Chapter Five

Summation

Arun Joshi, an outstanding Indian English novelist selected for indepth analysis in this thesis, rips open the psyche of an individual trapped in the matrix of decaying human values. The novelist delves deep into the crises of the contemporary Indian life and establishes the supreme significance of humanistic values in the life of modern man who is under the vicious impact of westernization and modernization. The aim of this study is to explore the psychological problems of the protagonists in the five novels of Arun Joshi and how the fission in their psyche makes them alienated and isolated beings. All the protagonists suffer psychologically as they journey in their lives. Though the reasons for their psychological troubles and turmoils are varied, their suffering is the same. Some of them detach themselves from human company and some of them are pricked by their conscience for their lapses. All of them tend towards finding a solution and most of their problems are resolved in their own peculiar way.

Arun Joshi’s novels demonstrate the author’s preoccupation with the problems of the twentieth century man’s dilemma and its repercussions. His novels expose the undue pressures by the modern civilization in the individuals which leaves them as mere automations with no sensitivity.
The subsequent fission in the psyche of the individuals reduce them to a state of alienation, detachment and isolation. Joshi discovers the reality which lies hidden in the actuality of one’s life. His characters live in a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. He presents the inner life of his protagonists so skilfully that it becomes universal in his creative smithy.

As a novelist, Joshi has renounced the larger world in favour of man who is in search of the essence of life. Joshi has not focussed on the social and political problems but on the deeper layers of man’s psyche. His distinction as a psychological novelist lies in the fact that he never winds up his character portraiture simply but gives them a wider canvas with psychological significance. Moreover his protagonists represent a cross-section of humanity and this lends an authentic aura to his creative world.

The protagonists of Joshi feel smothered by the malicious effects of the advancement of modern science and technology. Man in the new millennium feels depressed by the mechanization and he has lost his companionship and comradeship. With a feeling of dejection, he understands that his potentiality is reduced and his creativeness is decreased. So man undergoes a deep sense of personal crisis. The dehumanization is the cause for the isolation and alienation of the individuals from their fellow-beings.
Arun Joshi’s fictional forte is the exploration of man’s inner life. He plunges into the unfathomable depths of human psyche and brilliantly illuminates the subtle ways in which it deals with the onslaughts of disturbance in human life. In search of new themes, Joshi has engaged himself in finding the essence of human living. As an outstanding novelist, Joshi has sketched out in all his five novels, the inner crisis of modern man.

The Introductory chapter shows how Arun Joshi marks a definite departure from the general run of Indian English novelists in many ways. His novels delineate more of human problems than issues arising out of regional loyalties. His characters step out of themselves and question not only the situation which impinges on their consciousness but their own self-indulgent attitudes which keep them away from facing the reality. Joshi’s condemnation of the industrial, the civilized and the materialistic world is not guided by a sentimental extolling of Indian philosophy and values of life but by a genuine faith in the integrity of the primitive values of sensuousness passion and action. His technique of self-introspection intensified by self-mockery opens a new dimension in the art of Indian English fiction.

The novels of Arun Joshi exhibit the existential flavour as Joshi was influenced by Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre and Kierkegard. He held the father of India, Mahatma Gandhi in high esteem and he deemed his life as a good paradigm for a noble life. The novelist has candidly confessed his
debt to Indian scriptures. The journey of his heroes can be treated as a movement from “becoming” to “being”, from initial negation to final affirmation. In fact the truncated state of the protagonists is the first step towards the preparation for their metaphysical reconciliation and its resultant poise. They humble themselves and subject themselves to purgational experiences of all kinds while trying to find a way out from their misdeeds.

Joshi’s keen cognizance on the rootlessness and the consequential loneliness, worries and anxiety that envelop man in a highly materialistic self-centred and corrupt society are revealed in his novels. The human soul divided against itself is delved deeply and its urges and aspirations are articulated with rare psychological insight by Joshi because of his contact with schizophrenics when he was working for a short period in a mental hospital in U.S.A where his uncle was a psychiatrist. The experiences that he acquired at his work in a hospital left an indelible mark on his young and impressionistic mind and later influenced his fictional craftsmanship.

