

Journey of Existentialism philosophy in Twentieth Century

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Abstract--In this paper we are studied on Existentialism, though one of the most influential philosophies in twentieth century is also one of the most controversial of all. It is not a systematic school of philosophy. It is rather a fountainhead of several revolts in the past against traditional philosophy. It is by its very nature beyond a clearcut, an exact definition. It is actually an off-spring of the combined attempts made by philosophers, thinkers' psychologist, sociologists, artists and literature from different disciplines, periods and places of the world. It is said to have existed ever since man confronted his own frailty and the meaninglessness of existence. Hence it can also be understood more as a way of thought, an attitude to life, a vision, a way of perceiving the man and the world, a "timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there in the past"¹ a "Style of philosophizing" than an integrated system.

1. Introduction:

Existentialism, taken as a whole, undoubtedly a philosophical movement. Existentialism, broadly defined, is a set of philosophical systems concerned with *Free will, Choice* and Personal responsibility. Because we make choices based on our experiences, beliefs, and biases, those choices are unique to us – and made without an objective form of truth. There are no "Universal" guidelines for most decisions, existentialism believe. Instead, even trusting science is often a "Leap of Faith". Existentialism is, at its core, individualistic. It deals with man's disillusionment and despair some thinkers have presented a very gloomy picture of it. They have described it as 'the shocking the sordid, the obscene'. [5] To them existentialism is "nearly meaningless." They hold that it is mostly negative, morbidity, individualistic and devoid of values of any kind. They attach to it such charge of extreme subjectivism, pessimism and even nihilism.

Despite a strong pessimistic note, Existentialism does not aim at plunging man into despair it rather prepares him through disillusionment and despair for a some purpose, sense and meaning. Such a concern is quite pertinently expressed in 'Albert Camus' play '*Caligula*'.

"To love one's life is a little thin and I shall have the courage to do so if is necessary, but to see the meaning of this life dissipated, to see our reason for existing disappear that is what

is unbearable. One cannot live without meaning." [6]

A great philosopher Sartre have very well explained that existentialism is optimistic so far a it is doctrine of action:

"Existentialism is nothing else but an attempt to draw the full conclusion from a consistently atheistic position. Its intention is not in the least that of plunging men into despair. And if by despair one means as the Christians do– any attitude of unbelief the despair of the existentialists is something different Existentialism is not atheist in the sense that it would exhaust itself in demonstration of the non-existence of God. It declares, rather, that even if God existed that would make no difference for its point of view. Not that we believe God does exist; but we think that the real problem is not that of his existence, what man needs it to find himself again and to understand that nothing can save him from himself, not even a valid proof of the existence of God. In this sense existentialism is optimistic. It is a doctrine of action, and it is only by self-deception by confusing their own despair with ours that Christians can be describe us as without hope." [7]

Existentialism is a protest against all forms of rationalism. The existentialists have therefore reacted strongly against the excessive claims of reason. Kierkegaard reacted against Hegelian idealism. Marcel reacted against the idealists like F.H. Bradley and Brushchving. Heidegger and Sartre, too, reacted against the age of reason. The existentialists actually think passionately. He sets forth the dictum "existence precedes essence."

The existentialists assert that man first exists and then he look at the world, thinks of it and then acts as an individual. His contemplations and his actions are possible only because of his existence. "Existence, thus, is the first principal from which all else flows. It is only later, by living, thinking, and acting that man defines his nature and forms what is called his essence – that he is and will be." [8] The essence of man is pre determined. Jean Paul Sartre has thus posited his view point :

"What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence ? We mean that man first of all exist, encounters himself, surges up in the world, and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him, is not definable. it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then, he will be what he makes of himself." [9]

The dictum "existence precedes essence" paved the path for individual freedom. Sartre further clarifies :

"If however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is

responsible for what he is. Thus the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men." [10].

Thus Existentialism lays stress on the subjectivity and individuality of human existence. The existentialists recognize very well the tragic element in human existence, and hence they lay much importance on the facts of life such as – anguish, anxiety, alienation, boredom, choice, despair, dread, death, freedom, frustration, finitude, guilt, nausea, responsibility etc. They show that deep concern with the fundamental problems of human existence. They affirm that men should choose, decide and act as active participant in life situation. By doing so, he can save the world from deep distress, distrust and dissension in every walk of life.

