CHAPTER IV

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration: no single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures.  
—Matthew Arnold

As main concern of the present study is to compare the American and Marathi novels, this chapter pursues the question: what are the similarities and differences between the novels from two different literary traditions along with the theme of human existence? By comparing the novels of American and Marathi authors, this chapter aims to grasp the temporally and culturally distant assumptions on human existence through the select novels. But since a comparative study is always a dialogical process, this chapter, likewise, foregrounds the strands of existentialism, (which is already discussed in the first chapter) and a brief discussion on Comparative Literature Studies.

The Comparative Literature Studies is often defined as a discipline which makes the bond between texts that are not restrained by national or linguistic boundaries. In response to the question, what is comparative Literature?, Bassnett replies, “The simplest answer is that comparative literature involves the study of texts across cultures, that it is interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in

literatures across both time and space” (1). Moreover, it attempts to focus intercultural lines and establishes links between literature and other disciplines, such as music or film. However, the main concern of Comparative Literature Studies lies within “literature, the contexts of literature and the interaction between literatures” (BCLA 2006). It is obvious that literature of a particular society is a breath of a culture. Even though the different authors write in their own mother tongue and their themes are coloured with the local colours, certain cultural threads reflect in their works. In the core of their literary expressions they share common faculties (psychological and philosophical). Often, they obey common laws of material, and mode of the individual and social humanity.

The Comparative Literature Studies represents not only an academic discipline but also the world literature. The motif of the comparison under this title is not just glossing the examples of similarities and dissimilarities, but it focuses the literature of margins. With the comparative tool one can compare, native literature with the main stream literature. This act of comparison shades new perception to the existing body of criticism.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Comparative Literature Studies includes the other disciplines like—translation studies, sociology, critical theory, cultural studies, religious studies, and history. It also grants permission to study literature across the national borders. The obstacles like—the linguistic, racial, historical, and cultural aspects cannot restrict such kind of study. Therefore, the scope of the comparative literature cannot be defined just with the comparison of two literary traditions. Rather, its broader scope includes the comparison of Literature and other
disciplines like—psychology, philosophy, science, history, architecture, sociology, politics, etc. In short, the Comparative Literature Studies introduces fresh points of views, and establishes bridges between different nations, cultures and languages.

In the present Modern age, there is certain requisite to move beyond the boundaries of a single subject area. As the world is going to form itself as a global village, it is necessary to consider the different varieties of culture. Due to the developments in the print and electronic media, the process of transforming the knowledge has got tremendous speed. Day by day the new texts are emerging in the field of fiction, and consequently, they fix their marks on the world scenario. In order to maintain this speed and gain the knowledge of literary outputs or a particular literary tradition, it is necessary to compare it in the global socio-cultural scenario. Thus to fulfil this emerging need, Comparative Literature Studies deserves its importance. Nevertheless, similar to all other academic disciplines, it is important to establish certain direction of research, the theoretical premises as well as the aims and the outcome of comparison. In this context, some major aims of the Comparative Literature Studies can be drawn as: (a) to establish similarities between two or more texts or literary tradition or other disciplines; (b) to highlight the differences between the texts or literary tradition; (c) To explore the intercultural flux of ideas, the impact or influence of one national literature upon another, during a specific historical period; (d) and in addition, while writing a comparative analysis of texts, originally written in different languages, it is of importance to highlight the problems of translation. (Konzett 1-2)
All the select novels are similar in their thematic concerns. They reflect the similar themes like alienation, absurdity, freedom of choice, authenticity, death, and rebel. Though they are written in different literary traditions by different writers, and their creative minds are nourished by different socio-political aspects, the select novels reflect the similar human experiences, which are partially due to its universality and partially due to the existential beliefs they share in common. The existential worlds they form in their novels, in its many aspects, are identical with each other.

The protagonists of the existential fiction of the West are generally male characters, who are in search of meaning in their lives. Particularly in the American English novels the said generalization can be observed. The select American novels analysed in the second chapter help to generalize this fact. The story of J. D. Salinger’s novel *The Catcher in the Rye* moves around the male protagonist Holden Caulfield, an alienated individual living his life under the threat of ill-health, aging, and death. The protagonist of Richard Wright’s *The Outsider* is Damon, again an estranged individual, who escapes from his nightmarish life to exercise his freedom, and with this freedom he attempts to give the meaning to his existence. Walker Percy’s *The Moviegoer* centres its story on the life of Binx, a protagonist, who tries to find out the happiness in the movies, and escapes from the everydayness of his life. John Gardner’s *Grendel* is an experimental in its characterization; it uses Grendel, a monster from old English epic poem *Beowulf*, as a protagonist, and juxtaposes the middle point of the existentialist meaningless universe, and meaningful heroic
universe of the epic. Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*, explores the experience of an anonymous protagonist, struggling for the meaning of his existence.

The common thread of all the novels is that they have male protagonists, who exercise their will in order to search for the meaning of their existence. The life experiences of all the characters are similar in one and other way. The first and very basic thing is that all these protagonists are in search of meaning and purpose of their lives. They have brutal experiences of isolation, frustration, everydayness, anxiety of death, and confusion about the traditional values. Therefore, they rebel against the social systems and vanity of human existence.

The same thing accords with the Marathi novels, analysed in chapter third. Bhalchandra Nemade’s *Kosla*, portrays the life of a modern youth, Pandurang Sangviker, living in a hostile world. The feelings like alienation, frustration, meaningfulness are very dominant in his personality. Bhau Padhye’s *Barrister Anirudha Dhopeshwarkar* reveals the story of a male protagonist, Anirudha Dhopeshwarkar. Authentic behaviour and the meaningless of the existence are the prominent existential aspects depicted in the novel. Vilas Sarang’s *Enkichya Rajyat* is also a representation of the immigrant life of Pramod Vengurlekar, a professor of English, who also faces the similar issues like freedom of choice, anxiety, fear, and alienation. Kamlesh Waldkar’s *Baki Shoonya* is also centred on the life of a male protagonist, Jayaraj Sardesai and focuses on his frustration in the search of meaningful life and eventual existential enlightenment. However, only exception for this symmetry is Kamal Desai’s *Kala Surya*, in which a life of a female protagonist Meera

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is explored in more details. She also raises questions about the paradigms of her existence and the world around her through abstract vignettes of her past and present.

This analysis of the protagonists of the select novels provokes us to generalize that the protagonists of the select novels are the male protagonists and they share the existential philosophical beliefs, and therefore, exhibit the similar frame of thoughts. Many experiences they face in their lives, in many aspects, are also similar. Their perception about the cultural values, social codes and religious beliefs are similar. These similarities are not due to the universality of the human experiences, but due to their obsession about the fundamental issues of the human existence, and its purpose on the earth.

Besides the fact that the novels explore the lives of male protagonists, many other things about the protagonists are the same. All the select novels use a hostel, single room or lodging as a setting. For example, the novel depicts Holden’s life at the hostel of Pencey Prep, an exclusive private school in Pennsylvania. Holden, though he is in a sanatorium, narrates the two days from his hostel life. In the course of the time he leaves the hostel and stays at Manhattan hotel. The setting of the novel also helps to constitute the frustrating atmosphere which motivates the character to think about the purpose of his existence and his relation with hostile world around. As Kierkegaard says, “the aesthetic man, lost in sensual diversions, inhabits the basement” (24), Binx lives in a basement apartment in New Orleans suburb, and frequently talks with Kate in the basement of his aunt's house. John Gardner’s protagonist Grendel lives in a cave near King Horthgar’s castle. In his cave he is
accompanied with his mother, but she lives in water and is unable to
speak with him. *Fight Club*’s anonymous protagonist is also a modern
individual living his lonely life in the basement of Fight Club.

Thus the protagonists of the select American novels live lonely and
are alienated from the society. The same thing is observed in the
protagonists of the Marathi novels. Though the social and cultural
premises of these novels are different, certain developments in the
modern intelligentsia are common in the context of the American and the
Marathi novels. Nemad’s Pandurang also lives in the hostel, far away
from his native place and family. In the wake of drastic change in the
every aspect of the modern life, and in the era of science and technology
in Maharashtra, the modern youth becomes confused about the socio-
cultural values of life. Pandurang is a representative of this generation,
who for the sake of higher education leaves his family and lives in the
hostel. In the novel, Nemad uses a hostel as a setting which separates the
protagonist from the social and cultural contacts, which motivates him to
think about the purpose and meaning of his existence. Kamal Desai’s
protagonist Meera, as she gets transferred to a Post Office of Viranchi,
stays in the house of her maternal aunt, but soon she shifts in a single
room alone. Pramod, a protagonist of *Enkichya Rajyat*, accepts the job in
Basra University, Iraq and initially lives in lodging and then shifts to the
single room. Though Jayaraj initially lives with the parents, most of his
time he spends at hostel. After his Graduation he lives either in a single
room alone or in the hostel.

