

Chapter - III

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?*

III.0 Introduction

The present chapter introduces the second Existential Aspect, Bad Faith as revealed in the novels *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* by Arun Joshi and Anita Desai respectively. Bad Faith has been used as a term of art in diverse areas involving feminism, racial supremacism, political negotiation; existentialism etc. this term is closely followed by self-deception which is a process of denying the relevance or significance of the logical arguments and evidences. In other words, we can say that this term means living inauthentically, neglecting our openness to Being and simply going with the flow. Jean-Paul Sartre also states that self-deception is like two semi-independently acting minds within one mind, with one deceiving the other. In Bad Faith, we are inclined to deny responsibility for our situation. This happens in societies where there is oppression and exploitation.

Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir described Bad Faith as a philosophical concept where a human being under pressure from societal forces adopts false values and disowns his/her innate freedom to act authentically (an authentic action involves being true to one's personality and character despite the pressures of external factors). In simple terms it says that the human being does not remain true to his own character and decisions because of the external pressure, the materialistic world and its values etc. The lack of authenticity is considered in existentialism to be Bad Faith.

On the other hand, Kierkegaard says two things about the authentic life; firstly he views media to be the major factor that is being followed by the society and secondly, he interprets religion as a tradition passively followed by the society without recourse to authentic thoughts and personal views. His views clearly explain

that, in order to achieve authentic life, one must face reality and form one's own opinion of existence. But, Nietzsche rejects the role of religion in finding authenticity because he believes in finding truth without the use of virtues. He believes that the authentic man is the one who elevates himself over others by transcending the limits of conventional morality in an attempt to decide for oneself what is good or evil. According to Sartre, the situation in which we are is a flowing and an ambiguous situation. The identities we, the human beings, have is either imposed on us or it is the result of our choice, our self-defining actions. The identity imposed on us from outside is one form of Bad Faith. We, human beings, are in the process of 'being'. If we do not understand this, we are in 'Bad Faith'. We normally go with the flow rather than being open to our existence, our 'Being'. We deny responsibilities for our situation. This appears analogous to the 'Karma' theory in Hinduism. In terms of 'Karma' theory, we accept that we are what we are on account of our 'Karma', which is denying responsibility of our action. Sartre has given an example of a man in 'bad faith'. In bad faith we try to conform to the identity imposed on us by another subject. In his illustrative example he tells us how a waiter plays at 'being a waiter' in a cafe. He has become a slave to the role given to him by others. However, unconsciously he is aware of playing a game. To continue to live like this is to be in 'Bad Faith'. If the waiter in Sartre's example has will-power, and he sheds his waiter's apron, leaves the profession, accepting the anguish it creates, then this is the instance of 'good faith'. Another form of 'Bad Faith' is day-dreaming. One may day-dream about being a pilot, a surgeon or a hero, etc. fantasizing is also living in 'Bad Faith'. We have to see here how the characters in the literature live in Bad Faith and how they try to use their will power to be free from it and suffer the anguish resulting from this.

III.1 *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*

Arun Joshi presents his protagonist, Billy Biswas, through the narrative point of view of Billy's friend Romi (Romesh Sahai), who does not claim to have understood him, but who is sympathetic with Billy. Romi is, however, intrigued that a young man like Billy, belonging to affluent high-middle-class society has

“extraordinary obsessions” (Joshi, 2008, 7). He says, “I know of no other man who so desperately pursued the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end, no matter what traits of glory or shattered hearts he left behind in his turbulent wake.” (Joshi, 2008, 8)

