CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

I think and think for months and years. Ninety-nine times, the conclusion is false. The hundredth time I am right.

—Albert Einstein, The World as I See It

After analyzing and comparing the select American and Marathi novels on the basis of Existentialism, certain conclusions are drawn in the present chapter. After the cursory glance on the history of Existentialism in the first chapter, it becomes clear that it came into existence as a result of two cultural forces. The first was the demolition of traditional culture by the progress made in science and bureaucracy, which inspired early 19th century existential authors and thinkers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky. The second force was the Socio-cultural destruction of human existence in the Holocaust. It inspired 20th century thinkers such as Sartre, Camus and the writers of the Frankfurt School. Many old certainties about the meaning of life and the nature of the Universe have been washed away by the rising tides of scientific thought and inventions. This left an unpredicted vacuum at the centre of European culture. To fill this void vacuum, works of these existential thinkers attempted to give answer to the question, how should one live in the hostile and meaningless world? Through existential aspects like Freedom of choice, authenticity, dread and anxiety, alienation, death, etc., they examined human existence and its purpose in the world. These philosophical aspects are explored in the second and third chapter. All the select novels explore existential doctrine. The existential issues explored
In the select novels are universal and they are not constrained only to a particular social group.

In their fictions, all the select novelists have depicted authentic and inauthentic character to point out hollowness in human existence. They provide characters such as Holden, Damon, Binx, Grendel, Tyler, Pandurang, Aniruddha, Meera, Pramod, and Jayaraj, who lead their lives authentically and rebel against social norms, traditions, and struggle to prove their individual identity in the indifferent world. They enjoy their freedom of choice and become aware of their true existence by confronting the death incident, which make them anxious and think about their purpose in life. Ultimately they come to the conclusion that there is no meaning in their lives, therefore, they should live their lives according to their own choices. In the chapter fourth, ‘A Comparative perspective,’ the American and Marathi novels have been compared on the basis of Existentialism. Though, the select novels are the representative literary works of the different literary traditions, intellectually and intuitively, they articulate certain principles of the existential philosophy. The select novels, besides their different socio-cultural contexts, focus on the fundamental questions of human existence and its purpose in the hostile universe. The generalized conclusion, arrived at pursuant to the thorough study of the select American and Marathi novels with their different socio-cultural contexts, is a part of chapter fifth, ‘Conclusion’.

The social scene of the post-war era in America, alongwith other Western countries, provoked the intelligentsia of the age to think about the fundamental issues of human existence. The nuclear annihilation in the World War II and new inventions in the field of warfare, like...
machinegun, generated the threat of total destruction of human civilization. In such a chaotic situation, the socio-cultural meaning of human existence became inadequate and a new, more valid meaning was urgently required to overcome this empty space. This requirement of a new meaning established a new philosophical doctrine called ‘Existentialism’. The emergence and upbringing of this philosophy influenced the creative minds of the age. The literary representation of this philosophy has formulated a new generic type called as ‘Existential fiction’. Particularly in American context, it is a materialistic prosperity, which substitutes the social values with the material pleasures. This was the period in which the discipline of philosophy focused on the existence of an individual in the context of materialistic world, and left the age-old social idealism in the periphery. The literature produced in this period ultimately explores the existential despair of the modern world. Beside these social upheavals, the literary minds of the age were directly shaped by the existential philosophers like Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, who visited America for several times and delivered lectures, which gave a new beginning to the existential literary tradition in America. A German-born American philosopher Paul Tillich’s philosophical discourse *The Courage to Be*, has introduced the religious existential theory to the Americans. This philosophical phenomenon is transcended in fictional works of Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Walker Percy, J. D. Salinger, Norman Mailer, Ken Kersey, Flannery O’Connor and Joseph Heller. In their fictional works, they explore their own sense of anxiety, absurdity, disorientation and exile with a clear existential focus.
As it is discussed in the first chapter, the modern existential phenomenon emerged basically in the Western countries and after the World War II it spread throughout the world. However, this philosophic literary movement doesn’t touch the Indian minds thoroughly. This post-war situation along with the direct philosophical influences were absent in Marathi literature. The expression of this philosophical phenomenon first appeared in Marathi, through the translations of existential masterpieces and some introductory articles and lecturers of Vishwas Patil and D. K. Bedekar. These articles and lectures can be seen as a direct influence of the Western philosophy on Marathi scholars. Besides these articles, which introduced the existential philosophy to Marathi scholars, a few literary works of the West have also remained the inspiration hub for them. They are exclusively written in order to articulate the existential philosophy. This existential philosophy is clearly expressed through the fiction of Bhalchandra Nemade, Bhau Padhye, Kamal Desai, Vilas Sarang and Kamlesh Walawalkar. One cannot deny the influence of existential fiction of the West on all these authors, as they are well-read professors of English and Marathi literatures. The occasional references of the Western texts reveal their influence. For example, Pandurang, the protagonist of *Kosla*, reads the works of Soren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky, and Friedrich Nietzsche; Sarang uses a quotation from Albert Camus’s *The Rebel* (1951) as a prologue for *Enkichya Rajyat*; Walwalkar’s protagonist Jayaraj reads Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866). Bhau Padhye is also well aware of the existential philosophy, as he delivered a lecture on ‘Existence Precedes Essence,’ while chairing a plenary secession in a conference. Though the references of the western texts do not appear in
the novel *Kala Surya*, Kamal Desai’s first short story collection ‘Rang’ (1962) refers the works of Dostoyevsky and Sartre. Thus, it is apparent that all these authors are influenced by the Western philosophy, and they have read the existential philosophical treatises and its literary creations.

