This doctoral dissertation titled **Novels of Arun Joshi: A Psychological Analysis**, is an exploration of the psychological problems encountered by the protagonists in all the five novels of Arun Joshi, a reputed Indian English novelist. All the novels of Joshi, *The Foreigner*, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, *The Apprentice*, *The Last Labyrinth* and *The City and The River* selected for indepth analysis in this dissertation, spotlight the alienation and aberration, the dissociation and dilemma and the agony and anxiety in the psyche of the protagonists as they journey through the world where they feel that they are aliens and strangers.

Arun Joshi is a reputed novelist in the post-Independence phase of Indian English literature. His main thrust is on the individual psyche of his protagonists. All the novels of Joshi shuttle between the paradoxical pulls of attachment and detachment, action and inaction, love and hate, involvement and non-involvement, materialism and spiritualism. His novels are woven around the psychic imbalances and impulsive actions of the protagonists. They violate the norms of social life and indulge in actions which are instinctive and irrational. They unquestionably suffer from a deep sense of depression and despair, frustration and fragmentation and dilemma and trauma. Alienated and isolated from the familial and social surrounding, they try to work out their destiny in their own way.
The Introductory chapter discerns a brief survey of the psychological novels in the West and indicates the influence of the West on Indian English fiction. In order to appreciate Arun Joshi in the proper perspective, the beginnings of Indian English fiction, the major themes in the writings of Joshi’s contemporaries are dealt with briefly. The change that came in Indian English fiction after Independence when the authors shifted their focus from public to private themes, from external world to inner reality is highlighted in order to place Arun Joshi in his canon. The experiences he acquired as a young man in U.S.A and India, his contact with schizophrenics in the mental hospital and his indepth knowledge of Indian philosophy influenced his fictional craftsmanship.

A short survey of criticism on Joshi’s novels reveal how the novelist is dexterous in his delineation of the predicament of modern man. All the five novels demonstrate the power of the psychological over the physical. The psycho-emotional experiences of the protagonists provide the matrix of the plot. As psychology provides an important clue to the meaning of the problems of modern man, this dissertation earnestly attempts to analyse the alienation, rootlessness, dilemma and the trauma of man. So a psychological interpretation of Arun Joshi’s novels, it is presumed will be an addition to the study of Arun Joshi as a psychological novelist.

In the second chapter Dissociation and Dilemma brings into focus the untravelled, mysterious and dark realms of human psyche in order to
reveal Man’s distress which is consequent of his dissociation from his environment, family and his own self. The duo of protagonists, Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* and Billy Biswas in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* keep the band of human relationship at bay and cocoon themselves in a world of their own. Both of them struggle to find a way out from their commitment in life. Sindi is rootless and restless as he is an alien because of his mixed parentage. Devoid of familial, social and cultural ties, he is emotionally detached in his work place and even in his affairs with women. He is afraid of binding relationships. Later he realizes that involvement without undue attachment is the key to affirmation.

Billy Biswas, the protagonist in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is another dissociated individual whose dilemma is caused by the conflict between the norms of the primitive mode of life and the materialistic urban life. As Billy is a misfit in the civilized, sophisticated urban world, he goes to Maikala Hills to be one with the primitive tribal community. He is a strange man with an uncommon insight “Urkräft” in him. So he enjoys the company of Dhunia, the tribal chief and Bilasia, the tribal beauty. In the tribal world wearing loin cloth and eating simple food, Billy’s dilemma gets resolved.

Both the protagonists Sindi and Billy are troubled with dilemmas of different kind. Their temperamental difference alienates and estranges them from their friends and relatives. As dissociated individuals, they
resort to suitable alternatives for their survival. Sindi finds it through the principle of action without attachment. Billy is at peace, when he comfortably settles down in the tribal abode.