We are told that Billy, who goes to America for a degree of engineering, earns Ph.D. in Anthropology and is deeply interested in the tribal life and customs. He shuns the sophisticated high-middle-class society and prefers to live in Harlem, the Black ghetto, because he feels it to be the most human place. Billy is deeply engrossed in the study of the primitive man. Billy and Romi go to watch a play ‘Avocambo’, in which the well-educated man, who goes down to the Congo, and incensed by the heat and the light and the primitive music, he takes a shot-gun and starts killing everybody. “Billy is fascinated by the workings of the man’s deranged mind” (Joshi, 2008, 10-11) and remarks “One can quite imagine something like that happening to oneself.” (Joshi, 2008, 11). This is a pointer to the restlessness of Billy’s soul. Earlier, in Billy’s life, when he was just fourteen, Billy had felt great urge to live like a primitive man. He was awakened to the sudden interest in his own being, his identity, “Who was I? Where had I come from? Where was I going?” (Joshi, 2008, 122). He was evidently obsessed by the problem of his identity, and felt that “If anyone had a clue to it, it was only the Adivasis who carried about their knowledge in silence, locked behind their dark inscrutable faces.” (Joshi, 2008, 124) He always felt that something had gone wrong with his life, and thought that he belonged to the world of the tribals. Billy’s hankering after the tribal society has been suggested now and then in the novel. At a music party in the apartment of George (a Negro friend) Billy plays a pair of bongo drums. It had a mesmeric effect on Romi and others. Billy’s Swedish friend Tuula Lindgren also had an idea of Billy’s interests in and attraction for the primitive society. She even told Romi that this attraction for the primitive was very strong in Billy and might explode any time. Billy is possessed of an impulse to leave the civilized world and go to the forest among the tribals. He marries Meena to combat this great force or ‘urkraft’, a sort of primitive impulse, but her resentfulness and quarrels finally make him more and more desperate to leave the so-called civilized world. Billy finally disappears in the

forests of the Maikala Hills of the Satpura Mountains in Madhya Pradesh. For him, his existence in the civilized world seems meaningless. He had reacted to the greed, avarice, riches and hypocrisy of the civilized world. In his opinion the high-middle-class society to which he belonged mechanically imitated out-of-date ideas of the west. Billy hankers after the world in which he can experience fullness of emotion. He is aware of deeper layers of his personality, which makes him uneasy with his superficial realities of life. He is attracted towards Van Gogh's turbulent career. He is utterly dissatisfied with his high-middle-class life. It is said of him that "No other manso disparately pursued the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end." (Joshi, 2008, 8) In his study of Anthropology, he appears to be more interested in the tribal habitations and people described in them. He is deeply interested in the life of the aborigines, their primitive life.

Billy is, therefore, attracted to the primitive tribal life, where people were not materialistic, and lived unrestrained, uninhibited life of drinking, dancing and orgiastic love-making. He says, he had two choices, either to follow the vision of this tribal life or be condemned to the decaying superficial city society. The novel is the story of Billy's struggle, right from his adolescent life to find the meaning of his life, his existential craving. When he was a lad of just fourteen, he had felt a great urge to live like Adivasi in the forest environment. The moment he came out of the railway station, he had the intimations of his primitive self. This impression of Billy, of his incongruous existence in the civilized world is built up in the novel right from the beginning. The narrator, Romi, notes how Billy, "bantered and laughed, but his eyes which were the dominating feature of his face..... never lost their deep sombre look". (Joshi, 2008, 10) Billy laughed but his eyes remained serious. The narrator, Romi, who finds Billy to be an intriguing character, talks to Tuula, the Swedish psychiatrist about him. She tells Romi that Billy feels, "A great force, urkraft, a primitive force. He is afraid of it and tries to suppress it..... But it is very strong in him, much stronger than in you or me. It can explode any time." (Joshi, 2008, 18)

What Tuula, his Swedish friend, says is borne out by Billy's struggle with himself. He marries Meena thinking that he can suppress this urge in him, this hankering after the call of the primitive. There is urge in Billy to believe that "there are worlds at the periphery of this one, above it and below it, and around it, of which we know nothing until we are in them." (Joshi, 2008, 40) He was reacting to the human sacrifice a clerk performed to save his son, and the case was in his father's court. He obviously pleads here for the existence of a different world. Romi Sahai meets Billy after three years, in India. He finds Billy in a mental condition closer to madness. He is no more Billy of the sophisticated world. Romi feels,

All my words simply sank upon his listless mind without so much as causing a ripple. Gone was the staggering intelligence, the spectroscopic interests, the sense of humour.....he was turned upon some obscure segment of himself, ferreting out a bitter secret. Whatever it might have been, the Billy Biswas I had known was finished.... (Joshi, 2008, 70)