The comparative assessment of the Marathi novels reveals that many aspects of these novels are similar to the Western masterpieces. Although the existential phenomena is a product of the Western psyche and its representation is found in the Western literature before it appears in Marathi, the select Marathi novels are not just the imitations of the Western literary texts. Though all these select Marathi texts are similar as they represent similar ideologies, use similar rhetoric style, centre their fictional world on an individual protagonist, and explore similar themes like freedom, death, absurdity and authenticity, these texts are not just imitations of the foreign works. But all these authors have used indigenous social settings and cultural space to explore this foreign phenomenon, therefore, they become unique and original literary outputs.

Alongwith these influences of the western philosophy, many other socio-cultural factors also motivate to generate the similar search for identity and meaning. This was the period in Indian History which witnessed social unrest, industrial expansion, emergence of grimy slums and shocking exploitation of the labourers. In such a social scene, the fictional texts are written, in which the existential quest for meaning is reflected. Besides this social scene, some Indian scholars have also attempted to relate the Existentialism of the West with indigenous philosophy of Buddha. In few Marathi novels like *Kosla*, we could find the references of Buddhism. But they remain as a part of literary
influence of an individual author. The social scene of disillusionment is similar in the Marathi and American novels but do not share similar social context. The ending decades of the Twentieth Century have witnessed, both in Europe and America and several countries in Asia including India, a decline of the age-old, established social systems and cultural values. And this upheaval is clearly depicted in the novels—American and Marathi. Scene of disillusionment reflected in the American fiction is a direct outcome of the World Wars in general and the disillusionment of the American Dream in particular, whereas in the case of Indian fiction, this disillusionment is the result of a consequential post-independent scenario of political, social, religious and moral chaos.

Another important difference noted is that the select novels are from different religious backgrounds and the perception of ‘God’ is, therefore, different. In American context, the Christian beliefs are prominent, whereas, in Indian context Hindu religion is most dominant. Though the existential philosophy denies the metaphysical concept of ‘God’, it is necessary to consider the religious beliefs, while analysing the existential fictions. It is because all these novels are not solely the products of the existential philosophy, but they are the representations of the society and culture. All the protagonists do not accept to live according to the social norms, in which they are grown up and the cultural codes to which they belong. In order to understand their rebel, it is necessary to understand their social setting and cultural space. The major difference between the Hindu and the Christine beliefs is in their perception of God. Hindus believe in ‘Pantheism’ which considers everything, living and non-living, to be Devine and Sacred, and therefore,
they consider everything as God. On the other hand, Christianity considers human being and its surroundings as examples of the creation of God, rather than divinity itself so they believe that everything belongs to God. In this sense, in Christianity, the existence of human being is separate from the existence of God. They also believe that an individual can reduce this distance by adopting a way of salvation. Therefore, in Indian culture, it is very difficult to deny the concept of God or make an attempt to establish a new Godless identity. On the other hand, in comparison to Indian context, it is the discretion of the Christian believer whether to choose the difficult path of salvation or to adopt the materialistic pleasure. These are the reasons that in Western philosophy the schools like Nihilism and Absurdism emerged. Though the discussion of this religious difference may seem irrelevant in the context of existential philosophy, it is essential to understand the perceptions of these protagonists about the society to which they belong.