Very many critics have analysed the novels of Arun Joshi and they have emphasized how the novelist is dexterous in his delineation of the predicament of modern man. All the five novels of Joshi demonstrate the tormented and fissed psyche of modern man in this mysterious universe. As psychology provides an important clue to the perils and problems of modern man, this indepth study earnestly analyses the isolation, alienation,
laceration, rootlessness, restlessness, dilemma and trauma of man in the contemporary society.

The second chapter titled **Dissociation and Dilemma** explores the two protagonists Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* and Billy Biswas in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and their dissociation and disintegration from their fellow-beings. They are dissociated due to rootlessness and problems of adjustment. These men have no focus in life and so they shift their job and residence as they are dissatisfied and disappointed in their lives. The reasons for their dissociation and the consequent dilemma are their childhood abuse, parenting issues, conjugal conflict and existential problems. They are not attached to their family and friends, jobs and places. Sindi’s dilemma starts when he is disappointed with every relationship that he creates. Billy detests the urban sophisticated society in India and America and quits it as his preference is for tribal life in Maikala Hills.

Sindi and Billy have suffered a characteristic sense of existential insecurity in the modern world, the most significant aspect of which is their feeling that they are persons who cannot be related to any geographical space and cannot appropriate to any one culture, land or people or to themselves. Sindi fears that he belongs to nowhere and is left dangling in mid-air severed from all connections of rootedness whatsoever.
The Foreigner, the maiden novel of Arun Joshi highlighted thought-provoking, grave issues like rootlessness, detachment, frustration, quest for better alternatives, identity crisis and self realization underscoring India’s cultural heritage and imperishable moral values.

Sindi Oberoi, a Kenyan born American Indian is in a solitary state of mind, following his alienation from his environment, tradition and his own self. Sindi swings between detachment and attachment revealing the dissociation in his psyche, which gives him a sense of loss or rootlessness. He is a confused man as he is a produce of diverse cultures. His mixed parental blood and upbringing in an alien country instil in him a sense of rootlessness. Devoid of a spiritual and cultural anchorage, and being brought up in a loveless world, he harbours in him a deep sense of insecurity and unreality. Against this background Sindi cultivates a sense of detachment, to overpower the sad experiences of life. He is a self-deceiver, detached with a sense of delusion. He even avoids marriage because he is afraid of family ties. Moreover he is afraid of being possessed by anyone. His parentage and early life have made him a nowhere man.

Sindi comes to India in search of his ancestral roots. But he fails to carve out a niche for himself. He is a foreigner in India as well as in America. His foreignness lies within himself. Rootless and fissured, Sindi becomes quite cynical and detached. Devoid of care, security, and cultural
roots, Sindi grows with a cleft in his personality and becomes a wandering alien. He is an uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century who has become detached from everything. As Sindi believes in detachment from the world and its affairs he is led to his loneliness. His non-involvement, apathy, loneliness and strangeness make him fissured and deluded throughout his life. He creates an iron wall of detachment from everyone around him.

The disappointment and failure in Sindi’s two love affairs, one with Anna and another with Kathy taught him to practise detachment and non-involvement in human emotions. Even after a long time he carries on the ailing effect caused by his broken relationship with the two women. Still Sindi remains placid and firm as he has learnt to keep strong emotions of love and affection at bay. Sindi’s decision to remain detached gets jolted when he falls a prey to the charms of June Blythe. Though he falls in love with her, Sindi is afraid of being involved. He wants to remain free of all kinds of bondage though he loves June wholeheartedly. June, therefore, has to incline to Babu’s constant love on her. Sindi’s false and loose game with detachment drives both June and Babu to death. Hence Sindi leaves America and goes to India. He hops from one landmark to another. The unfortunate circumstances toss Sindi from one set of blows to another and he appears to be wearied of his existence. His chance meeting with a catholic priest whose teachings “all love – whether of things, or
persons, or oneself – was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion” (Foreign 145) marks a turning point in his career and he is prompted to accept the concept of action without attachment.