**Agony and Anxiety**, the third chapter explores man’s agony due to grief and anxiety resulting from incompatible inner needs. In an atmosphere of moral and spiritual decay, the two protagonists Ratan Rathor in *The Apprentice* and Som Bhaskar in *The Last Labyrinth* find themselves lost and alienated. Truncated from a foothold, due to guilt and moral lapses, both of them, Ratan and Som grope in a state of spiritual darkness, unable to secure a grip on the forces of life. Ratan like Sindi and Billy is fissured 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. In his pursuit of accumulating wealth, he falls into the corrupt ways of life. Silencing the cries of his conscience, he receives bribe for supplying defective war material which kills his childhood friend. Later he tries to make amends for his misdeeds. Realizing the futility and hollowness of his whole life, he goes to a temple and wipes the shoes of the devotees and begs forgiveness to God. The symbolic act of penance brings him peace and tranquillity.

Som Bhaskar, the protagonist in *The Last Labyrinth* is relentlessly driven by undefined hungers, hunger of the body and hunger of the spirit. Though a multimillionaire and a business magnate, he wants to possess
anything that he desires. He has a sense of void, idleness and loneliness within him. In his anxiety to acquire more and more, he maneuvers a sort of alienation, restlessness and self-centredness losing faith in God, in friendship, in marriage and in fatherhood. Anuradha, the concubine of Aftab, gives him a little relief from his anxieties and agonies. Her sudden disappearance, from Som’s life, his unexpected illness, and the fear of death are all taxing his soul to the core. Gargi, the spiritual mother understands the orchestra of Som’s discontent. His warring emotions get reconciled when Gargi provides the missing link between Som’s material hunger and spiritual cravings.

The bruises and scars in the psyche of Ratan and Som get healed with the balm of love and spirituality. Both of them realize that humility, sacrifice and suffering are the three-fold path to exploring divine truth. In their anxiety to end their trauma and fill their emotional lacuna, both of them have crossed the dark mossy labyrinths of their soul.

The fourth chapter titled **Dream and Despotism** exposes the psychology of the ruling class, their sycophant coteries and the masses in Joshi’s socio-political novel *The City and The River*. The author sets aside the inner turmoils of the individual depicted in his preceding works and leaps ahead painting on a vast canvas describing the predicament of a whole generation. Being a severe commentary on the times and a political parable, the novel reveals the ruthless governing of the city by a power-
conscious Grand Master and his fawning council of Advisors. The people of his kingdom struggle and suffer to maintain freedom and liberty of spirit. It digs on the corruption and malpractices of the political leaders, the businessmen, the police and the armed chiefs.

The political theme of the novel is maintained through the dream of the Grand Master, who is a despot of the city on Seven Hills. The spiritual theme rests on a parable of human choice between allegiance to God and allegiance to man. The boatmen swear their allegiance to God and not to the Grand Master. In order to make his dream a reality, he schemes and plans in such a way that he should become an unopposed king of the city. The boatmen oppose the evil ways of the Grand Master to wield power. When man fails, nature takes its cudgel to purify the city by destroying it with water. The city has to be purged from the vices of egoism, selfishness and stupidity of the old Grand Master. An unquestionable faith in God and surrender to Him is the only solution to the threatened existence of human beings.

The last chapter **Summation** ties up all the points together and sums up the findings of the researcher. In this doctoral dissertation, the researcher has closely followed the mechanics of writing outlined in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Seventh edition, 2009.
All the five novels are authentic records of the agonies and anxieties of modern man who with his eagerness for materialism gets deviated from the right path and chooses the wrong way. Joshi does not advocate escapism as the solution to the problems of life but projects the journey of the protagonists from detachment to involvement, from inaction to action and from illusion to reality.

Despite being influenced by the West, Joshi’s vision of life is deep rooted in the Indian soil, its culture and spirituality. He has strong faith in God and this faith redeems his protagonists from their corrupt ways of life. The study affirms that through self purification, faith, suffering and sacrifice that divinity is restored and mankind gets salvation. Thus Arun Joshi’s presentation of the tormented and tortured self of the modern man has added a new dimension to the Indian psychological novel.