In the light of this difference, we can sustain the same logic in the context of the select novels. In the select Marathi novels, denial of the religious obligations or the concept of God is very prominent as compared to the select American novels. For example, at the end of the novel Kostla, Pandurang accepts that he believes in the eternity of the soul, in the last section of the novel, in his discussion with Bambasbuwa and Giridhar. This part of the novel explores in detail the beliefs of Hindu religion. Vilas Sarang uses a mythological God figure ‘Enki’ in the title of his novel Enkicya Rajyat. Enki is a God of Sumerian people, who control human beings. The title of this novel suggests that the world depicted in this novel is controlled and governed by the almighty. The
The focus of the novel is the protagonist’s search for the meaning of his existence in the cradle of human culture, but the world explored in the novel generates a feeling of disillusionment. By using this title, Sarang maintains a contrast between the metaphysical and the concrete notion of idealism. The central action Kamal Desai’s novel *Kala Surya* is the destruction of a temple by Meera. Thus, this novel too, depicts the issue of the rebel against religion very prominently. The destruction of the temple suggests the destruction of the religious meaning of life. Meera’s thinking that God is an unnecessary object, he has created a lot of commotion, and therefore his interference must be stopped, also suggests that the major concern of the novel is to enlighten the concepts like ‘God’, ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’. In the last part of the novel *Baki Shoonya*, the issue of belief again becomes prominent again. Jayaraj behaves according to his own desires, which are absolutely strange to other characters in the novel, so they think that he might be haunted by the supernatural powers. His friend Amogh, who is eccentically religious, visits with him many Babas and Sadhus (Godman) to cure this problem, which shows a plight of Indian superstitious society. Thus, all the select Marathi novels depict the issue of religion and God very prominently. In the case of the American novels, only Binx, a protagonist of *The Moviegoer*, surrenders to the religious doctrine which is also a substitute way to escape from the meaninglessness of existence.

In the light of this discussion, we may further apply this logic to the intensity of the rebel in two different religious contexts. Meera’s act of destroying the temple and Jayaraj, Pandurang and Anirudhha’s rebel against the inseparable context of God cannot be considered as just
another similarity in the American and Marathi novels, but these rebels signify something more than the rebels of the American protagonists. This rebel in the American context is not the rebel of an individual but is a part of social rebel at large; on the contrary, the rebels of the Marathi protagonists are the rebels of an individual.

In the existential philosophy, sex is seen as either just a biological need or another substitute to prove one’s existence. All the abstract ideas like platonic or spiritual love become illogical for the existentialist protagonist, because these ideas are unable to prove on the ground of empiricism. The select American and Marathi novels follow this principle and reflect the concept of sex just as a biological event, and also count man and woman just as heterosexual beings. For example, Pandurang describes his sister’s death as a death of womb; Anirudhha finds sexual activity mechanical; Meera denies to follow the banalities of the social morality and establishes sexual relations with Bendre; Pramod keeps sexual relations with Juana without any moral and ethical engagements; Jayaraj’s sexual relations with Nikita or Michel, if judged in the social context, are immoral, as he only considers sex in terms of a physical need. However, in the American novels the narrative space given to the sexuality of the protagonist is limited and secondary. The issue of sex is censored universally, but it is not taboo in the American social context as it is in India. Therefore, Holden’s sexuality can be interpreted as a part of his age; Damon’s sexual relation with Dorothy should be judged in terms of his failure in married life. Binx’s sexual relation with his secretaries is a part of American culture and on personal grounds it is just a way to
escape from the everydayness of life. Palahniuk’s narrator also thinks about sex but it can be interpreted as a part of his psychological disorder.