Billy used to have strange dreams and hallucinations before he left his city life and his wife for good. The letters he wrote to Tuula, his Swedish friend and psychiatrist reveal to us how his mind was disturbed. He writes, "The curious feeling trails me everywhere, that I am a visitor from the wilderness to the marts of the Big City..." (Joshi, 2008, 69) He is dissatisfied with the so-called civilized society, which according to him was preoccupied with making and spending money. He dreamt of a strange woman crossing his dreams. This is evidently a tribal woman. He writes to Tuula saying, "We are swiftly losing what is known as one's grip on life. Why else this constant blurring of reality? Who am I? Who are my parents? My wife? My child? At times I look at them, sitting at the dinner table, and for a passing moment I cannot decide who they are or what accident of creation has brought us together."¹³ [Joshi, 2008, P/70] Whenever Billy returned from expedition, he could not shake off the sounds and smells of the forest. He felt like being a visitor to the marts of the big city from the wilderness. He felt his real life was in the primitive tribal life where he

can find his own fulfillment and the essence of human existence. In the tribal woman, Bilasia, he discovers the quintessence of the primitive life. He feels as if he suddenly discovered what he was searching for all his life. Talking to Romi, he once criticized the civilized life whether in America or the upper crust life in the Indian society. For him these so-called civilized people are pompous and,

Artistically they are as dry as dust. Intellectually they could do no better than mechanically mouth ideas that the West abandoned a generation ago. (Joshi, 2008, 197)

Billy began to have hallucinations even in America. He experienced an odd feeling of being in a very, very old place, in wilderness, and sometimes among strange primitive people. He had recurrence of this odd feeling after he started studying Anthropology. After such hallucinations he had depressing feeling that something had gone wrong with his life. His friend, Tuula advised him that he should not encourage these hallucinations. He had very strong dose of these hallucinations when he was hospitalized after an accident. He was under pathedine for several days continuously. At that time, these hallucinations became stronger, and he began to enjoy them; but after that he used to feel greatly depressed. Under this disturbed state of mind he decided to marry Meena, thinking that it could be an insurance on his staying normal. But very soon he realized that it was a great mistake. The tensions between him and Meena built up. He could not explain to her his state of mind, and she became more and more resentful and quarrelsome. She did not want to leave him alone, and the relationship reached breaking point. Billy argues that he had greater responsibilities towards his soul than towards his wife. He, meanwhile, had an affair with Rima Kaul. He deliberately gave out himself to be an unhappy married man, whining and complaining. He degraded himself seducing Rima. He seduced her offering to divorce Meena and marry her. He realized that there was a strong corruption force working on him. Billy finally came out of the degradation of his soul when he decided to go on his anthropological tour with his students. Billy fixed a tent for them getting a few ropes from Dhunia, went out and sat on the rock. It was here he had a vision of a furry little animal inviting him,

“come, come to our primitive world that will sooner or later overcome the works of man. Come, we have waited for you,” (Joshi, 2008, 88) Later, he witnessed the drinking orgy of the tribals, the exotic drumming, and the yelling. Billy stood before Bilasia as she danced. Later, they were alone, Bilasia looking up into his eyes, smiling. She represented for him the essence of primitive force, which had called him year after year since he was just fourteen. It was the turning point in Billy's life. He had waited for it all his life. He discovered his primitive self shedding the layers of the so-called civilized society.

Billy's renunciation, his quest was thus complete. What follows afterwards is his betrayal. His collector friend could not keep his secret from his officious wife, and the civilization caught up with him to reclaim him, and got him killed.