Though the Existentialists thought has its roots deep in the past, it has been popularized mainly by Existentialist thinkers like Jean Paul Sartre (1905.....) and Albert Camus (1913-60). Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) is generally regarded as "the father of modern existentialism, and is the first European philosopher who bears the existentialist label." [11] He coined and used the terms "existence" and "existentialism" [12] for the first time. He rejected the prevalent political, social, religious ideas which identified man with state, society and church respectively. He thus brought about a revolutionary change in the basic concept of existentialism. He rejected Hegel's "Dialectical Method" and his contention that "Objectivity is truth", and emphasized: "Subjectivity is truth, subjectivity is reality". [13] He based his philosophy on the subjectivity of human existence and laid emphasis on the individual's "act of choice" or "freedom of choice" or "free choice" and the subjective "will" and "responsibility", raising them to the moral level. As a Christian and theistic existentialist, he believes that man acquires self-knowledge only when he has an "intensified awareness" of an encounter with God.

Kierkegaard's existentialist idea, too contributed much to his philosophy of "Being". His major work, 'Being and Time' presents a perfect and impressive analysis of human existence. According to him, although man is in the world, he is "not of the world".

His "authentic existence" is possible only when he is "free from his world."

Kierkegaard also stressed the importance of the self, and the self's relation to the world, as being grounded in self-reflection and introspection. He argued in concluding – Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments that "subjectivity is truth" and "truth is subjectivity". This has to do with a distinction between what is objectively true and an individual's subjective relation (such as indifference or commitment) to that truth. People who in some sense believe the same things may relate to those beliefs quite differently. Two individuals

may both believe that many of those around them are poor and deserve help, but this knowledge may lead only one of them to decide to actually help the poor.

Karl Jasper's role in existentialism is sometimes ignored, but he was important. He coined the term "Existenzphilosophie" a forerunner of the term existentialism- and this alone makes his contribution unique. Jaspers viewed his philosophy as active, forever changing. This approach compelled Jaspers to protest any attempt to group him with other philosophers.

"It is in the work of Jaspers that the seeds sown by Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche first grew into existentialism or, as he prefers to say, "Existenzphilosophy". One reason for his opposition to the label "Existentialism" is that it suggests a school of thought, a doctrine among others, a particular position." [14]

Karl Jasper (1883-1969), a German Professor, takes the Kierkegaardian line of philosophical faith. He is convinced that man in the modern age is doomed to failure. However, failure is not necessarily all negative. He proclaims in his way to wisdom: "The way in which an approach to his failure determines that he will become." [15] Failure leads man to seek redemption. Existentialism is "a philosophy of 'becoming' rather than a philosophy of being. As such, it is anti-intellectualistic and voluntaristic. Jaspers values more highly the élan of an endless seeking and striking than the tranquility of possession regardless of whether it be a question of truth or being or God.

Existentialism is "authentic" being. As with Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre, we find that Jasper emphasizes the importance of decision making and freedom in defining the individual. Total freedom for Jaspers translates into the same infinite possibility to redefine the self Sartre would describe in his responses to psycho-analysis. Freedom to make a decision apart from all previous decisions results in a sense of alienation

and loneliness – again, the responsibility of creating a self is a major one.

There are limits to our freedom, according to Jaspers. These limitations exist as "boundary situations" including death, suffering, guilt, chance and conflict. Jaspers did believe there was a certain randomness to fate; chance situations arise forcing one to react in a manner not consistent with true freedom. Death stands apart from other boundaries as it is both the source of dread and the reason many choose to experience pleasures. Without death, these might not be a reason to search for pleasure.

2. Existential Concern in the Post Independence:

Novel as an art form came to India with the British. It was a new genre in Indian literature. In various Indian languages novel became a popular literary form which attracted great writers. Bhudev Chandra Mukherjee's Anguriya Binimoy (187), Bankim Chandra's Raj Singha (1881), Kapalkundla (188) and Durgeshnandini (1890), R.C. Dutt's Sansar and Madhvi Kankan, Tagore's Ghare Baire (1916) and Char

Adhayaya (1916) are some noticeable novel in Bengali. In Hindi, Kishorilal Goswami's Labangolata (1891) and Debki Nandan Khatri's Chandrakanta; in Marathi Hari Naraiian Apte's Maisorcha Wagh (1890) and Gadth Ala Pan Simha Gela (1906); and in Kannad Galagnath's Kumudini are important works which are of great interest in the development of the history of novel in Indian literature. The English renderings of novel written in various Indian languages contributed much to the evaluation of Indian English novel in the nineteenth century and in the first two decades of the twentieth century. R.C. Dutt, Bankim Chandra and Tagore translated their novels into English. The output of Indian English novel is not worthy of note until the year 1920. Meenakshi Mukherjeet rightly remarks.