Sindi notices the hypocrisy and artificiality of the modern society in America. The social parties in America, the related tensions and false promises, the pretended curtsies are testing his nerves. Similar are his experience at the social parties at Mr. Khemka’s house in India. He finds parties to be a bit of hoax. Though East and West are poles apart, both the civilizations are destructive and tyrannical. The material prosperity and individualism rampant in both civilizations make Sindi unhappy and fail to provide him a state of peace within and around. Sindi feels a misfit in the ultra-modern society of Boston. His foreign background alienates him in the Indian society also. This affects Sindi psychologically that he becomes a sort of detached being, afraid of any commitment in life. Sindi’s experiences in India in the beginning were not much different from those in the West. The show had continued and only the theatre had changed.

Finally, Sindi understands that detachment does not mean escape or alienation, instead it means involvement, devotion and sacrifice. His idea of non-commitment comes to an end, when Sindi takes over the management of the imprisoned Mr. Khemka’s business and becomes fully devoted to his task at hand. He decides to pilot the sinking ship ashore. To achieve his goal and to straighten the factory, he hurls himself headlong
into the battle of survival which the workers could not have won without his help, cooperation and guidance. This feeling reduces the loneliness, frustration and apathy in Sindi and it creates the deepest feeling of happiness, joy and gladness of heart in him. Sindi who is a man totally detached from his surroundings, society and even from his love, turns out to be the saviour of the factory workers. The cynical exponent of non-involvement is turned to be a warm hearted, purposeful man of action. The armour of indifference and non-involvement which he has been wearing is made of wax and the slightest warmth of love has melted it away leaving him naked and helpless. He has learnt by bitter experiences that true detachment consists of right action and not escape from it. As Eliot puts it “And do not think of the fruit of action/Fare forward” (“Dry” 11. 161-62).

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a continuation of the first novel *The Foreigner* because thematically both these novels are cemented together. Both the protagonists Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* and Billy Biswas in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* are exploring things in order to find out their own bearings and moorings. They are disillusioned and convinced that it would be pointless for them to try to participate in the indifferent anglicized social world of India. They are unable to relate themselves meaningfully to their surroundings and consequently with divided personalities, they are helpless in reconciling with themselves.
Like Sindi Oberoi, Bimal Biswas (Billy), the protagonist in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is also detached from family and society. He is a misfit in the ordinary human world. His case is slightly different from that of Sindi who deliberately detaches himself from human company. It is Billy’s uncommon insight in him that separates him from others. A primitive force or *Urkraft* is motivating him. He is over sensitive and has intensity of feeling and his mind is constantly under stress and strain. He consciously gives up the modern day world as he feels suffocated within the elite society. Arun Joshi mediates between two conflicting forces – the primitive world and the modern anglicized upper crust of Indian society which is lost in the superficialities of life.

Romi and Billy stay together and develop a strong bond of life-long friendship. Billy stays at Harlem in New York, though he could afford to live at some better place. To him White America is much too civilized and Harlem is the most human place he could find. He is a rare man who has poise without pose. Most people consider him a light-hearted good sport but his eyes which are the dominating feature of his face never lose their deep sombre look. Tuula Lindgren, the Swedish girl doing an advance course in psychiatric social work and Romi are the two persons who understand the dilemma of Billy’s life. As he feels the strong streak of primitivism, he is interested in far away places and he wants to have a glimpse of “fascinating primitive societies” that exist in India.
After returning to India, Billy does not find the phoney, consumerism ridden world of Delhi much different from the American materialistic society. The people he meets in India are nothing more than apes mimicking the forsaken ideas of the West. Billy’s predicament results from the confusion of values in civilized society. There is a wide gap between him and the modern Delhi society.