Thus, it is clear that the existential protagonists of the select novels
live in the hotel, lodging, or alone in a separate room. The hostel
atmosphere depicted in *Kosla, The Catcher in the Rye*, and *Baki Shoonya* are similar in many aspects. The setting of the novels creates the gloomy, frustrating and alien atmosphere, which takes the protagonists away from the society. In such setting all the traditional and conventional meanings of the human life are shattered. The social roles which becomes a vehicle to sustain the social identity are also absents in it. In the traditional sense the characters represent the stereotypical behavioural patterns of the social roles. For example the characters of Jane Austen’s novels *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), and *Persuasion* (1817), represent the behavioural patterns of social roles. The characters exist in the social and cultural scenario and impose the social and cultural meaning to their lives. If a question, ‘who I am?’ is asked in this conventional premise the answers would be, ‘I am a father/ mother/ brother/ sister/ uncle/ aunt of so and so’ or an answer would be ‘I am a policeman/ preacher/ doctor/ businessman and so on’; all these familial and social roles are their identities. In the context of the traditional novels, it is possible for a reader and critic to guess what would be the response of a particular character in a particular social situation. However, in the case of Existential novels, it is not possible for the readers to guess the probable response from protagonists. These protagonists, as they are alienated from the society and live according to their will, their actions are not modelled on the basis of established behavioural codes of the society. For instance, Mersault kills Arab without any reason; it is unexpected thing in the traditional sense, but it is an authentic behaviour of the existential character. These characters are not interested in playing the family roles; instead, they are in search of the new identity. In order to present such characters, different
from the social norms, the authors place them in the remote settings like hotels or lodgings. By using such settings they constitute an existential world, in which the social morals and cultural values are worthless. Thus, all the protagonists of the select novels do not live in their native place with their families; they are outsider. In such an alien space they are motivated to contemplate on the purpose and meaning of their existence.

Another important point is that all these protagonists are the objective observers of the society. These characters can be compared with Camus’s Meursault, who objectively observes the outer world. His response to the outer environment is either physical or intellectual. Instead of thinking what society expects, he always thinks in the term of what he feels and what he needs. The protagonists of the select novels also experience the aloofness from the outer world, which enables them to observe and analyse the socio-cultural scenario just like a foreign entity.

Salinger’s Holden, as he lives in the hostel, feels alienated from the parents and a sister. As an objective observer of the outer world, he tells in detail about his visit with the history teacher, Mr. Spencer, where he has noticed the smells of medicine and Vicks. But, unlike Meursault, he acknowledges his feelings about his teacher and he also associates it with death. His objectivity in the observations is also revealed in his criticism of school, teachers, friends, adult people, and the entire society. Richard Wright’s protagonist, Damon, similar to Meursault, is an objective observer. Meursault is alienated from the society, because he is culturally different from the society where he lives for a job. As a black, Damon is also alienated from the society due to racial discrimination. Without
involving emotionally, he objectively takes each decision. Damon’s routine life in Chicago is overburdened by his shrewd wife, his pregnant underage mistress, his religious mother, and his encounters with the white officers. He gets chance to overcome it by let another man’s body be mistaken for his in a subway accident. His decision of taking this opportunity is so quick and surprising that it would be very difficult for any other person to choose such a way to escape from the burdens of life. This is his objective insight, which makes him to take such a radical decision and attempt to create a new identity in New York. Walker Percy's Binx is also an alien observer of the society. His description of the world around and the minuteness in narration defines him as an objective observer. Gardner’s Grendel is a monster, but he has interested in observing human life. Initially, he is also emotionally involved in the human world, but when he realizes his own identity as a monster, he becomes objective in the analysis and contemplation of the human behaviour. The narrator of *Fight Club* is also an objective observer of the world; his contemplations on pertinent issues of human existence, and its purpose on the earth lead him to take a decision of total destruction. He analyses certain fundamental issues of human existence and realizes its absurdity.

The protagonists of the Marathi novels are similar in their objective observation like the Americans. Pandurang’s perception and understanding of society is objective and scientific because he attempts to judge human behaviour either on the physical level or on the scientific reasoning. The contrast in the human behaviour he comprehends after the meditation on Mani’s death, and the behaviours of other family members...
in her illness, makes him objective critic of the society. Aniruddha’s transformation from romantic, optimistic, and enthusiastic youth to the pessimistic person is due to his objective analysis of the world and his relations with other characters. Through his objective observation he criticizes his father, wife, women of their colony, friends and social reformers. He is intelligent enough to understand that after the exclusion of the emotional bonds from his relations with his wife, all that he initially felt romantic become a mechanical human act. This realization is also a good evidence of his objective thinking and the ability of contemplation. Meera, a protagonist of Kala Surya, is also very objective in her attitude towards the world. Through her minute observation of the society, she realizes the hypocrisy and absurdity in social codes and conducts. Sexual relations, therefore, for her, are only physical needs and not a sin. Through her objective contemplation she comes to know that the Temple of Sun is a curse for village, so she destroys it. As Meursault is an outsider in Algerian society, Sarang’s Pramod is also a stranger in the Iraqi society. Therefore, his observation of the Iraq and Iraqi society is objective one, which leads him to understand the contrast between his idea of Basra, as cradle of human culture, and contemporary socio-political scenario. His point of view to see at Iraq, especially Basra city is as an ancient Sumerian city, of World’s oldest civilization. He observes objectively the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, destruction of religious beliefs and the suppressed society, and criticizes it in his own way. Jayaraj also makes comments on the social issues and tries to keep himself away from its phony things. As an objective observer, he severely criticizes the marriage institution, and makes fun of the system of arranged marriage. His attitude towards educational system is negative.
because he believes that they proved nothing. During his graduation he observes that teachers and students, both are fool, because a teacher does not know how to teach, and a student does not know what to learn.

Thus, the objective thinking of these protagonists makes them estranged from the society and culture, and, in this alien space, they are curious to know about the purpose and meaning of their lives. Their highly rational thinking invalids all the emotional and social bonds, which otherwise might create obstacles in the way of existential knowledge.

Another important fact is that all the protagonists face failure in their materialistic life. Initially, they are successful and responsible men in their profession and the society, but after realization of meaningless and purposeless existence, they become eccentric for others. This realization also makes them unsuccessful in their profession and married life; as a result their family relations turn into hostile. They remain only emotionless and detached husbands, brothers or sons. Holden’s father is a rich lawyer, who provides him good education in a private institution like Pencey Prep, but he has failed to nurture his sensitive mind. Holden has been expelled from school due to his failure in four subjects. On the other hand, as a social being, he cannot even establish an intimate friendship in the school, and also fails to maintain intimate relations with parents. His quest for parental love and the failure to achieve it makes him alien. Wright’s Damon also experiences such failures in the material life. He cannot maintain good relations with his wife. Even, it is not possible for him to handle the case of his underage beloved’s pregnancy and he is unable to cope with his sentimental and religious mother. He is also
unsuccessful in his office life; he has been stressed and tensioned by the scrutiny of white supervisors in the Post office. Thus, he becomes restless in home as well as in the office, which compels him to take the existential choice in a sudden opportunity, emerged in sub-way accident.