"The flowering of Indo-Anglian fiction coincided with the novel's coming of age in the regional languages of India." [1]

The origin of Indian English Novel dates back to June 6, 1835 with the publication of Kylash Chunder Dutt's A Journal of 48 Hour of the year 1945 in the Calcutta Literary Gazette. It is a literary fantasy, in which the author narrates the story of an imaginary unsuccessful revolt against the British rule hundred years later. It is out and out a failure from the view point of technique and craftsmanship. But the dawn of the twentieth century witnessed the advent of a great national awakening in Indian. This period is remarkable for the introduction of various fictional genres the social and realistic novel, historical novel, romances, detective fiction and short story.

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English Literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English Novels.

Early, Indian English Novel is derivative and imitative of English models.

What distinguishes Indian English Novel from the very beginning is its social concern, realism and its unflinching interest in man. Ralph for says :

The novel is not merely fictional prose, it is the prose of man's life, the first art to attempt to take the whole man and give him expression.....the great failure which distinguishes the novel from the other arts is that it has the power to make the secret life visible.[2]

The Indian English novelist has always been true to this fundamental rule of novel writing. All great Indian English novelists from Bankim Chandra, the father of Indian novel to Arun Joshi and Salman Rashdie have unflinchingly been true to this dictum. C. Paul verghese comments :

A novelist, it may be said, is in search of a unity in the diversity of life and civilization. He, therefore, can not term his back on the social realities of his time, but should carve man's image in his art with his social awareness and insight into life.[3]

As in other commonwealth countries the novel writing in English in our country too became a vehicle for the expression of our indigenous ethos. With its comparative flexibility and amorphousness, the novel provided a unique literary phenomenon. Initially we come across the historical romances such as, S.K. Nikambe's Ratnabai (1895), R.C. Dutt's 'The Slave Girl of Agra (1909) S.K. Ghosh's 'The Prince of Destiny' and S.K. Mitra's 'Hindupur' (1909)

In the 1930s and 1940s a new trend is perceptible in the Indian English novel. It lays emphasis on social and political realism. The freedom movement of Mahatma Gandhi inspired several Indian English novel is to. Even after Independence the freedom movement of Mahatma Gandhi continued to inspire quite a few Indian-English novelists such as R.K. Narayan, K.A. Abbas, N. Nagarajan, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgoonkar, Nayantara Sehgal and Chaman Nahal. But the greatest fillip to the Indian English novel was given by the 'Big three' M.R. Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Mulkraj Anand in 'Untouchable' (1935), R.K. in "Waiting for the Mahatma" (195) and "The Vendor of Sweets" (1967) and Raja Rao in "Kanthapura" (1955) deal with one or the other of Gandhian themes. The three have respectively been called "the novelist as reformer.... the novelist as moral analyst.... (and) the novelist as metaphysical poet'. Regarding the contribution of big three, William Wash quite aptly says that:

"It was these three who defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. They established the suppositions the manner, the idiom the concept of character and the nature of the themes which were to give the Indian novel its particular distinctiveness." [4]

Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao whose emergence is the most remarkable event in the realm of Indian English fiction. They were the herbingers of the true Indo-English novel. These novelists began writing around the mid 1930s. The writing of these novelists moved the Indian English novel in the right direction. They discovered a whole new world in Indo-English fiction, and the Indian novel owes much to their efforts for gaining solid ground and achieving an identity of its own.