Meena, the wife of Billy is a product of the phoney society who has no idea of human suffering. She fails to communicate with Billy. He expects Meena to help him put a check on his hallucinations but he is greatly mistaken as it is a marriage between uneven minds. Even while staying so close as husband and wife, Billy is essentially lonely as he could not feel free to be mentally independent and share his natural feelings with his wife. Marital incompatibility between them aggravates Billy’s loneliness. This incompatibility exacerbates Billy’s growing disenchantment with this world. He suffers from dislocation and a sense of isolation.

Billy, all of a sudden disappears from the face of the earth into the Sal forests. The whole area is combed for a year to trace him but the efforts prove futile. People believe that he has been killed by a man-eater. He leaves the civilized society because he is conscious that staying in it will yield evil consequences. He withdraws from the trivialities of life in the sophisticated society which fails to sustain him and fulfil his urge for a
meaningful life. He wants to have the realization of his true identity and to integrate himself with the vital forces of nature that will lead him to higher plane of experience. He takes efforts to integrate himself with the primitive self. He is determined to seek his own destiny. He realizes that he belongs to the tribal abode. He undergoes a metamorphosis. The civilized world condemns him and calls him a rebel but the tribals consider him their friend and king.

Agony and Anxiety, the third chapter analyses the agonised psyche of Ratan Rathor in The Apprentice and Som Bhaskar in The Last Labyrinth. In an atmosphere of moral and spiritual decay, the duo of protagonists find themselves lost and alienated. Due to guilt and moral lapses, both of them, Ratan and Som grope in a state of utter spiritual darkness, unable to secure a grip on the forces of life. Agony due to grief and anxiety which is consequent of incompatible inner needs are the major causes for their trauma.

Like Sindi and Billy, Ratan too is another reflective introvert. He is a victim of the petrified and frozen society of the modern world and the plot is woven around his memories of events and incidents that take him out of a village and enable him to secure a foothold in the metropolis of Delhi. He is neither a rootless foreigner like Sindi nor a rebel like Billy. He is a practical man whose idealism is shattered by the corruption in society. The guilt-loaded psyche of Ratan is burdened and he confesses his
sin to a silent listener, actually a student who has come from Punjab to Delhi to rehearse for the N.C.C parade on the Republic Day.

Ratan’s psyche is troubled because of his steep fall in morals in proportion to his meteoric rise in material status. Ratan is a young man who out of sheer exhaustion of joblessness and privation is forced to shed the honesty and the old world morality of his father to become an “apprentice” to the corrupt civilization. One is alienated in this ‘phony’ world unless one accepts and adjusts to ‘the guilt’ of the modern society in order to belong. In his feverish pursuit of careerism, Ratan submits himself to all sorts of corruption that the modern world offers. Ratan realizes that a combination of humanism and religion can be the saving grace of mankind steeped in corruption. The inner emptiness of Ratan is neither the rootlessness of Sindi nor the unusual urge of Billy but it is the compelling force of civilized society that shatters the idealism of the youth like Ratan and compels them to turn cynical and even hypocritical. Ratan has lost his self and felt the anguish of loss. His existential decision to recover the lost self through an act of penitence reveals the need to realize and prize one’s integrity.

Ratan is agonized in his psyche because of his double inheritance, the patriotic and courageous world of his father and the mean and materialistic world of his mother. His sense of guilt in his pursuit of accumulating wealth causes anxiety in his psyche. But his mother advises
him not to be a chip of the old block by being a patriot and not earning money for the family. The humiliating experience of Ratan, while hunting for job leaves him frustrated and disillusioned.

When Ratan finally gets a job, he is swept away by the materialism of the world and he reveals the obvious fact that money is essential in life. With money comes its drawbacks. Women, wine and wantoness titillate him. He ogles at the women around and visits prostitutes. Ratan’s contact with Himmat Singh, an underground don is the last stage in his materialistic and deceptive way of life. Ratan dares to consign the defective materials for graft which during that time has permeated all over the country. The corruption starts seeping into Ratan’s soul. Betraying conscience, he receives the bribe proving his moral degradation. It is the irony of fate that Ratan becomes responsible for his childhood friend the Brigadier’s nervous breakdown and death. Pricked by his conscience, he realizes the severity of his misdeed.