The socio-cultural environment of the novel *The Moviegoer* is a materialistic society of America. This period of American history is known as ‘American Dream’. In such dreamy materialistic period Binx, a protagonist of *The Moviegoer*, is shown as passive. He has given up all the dreams of “doing something great” and “living the most ordinary life imaginable”. He is also a member of consumerist society, who makes money for buying the best products to increase the pleasure of life. But Binx is trapped in the materialistic world and addicted to the pleasures of life. His narrative echoes the ironic tone, which suggests that he is not the man of that kind. He is also not able to develop the permanent relation with any of the secretaries, with whom he is dating. As Grendel is a monster, this analogy of the materialistic life is not relevant in his case but he is also unsuccessful in his life as a monster. His conscience always switches from ‘good faith’ to ‘bad faith’ and his behaviour switches from authentic to inauthentic. For example, on some occasions, he longs for companionship, which is totally against his nature, again he feels, sometimes, pity and love which are in fact the human feelings. This shows his failure in his life. In the end of the novel, he is defeated by the huge, cold, determined, stranger (Beowulf). The anonymous narrator of the novel *Fight Club* is a pessimistic youth, who lives in the world, in which nothing is left heroic to be done, and anti-heroic deeds like brutality, infanticide, suicide and disfigurement becomes ordinary, and
therefore, they lost hawking effect. In such world the concept like success becomes invalid, so its antonym ‘unsuccessful’ becomes illogical. The novel represents the dark and unpleasant nature of human life and culture, which in itself, is unsuccessful and frustrated. The culture which is incapable of showing the way of life, the society which is unable to provide the companionship, and the human communication which is inadequate to transmit the emotions, and provokes the thought like, “If I knew how this would all turn out, I’d be more than happy to be dead and in Heaven right now. (Fight Club 14)” Thus, the protagonists of the select American novels are unsuccessful in their material lives so they face several problems in establishing themselves in the professions and in the society, as well.

The protagonists of the select Marathi novels are also unsuccessful in their lives. Pandurang is a student, who constantly fails in exams and this constant failure soon becomes a cause of his failure in his life. He is elected as a secretary of mess, but he gets failure in it due to the unknown discrepancy of six hundred rupees. After a constant failure in the educational career, he goes back to his native place and accepts the common village life. Anirudhha has completed his degree of Barrister from England, but when he finds the difference in his learning and the actual practice, he becomes reluctant about his profession. Consequently, when he loses the first case in the court, he desperate entirely, and decides to give up his profession as Barrister. He also feels disenchanted even in his married life and fails to maintain healthy relations with his wife. His thoughts are very much similar with Pandurang, when he thinks: “ना नाय आयायि आयायि आयायि आयायि, सत्त्वाया आयायि.”
The post-modern socio-cultural context depicted in the novel *Fight Club* is similar to the socio-cultural context depicted in the novel *Kala Surya*, where, in the wake of existential questions, many social concepts, including success, has defused. The difference between these two contexts is that, the context of *Fight Club* is offshoot of the modern lifestyle of the society, which is based on the extreme rationalism and radical mechanization. However, the context of *Kala Surya* is constituted by the personal psyche of Meera, which is limited for herself. At the end of both the novels, when the protagonists find their diseased society incurable, they turn towards the social destruction, in which they themselves get destructed.

Pramod determines to find out the purpose of human existence in Basra, but he fails. He wants to write a book but this project also fails due to his sense of entrapment in Iraq. He is, emotionally, cut-off from his native land India, so, he cannot accommodate himself in America and finds himself unable to cope with the socio-political environment of Iraq; this is his failure in the materialistic life. Walawalkar’s protagonist Jayaraj Sardesai also gets failures on all the fronts of life. He has attempted many professions, including career in film industry, sales executive in the corporate sector, Journalist, and his attempt to pass the UPSC exam, but he cannot secure success in any. However, his experiences in all these fields give him the realization of absurdity.

Thus, all these protagonists experience utter failure in their lives and this materialistic failure keep them aloof from the social attention. These novels, in fact, reflect the transitional period of their lives, in which
they face failure in their careers, and eventually enlighten with existential
knowledge.

The disbelief in the traditional values is also prominently found in the
American and Marathi novels. The protagonists, as they live
authentically, deny to believe in the social and cultural values. They think
in terms of their own existence, and instead of thinking about social
expectations, they think about their physical needs. For example, Holden
fails in four subjects; as a result, he has been expelled from the school.
After leaving the hostel instead of returning to home, he wanders
aimlessly and attempts to have an intercourse with a prostitute, and this is
not expected in the traditional idealistic stereotype of the social
behaviour. Damon’s act of distraction from the previous identity,
migration from Chicago to New York, and leaving behind the wife,
mother and pregnant beloved is against the ethical values of the society.
To keep his secret undisclosed, he murders his fellow worker who makes
him perfect ‘outlaw’. His establishing sexual relation with an underage
girl suggests his denial of moral values of the society. Percy's Binx
doesn’t want to sink into the everydayness of ordinary life, so, he adopts
the ‘little way’ of life, which doesn’t remind him that he is sad and
alienated. This way of life also keeps him aloof from the ‘big questions’
of life. His ironic tone suggests his disbelief in the traditional values of
the society and the conventional ways of life. Gardner’s Grendel, as he is
a monster, forgets his natural role and loves the ways of human life and
experiences excitement by listening Shapers song. But at the same time
he points out the contrasts within the human life. Palahniuk’s anonymous
narrator wants to destroy the history along with the present identity of
human being, and desires to create something new. This desire of social destruction signifies his anger about the social system. Pandurang’s disbelief in the tradition is clearly depicted when he demands a wife who could not bear a child. He wants such a wife, because if she could not bear a child she would break the tradition of his family. Padhye’s Anirudhha also represents the disbelief in the social and cultural values. His disbelief is highlighted on the occasion of Kojagiri Pournima, when, instead of participating in the social gathering or enjoying the traditional music he prefers to drink wine and shouts to stop the music. Desai’s Meera prefers the life of a social outcast, by involving in the immoral relations with Kedarnath Bendre. However, this social-outcast is an opportunity for her to establish her special individual identity against the traditional social norms. Meera thinks that the path from darkness to light is an unnatural one, and therefore, she prefers the path which leads her from light to the darkness. It suggests her disbelief in the social norms. Pramod’s disbelief in the traditional values is depicted through his decision to settle in abroad instead to return India. His lifestyle, his fabrics of rational thoughts, his relationship with American girl, and adaptation of free sex, denotes his disbelief in the traditional values of the Indian society. Similar to Pramod’s personality, Jayaraj also reveals his disbelief in the traditional values through his behaviour. His understanding of the absurd provokes him to deny the social and moral values.

Non-conformist model of thinking is another important similarity found in the select American and Marathi novels. In existential fiction the protagonist is always depicted as an alienated individual, who follows the non-conformist model of thinking. He spontaneously does what he wants
to do and manipulates his freedom of choice for his own interest. For instance, Camus’s Mersault kills Arab, Wright’s Damon changes his own identity, Percy's Binx denies the idealistic and heroic life, Salinger’s Holden also uses his own choice, Gardner’s Grendel kills human beings to prove his authentic behaviour, Palahniuk’s anonymous narrator attempts to destroy the human identity along with human history, Nemade’s Pandurang and Padhye’s Aniruddha denies the social constrains and the ordinary way of life, Desai’s Meera destroys the temple of the Sun, a symbol of traditional values. Sarang’s Pramod accepts the Job in Iraq, and Walawalkar’s Jayaraj lives according to his own desires. Thus, all the characters adopt the non-conformist model of thinking; they live their lives authentically and to follow the behavioural patterns of the social or gender roles.

Thus, this analysis is sufficient to point out certain similar assets of the central personalities of the select American and Marathi novels. Though they are responding to the different social and cultural environments, they project the similarities in their social behaviour. The varied social, cultural, economical and political features contribute to constitute the consciences of these protagonists, but they share certain existential beliefs in common. All these central characters are haunted by the question of the meaning and purpose of their existence. They want to create their own world and attempt to find out the meaning of their existence in minus-culture and minus-social environment. A few of them neglect social norms and try to live an authentic life, however some of them respond the outer environment violently, and attempt to destroy it. But all these characters similarly think that the world is meaningless and
it is impossible to find out the meaning of their existence in it. They are rationalists and think always in terms of empiricism, and deny to rely on the baseless and metaphysical cultural ideas like ‘God’, ‘Sin’, ‘Heaven’, and also deny to accept the non-physical emotions like ‘love’. Despite any social and cultural values they live their lives just like ‘a higher biological unit’ that only responds to the natural drives of the body. All these characters are also obsessed with the thoughts of death. Besides all these similarities, few protagonists show exactly the similar thoughts. For example, Nemade’s Pandurang and Salinger’s Holden can be compared on various grounds; Pandurang’s meditation on the death of his younger sister, Mani is similar to Holden’s meditation on his brother, Allie’s death. Palahniuk’s anonymous narrator wants to destroy the world and wants to free society from its own history. The same case is with Desai’s Meera who wants to destroy the temple of Viranchi and this distraction carries the same significance. Both these protagonist believe in the creation of new world.