Mulk Raj Anand is the first writer who gave to the Indian English novel a definite tone and texture. He is as Iyenger says, "the advocate of the down trodden and the underprivileged."5 R.K. Narayan, a product of the south Indian Hindu Middle class, remained aloof from the contemporary social political issues. He explored the South Indian Middle class milieu in his Malgudi fiction. Like a seasoned artist, he aptly explores "the staying power of the society... whose hundred ill have not destroyed the moral and spiritual base of the individual."6 Using Western techniques but Indian material. Narayan has been commendably successful, to use William Walsh's words, "in making an Indian sensibility at home in English art." [7]

Indian English Novel forms an impressive core of the commonwealth literature as it deals profoundly with the duality of selves, the native consciousness acquired from

western civilization. Indian culture, receptive as it is, has also shown adaptability to changing situations. The western culture has infused in it class consciousness, the desire for woman's liberation, self-centredness and the proneness to materialism. The cultural interaction has provided novelists the theme of east-west confrontation and conflict of values. Consequently, there is the tension of identity ensuing from bi-culturalism in a good number of Indian English Novels, for example- Bal Chandra Rajan's 'The dark Dancer', Kamla Markandaya's 'A Science of Desire' and 'The Nowhere Man', Nayantara Sehgal's 'A Time to be Happy', Raja Rao's 'The Serpent and the Rope' etc.

Modern Indian English fiction is conspicuous for realism. The novelists with observant eyes and understanding hearts have pried deeper and deeper into the varied and multitudinous social life of India. Both the urban and rural areas have been fully explored. The image of as represented by Anglo-Indian Novelists- Meadow Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, John Masters, and E.M. Forster – is far from realistic. The Anglo-Indian have missed the soul of India, the deeper currents of Indian politics and the passionate yearnings of her people. The Indian English Novelists- Anand, Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Chaman Nahal, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sehgal, Ruth P- Jhabvala and Anita Desai have touched various facets of Indian social life realistically and have exposed the horrid evils which have been eating into the vitals of social and national life with a view to reforming the existing order.

In Indian English Novel suffering has been broadly dealt with. Kamla Markandaya depicts human misery in 'A Handful of Rice' in term of India-recurrent droughts, its barren landscape and its over populated cities. Mulk Raj Anand presents human suffering in 'Untouchable' and 'Coolie' in terms of social injustice and class inequality. Khuswant Singh in 'Train to Pakistan' highlights tension arising from communal disturbances. Commenting on the theme of suffering in Indian English Novel Ron Shepherd Writes :

"Writers like Rao and Narayan find a place for human suffering within a larger philosophical context; suffering is shown to be not just a negative experience, but rather an experience which can lead to personal and social improvement. Anand and Khushwant Singh, on the other hand, tend to regard suffering as a negative condition which is the consequence of failure; suffering is not allied one's dharma, but is allied to meaninglessness and despair." [8]

Modern Indian English Novel is realistic in a comprehensive term. All the novelists of this period from Anand to Salman Rushdie have sincerely and realistically recorded these revolutionary changes in human outlook and, thus, they have envisioned a new social order.

The Post Independence novel has shown signs of maturity from the view point of technique, style and languages. American and European models began to exercise their influence on novel K.R.S. Iyenger says :

"Before 1947, the English models were the major

outside influence on the Indian novel. After Independence, however, novelists in India have shown themselves susceptible to the influence of American and European (especially Russian Models, and also models from oriental countries." [9]

The advance in fictional technique is a landmark in the history of Indian English novel. The novel has emerged as "A living and evolving genre, and is trying in the hands of its practitioners, a fusion of form, substance and expression that is recognizably Indian, yet also bearing the marks of universality." [10]

The relationship between an author and the public, though a peculiar and complicated one, is a vital factor which determines the evaluation of technique. The Indian English Novelist has not ignored this vital factor and has created an artistic and imaginative rapport with the public. The character of the public determines the technique. Many post-Independence novelists endeavour to explore the theme of encounter between the east and the west. The theme has been explored in Kamla Markandaya's 'Possession' (1963), Balchandra Rajan's 'The Dark Dancer' (1959), Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's "Esmord In India" (1968) and "Head and Dust" (1975), Santa Rama Rao's "Remember The House" (1956). We find the finest example of the east and the west encounter in Raja Rao's 'The Serpent and the Rope' (1960).

After 1950s, however, the Indian English fiction, like its western counterparts, has shifted its focus from the public to the private sphere. It is not mainly concerned with exploration and interpretation of the social milieu. Henceforward the novelist's is driven towards delirating the individual's quest for the self in all its varied and complex forms. So, with Anita Desai, The Indian English fiction makes departures and shifts from the outer world to the inner recesses of the mind and heart. Anita Desai's forte is the exploration of modern Indian sensibility that is ill at ease in the modern upset set-up.