The concept of salvation through devotion is powerfully exemplified through the story of Ratan. The novel’s main thrust is on the purification of the soul and also on the abiding values of humility and self-effacement in human life. The realization that “one’s life is a total waste” (*Apprentice* 138) that dawns upon Ratan after his friend’s death goads him to undergo penance. Ratan starts from the very lowest by dusting the shoes of the congregation, outside the temple every morning like an apprentice.
with a desire “to learn”. The way which Ratan chooses for his purification is by service to mankind and prayer to God as he knows that purification of self is not to be obtained by any ritual or dogma. Such an apprenticeship in humility arms man to face the challenges of life successfully. The novelist pins his hope on the new generation and ends the novel with a positive note of affirmation.

Life today is characterized by chaos, disorganization, absurdity, cruelty, brutality and insensitivity. The unclean political and administrative set up has perverted the universally accepted ethical norms and has encouraged the unscrupulous pursuit of wealth and power. The individual with heightened sensibility feels powerless and isolated from his innermost nature as well as from his surroundings. Through Ratan the dehumanising materialism of the present century is brought to limelight.

Som Bhaskar, the protagonist in *The Last Labyrinth* has another kind of psychic dissociation. Though a millionaire industrialist, he has an eternal longing to possess anything that he desires. His inner world is turbulent because he is relentlessly driven by undefined hungers, hunger of the body and hunger of the spirit. Som considers the world as a labyrinth and is groping through reality in order to beget the material and sensual pleasures, the business shares of Aftab Rai and even his concubine Anuradha. Som’s failure to control his weaknesses and flaws ditches him into agony and anxiety.
Som Bhaskar is an obsessive and highly sensitive individual, who has his grappling with the feeling of emptiness and void at the core of his being. He is an ambitious son of a prosperous industrialist. In his pursuit of realizing his ambition, his efforts are futile. He even rushes to the arms of innumerable women but every time he experiences just void. He becomes mentally shattered and physically exhausted with dreams and insomnia. As a result of his anxiety to acquire more and more, he manoeuvres a sort of alienation and restlessness and even loses faith in God, in friendship, in marriage and even in fatherhood.

Som is fissured psychologically because he is completely immersed in the labyrinth of life which leads him through innumerable sufferings. The reason for his dilemma in his psyche is that he is relentlessly chased by undefined desire to possess everything. He is always haunted by a mysterious voice which is audible only to his ears. He feels void, loneliness and is lost in the labyrinth of thoughts. He is at a loss to know how to fill this emptiness. This void leaves him with insomnia and he can do nothing about it at the conscious level.

Som has made several unsuccessful attempts to find out the reason for the void in his psyche. With the spirit of a business tycoon and guided by the dictum “Survival of the fittest” he has tried to acquire wealth and name and fame that go with it. Money has added to his misery. Even tranquilizers and sleeping drugs could not afford to soothe him, instead the
voids return with a relentless ferocity. He has gained melancholia from his father. Moreover, his grandfather is a womanizer and boozzer. It is this lack of stability that has created dilemma in the psyche of Som Bhaskar. Besides, his mother is a religious woman who believed in God and divine healing. Science and religion created a strain in his psyche.

Som is a representative of those modern men who may have gained the whole world but have lost their souls, their spiritual and cultural moorings. His conflicting self with its endless desire to possess is resolved through his association with Anuradha, Gargi and Geeta. Anuradha showers love and sympathy on him and miraculously saves him from his ailment. Gargi makes him realize the meaninglessness of worldly possessions. Geeta, his patient and tolerant wife saves him from the sin of suicide and rouses him from ignorance. These trio of women in their own way help Som to move on the path to faith. This faith can be attained only after passing through a painful ordeal and overcoming the impasse of intellectual doubt through a knowledge of human suffering and through spiritual commitment.