These select American and Marathi novels also project certain similarities in the portrayal of minor characters and woman. As these novels are written in an autobiographical style, it thus exclusively focuses on individual characters, and there is very little space for the minor characters. Another important fact is that the most of the novels are written in the first person narrative technique. Readers are able to form the personality of the protagonist but do not get any separate impression of the minor characters. They know about these characters only through the protagonist’s point of view. To maintain the contrast and highlight the existential behavioural patterns, the authors of these texts, portray the
minor characters, who believe in conventional faith or adopt the
traditional ways of life. In the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, the minor
caracters are Phoebe, a sister; D. B. his younger brother; Allie, a dead
brother; Mr. Spenser, a history teacher; Sally Hayes, a girl who dates
Holden, and Mr. Antolini, a favourite teacher of Holden. Though all these
characters are minor one, they are important to denote the Holden’s
perceptions about the outer world. They live the materialistic life and
follow the normative guides prescribed by society and culture. They are
totally unaware about the existential questions, which are very prominent
in Holden’s psyche. Phoebe is Holden’s only trusted link to family.
Throughout the novel Holden associates each and every thing with the
death but Phoebe is the only character in the novel, which makes him to
think about life. In this sense, Phoebe stands as a symbol of life in the
existential world of Holden. His brother Allie has been dead, but he has a
significant role in the life of Holden. Allie’s presence in Holden’s each
thought represents his association with death. Sally Hayes represents the
conventional, superficial, stupid, and phoney personality which is exactly
opposite to Holden’s personality. For her everything is ‘marvellous’ or
‘lovely’ and she doesn’t understand certain things, the way Holden does.
She is artificial in her gestures, and neither spontaneous nor sensitive in
behaviour. Her behaviour in the theatre and with other characters clearly
denotes that she is an ambitious and a practical girl. She is greedy and a
bit social climber and is able to gain what and when she wants it. Mr.
Antolini is a favourite teacher of Holden, who is an ideal personality for
him. Holden admires and respects him because of his humanistic attitude
towards his students, but his alcoholic behaviour has disillusioned
Holden’s ideal thoughts that he expects from him. His brother D. B. is a

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creative writer but he sells his the short stories for the screen plays in Hollywood. As he switches from short story writing to the screen play writing, Holden thinks that he has prostituted himself for the cheap medium.

For Damon, all the minor characters are threat and burden to him, especially his wife Gladys Damon, religious mother, and underage pregnant beloved Dorothy Powers. His wife is a shrewd woman, who tortures Damon physically and mentally for money, and the religious mother makes him feel guilty. His unsuccessful relationship with his mother comes to a point of hatred and bitterness, as he feels she does not love him. To escape from all these familial misfortunes, he gets engaged himself in a fifteen year old girl Dorothy Powers and thinks of marrying her. But when his wife refuses to give him divorce, in this case she becomes a threat for him. Through the subway accident Damon escapes from all these burdens and starts a new life. However, he again gets tense and threat of other characters like Gil Blount, Herndon and Jack Hilton. When he comes to know the case of Eva Blount, he becomes anxious about cynical violation of individual rights, and his freedom, and worried that his party would also restrict his individual rights. The novel creates an existential world with a deductive method. It deduces the social and ethical aspects of the cultural world and constitutes an existential world, where an individual is at the centre. All the secondary characters represent the outer environment, which is hostile in nature. The novel *The Moviegoer* is also written in the first person narration which also exclusively focuses on the life of an individual. All other characters remain at the margin of the plot. His secretaries Marcia, Linda and
Sharon or his beloved and would be wife Kate remain mute about the existential questions, which are very prominent for Binx. They are totally unaware of the existential quest of meaning. They love to be in the company of Binx, in his movie going. They love his social and professional position, and want to establish a permanent relation with him. Thus all these characters represent the ordinary personalities, whose fabric of thoughts is conventional, and who aspire for the horizontal mobility in the social structure.

As Gardner’s novel *Grendel* is a metaphorical retelling story of a monster, its prime focus is on Grendel, and other characters remain secondary. They contribute to constitute the existential world of Grendel, and occasionally, some of them represent the human world. The characters like his monstrous mother, the Dragon, the Shaper, Beowulf, Bull, and Hrothgar’s people are significant in the novel, but still they remain secondary. His mother is unable to share emotions and feelings with him because she lacks the capacity to communicate with human language, so she cannot establish normal relations with him. Another character, Dragon, is a motivator for him to live an authentic life, who makes aware him the pointlessness of the human endeavours, and meaninglessness of religion, songs, philosophy and history. He also makes him aware of his own identity, as a monster. The Shaper stands as an opposite figure to Dragon, who sings for the history and glory of Hrothgar and his kingdom. His songs make Grendel confused because these promote heroism, altruism, love, and beauty, which are exactly opposite to his pessimistic world. Having a human-like sense, Grendel hates the animals around him for their animalistic stupidity.
Chuck Palahniuk’s novel also projects the secondary characters like Tyler Durden and Marla Singer. Tyler is analysed as narrator’s own simulacrum, which is aggressive, individualistic, charismatic, and powerful. Tyler projects all the desires of the narrator, which can be seen as his hallucination for self-gratification. Marla Singer meets him in a support group for men with testicular cancer. He comes there to get the real experience of death. Thus, all these secondary characters either contribute to constitute the major protagonists’ existential world or stand exactly opposite to highlight their existential thoughts.

Nemade’s *Kosla* is also written in the style of an autobiography, which focuses only on the life experiences of Pandurang. Besides the character of Pandurang, many minor characters appear in the novel, which help him to realize the emptiness of human relations and absurdity of its existence. In this novel, too, readers can understand the secondary characters only through his point of view. The portrayal of these characters is not intended to project another personality, but only to explore Pandurang’s views about them. How his father, mother, friends, neighbours, and teachers behave with him is the major focus of the novel. The motif of the novel is not to project the kaleidoscopic representation of the contemporary society by depicting the representatives from distinct class, cast and gender, but it is motivated to project the multi-layered psyche of Pandurang.

In the novel *Barrister Anirudhha Dhopschwarkar*, Padhye portrays many minor characters, but the focus remains on the life and opinions of Aniruddha. The minor characters like Priyamwada, Tatya, and Sukhadeorai lead the inauthentic lives. They all are social beings; very
much concerned with the social and cultural norms. Priyamwada is obsessed for the social prestige, and therefore, her each and every activity is dominated by the social code and conducts. She herself attends the social programmes, and also forces her husband for the same, not because she is fond of it, but because of her fear of social criticism and social atrocity. Thus, this contrast in the personality is aimed at to focus an authentic behaviour of Anirudhha. Priyamwada’s world is conventional one, in which the focus is always on the society, which neglects the individual freedom. Thus, in this novel too all the minor characters represent the conventional world, which serves as a background to the existential world.

The novel *Kala Surya*, projects the minor characters like, Meera’s paternal aunt, Avinash, Vyankanna, Ramanna, Washinde and Kedarnath Bendre, a sinner from Viranchi. Meera’s paternal aunt is a stereotype of the Indian woman, who cares for her family. Her personality is opposite to Meera, she is afraid of social criticism and therefore, follows the social norms and has concern for moral codes, whereas Meera, who believes in amoral world, destroys the social banalities, and never loses a chance to break the social norm. Ramanna represents an authentic personality, who never considers the social codes. He does not think even about his social reputation, as he keeps a low caste woman, Goda in the house as his mistress. Vyankanna lives under the ‘bad faith’; he fears to take any individual decision and its eventual responsibility. This personality also stands as an opposite to the personality of the protagonist Meera. Kedarnath Bendre lives the life of social outcast because of his incest relation with his daughter. His rebel against the social norms is similar to
the Meera’s rebel. Thus, these secondary characters constitute the existential world of Meera. *Enkichya Rajyat*, as it depicts the experiences of the author in the foreign land like Iraq, it reflects the life of many native personalities and entrapped immigrants. The novel projects the lives of all these characters to show how the concept of freedom changes from person to person. For some characters, the entrapped socio-political situation is a freedom or escape, on the other hand for some of them, it is a restriction on their individual freedom. *Baki Shoonya*, in its bildungsroman scope projects many characters, which helps him to reach at the existential knowledge. All the secondary characters depicted in this novel remains at the periphery and move around the life story of central character Jayaraj Sardesai.