A cursory glance at the 'Post-Independence Indian English fiction reveals a significant development in the form of the existentialist novel. It brings to light "a shift of emphasis from the external to the internal. The outer to the inner etching the contours of the interior landscape of the individual mind." [11] There are many of other novelists where works display a strong undercurrent of existentialist. Anita Desai is the novelist who seems to me to be fully committed to existentialist themes. She skillfully exposes mainly through remarkable images and symbolism, the emotional ecology of the turbulent inner world of individual tormented by existentialist problems and predicament.

Anita Desai presents a new dimension to English fiction through the exploration of this troubled sensibility, a typical neo-Indian Phenomenon.

The tradition of social realism of Mulk Raj Anand has been followed by Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Khushwant Singh and Chaman Nahal. The poverty hunger and deprivation as consequences of World War II and the Bengal famine have been depicted realistically by Bhabani

Bhattacharya in 'So Many Hungers (1947)' and 'He Who Rides A Tiger (1954)'. The hungers fear and misery faced by the people after Independence find poignant expression in Kamala Makandaya's "Nectar in A Sieve" (1954) and 'A Handful of Rice' (1966). The clash between tradition and modernity. Gandhi's vision of rural construction and Nehru's plan of rapid industrialization constitute the theme of Bhabani Bhattacharya's 'Music For Mohini (1952)' and shadow from Laddakh (1966) The horrors and inhuman atrocities of partition in the name of regions find powerful expression in Khushwant Singh's 'Train To Pakistan' (1956). Chaman Nahal's 'Azadi (1975)' Manohar Malgaonkar's 'Distant Drum (1960)' and 'A Bend in the Ganges' (1964). The theme of social change from traditional values to modern ones and the transformation of the socio cultural milieu have been dealt with in Menon Marath's 'The Wound of Spiring' (1961) Venue Chitale's 'In Transit' (1950) and Attia Hussain's 'Sunlight On A Broken Column'. In Sudhin Ghose's tetralogy 'And Gazelles Leaping (1949); 'Cradle of The Clouds' (1951). 'The Vermilion Boat (1953) and 'The Flame of the Forest' (1955). We find the protagonist t endeavoring to adjust himself to the changing times. An altogether different kind of novel we witness in All about H. Hatterr by G.V. Desani. It is an experimental kind of outstanding novel full of practical wisdom.

Many post- Independence novelist endeavour to explore the theme of encounter between the East and the West. The theme has been explored in Kamala Markandaya's possession (1963), Balchandra Rajan's "The Dark Dancer" (1959), Ruth Praver Jhabvala's 'Esmond In India' (1968) and 'Heat and Dust' (1975) Santa Ram Rao's 'Remember the House' (1956). We find the finest example of the East and the West encounter Raja Rao's 'The Serpent and the Rope (1960)' where Ramaswami, an Indian scholar and Madeliene, his French wife, part ways because of the basic incompatibility of these two cultures.

Social Realism not with standing, the authors now shifted their focus from the public sphere to the private sphere of individuals by Probing deeper into individual psyche Kamala Markandaya's 'The Nowhere Man' (1972) is about the psychological crisis of an Indian immigrant in London. Similarly B. Rajon's "The Dark Dancer" (1959) depicts the thought processes of an embittered woman persecuted and alienated from her family. In 'A Time to be Happy (1958)' and 'This time of Morning (1968), Nayantar Sehgal has interwoven the political turmoil of the world outside and the private torment of the inner world of individuals. In these we find the theme of loneliness, self realization and sexual liberation. The novels of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi are the result of she complex social political situation in the post-independence days, which only got a fillip by the west. Modern Indian English novel is, thus preoccupied with the inner life and individual problems of men and women passing through revolutionary changes. The novel in the previous era was mainly concerned with the external aspects of society and little with the enteriorization of the inner landscape of the

human psyche. It has become more subtle, philosophical and psychological. This change in the content of the novel has necessitated the use of new technical devices. Anand detty uses the device of the stream of consciousness in his first novel Untouchable. Myth too has been used as a technique to illustrate the novelist's vision or point of view. Almost all the novelist of this period have interpreted myth in their own manner so that it may contribute to the expression of their point of view.