This world is a labyrinth, an intricate maze where man has to carve his way out for himself. The thematic structure of the novel concentrates upon two coordinates – “hunger of the body” and “hunger of the spirit”. The protagonist Som Bhaskar’s odyssey shows that he is torn between two pulls of the body and the spirit. Life is so full of distractions like lust,
greed, wrath and pride which serve as different layers of a labyrinth that man is most likely to get deviated from the right path of salvation. Lal Haveli, the locale of the novel is literal as well as metaphorical in its implications and serves as a fitting symbol of the world outside.

The trio of protagonists Sindi, Billy and Som are in some way or other globe-trotters. They are educated in British or American Universities. But Ratan Rathor in *The Apprentice* is a “home-spun” one who has received no higher education beyond the frontiers of Punjab. They are all sons of parents with social recognition, either material or cultural, with noble or lofty ideals. Sindi belongs to an affluent family, Billy is the son of a Supreme Court Judge, Ratan’s father is a freedom fighter and Som comes of an engineer – father’s family. All have their childhood days in a world of make-believe and their growth becomes a process of realization that the world outside is the hard reality. In their life, they face problems of alienation and lose their inner harmony.

Sindi, Billy and Ratan seek redemption as preached in *The Bhagavad Gita*. They demonstrate the universal lessons of Indian spiritual heritage that might have been temporarily relegated to the background but are still relevant, despite the materialism and rapid westernization of India. For Joshi, they still hold the key to the tormenting psycho-social problems of modern times.
The labyrinthine dark, rooms of the Haveli are in a way figurative embodiments of agitations, tensions and bitter memories from the past crowding round Som’s brain and tormenting him day and night. They provide the most appropriate backcloth for Som’s journey into the darkness of his soul. The labyrinth as an analogue for the flux of thought is recurrently used by Joshi in his earlier novels too. Sindi in *The Foreigner* speaks of the hurt that is still in the labyrinth of his consciousness. Romi, the Collector in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* expresses the view that the true meaning of life is to be found not in gossy pretensions but in the dark mossy labyrinths of the soul. In *The Last Labyrinth*, it is posited with the meaning of awareness and alertness in thought. The concept of cyclic continuity that of life and death, entry and exit being linked together by the labyrinth of life carries with it the metaphysical implications of T.S. Eliot’s famous line “In my end is my beginning”. Through intense self-examination and soul searching, Joshi’s heroes try to find the clue to the intricate labyrinth of life and arrive at a personal equilibrium and fulfilment.

Joshi’s last novel *The City and The River* is thematically different from the other novels and hence it is analysed separately in the fourth chapter *Dream and Despotism*. Though apparently a socio-political novel, it presents the psycho-social aberration in the city which stands on the Seven Hills. The novel revolves around the dream of the Grand Master
whose power syndrome drives him by fake means to prepare the city and its people to pave way for him to become its unopposed king but unfortunately his tricks lead to his destruction.

The novel is two dimensional, the eternal conflict between allegiance to man and allegiance to God. The tussle between “allegiance to God” and “allegiance to Man” is a recurring phenomenon in human history. The allegiance to man results in the coming of the Grand Master as a king and the allegiance to God with the Grand Master’s descend from the Seven Hills. In the conflict between good and evil, the one who has faith on the right action acquires the affirmation of life. It is left to man to choose his course of action and determine his future. Devoid of faith, the king and his men are blind to see this reality. Through the narrator, the Great Yogeshwara the myth of Sristri and Pralaya is brought forth and the novel satirises the alarmingly materialistic nature of existence. The Great Yogeshwara and the Grand Master represent two sets of values either of which man may choose in accordance with his perception of reality. The modifiers “Great” and “Grand” also suggest the quality of approach the two principal characters show in their conduct and activities.