Thus, after the analysis of all the secondary characters, it is clear that in all the select American and Marathi novel the focus is exclusively on the central characters. The stories of these novels are, in fact, not the stories of the society, family, or class but they are stories of an individual, who are in search of real meaning of their existence. All the other characters portrayed in the novels serve the subsidiary roles.

Authenticity in behaviour is another important theme in the select American and Marathi novels. The Existential concept of ‘authenticity’, developed by the western philosophers like Heidegger and Sartre, can be traced in the select American and Marathi novels. The central characters of the select novels are authentic in their behaviours; they are true to themselves; for them physical needs are more important than the social aspirations. The behaviours of the existential protagonists seem abnormal because they deny to follow the social codes, and behave according to
their own wills. These characters do not follow the safe and customary paths, and strive for an authenticity, and therefore, they raise the questions about the validity of directive norms of society. For example, Holden’s behaviour clearly exhibits his frustration and aggravation against the hypocrisy, ignorance, indifference, and moral corruption. He dislikes his school because it attempts to make him inauthentic as it goes against his personal sincerity and presents him as something he isn’t. Damon’s existential choice of escaping from the burdensome life and his killing of Gil Blount and Herndon is his authentic behaviour. In Damon’s world all the social norms, ethical and moral codes of the society and the laws of the nation are shattered and replaced by the physical needs.

Unlike other existential characters, Binx, a protagonist of the novel *The Moviegoer*, is inauthentic in his behaviour. To escape from the burden of freedom of choice, he surrenders to the society and the religious doctrine. Nevertheless, this choice of inauthentic life is a deliberate one, so his behaviour must be interpreted as an authentic. Grendel also switches from authentic to inauthentic behaviour. He is impressed by the logical and glorious representation of the human history by the Shaper. His attempt to be friendly with the human beings is his inauthentic behaviour. However, in the course of the novel he visits the Dragon who enlightens his own identity. His killing of people and enjoying their screams is his authentic behaviour. The novel *Fight Club* explores the authentic and inauthentic existence within a single individual by using multi-personality disorder. Thus, after this brief review of the authenticity in all the select American novels it is obvious that the
protagonists of all the novels are authentic in their behaviour, except the protagonist of *The Moviegoer*, Binx.

The authenticity in behaviour can be traced in the select Marathi novels also. For instance, Pandurang is authentic, who criticizes social and human hypocrisy and rejects the moral norms of the society. Padhye’s *Anirudhha* is a young barrister with full of enthusiasm and calibre, but finds his job boring and meaningless, so he has been spending his days hopelessly, doing nothing. The novel also portrays an inauthentic personality of his wife Priyamwada who cares much for the society. This portrayal of Priyamwada’s personality is explored in the novel to highlight Anirudhha’s authenticity. *Kala Surya*, explores two authentic personalities—Meera, and Bendre. These characters deny to follow the social, cultural and moral norms; as Meera makes relations with Kedarnath Bendre, a social outcast, society accused him of an incestuous relationship with his daughter. Her behaviour and thoughts are not governed by the social rules or the conventional roles of gender, but by her concern for her personal needs. In her first experience of sex, when Avinash gives her sleeping pills and intercourse with her, she asks him why he has given her sleeping pill for sexual intercourse; as in fact, she was also willing for same. This is her directness towards her physical needs, and when it is resulted in the pregnancy, she is ready to abort it and accepts it as a natural process, without any emotional involvement. This analogy is also identifiable in Meursault’s relation with his beloved Marie. His sexual intercourse with Marie is not the response to the metaphysical idea of ‘love’, but his physical need. Though there are many similarities in Meera and Meursault’s attitude towards sexual desires,
there is a slight difference too. Meera takes sexual attraction as an emotional attachment in the initial stage of her existential awareness, but in the course of time she comes across the contradictions in the bodily needs and social expectations, which leads her towards the existential objectivity. Pramod chooses Basra University, instead of choosing a job in America, is his authentic behaviour. Another important character of this novel is Maria Nazar who lives according to her own desires and is also ready to take the responsibility of it. Jayaraj, a protagonist of *Baki Shoonya*, is an authentic being in sense that his every action is according to his own choice.

Thus, it is clear that the authenticity reflected in the select American and Marathi novels is similar in nature.

Alienation is prominent theme reflected in all the select American and Marathi novels. The protagonists of all the novels are alienated from the society and culture around. Alien individual’s quest for his own identity is a major concern of American existential fiction. For example, Holden’s alienation is due to his emotional detachment from parents, his obsession with death, his inability to communicate effectively, and inability to think practically. He rejects the outer environment in which it is impossible for him to establish himself, and cope with the society. His anti-social behaviour cuts him off from his family life, school, and even from his classmates. Holden observes that Spencer, Stradlater, and Bernice do not listen to what he says, so it intensifies his alienation. His meditation on Allie’s death makes him more objective towards life. The coming-of-age story depicts the transition period of Holden’s life which leads him from innocent, authentic and spontaneous childhood to the
compromises, loss of innocence, absence of integrity, and inauthenticity of the adult world. His journey takes him through a cross-section of American society—the school, bars, city streets, family—and everywhere he finds an insensitive, cruel, and phony elements of life. Another important cause of his alienation can be seen in the socio-political context of the contemporary period. In this period of American history, the materialistic comforts become prominent for the people. For them, the spiritual world, social, and familial commitments are secondary against the materialistic luxurious life, which affects adult values and childhood innocence. Depressed, terrified, and insecure, Holden becomes alien from such society and restrict his emotional world for himself. Cross Damon’s case is different from Holden. Whereas Holden represents the confused world of an adolescent, Damon is a representative of the burdensome world of a grown-up Black. In Chicago, he leads his life under the tremendous burdens of his shrewd wife, beloved mother, and the white fellow officers. Due to all these burdens, he gets alienated from the society. His adoption of a criminal means to hide his identity makes him alien from his prior identity and the society. Besides all this, another important factor which contributed to make Damon alien is the echoes of the contemporary period, in which he observes that unrestricted industrialism becomes the criterion for all values. The human life is affected by the methods of totalitarianism, the calumnies, and ceaseless fights for power. Weakening of faith, the secularisation of man, and advent of nihilism make an individual alien from the society. The social institutions, cultural conventions, and human emotions become meaningless and empty and that makes man self-centred. It is prominently depicted in *The Outsider*. Damon symbolises the explosion
of the social units and the civil anarchy, which make him alienated from
the society.

Unlike other protagonists of the existential fictions, the protagonist
of *The Moviegoer* is a socialized. He attempts to establish relations with
his secretaries and his wife Kate. Though it is so, he is well aware that his
life is sinking into despair, boredom, and everydayness. His moviegoing
and affaires with secretaries can be interpreted as his attempt to escape
from the alienation. Binx’s existential enlightenment and the realization
of the absurd, divert him from the ways of ordinary life. To escape from
the meaningless existence he substitutes the real life with the illusionary
world of films. This choice of illusionary world of films makes him alien
from the society, in which he exists. His final surrender to the religious
doctrine is also a part of this escape. Though the theme of alienation is
not clearly depicted in the novel it is depicted through the ironic tone of
his narration and his personal search for meaning. Though Grendel is a
monster, he also feels alienated. He can’t communicate with his mother
because of her inability to communicate; he cannot establish relations
with Hrothgar’s people because he is a monster. They keep a distance
from him, because they are afraid of his dreadful appearance. Thus, his
intellectual abilities and to speak like human being makes him alienated
from the human as well as monsters.

The theme of ‘Alienation’ is treated as a major theme in the novel
*Fight Club* also. As Binx in *The Moviegoer* travels through the public
transport, because he feels comfortable in the society, similarly the
narrator of *Fight Club* feels comfort, after joining the support group.
They both feel lively in the society. The anonymous narrator of the novel
is alienated from his family because his father has abandoned his family. This emotional detachment from the family results in the psychological disorders, which makes him socially alienated. Similar to other protagonists of the American novels, this alienation is also imposed on the central character by the social and cultural scene in which he lives. This novel aims at re-contextualize the 1960’s and 70’s phenomena of existentialism in modern consumerist society. This modern period of science and technology makes the human life mechanical and reduces its human qualities. The symbol of ‘fight club’ also stands for the “clean and well lighted place” for the alienated individuals. In short, the causes of his alienation are the life style of modern society, his mental disorder, and his realization of the absurd.