Thus, the select American and Marathi novels depict an amoral world, in which all the conventional ideologies about morality become invalid. But as the select novels are of two different literary traditions, it is necessary to contextualize the concept of sex in these existential fictions, and while doing, so the cultural differences should be taken into consideration. The ideas about sex in American society just a physical need, but on contrary in Indian context, even in the late twentieth century, sex remained a taboo and the idea of morality and immorality is still prominent in the minds of a modern Indian man. Therefore the sexual intercourse in the Indian context carries a social and cultural significance. The sexual relations depicted in the select Marathi novels can be compared with the select American novels and even can be judged in the light of existential ideology. However, its influence on the Marathi reader is more effective than the American. However, all the protagonists take sex as a biological need, rather than associating it with any other abstract emotions. They deny the concepts like ‘Platonic-love’ or ‘Spiritual love’.

Thus, after considering the different cultural ethos, it becomes clear that the select Marathi novels are not just representation of the existential philosophy, but they attempt to depict the existential quest of an Indian protagonist with their indigenous experiences. Besides the industrialization and urbanization, the indigenous experiences are nourished by the long-lived-Indian conventions, Hindu Advaitwad, strong familial bonds and entrenched social codes. Therefore, after analysing the select Marathi novels, it is obvious that though these novels are
committed to the existential ideology, all the principles of existential doctrine are not expressed in a single Marathi novel. On the contrary, they explore some major aspects of this phenomenon. For example, Nemade’s Kosla expresses the existential themes like alienation, death and meaninglessness. However, in Padhye’s Barrister Aniruddha Dhopeshwarkar, these themes become obscure and authenticity, inauthenticity and freedom of choice achieve the prominence. Kamal Desai’s Kala Surya focuses on the themes like rebel and authenticity. Search for identity and restricted freedom have been given the prominent place by Vilas Sarang in Enkichya Rajyat. Kamlesh Walawalkar’s Baki Shoonya mainly concerns with absurdity of human existence and futility of human action. Thus, no single Marathi novel has expressed all the aspects of the existential doctrine at length, but on this ground one should not deny their existential values. Existentialism is mainly concerned with ‘human being’, in short ontological study of human being, and it is the main goal of this phenomenon, which is clearly reflected in the select Marathi novels. Therefore, it can be said that all the select Marathi novels are ‘Existentialist Fiction.’

Both the novelists—American and Marathi—have given their answer to the riddle of the absurd human existence. As man is condemned to labour and death, without any assurance of meaning or afterlife, then how can he make sense out of his futile existence? In The Stranger, Camus answers the riddle of absurdity at the end of the novel, when Meursaults realizes that man does not need either meaning and a goal, or God to fill up his empty life. Only to live life is more than enough. The absurd, that inspired the creative energy and passion to
Camus, has great difficulties in finding a meaningful place even in the contemporary Indian scenario.

Though the select Marathi novels explore the existential doctrine of the West, it explores it through the indigenous experiences of Indian protagonists. Similar to the American existential fiction, the select Marathi novels also separate their protagonists from the social and cultural contexts, and motivate them to search a new meaning to their existence. But these select authors try to depict an individual’s relation with the social and cultural environment around, which, in fact, is a central concern of the existential ideology. The Marathi authors also depict how the social and cultural meaning of human existence is invalid, and therefore, the social and cultural contexts become inevitable in their novels. So, it becomes obvious for the researchers and the literary scholars to consider the differences in the social and cultural contexts, while analysing the select Marathi novels.