Billy had existential hankering after the life in the forest, the life of aborigines even as a teenager. He was deeply concerned about his identity. He questioned himself “Who was I? Where had I come from? Where was I going?” (Joshi, 2008, 70) In his city life, in his high-middle-class family, the university, he lived in Bad Faith. His relationship with Rima Kaul was the ultimate sign of his degradation. He pitied himself and whined in her presence, pretended every way to win her sympathy and seduced the girl. He confesses to Romi how he offered Rima to marry her by divorcing Meena. He says, he realized that there was a tremendous corrupting force working on him. As if his effort to deny and to escape from the ‘Other thing’, the call of the wild was taking revenge upon him. The Rima incident was a kind of warning telling him what would happen to him if he disregarded the call of the wild, the vision that he had. Billy claims that he had to save himself when he took this drastic step to leave civilization and embrace the life of the aborigines. But his search was for something beyond. It was not just the primitive life. It was for him only the beginning. It was for him the Existential problem, the search for the meaning of his life. He felt alienated from the so-called civilized society. He detested the very artificiality, the inane talk of the so-called civilized people. There was a choice before him, a difficult choice because on one side there was rationalizing and postponing decision until one is deeply mired into the quicksand of the

conventions and expedience of the society and then there is hardly and choice left. On the other hand there is a bold step to refuse to be swallowed by the phoney, conventional society and embrace the life of your vision. For Billy, it was a very drastic existential decision. He was quite aware of the enormity of his decision, yet he decided to renounce the civilized society, the wife and the child. He paid a heavy price for it. It was for him an existential choice of renouncing the hypocritical civilized society, and embracing the life among the aboriginals.

Billy, as we realize from his life-story, suffers existential anguish. He is alienated from the hypocritical, materialistic life around him. He at first tries to ignore the urge of his sub-conscious self. His action of getting married to Meena was an effort to suppress this urge, the dictates of his 'Id', his instinct. He finally chooses to abandon the monotonous respectability of the high-middle-class society and seeks his roots among the primitive tribe, leading to tragic consequences for himself as well as his family. The case of Billy is the doomed existential quest for values in the crass materialistic world. Billy was evidently not satisfied merely with the business of living. He had a dream, a vision. The 'Chandtola' in the tribal world signified this vision. Life without a vision appeared meaningless to him. His life is the study in the total alienation from the modern high-middle-class society and search for the meaning of existence in the primitive society. Bilasia for him represented the essence of that primitive force which had attracted him since he was just a lad of fourteen. Billy was confronted in his life with two clear choices: he could either follow his vision at any cost or be condemned to the inanity of meaningless social life of decay. He chooses to respond to the call of Bilasia, who represents the essence of the primitive force which called him the year after year since his adolescence.

There was in Billy an urge to live like a primitive man in a primitive world. At Bhubaneswar he had felt this urge when he was just a teenager. He then felt as if, "_____ a slumbering part of me had suddenly come awake. Watching the tribal dance he had felt, something had gone wrong with my life. This is where I belong. This is what I have always dreamt of." (Joshi, 2008, 91)

Billy discovers fulfillment of life, the essence of existence, in the tribal life. He is sick of materialistic life, in particular of the high-middle-class community. He is drawn towards unrestrained, uninhibited life of the tribals, who are not slave to the money economy. He decided to follow his vision, which was his existential choice. D. Premapati, [1956] in his article on this novel expresses doubt whether "The Strange Case.... poses a literary problem or the existential one". (Premapathy, 1956, 186-193) However, it is quite evident that the protagonist of the novel 'Billy' feels total alienation from the modern bourgeois society. He had hankered after the free tribal society right from his teen-age. We can see that he is not pessimistic in his approach to life. He takes a positive stand about his existence, about his self-realization. He was living in 'Bad Faith', and he was deeply anxious of his terrified degradation. Colin Wilson, in his *The Outsider* [1956] says, "so long as a man is not horrified at himself he knows nothing about himself." (Wilson, 1956, 316). Billy realizes his degradation when he seduces Rima Kaul, and then he is horrified at himself, and at his degradation. He makes his existential choice then and embraces tribal life, but that too is not his ultimate goal as he suggests in his conversation with Romi. "His questioning about himself, of his identity" (Joshi, 2008, 70) finally makes him conscious of his life guided by the 'Bad Faith', which he must renounce. Like Siddhartha he renounces his wife and child and obeys the urge that he had felt right from his adolescence. He becomes a refugee from civilization, as he alienates himself from the civilized world which is meaningless for him. It was Billy's existential choice to renounce the crass materialistic society. He responds to the call, the vision of the primitive life and embraces it without making any compromises. He is different from Sindi Oberoi who makes compromises getting involved finally, though to begin with he is presented as a rootless – character. Billy's life ends in tragedy as he makes his existential choice of embracing the primitive world as his first step in his quest for something mysterious. Billy's renunciation of his family has a mystic meaning as he felt that 'the inheritors of the cosmic night' were waiting for him. He had a quest for something beyond himself. He was in search of 'real' life. Bilasia, the tribal girl, attracted him because she represented a primitive force. In her company he felt that he had discovered that bit