Thus, in all these select American novels characters are alienated from their family and society. A similar point which we can be generalized after this analysis is that this alienation is due to the inner structure of existential thoughts, as well as the outer social factors. Alienation is a prominent theme depicted in the modern literary traditions across the world, and its major cause is that it is a common feeling experienced by human beings in general, and Marathi literary tradition is not the exception for that. The select Marathi novels also prominently depict the theme of alienation. Pandurang’s portrayal demonstrates an individual’s sense of alienation in the context of Indian society and culture. Similar to the novel, The Catcher in the Rye, Kosla explores the transition of an adolescent to the adulthood. In this sense alienation depicted in the novel can be interpreted as a generation gap. His thoughts are totally different from his father, and therefore, his immaturity and
lack of parental love compels him to think that his father behaves wickedly with him, which makes him emotionally detached from his father. His failure as a secretary of mess, in educational career, and in adopting the practical ways of life, makes him to think that outer world is cruel and hostile. This feeling makes him totally alienated from the society. In the case of Anirudhha, the feeling of alienation is prominent due to his awareness of the meaninglessness of human existence. Similar to Holden, Grendel, and Damon, Anirudhha hates the phoniness of the society; he hates the artificial behaviours of the people. Though he lives with his family members, he is alienated from his wife, father and society. This alienation is not imposed by the society or culture but by his failure in the professional life, disillusionment in married life, realization of meaningless social codes and disbelief in cultural and religious values. This alienation leads him towards the obsession for the existential quest for meaning. His way of reacting to the social environment is different from the conventional responses and as a result, he is alienated from the society and family.

In the novel Kala Surya, Meera is alienated from the society due to her authentic behaviour, and her rebel against the social norms. Similar to American protagonists, she denies to follow the social norms of living. Her attraction of sin and darkness is also an important factor, which makes her alienated from the society. Sarang’s protagonist Pramod is culturally alienated from the society. He is born in India where the individual freedom is a prime aspect of the Indian democracy. In America, where he has completed his doctoral degree, he enjoyed the individual freedom. However, in the Iraq, he never experiences such
freedom. This very fact makes him stranger, as a result he gets alienated from the outer world, mentally and physically, from his mission to write a book on ‘On Identity’ and find out first footprint of the human existence in the land of Enki. His alienation is not only due to his adaptation of existential ways of thoughts, but also due to the political scenario of the Iraq. His sense of alienation is similar to the alienation experienced by Damon. Damon is alienated as he is Black. Similarly, Pramod’s alienation is due to his different origin in a different culture. Furthermore we can even compare Pramod’s alienation with the alienation of Grendel. As Grendel is a monster he lacks the companionship of his species. Pramod is different in his origin and hybrid in his conscience; he has no good companion in Iraq. Jayaraj’s alienation is similar to Anirudhha’s. Both are aware of the absurdity of human existence. This knowledge of the absurd make them outsider or stranger in their own society. Jayaraj is concerned with the existential issues and highly rational fabric of thoughts which make him alienated from the society and his meditation about the human existence and its purpose leads him towards the objective absurd life.

Though the theme of alienation is similar in all the select American and Marathi novels, the social and cultural environment is different. The alienation depicted in American novels is the result of the existential framework of thoughts, along with the chaotic situation of the contemporary period. This chaotic social and cultural context is absent in the world of the select Marathi novels. The social situation depicted in all the select Marathi novels is conventional one. The effects of unrestricted industrialisation or the devastating experiences of the Second World War
have contributed much in the formation of a psyche of the modern western society. The sense of alienation or loneliness is similar in both the tradition; however its intensity is different. The advent of extreme individual freedom makes the difference in the behavioural pattern of an individual from the homogenous social group, which actually provokes the alienation in western context. For example, Damon, whose worldview is definitely a worldview during the 1950’s, in which the social values are abolished by the unrestricted industrialisation; Binx also lives in the society in which all the social values are replaced with the materialistic prosperity and expensive luxuries. The echoes of the contemporary social and cultural scene can be traced out in the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, which reflects frustrated, emotionally detached, and psychologically disordered youth. In the case of anonymous narrator of *Fight Club*, alienation is largely imposed by the social and cultural scene of the contemporary era. Whereas, in the case of Pandurang, though we cannot deny the contribution of the social environment in which he lives or cultural changes he faces, the social and cultural changes remain secondary. What makes him alien from the society is his own structure of thoughts or his own undertaking of the existential search. The same is in the case of other protagonists of the select Marathi novels. Thus, the social and cultural factors, which promote the select American and Marathi authors, are clearly different, but they all respond to the feeling of alienation in the same way. All these characters are identical with the personality of Meursault, but his estrangement from the society is due to his knowledge of the absurd, however all these characters alienate, because of their failure in all the fronts of their lives.
Freedom of choice is also an important aspect, which is prominent in all the select novels. Philosophical treatises and existential fictions, while dealing with the question of human existence, always undertake a scrutiny of the prime issues related to the human existence, like freedom, choice, an individual's experience in the world, and the environment in which they exercise their power of choice. All the select American and Marathi novels explore this prominent existential theme of 'freedom of choice' alike. The novels demonstrate the objective sight of the human existence, and highlight the concept of freedom. All the novels not only acknowledge our inherent freedom as a human being, but also transform our very experience of being and meaning-making in the world. Some of them also make an attempt to investigate why human beings tend to avoid accepting their freedom. These characters shape their lives according to their chosen projects and commitments to themselves. This argument can be proved by taking a brief survey of this theme in all the select novels.

Holden’s choice is not governed by the directive norms of his society. Instead, he prefers to reject all the social roles and exercises against the individual freedom. He does not behave according to the behaviour that is expected at Pencey Prep, which indicates his obsession for the freedom of choice. He strongly believes that one has to live in the hostile world, and what you make of yourself is totally up to you. He also denies entering into the adult world because, it is inauthentic and phony. His emotional bond is only with his sister, who stands as a symbol of innocence and authenticity. Instead of surrendering himself to the society or a religious doctrine, he prefers his own way of life. Damon is also an advocate of the personal freedom and for that he is ready to do anything.
He leaves his house to escape from the trapped situation and create a new meaningful world. Unexpected subway accident gives him an opportunity of taking a deliberate existential choice to escape from his unsuccessful conjugal life. Damon deliberately kills Gil Blount and Herndon to escape from the burden of the cynical violation of individual rights by the party, which suggests his concerns with the freedom of choice. Binx’s choice is also not governed by the social norms or by any idealistic values. He decides to lead his life ordinarily and denies striving to gain something great. He tries to escape from the everydayness of life is also a part of his freedom of choice, but at the end he surrenders to the religious doctrine. Grendel manipulates his freedom of choice for his own interest. He kills Horthgar’s people to prove his authenticity. In fact Gardner uses his protagonist as a monster to avoid the moral obligations of the society. In his world only his personal desires are important than any other thing. In the case of Fight Club psychological disorder makes Joe alien from the society; and this alienation leads him towards his ultimate freedom. He enjoys the freedom without any socio-cultural banalities. Novel creates a vacuum, where the society and culture is absent, and the characters are free to behave spontaneously, and take the responsibility of their actions.

Nemade’s Pandurang also believes in the freedom of choice. Similar to Holden, Pandurang criticizes the profession of teaching. For him one should not become teacher, because they teach students to behave inauthentically. Besides this, he thinks that giving advice to another is to restrict one’s freedom of thought. Similar to the American protagonists, he denies the obligations of the society, and experiences the individual freedom. Anirudhha is also an ardent preacher of individual
freedom. He revolts against the religious faith and moral ethics of traditional marriage system. Meera lives authentically and enjoys the freedom of choice. She enjoys sex with Avinash and further maintains the same relation with Bendre. Thus, her behaviour is not governed by the social rules or any cultural conventions. Pramod feels entrapped in Iraq because he also thinks that a man should have a freedom of choice. He decides to live abroad permanently because, there, he can enjoy his freedom. Jayaraj’s behaviour is also not governed by the social norms therefore his every action is according to his own choice. His all decisions, to leave his IAS studies, getting addicted to alcohol, and to stay at the brothel house, are nothing but an example of his freedom of choice.

