

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

I declare that the thesis entitled “**A Comparative Study of the Aspects of Existentialism in the Novels of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi**” submitted by me for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English** is a record of work carried out by me from the period August 2010 to April 2015 under the guidance of my guide Dr. V. A. Rankhambe, Associate Professor, Postgraduate Department of English, Bharati Vidyapeeth University, Yashwantrao Mohite College, Erandwane, Pune and that it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associate-ship, fellowship or any other similar titles of this or any other university or other institute of higher learning.

I further declare that whatever material has been borrowed from other sources has been duly acknowledged in the thesis.

Place: Pune

Date: /04/2015

Ms Aneela Malhotra

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in the thesis entitled “**A Comparative Study of the Aspects of Existentialism in the Novels of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi**” submitted by Ms Aneela Malhotra for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in the subject of English under the faculty of ‘Arts, Social Sciences and Commerce’ has been carried out in the Department of English, Bharati Vidyapeeth University, Yashwantrao Mohite College, Pune from the period August 2010 to April 2015 under my direct supervision/guidance.

Place: Pune

Date: /04/2015

Dr. V. A. Rankhambe

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Ms Aneela Malhotra
Pune

A Comparative Study of the Aspects of Existentialism in the Novels of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi

Abstract

Existential philosophy is instituted to regain contact with the existence of human being and experiences of being alive and aware. To provide a comprehensive definition for existentialism is a difficult task as this term is very loosely used. In spite of numerous differences, 20th Century philosophers focused on a single point; the philosophy basically deals with the individual person and their emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts. The present study attempts to show how Indian English Literature is affected by this philosophy through the works of two renowned Indian English Writers; Arun Joshi and Anita Desai.

The objective of the research work is to critically explain and compare the existential aspects; Angst and Self-Alienation, Bad Faith and Self-Alienation and how they are reflected in the novels of Joshi's *The Foreigner*, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, and *The Last Labyrinth* and Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*, *Where Shall we go this Summer?* and *Cry, the Peacock*. No creative writer writes to purposefully describe or narrate how his or her protagonist lives life to suit or exemplify a particular philosophy. It is quite possible that the creative writers are aware of a philosophical point of view such as Existentialism. It may be reflected in their creative work. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine their works to see how far the existentialist philosophy has influenced their creative writing. The proposed study tries to demonstrate how both the writers produce similar existential aspects in their respective characters. It is noted that the protagonists in their fictional work reflect existential angst in their own way depending on their personality, family background and their social status. In this sense comparison is between how the protagonists in the novels of these writers face their existential predicament.

This study tries to explore the selected novels to carry out a critical analysis from the point of view of some aspects of Existentialism. The researcher will focus

on the philosophical thought that deals with the conditions of existence of the individuals and their emotions, actions, responsibilities and thoughts. The researcher will study these Aspects as revealed in the selected novels of Arun Joshi and Anita Desai. The present research work tries to break fresh ground in explicating the obstacles that an individual has to face in his life, and the view that life has no inherent meaning, has been illustrated in the fiction of these two writers. Anita Desai's and Arun Joshi's contribution to the world of literature is the way their fiction expresses aspects of Existentialism.

The present research is divided into the following chapters:

The first chapter entitled '**Aspects of Existentialism, the Theory of Comparative Literature and a Brief History of Indian English Literature**' throws light on the philosophy of Existentialism, and its salient Aspects, contribution of Arun Joshi and Anita Desai to the Indian English literature. It briefly states the contribution of the Existential philosophers. It also deals with the theoretical aspects of the Comparative Literature as they are reflected in the study of the fiction of these two writers. The chapter also comments on the Existential Aspects revealed in the work of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi.

The second chapter '**The Theory of Angst and Self-Alienation Reflected in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* and Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain***' explores two existential aspects; Angst and Self-Alienation reflected in the novels *The Foreigner* and *Fire on the Mountain* respectively. It compares and contrasts the way the protagonists in these two novels face their existential challenge.

The third chapter titled '**Aspects of Bad-Faith Revealed in Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and Anita Desai's *Where Shall we go this Summer?***' studies Bad Faith Existential Aspect in the respective novels. It tries to analyze how an individual is responsible for his unconscious decisions, and at the same time explains that human being is solely responsible for his/her actions and choices in life taken with their own free will or with the help of some external help.

Simultaneously, this chapter tries to present comparison between Bad Faith Aspect reflected in the respective novels.

The fourth chapter presents **‘Aspects of Self-Alienation as Reflected in Arun Joshi’s *The Last Labyrinth* and Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock*’** and evaluates their protagonists struggling with isolation and aloofness in their life which leads to the tragic consequences. It compares and contrasts the aspect of Self-Alienation faced by the protagonists in these novels.

The fifth and the last chapter is in the **‘The Conclusion’** which briefly summarizes the findings in the previous chapters and comments on the way the Existential Aspects are reflected in the novels of Arun Joshi and Anita Desai. In the conclusion the researcher presents her evaluation of the aspects of Existentialism reflected in the fiction of the writers.

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