Joshi has used various myths, legends and archetypes to suggest the value of right action, faith and authentic life which is the barest necessity of modern man. Joshi enlarges his canvas, turns his focus from the private to the public and deals with the socio-political and existentialist crisis of
the entire “City” which is every city. He takes up his favourite existentialist issues, but sees them through the spectacles of politics and thereby elevates the novel to the level of political–allegorical satire. The vision of life presented is relevant to both the individual and nation. In the political context, men’s ambition, egoism, selfishness, defiance to truth and the consequent suffering are reflected. There is definite need for spiritual commitment and collective responsibility to do away with evils.

The political and spiritual worlds are built on the dream of the Grand Master. The dream does not make him happy because in his dream he sees a bizarre world of naked men cropping up from the river who try to usurp his throne. This dream psychologically brings out the all embracing unconscious and latent desires of human mind. The Grand Master’s sole aim is to be an unopposed king of the city of Seven Hills. So he moves the coin in a perfect way in his game to retain and gain power and also to eliminate dissent. He creates an impression in the people that he is very popular, he is the choice of the people, endured and adorned by them. In order to consolidate his position, the Grand Master with the assistance of the court Astrologer announces “The Way of Three Beatitudes” or “The Triple Way” which is followed by “The Era of Ultimate Greatness” which leaves the people with foreboding.
The dramatic tension stems from the struggle between the Grand Master who wants to rule the city as an unopposed king and the lower rung of society, the Boatmen who are the children of the river. The city and the river are two opposing symbols. The palace Astrologer, the supporter of the Grand Master and the Hermit of the Mountain who is the disciple of the Great Yogeshwara, interpret the prophecy of the advent of the king in two different ways which results in great struggle and suffering.

The city is sterile devoid of vegetation and flowers. The area has the dominance of steel and glass and marble. In such an unnatural chaotic and spiritually sterile atmosphere, the characters suffer from alienation, weariness, boredom, rootlessness and meaninglessness in their lives. The city’s unnatural and chaotic atmosphere reminds one of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. With the advent of winter, the entire landscape excepting the palace and its adjoining area, is covered with flowers. The city’s severance from the river is the reason for its barrenness. The escalating tyranny of the Grand Master is the cause of the misery of the boatmen who are the children of the sacred river and leading a righteous existence. The boatmen’s sole allegiance to the river which cannot be shared accentuates the conflict between the city and the river. It represents the conflict between the materialistic dark world and the bright cosmic world.
After the destruction, a new city has to be risen. It will be ruled by another Grand Master. The city has to be purified of the vices of the old Grand Master such as egoism, selfishness and stupidity. At the end of the novel, the Great Yogeshwara sends his disciple to teach people the significance of prayer, faith and understanding to the new city. He also tells his pupil the gospel of Dharma and revealing to him the mystery of the world. The river is the great mother and the boatmen are her children. The river sustains the city like a protecting mother and destroys it when it becomes too overbearing.

The Grand Master’s psyche is fissured due to power syndrome. The ways of the city are vicious. Purification and sacrifice go hand in hand. The ‘yajña of life’ burns only on sacrifice. The solution to the malaise of the city can be found in prayer, faith, tolerance and above all right action. It is belief in God that restores peace to human soul. It is not success or failure that matters but man as an instrument of God must learn to submit to the will of God and surrender under his mighty wings.

The heroes of Joshi encounter numerous psychological and spiritual problems as they journey in their lives. All the heroes suffer from spiritual vacuum, fissured psyche, identity crisis and loss of faith in human values. They experience a sense of alienation and estrangement from their family, community, society and eventually from their own self and hence they have a paradoxical view of life. They are abject outsiders and stark
strangers. They are unable to relate themselves to the surroundings. Their house itself becomes a cage, where their souls groan and mourn and try to untie the chains around them. This pervading sense of rootlessness and alienation crushes human life from different sides and hence modern man is cowed down by the burden of life. He finds that the world is materialistic, full of disparities, tensions, corruptions and convulsions. The mechanized industrialization has come down very heavily on the nerves of modern man and has thrown him to “sick hurry and divided aims”. As he feels restless in this world, he decides to go on a spiritual quest so that he can be at peace within himself.