The critical analysis of the works of major novelist clearly shows that the majority of writer since 1947 evince little interest to recapture a recent historical past and have turned inwards to more private and personal concerns. These novels turn upon East-West encounter and the conflict between the old and the new. These novels deals with the personal predicament of a particular individual and existential concerns. R.K. Narayan and K. Nagarjan have not been seriously affected by the inter-cultural tensions. But Manohar Malongkar's protagonists suffer from cross cultural conflicts. The quest of the self and identity, and despair and despondence caused by the feeling of rootlessness and the solution of existential problems characterize B. Rajan's The Dark Dancer. To long in the west, Santa Rama Rau's Remember the House Attia Hossain's Sunlights on A Broken Column. Kamala Markandaya's Some Inner Fury, Anita Desai's Cry, the Peacock and Nayantara Sehgal's. A time to Be Happy. Bharti Mukherjee in Tiger's Daughter and Wife deals with the personal problems of Idnian immigrants in U.S.A. The novels of Ruth P. Jhabwala also treat this theme. The solution of the traumatic existential problems is personal.

Anita Desai tried to explore the sensibility of modern Indian generation ill it case in the modern, rudderless. Chaotic set up with this emerged the antihero in the Indian English novel. Anita Desai writes in 'Voice in the City (1956)' that an unheroic hero is "a man for whom aloneness alon was the sole natural condition, aloneness alone was the treasure worth treasuring." Her novels explore the loneliness of individuals. The crisis in her novel such as "Cry the Peacock (1977)" and 'Clear Light of Day (1980). In Custody, Baumgartner's Bombay (1988), and 'Journey to Ithaca' emerge from the pain born of broken marriages emotional trauma and the failure of communication between individuals. She proved to be a crucial pioneer in the psychological exploration of feminist concerns and proved to be a major post. Colonial Indian novelist.

In the Eighties yet another breed of novelists emerged. It includes Salaman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Upamanayu Chatterjee, Allan Sealy, Shashi Despande, Shashi Tharoor, Farukh Dhandi, Amitav Ghosh, Bapsi Sidhwa, Ipsita Roy Chakraverti, Sudhir Kakkar, Dina Mehta, Dolly Ramanujan, Arundhoti Roy and others. A post from these some later novelist have also emerged on the contemporary scene such as Shiv K. Kumar, Saros Cowasjee, Raja Narsimha, Vasatn A Shahane, K.V. Subbaram, Ranga Rao, Raj Gill, Balraj Khanna and others. Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children and Shame

changed the substance and tenor of the India. English novel. From the corridors of St. Stephen's college alone emerged Vikram Seth. Amitav Ghosh. Upmanyu Chatterjee, Allen Sealy and Shahsi Tharoor. They have produced works that exhibit their remarkable ease with language. New novelist with new visions, new themes and new technical and linguistic devices are gaining recognition abroad which insures a bright future for the Indian English novel.

A cursory glance at the post Independence Indian English fiction reveals a significant development in the form of the existentialist novel. It brings to light "a shift of emphasis from the external to the internal, the outer to the inner etching the contours of the interior landscape of the individual mind." Although the existentialist element is also traceable to the some extent, in some extent, in some of the works of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, these novelist can not be called existentialistic by any means. But Anita Desai. Arun Joshi, Shashi Brata, Saroj Cowasjee, Shiv K. Kumar, Y.P. Dhawan and Nayantara sehgal are the novelist whose words display a strong undercurrent of existentialism. Anita Desai is the novelist who seems to me to be fully committed to existentialist themes. She skillfully exposes mainly through remarkable images and symbolism, the emotional ecology of the turbulent inner world of individual tormented by existentialist problems and predicament.

Anita Desai was born in Delhi in 24, June 1937 to a German mother and a Bengali father. She was born as Anita Mazumdar. Anita Mazumdar married Ashvin Desai, a business man in the year 1957. She grew up speaking German at home and Bengali at home. She learned to read and write in English at school, which became her literary language.

3. Conclusion:

A modern philosophical movement, Existentialism deals with man's disillusionment and despair. Originating in the philosophical and literary writings of Jean Paur Sartre, it was more on attitude to life, a vision, or what Kaufman calls a "timeless sensibility that can be discerned here and there is the past." (Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre 12) A philosophical idealism, existentialism in due course of time developed into a powerful revolt against reason, rationality, positivism and the traditional ways in which early

philosophers portrayed man. Man's autonomy, assertion of his subjective self, his flouting of reason and rationality, his denial of traditional values, institutions and philosophy, his experience of the absurdity and 'nothingness' of life are some of the existential themes which are reflected in the writing of the exponents of existentialism.

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