Thus, the protagonists of the American and Marathi novels exercise their freedom of choice, and fulfil their desires. In the Indian context, the social constraints are more dominant as compared to the American. In the select Marathi novels religious beliefs, moral values, social codes and cultural conducts are set in the background of the freedom of choice. Meera’s choices seriously damage the Indian cultural consciences; Anirudhha’s behaviour at the social gathering is a shock for the Indian readers. However, compared to it, Tyler’s distractive thoughts are the everyday matter for Americans, and Holden’s behaviour is also treated (even by many critics) as a coming-of-age problems. Thus, though the American and Marathi novels explore the freedom of choice, its perception to the readers is varying in degree—one is more intensive than the other.

The awareness of the absurdity of the human existence and futility of human action has been emerged as prominent theme in the select
American and Marathi novels. As the select American novels explore the post-war era, in which the human life was suppressed under the fear of nuclear annihilation, so it can be said that authors of these novels are the direct followers of the ‘Lost Generation’. They represent the ‘disillusionment of American dream,’ very prominently in their fictions. The existential search of all the central characters of the select novels enlightens themselves with the knowledge of the absurd, and its presentation in novels is highly fragile and hopeless. For example: Holden’s early acquaintance with the death makes him detached from life; Damon’s anxiety and burden make him aware of the emptiness of his existence; Binx’s escape from the reality of life suggests his realization of the absurd; Grendel’s confusion after listening the Shaper’s song and Dragon’s undercurrent of nihilism leads him to understand the contrast in the human nature and his own existence. Similar to Holden and Damon, anonymous narrator of *Fight Club* is emotionally detached from the family, and the appealing consumerist world disturbs and acknowledges him the absurdity of life. Thus, all these protagonists show the symptoms of their knowledge of the absurd, and their behaviours, governed by the absurd principles they experienced in their lives.

Similar to it, the protagonists of the Marathi novels experience the absurdity. For instance, through the portrayal of Pandurang’s personality, Nemade attempts to suggest that all the romantic ideas, created by man, are meaningless and absurd in the face of modernity, and therefore in the end of the novel Pandurang adopts the rural life. Anirudhha reminisces about his life and comes to know that absurdity is deeply rooted in his existence itself. He recount his life attainment—a degree of Bar at Law

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from England, a prestigious position in the society—and rises a question what actually he has achieved in his life. Kamal Desai’s novel *Kala Surya* uses the setting of Viranchi, a rocky and baron land which symbolizes that human existence is impotent to create any meaning. Meera’s sense of absurd is illustrated through her social behaviour. Representation of contradictory ideals of human life in the novel *Enkichya Rajyat* arouses the sense of absurdity in its protagonist, Pramod. The truth of absurdity appears so dominant in the novel *Baki Shoonya*. Jayaraj’s awareness of the absurdity is clearly reflected in the novel when he asks his friend Vishal, what have Samrat Ashok, Alexander, César, Buddha, Chandragupta, Akbar, Nehru, Gandhi and others achieved in their lives. He concludes nothing, and generalises this nothingness to his life. By presenting the *tantric, mantrik*, and religious beliefs, Walawalkar criticizes the absurdity in customs and religious beliefs.

Thus, all the select American and Marathi novels represent the human absurdity in the modern context. In the American context the absurdity is a product of the social chaotic situation. Some of these authors are also influenced directly by the existential school of philosophy and the absurd school of thoughts, but the absurdity explored in the Marathi novels is emerged through the everydayness and momentousness of life. This argument does not deny solely the influence of the Western philosophy on the Marathi authors, but it attempts to point out its different expression. The authors like Vilas Sarang and Kamlesh Walawalkar show their learning of existential philosophy by using the allusions from the fundamental texts of the Existential philosophy. However, in the American context, the absurdity is the product of the two
World Wars which shattered the social and cultural values in the modern human life. But this context is absent in the case of the Marathi novels, therefore the absurdity explored in the novels is crises of day today life. Thus, the feeling of absurdity reflected in the Marathi and American novels are similar, but there is difference in the motivations.

Rebel against the conventional ways of life is similar in the select American and Marathi novels. The protagonists of all the novels are rebellious in nature as they rebel against the illogical and irrational conventions of the society, and adopt their own ways of life in which they want to create their own world with their own meaning. The conventional meanings of human existence are not acceptable to them. The question of ‘why’ discharges all the social norms and points out the absurdity of the conventions. As all these protagonists are advocators of the individual freedom, they reject the social restraints, which otherwise may prohibit their freedom of choice.

Holden Caulfield’s rebel against the society is a rebel of an adolescent, who strongly protests against the inauthenticity of an adult life. When he observes the phoniness, the pleasure seeking nature of adults, and contradictions in the society, he attempts to keep himself away from the society. This should be interpreted as his rebel against the society. Instead of considering this as an adolescent’s transitional period, as many critics say so, it must be calculated as an existential rebel. Damon’s existential choice of escaping from the burdensome life and his action of changing the identity is in fact his rebel against the social norms. Besides his identity as an existential hero, Damon must be first considered as a Black personality, and in this sense, his rebel against the
society is the rebel of a representative of the Black community. Thus, in his case too, the social, racial and the cultural factors contribute to motivate a rebel in him. *The Moviegoer* explores the post-war situation and a soldier’s experiences which make him rebellious against the society. In the novel, as Binx approaches the death, he becomes aware of the momentousness of the human life and the absurdity of human actions, and as a result, he decides to leave all his ideal thoughts of becoming a great personality and starts living ordinary life. This can be interpreted as his rebel against all the age-old ideologies and his response to the post-war social scene. Grendel’s thoughts are also rebellious but in a different sense. His rebel is not aimed at any society or ideology, but it is against the fundamental nature of life. He thinks why should he behave like a monster or why should he adopt human ways. This utter confusion makes him rebellious against the human society. In Palahniuk’s *Fight Club*, an insomniac character Tyler itself is a rebel against the consumerist culture of the modern society as he points out the materialistic priorities of modern life. Tyler is another self of narrator, who is against the cultural standards of the society.

Similarly, all the protagonists of the Marathi novels also rebel against the social obligations. Pandurang, a protagonist of *Kosla*, does not express his rebel through his behaviour, but his constant social criticism and ironic tone should be seen as his rebel. Anirudhha’s rebel against society is registered through his behaviour. He drinks wine instead of milk in a social gathering of *Kojagiri Pournima*, establishes relations with two ill reputed girls, and by doing so he rebels against the social and moral norms. His rebel is motivated by his understanding of the contrast existed
within human life. His failure in the professional life as well as in the marital relation makes him reluctant about the social values. Meera’s deliberate sexual relations with Avinash, Vashinde and Bendre; her decision to live alone in the Viranchi far from parents, and mother’s cremation by her, even though she is a woman, denote her rebel against established rules and conducts. The social space in which she exists is highly conventional, and it is impossible for a woman to think what she has achieved in her life. Therefore, Meera’s rebel can be interpreted as her personal protest against the social norms. Jayaraj’s rebel is also reflected in his behaviour. Just like Pandurang, he also neglects all the obligations of the society, and criticises the educational institutions and teachers. He request to his father to disown him from his property is another way of rebelling against the established norms of the society.

Though, all the central characters rebel against the social institutions and the cultural conventions as their socio-cultural contexts are different, their rebel also differs in its degree of intensity. The American society, as earlier said, is under a drastic change, as every sector of America is under reconstruction. All the social values, religious beliefs and cultural conventions are already under the suspicion. Other schools of philosophy like, Nihilism and Absurdism emerged in this social context. And therefore all the select American novels, excluding Grendel, are the response to this chaotic social environment. However, these social changes are absent in the context of the Marathi novels, and therefore, these novels in this sense are the personal protest against the social factors. Pandurang, Anirudha, Meera, Pramod, and Jayaraj’s rebel is the personal rebel, and so their rebel is more prominent than that of the
rebel registered by the American protagonists. In fact, the production of these novels, in such highly conventional and prominently religious environment of India, are in itself a rebel. Another important difference is that the American protagonists, at least, form a substitute system of life, which enables them to escape from the everydayness of life. For example, the protagonist of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden tells his story that in his stay at the sanatorium is to recover from the mental stress. His staying at the sanatorium itself suggests his surrender to the ordinary life. At the end of the novel *The Moviegoer*, Binx surrenders to the religious doctrine; the narrator of Palahniuk’s *Fight Club* is also retained to his normal life. But in the case of Marathi protagonists they reject the values of the society without any substitute way of life. For example, Pandurang, Jayaraj, Aniruddha spoil their careers, Pramod is trapped in Iraq and Meera dies in her attempt to destroy the temple.