of himself that he had searched for all his life. But Bilasia, of course, was a step towards his quest for something beyond. The sophisticated society in which he lived was for him meaningless as it appeared to him nothing more than the making and spending of money. The life in this society was for him like that of dogs in the kennel 'yawning or struggling against each other.'

Billy's wife, Meena, is a contrast to him. She represents the so-called civilized society involved in their ambition and superficial life, which for Billy was phoney. Billy finds himself being corrupted by this society and its ideals. His seduction of Rima Kaul was a great shock to him, which jolted him out of his degradation. There was a threat of being condemned to the life of decay. Billy realizes that he is being completely mired into Bad Faith especially after his infatuation with Rima. Talking to Romi, he says:

I certainly underwent a deep metamorphosis that was, no doubt, responsible for all that I did subsequently. Layer upon layer was peeled off me until nothing but my primitive self was left trembling. (Joshi, 2008, 124)

Billy was evidently trying to rescue himself from the clutches of Bad Faith, the kind of life he was living. But when he tries to escape it, he has to pay heavy price for his existential angst. The effort of the members of his family to bring him back to civilization result into the final tragedy of his life.

III.2 *Where Shall We Go This Summer?*

Sita, the protagonist in Anita Desai's novel arrives at the Manori Island, the magic residence of her father, not to give birth to her fifth child. She does not want to give birth to the baby. But, she wants to keep it, keep it inside her, preventing it to come out into the world. In other words, she wants to work out a miracle, in the words of her husband, Raman, she would like to have "An immaculate conception in reverse." (Desai, 1982, 33)

After the death of her father, Sita was married to Raman, the son of her father's friend, Deedar. On the Manori island, with her father, Sita enjoyed Arcadian life, which was a simple life without luxury. Her childhood on this island was unusual as she was a motherless child. Her father, who was a freedom-fighter and a social worker hardly had time to look after his children. For Sita, Manori island appears to be an island of miracles and enchantment. Sita hankers after the island life of her memory. She is utterly dissatisfied in her married life, though she has now four children and she is pregnant with her fifth child. Sita's latent dissatisfaction is evident time and again in the novel. She shows her desire to go travelling like the tourists, which is her latent desire to go escape the drab, violent, crowded urban life. Sita appears to be facing an existential predicament. She would like to escape to the Manori island because she is utterly disillusioned with her life. People in the city appear to her to be obsessed by their appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter to them. She rebels against the stereotype life of cooking and procreating. When she faces the existential choice of either to escape to the Manori island where she can magically keep her child unborn or continue to live in the drab city life.

Sita, who was brought up on a secluded island away from the complexity of the civilized world in a city, feels like an outsider in the city. She is frightened, appalled and disgusted. The quarrels among the maids, the gruesome death of the offspring of an eagle tortured by the crows, even her daughter Menaka's tearing off the paintings greatly upset her, reducing her to tears. She is pregnant. She would not like her fifth child to be born; she would like to keep it inside her. She prepares to go back to her father's residence on the Manori Island, away from the civilization. In her words, she is trying "to escape from the madness here, escape to a place where it might be possible to be same again". (Desai, 1982, 32) She wants to say 'No' to this civilization where there is violence, lack of feeling. Her daughter Menaka absent-mindedly crumbles new buds on a small potted plant, which horrifies her. Her sons engaged in a mock-battle horrify her. Coming back from Ajanta Caves, Raman and Sita come across a foreigner, who seeks a lift to Ajanta, and Raman guides him to the right way. Sita considers the foreigner to be brave, and says, "I

would like to travel like that myself.” (Desai, 1982, 47) To Raman it appears an act of infidelity. But this wander-lust in her is actually a sign of latent desire to escape the civilization where she feels like an outsider. After her father's death she is thrown into this strange world, which is quite normal for her husband and children, but which really suffocates her. After her marriage with Raman, she had adopted bridehood as an insect adopts certain form “for the sake of camouflage and self-defence”. (Desai, 1982, 48) Since then she had experienced melancholy and boredom, which showed on her face.