Thus, to explore the Existential ideology, which is emerged and engendered in the Western social context, the Marathi authors use the indigenous human experiences. For example, the last part of Kosla discusses the meaning of birth and death from purely Hindu religious context. Buwas, Sadhus and Sannyases (Godman) reflected in the background of Pandurang’s existential search are purely Indian. Kamal Desai’s Kala Surya is an attempt to find out an Eastern mythical metaphor to substitute the Western Myth of Sisyphus. Bhau Padhye’s Barrister Anirudha Dhopeshwarkar also explores the milieu of Indian society and points out an irrationality, on which it is founded. Walawalkar’s Baki Shoonya explores the Indian social scenario like
prostitute area or his visits to the *Tantrics* and *Mantriks* are purely Indian experiences. Only Sarang’s *Enkichya Rajyat* uses a foreign setting against the background of the existential search of Pramod, but his constant comparison between India and Iraq reveals that his perception of the outer world is also influenced by his Indianess.

Thus, these indigenous human experiences are nourished in the exposure of the social and cultural context so their perception must be counted in the indigenous context. Though some of them are universal in many socio-cultural contexts, some of them are pure products of Indian society.

After the forays into the American and Marathi novels, the question remains—what are their respective conceptualizations of human existence? For the American writers, human existence is situated at the plateau of modernism, where man, driven by the modernist logic of accumulation of knowledge, power and wealth, finds himself saturated with things that isolate him from humanity and could not infuse his own existence with meaning. The American modern man is a lonely individual, without past, future, meaningful loving life, and having no children. In their plateau of modernism, the American writers have decided to continue the modernist journey, where other intellectuals have either languished in nihilism or taken the leap into the postmodernist horizon.

The Marathi writers’ idea of human existence, on the other hand, challenges the universalization of American writers’ modern man. The present comparative reading proves that the American writers’ existential
brooding is a temporally and culturally over-determined as Marathi writers. Marathi writers’ human existence does not stand on the same modernist plateau, where the American writers’ modern man stands. Consequently, the over-saturation with knowledge, power, and wealth that nauseated American writers’ modern man is not significant to Marathi writers. The Marathi writers’ modern man is a person who cannot be abstracted from his familial life, which is structurally effective Indian (Maharashtrian) society. Their modern protagonists are different from the highly individualized and motivated modern American men that make us to suspect that such a contemporary Indian could still be rambling in the twilight of pre-modernity.

Universalizing the existential thoughts of Americans could mean the underrating social criticism of Marathi writers’, just as to absolutising of Kamal Desai’s radicalism could be undermined the wisdom of Palahniuk. Both intellectuals struggled to make a sense of their temporally and culturally determined existence, using the intellectual tools available to them. Palahniuk, bothered by the Nietzschean nihilism and disillusioned by the atrocities manifested by World War II, had existentialism and the current American and French literary tradition at hand. On the other hand, Desai, disturbed by the monstrously and hideously defective social structures, left by the colonial powers and unreflective Indian politicians, had a milder version of social criticism at her disposal, for the contemplation. Thus, in the context of American literary criticism, the existential fictions are rightly defined by the philosophical thoughts, which have been explored in American novels. However, in the context of Marathi literary criticism the select Marathi
novels are defined either as a social criticism or radicalism; very few (Sane-Inamdar) attempts have been carried out in this regard. Some critics (Nativist) still think that these foreign models are inappropriate to analyse these indigenous phenomena. But, on the whole, when such kind of comparison is undertaken, it obviously compels us to follow the influence model of the Comparative Literature Studies that allows to evaluate the Marathi texts in the light of Existential Philosophy which is proved appropriate in the said thesis. After analysing all these novels in the light of Existential ideology and after a comparative assessment, it becomes apparent that all these authors are well read and they write under the influence of this Western philosophical school. The select American and Marathi novels focus on an individual’s search for the meaning of his existence in the hostile world; they exclusively portray the life of a single person. Except Kamal Desai’s Kala Surya which uses exceptionally woman as a protagonist, the women characters are marginalized in the select novels. Besides this, all the select novels, except The Outsider and Enkichya Rajyat, have the first person narration as a narrative technique, in order to maintain the authenticity of experiences.

Thus, we do live in the shadow of technology, economical instabilities, threat of nuclear annihilation, dread of third world war, terrorism, political upheavals and religious fanaticism. The past is unchangeable the future is unknown and the present is uncertain, therefore, one has to continue one’s life, but without any joy in it. This is the common existential predicament of modern man, which is reflected in many literary traditions, across the modern world.