As it is already discussed in the theoretical framework of the thesis, ‘death’ is not mere a biological event, but one’s awareness of death that he has to die one day. This insight of existential concept of death is evidenced in all the select American and Marathi novels, as they reflect ‘the human confrontation with death, as a central theme. Holden’s preoccupation with anxiety of death is a major factor, which disturbs his familial, educational, and social life. The constant thinking of death compels him to answer the questions like what it means for him to be in the world or what is it for him to exist in the world. The context of the theme of death reflected in the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* is a personal one. Holden is disturbed due to the death of his brother Allie. But in the
case of Binx it is the context of war. The inventions of machine gun along with many other techniques of war, political upheavals, and the terrific scenes of death on the war fields, have left indelible scars on his mind. Binx’s behaviour, throughout the novel, is governed by this indelible scar made by a war. Whereas Binx’s preoccupation with death is his response to the social and political event of war, Holden’s preoccupation with death is his response to his brother’s death, which is personal. The novel, *Fight Club*, is also centred on the theme of death. This novel starts with the threat of death as Tyler pushes a gun in the mouth of anonymous narrator. This threat is maintained throughout the novel, and it ends with the pressing of trigger and the death of Tyler. Fight club is a central symbol which stands as a place where diseased people gathers to share their pains of death. Thus, in this novel too, the protagonist’s response to the death is his response to the social scene. Pandurang is also disturbed by the death of his younger sister. This is his first acquaintance with death, which can be compared with the experience of Siddhartha (Gautama Buddha), when for the first time he sees corpse. The awareness of death becomes a climax in their lives and after this realization they are enlightened with the knowledge of self. Pandurang comes out of his adolescent mind-set and becomes more objective about life; however, Buddha leaves all the pleasures of monarchy and goes in search of the absolute knowledge. In many aspects these experiences are similar, both, after observing the death, get frustrated and alienated from the materialistic life. In the end, Pandurang clearly projects his belief that human existence is absurd, which is also similar with Buddha’s saying, *Sarwa Dukkham, Sarwa Kshanikam, Sarwa Shoonyam*. Jayaraj Sardesai is first acquainted with death when a son of his friend’s sister dies in the
hospital due to burning. This incident makes him to contemplate on the ‘death’, which eventually leads him towards the knowledge of the self. He attempts to find out what exactly death means, and for that he practices to cut the throats of hens, and experiences the actual death of hens. At the end he also attempts to commit suicide and its sole reason is that he wants to see death.

Thus, it is clear that all the select novelists, in common, believe that the existence of human being can be judged in the context death. But the context of the death is different from person to person. In a few cases death obsession is a result of war experiences of the contemporary age. However, a few of them are obsessed of it, due to the death of their family members. For example, Holden’s obsession with death is due to his brother Allie’s death, and Pandurang is disturbed by his sister Mani’s death; Damon and Binx has experienced their own deaths; Meera is a witness of his aunt’s death; Grendel kills many people and also experiences death at the end; Anonymous narrator of Fight Club observes the people who are about to die; Jayaraj attempts to commit suicide in order to experience the death. Thus, except Pramod, all these character in one way or another have encountered with death, which makes them aware of the knowledge of self. All the select authors, therefore, share the existential belief that the existence of human being can only be judged clearly in the context of death.

The focus of the present thesis is on the existentialism reflected in the select American and Marathi novels and so the novels are compared on various features of existential philosophy. Therefore very little has been said about the narrative techniques used in the novels. Generally, the
existentialist fictions, throughout the Europe and other Western countries, have been written in an autobiographical mode of writing. To depict the authentic character in the novel such mode of writing becomes helpful to an author, that is why in almost all the existentialist novels, and in present select also, first person narration has been used. This first person narration also helps to explore existential world of an individual. All the novels unfold the life story of the protagonists and centred their actions on the protagonist’s journey towards the existential enlightenment. The perception of a social event or an interpretation of a social value is totally different in the case of existential protagonists, and therefore, it becomes inevitable for an author to depict the inner process of the perception. In order to depict the process of perception, the authors use the first person narration along with the occasional use of the stream of consciousness narrative technique. All the select American and Marathi novels can be grouped under the title ‘novels of ideas’ which generally proclaims a philosophical doctrine or serves as a mouthpiece of a school of thought. In this sense, all the select American and Marathi authors are directly or indirectly influenced by the existential philosophy. As existential philosophy is always interpreted as a response to the chaotic situation of the early twentieth century, all the existential fiction has been interpreted as a literary response to the philosophy and the social, political and philosophical scenario of the contemporary age. These authors attempt to render the protagonist’s sense of the contemporary life, in both, emotional and intellectual terms. As all the novels, in general, aimed at to denote an individual response, the first person narrative technique is used, which makes narration more authentic. This use of first person narration or the
autobiographical mode of writing grants author to enter into an individual’s psyche.

Except Richard Wright’s *The Outsider* and Vilas Sarang’s *Enkichya Rajyat*, all other select American and Marathi novels are written in the first person narration. In the novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, the first person narration, reveals the personal experiences of an adolescent protagonist, Holden Caulfield. The novel minutely unfolds the events happening in the outer world and the thought processes carried out in the psyche of Holden. By using this narrative technique author juxtaposes the inner thoughts and outer reality. For example, “The minute I walked in, I was sort of sorry I’d come. [. . .] there were pills and medicine all over the place, and everything smelled of Vicks Nose drops. It was pretty depressing. I’m not too crazy about sick people anyway” (7). *The Moviegoer*, also reveals an individual’s perception of his life. Though the social situations reflected in the novel are ordinary and can be observed elsewhere in the society, Binx’s perception about it is exclusively his own. The use of the first person narration makes it more authentic and firsthand experience. This narrative style also explores the psychological state of Binx. The plot of the novel frequently switches from what he is thinking and what he is doing actually. The repetition of certain thoughts about the purpose of existence certainly adds a different outlook to a simple story of a man, who gets married, and settles down. Gardner also uses the first person narration to explore a monster’s attitude towards his life, and his meditation about human life. Grendel’s point of view reveals his confusions about the logic of human life and the glory of human history. His existential awareness after the meeting of a Dragon can only
be explored through the first person narration. The story of the novel *Fight Club* is also revealed in the first person narration, which reflects the insomniac hallucinations of a psychologically disordered protagonist. The story of this novel takes place in the insomniac mind of the protagonist, and therefore, it is very difficult to denote minuet details of one’s psychologically disordered thoughts through the third person or omniscient narrator.

The use of first person narrative technique is also found in the select Marathi novels. Pandurang, a protagonist of *Kosla*, starts telling his experiences at the age of twenty-six. This is a story of an individual’s failure, frustration and depression on the every front of life. The story and the narrative of this novel can be resembled with American novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*. Both the novels prominently depict the psyche of an adolescent. This is the period in one’s life which is marked by the emotional crises and the adaptation of the adult ways of life, and therefore, both the authors have used the first person narration. Aniruddha’s story is also told in the first person narration. What he thinks about a particular social situation is totally different, because he denies the established thoughts, and therefore, in his case too, it is impossible to use the third person narration. By using the first person narration, the author shows us the multiple layered Aniruddha’s psyche. Meera, a protagonist of *Kala Surya*, tells her story in first person narration. Her strange, compelling inner life is explored in the novel, and for its motif only the autobiographical narrative technique is suitable. The novel *Baki Shoonya* explores the experiences of Jayaraj Sardesai, and in order to maintain its authenticity author uses the first person narration. Besides the
first person narrative, the third person narrative technique is also skilfully used in the novel, *Enkichya Rajyat*, which unfolds the personal experiences of Pramod. By using the third person point of view, the author is able to explore the political situation in Iraq.

Thus, it is clear that all these writers are committed to the existential ideology than the rhetoric of fiction, and in the true sense it is necessary to articulate a philosophical vision or moral imperative. In a true sense the last and major objective of the study to compare the American and Marathi novels on the basis of Existentialism is accomplished here.