Sita's boredom, her latent dissatisfaction, was quite evident the way she used to sit on the balcony, smoking, not reading the book on her lap either looking at the sea or away from it, as if always waiting. She had not inwardly accepted the life she was living. She seemed to be waiting, but she could not say what she was waiting for. These years of her life were tinged “with either anxiety or resignation, or with frenzy, patience, grimness, fears” (Desai, 1982, 49), always ‘waiting’. She was always upset by signs of violence ranging from her son, Karan, kicking a tower of blocks, Menaka tearing her watercolour paintings, and newspapers giving headlines of violence in Vietnam, a woman weeping over a small grave, evidently of a child. These pieces of news struck her like hand grenades hurled at her belly holding her child. She was worried that by giving birth to the child safely contained in her belly, she would be releasing it in a violent, pain-wracked blood-bath. She appeared to lose ‘her maternal belief in child-birth.’ How could she bring a child into this violent world? She felt it was one more act of violence. And thus she came to a decision of not have the baby, not to bring it into the world but keep it safe in her belly.

Sita's decision to keep the child in her belly appears to be prompted by her latent existential thinking. Why should she bring this child into the world full of violence and brutality? And her decision to go to Manori Island is prompted by the feeling that only at Manori, with its black magic; she would be able to keep her child in her belly safe from the violent world. As J.G. Masilmani points out –

The escape to the island of Manori and its primitive conditions is an attempt to capture the carefree days of her childhood

where time stood still and yet it was no paradise. Corruption, selfishness, egoism have all had their place there. (Masilamani, 1978, 29)

When she was very young she had grown afraid of the Island. She was sceptical about it. But now the life on the Island beckoned her. And the life on the mainland became "a crust of dull tedium, of hopeless disappointment". (Desai, 1982, 52) She, therefore, decides to go back and find the island of her memory, the magical Island, where she would, by magic, keep her baby unborn, protecting it from the world of violence.

For Sita the life on the mainland, the ordinary day-to-day life, had become insufferable. She wanted to go to her father's island to find release from the cross materialistic and humdrum life. Its reality became very oppressive to her. So she tried to seek refuge in her vision of the magic island of her father's days. It appeared to her a protection from the drab, unfeeling life on the mainland, where even her children appeared to be insensitive. She saw how maidservants harshly quarreled and cursed each other. She could not even stand the mock-fight between her young sons, who were imitating a scene in a movie. She could not understand even her daughter, Menaka, who recklessly tore off the paintings. Her husband, Raman, could not understand her, though he really cared for her. He could not see how Sita had grown disenchanted with the mundane, drab life, and how she hankered after the romantic escape to the island of her father.

As Jasbir Jain notes:

In many ways her experience of life had been bleak and drab, grey in many ways, harrowing and depressing and she could not bear the thought of bringing the child into a world as dreadful as this. (Jain, 1987, 127)

Sita mentally lives in the world of the past. Though she is upset by the violence around and in the world, she hardly appears to think of her husband and the children. She is utterly dissatisfied with the life around. She is one of those

women who would cry out 'No' to the life around them, who rebelliously defy the life around them. As Dalmia [1997] says, she is one of those "who fight the currents and struggle against it, they know what the demands are and what it costs to meet them." (Dalmia, 1997)