Some of the characters rebel against the socio-cultural pressures and pursue their quest for tranquillity. Though his heroes take erratic choices in their lives, they are pricked by conscience and step towards redemption and expiation. They are confused men who have no clear goal in mind. The economic drudgery, social pressures, the dissolution of old faith and dogmas and uncertain loyalties mercilessly crumple their life and wound their psyche. So they adopt a cynical attitude towards life which has blurred the established norms and the long cherished values of life. Through self-probing and self-exploration, through perceptions of the past and alienating experiences of the present, they discover the higher values of life.
The descriptions of inner life within the under-world of the soul divided against it have been evidenced in all the protagonists of his novels. The protagonists are subjected to extreme social, cultural and psychological pressures. The inter-generational tensions engendered with the changing ethos make increasing demands on the individual and contribute in creating a void which is nothing but a chaotic feeling of rootlessness in life, incessantly haunting their psyche and corroding every sphere of their life. This awareness of rootlessness and consequential restlessness is the keynote of Joshi’s existential vision of the plight of modern man. The protagonists discover the value and meaning of their existence by probing through the dark mossy labyrinths of the soul. This search or quest for peace and tranquillity is the leitmotif of Joshi’s novels.

Arun Joshi’s novels are thus bold attempts to discover the meaning of life. They try to devise ways and means for eliminating the discrepancy between the pursuits of an individual and his fulfilment. Joshi’s heroes are lonely and misfits in the world in which they live and face the meaningless of life. Though they are not religious or saintly, they are humble enough to learn the lessons taught to them by life’s problems. While experiencing the normal claims of love and hatred, doubts and dilemmas, they try to face challenges of their meaningless life by outstripping the narrow confines of their distraught selves. They indicate that they can realize the essence of life by liberating the self from the
clutches of mercenary civilization and by paying due heed to authentic calls of the inner being. By this way, they can come out of the terrifying degradation and purposelessness of the contemporary sordid, meaningless world.

Man in modern society fails to perceive the true meaning of life. Scientific and technological advancements have led to the loss of moral values, customs and traditions of the society. This advancement has engulfed him in a tragic mess of rootlessness, loneliness and meaninglessness. The rapid growth of affluent society, the poverty and hunger of the masses, the deterioration of moral values, the tension between ensuring generations resulting from changing ethos make increasing and often disturbing demands of the individuals.

In all the novels, Joshi views money as the corrupting force, be it Sindi, Billy, Ratan, Som or the Grand Master. The issues taken up by Joshi hammer on the consciousness of his readers about their own choice between the materialistic values and spiritual affirmation. His novels suggest that man’s metaphysical reconciliation is the only answer to all the agonies of his existence. They demonstrate that modern man may overcome his sense of uprootedness by self searching and introspection. The protagonists reach a critical point where they are in utter confusion and then encounter a catastrophe which becomes the basis for his introspection and prompts them ultimately to reconcile with the world.
The Great Yogeshwara exhorts, “let not fear sow confusion in your heart. Whatever happens the Lord will not forsake you, nor will your work be fruitless. Be rest in peace. Be not afraid. All shall be well” (City 157). Such kind of faith gives an existential vision which is essentially affirmative in character. The readers can identify themselves with Joshi’s protagonists and scrutinize the relevance of their daily struggles and dilemmas, agony and anxiety, fear and frustration.

Thus Arun Joshi’s novels enact the dilemmas, desires, dreams, traumas, and destines of modern man. His rejection of material civilization brings out and engages his worst instincts and cuts him off from the sustenance and peace provided by his traditional, moral and spiritual founts. Though man has no choice in his birth and death, he can take decisions about his life. He can make it meaningful by right action, self-discipline and by performing his duty to the world in a spirit of detachment. This detachment does not mean withdrawal from life and action but renunciation of selfish desires. The protagonists of Arun Joshi threading through the labyrinth of life, reach effulgent chinks of affirmation, thereby fortifying one’s faith in man’s ability to survive as man.