, the end of his life turns to be tragic. Ignace says, “Gnosticism thought that the world is alien even hostile to man that ‘men are lost and alone in a vast, alien world.’ The world is ‘alien and inhuman’.” There is an inability to relate to other human beings on human grounds. For Chimanlal’s son, the values upheld by his elders have no sanctity. Kurt also displays the corrupting effect of the post-war period. This drug addict German boy suffers acute alienation - both cultural and psychological. He has no sense of piety of human life. It proves by the gruesome murder he commits for a few pieces of stained silver. He is one of the baby men who comes to India ‘uninvited’ by kicking ‘his parents in the face’ and has turned himself a beggar and remained a ‘child’. Keniston observes “...alienation... may involve revolution, terrorism, criminality, delinquency, non-conformity, sociopathy...”. On the whole man seems to have lost his cosmic vision or else how could one sufferer be unfeeling towards another sufferer? Why should Hugo and Habibullah be at a loss to relate to each other with
Habibullah having 'no more conception of Baumgartner's war of Europe's war than Baumgartner had of affairs in Bengal, in India'.

All the characters feel more miserable and anguished when they try to run away from interpersonal relationships. J. Krishnamurthy makes a very apt observation when he comments: "without relationship you are not to be is to be related: to be related is existence ... you exist because you are related: and it is the lack of understanding of relationship that causes conflict." Escape and withdrawal do not constitute a viable solution to the riddle of life. As Mrinalini Solanki says, "Shared experience is specifically the basis of all psychological understanding and emotional fulfilment because it is not in some hidden retreat that we find ourselves but on the road." In the final analysis the novel comes out as "a purely psychological novel converging into existentialist emotions of frustration, alienation, estrangement and anguish". Mishra and Dubey Sharada.
REFERENCE NOTES


2. Swain S.P. Prof., and Nayak, P.M., Ibid., p.17


12. Desai, Anita., Voices in the City, (Orient Paperbacks, Delhi, 1985). p.23


17. Swain S.P. Prof., and Nayak, P.M., Ibid., p.17