Like other women protagonists of Anita Desai, Sita also tries to reject the role she has been given in her life. She feels like an outsider in Raman's family. Her smoking cigarette is a kind of protest signifying her rejection. Her husband, Raman, is a practical kind of man. He does not quite understand Sita's neurotic sensibility, her reaction to the violent happenings around her. Though he is well-meaning and considerate, it is an ill-matched marriage that leads to such tensions in Sita's mind. There is an existential tone to Sita's distraught behaviour and her deep dissatisfaction in her life. Her escape to the island of Manori is out of despair and frustration caused by the violence of the city life and her hankering after the ideal life she once lived on the Manori Island. She feels anxiety about giving birth to her fifth child, which becomes the present crisis in her life. Anita Desai is concerned with the human condition of her characters like Sita, who are caught in an emotional turmoil. As F. H. Heinemann says, "The problem of existentialism is in a narrower sense expressive of the present crisis of man, and in a broader sense, of the enduring human condition". (Heinemann, 1953, 178) Sita feels emotionally isolated in the absence of desired relationship, rather companionship of her husband. As a result she finds herself alone and anxious in her family. She is herself responsible for it because of her inability to look at her life in proper perspective. She finally returns from her world of fantasy to the world of reality. She takes a decision to make a compromise which is prompted by a poem by D. H. Lawrence, which runs as follows:

The wild young heifer, glancing distraught,
With a strange, new knocking of life at her side
Runs seeking a loneliness.
The little grain draws the earth, to hide

Nay, even the slumberous egg as it labours
under the shell
Patiently to divide and sub-divide,
Asks to be hidden, and wishes nothing to tell. (Desai,
1982, 137)

Anita Desai, in her interview, has explained the significance of these lines, justifying the compromise Sita makes accepting to go back with Raman:

Of course, if one is alive in this world one cannot survive without compromise, drawing the line means certain death and in the end, Sita opts for life with compromise – consoling herself with Lawrence's verse with the thought that she is compelled to make this tragic choice because she is a part of this earth, of life, and can no more reject it than the slumberous egg can or the heifer or the grain. (Ram, 1977, 95-104)

Sita makes positive existential choice here, prompted by the lines of the poem and accepts to go back to Bombay and deliver the baby.

III.3 Impressions

The protagonists of these two novels, Billy Biswas and Sita, are very different from each other. However, both have a feeling that they are mired into the mundane world in which they feel alienated and are required to lead life in 'Bad Faith'. Billy finds himself being degraded in his effort to stay put in his high-middle-class life, and he is disgusted with himself for duping Rima Kaul by false promises. He is horrified with himself, and resolves to renounce his past, his family and the everyday world, and seeks meaning of life among the tribals. Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* finds herself in the world of violence in the metropolitan city, and resolves not to give birth to her fifth child. She goes to the island of Manori, where she had spent her childhood, an ideal place of magic of her father. She has an idealistic notion of the life on this island, and hankers after it. She is disgruntled

with the life that was “nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matters. Animals.” (Desai, 1982, 47) Her escape to the island of Manori is the result of her life being lived in Bad Faith. She cannot, however, achieve this because she is pregnant, and the island of her childhood is now a desolate place. Both the protagonists struggle to end their life being lived in Bad Faith, but in Sita's case her escape route is unfortunately blocked. Even in Billy's case, his escape proves futile much later, as the mundane world of violence comes visiting him in his world of romantic escape. Sita experiences existential predicament as a result of the loss of interpersonal relationship as well as maladjustment in her family life. She is disillusioned with life. The idealism she experienced in her life on the Manori island made her contrast her married life in the city, where she finds nothing but sex and appetite; only food and sex and money. She is disillusioned with the sluggish stereotype life of just cooking and procreating. She revolts against it and hankers after the idyllic life on the Manori island. She goes in search of the values of this life being disgusted with the crass materialist life of a metropolitan city. But, like Billy Biswas she is defeated. Being a woman she has limitations. She cannot turn neurotic like Maya in *Cry, the Peacock*. She has to make compromises accepting duty to her family and come back to the inauthentic domestic life. Sita's life in the city is lived in Bad Faith. Like Billy she seeks escape from it. Both meet relatively tragic end, Billy courting death and Sita meekly surrendering to her mundane inauthentic life, utterly disillusioned at Manori island.

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