Chapter One

Introduction

Every creative person is a duality or a synthesis of contradictory aptitudes. On the one side he is a human being with a personal life, while on the other side he is an impersonal, creative process. Since as a human being he may be sound or morbid, we must look at his psychic make-up to find the determinants of his personality.

Jung

Arun Joshi, as a psychological novelist recognizes a reality beyond the mere phenomenal world and offers a consistent form to the shapeless facts of human experience. He, as an artist is not satisfied to restate the experiences in a cold matter-of-fact manner, but he shapes them in a new way in order to discover the reality which lies hidden in the actuality of his own life. For Joshi, fiction is neither a source of entertainment nor an instrument of publicizing some set ideas. He does not use his genius for propagating any political or social creed. Moreover, he does not follow any formula while writing a novel but he rather grapples with the moments of acute, trying situation in human life. He reveals man’s predicament,
particularly the motives responsible for his action and the reaction of his action on his psyche.

Man is a social animal and he is interdependent in his family and society. In spite of the latest technological and scientific advancements and all the means of comforts and luxuries, modern man is ill at ease within himself because of his sense of rootlessness, restlessness, alienation and isolation. He feels that the immense increase of knowledge has not liberated him, instead it has cooped him in a cage of existential dilemma. Arun Joshi’s men protagonists are images of modern man who mark themselves as “outsiders” and “misfits” with segmented and tortured psyche. As Joshi has unveiled the inner crisis of modern man through his protagonists, a modest attempt is made in this thesis to explore the novels of Arun Joshi namely *The Foreigner, The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, The Apprentice, The Last Labyrinth* and *The City and The River* in a psychological perspective.

Joshi’s fictional world is a world, where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. His search is directed towards the unfathomable region of human psyche. This attempt of his makes him a great artist with psychological insight. He delves into the inner recesses of human psyche where he finds instincts and impulses at work. “He seeks a process of the apprehension of reality which may lead him to the world of
the core of the truth of man’s life” (Dhawan 18). He reveals that man is unique in an indifferent and inscrutable universe.

One of the remarkable features of modern writings is the use of non-literary techniques to gain insight into literature. One of these techniques is the psychological approach. As psychological analysis in literature is an excellent tool for reading beneath the lines and as it can afford many clues towards solving a work’s thematic and symbolic mysteries, an earnest attempt is made in this dissertation to analyse the novels of Arun Joshi in a psychological perspective.

Modern literary critics are interested in Psychology as a discipline that will provide them with better instruments of perception. Freud’s emphasis on the unconscious aspect of human psyche, Jung’s concept of archetypes, information about the pathological expressions of the human mind from clinical pathologists, discoveries about the behaviour of man in groups and social patterns from the social pathologists have supplied them with new weapons of inquiry. Guerin has rightly pointed “. . . for all the difficulties involved in its proper application to interpretive analysis, the psychological approach can be fascinating and rewarding” (84).

In the general sense of the word, there is nothing new about the psychological approach. Guerin feels that “as early as the fourth century B.C. Aristotle used this approach in setting forth his classical definition of tragedy as combining the emotions of pity and terror to produce catharsis”
Sir Philip Sidney with his statements about the moral effects of poetry was “psychologizing” literature. So were the Romantic poets like Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley with their theories of imagination. In this sense then, virtually every literary critic has been concerned at sometime or the other with the psychology of writing or responding to literature. According to Trilling, the psychological approach began “as far back as 1762 with the publication of Diderot’s *Rameau’s Nephew*, a shameless outcast of disintegrated consciousness” (276).

Psychology refers to the application of the knowledge of scientific study and mental functions to various spheres of human activity including issues related to everyday life. “Psychology includes many sub-fields of study and applications concerned with such areas as human development, sports, health, industry, media and law” (“Psychology”). Psychology is literally the study of the mind or soul but its area is broadened in the last century. The psychological novel steered fiction away from the traditional roads of external reality and physical world to the new avenues of inner landscape of the human mind. Psychological approach is one of the most controversial approaches in the field of literature. But proper application of the psychological approach to literary studies can be fascinating and rewarding. Psychologists like Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung (1875-1961) have underscored the principles of psychology and they have explained and applied these principles in interpreting literature.
Sigmund Freud appeared on the scene with his brilliant thesis on psycho-analysis which violently shook the foundations of human thought. His statement that man has got a sub-conscious, a reservoir of suppressed thoughts and desires was an eye opener to many. He declared that every little action of man, even his dreams, reveries, half expressed and unexpressed thoughts could be traced back to his sex instinct or libido. People began to look at things in a new angle. Experiments were commenced in the light of psycho-analysis. Stream of consciousness was one such experiment. Freud thus paved the way for blending psychology and literature.

The modern writers make use of the new science of Freudian psychology in their writings in order to portray their characters. Freud discriminates between the levels of conscious and unconscious convictions which are rationalisation of emotional needs. By Freud’s psychology man’s strongest motivations are sustained by primal instincts rising in his subconscious depths.

There are certain factors which affect the psyche of an individual and cause disorders in the physical, mental and psychological attitudes of persons. Schizophrenia, trauma and fear complex are caused by psychological turmoil. The behaviour of a person speaks volumes of his defect in his psyche. This may perhaps be due to the unconscious conflict
often arising from a person’s childhood or adulthood experiences. These conflicts and clashes find expression in the modern psychological novels.

The turn of the modern age saw great changes in the political, social and intellectual life of the people all over the globe. At the beginning of the twentieth century, English writers like William Butler, Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells and John Galsworthy were teaching their countrymen to throw out the obsolete ideas and dogmas of the past ages and to imbibe new conceptions of freedom and self-assertion. With eagerness and naïve optimism, social reformers and intellectuals set out to build a “brave new world.” To smash the false ideologies of the last age was the intention of writers like Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington and their followers. So far literature has been concerned with the “externals” and the revolution is with the “internals” and literature should focus on the mysterious inner recesses of the psyche and the hidden parts of the conscious must be dragged to the open.

Strictly speaking, the modern psychological novel was born between 1913 and 1915 with the publication of Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913) and Dorothy Richardson’s first volume of *Pilgrimage* (1915). James Joyce published *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1914) in serial form. This was a mere coincidence that these trio of novelists who were unknown to each other, three distinctly different talents and temperaments were producing works that had a remarkable influence
on English fiction, by turning it away from external to inner reality, from
the outward world to the hidden world of fantasy and reverie. The
twentieth century British novels in the later part of the Georgian period
were influenced by the psychologists and as the years (1915-1945)
advanced the psychological tendency became more and more pronounced.

The psychological novel opened out new horizons for the art of the
novelist. It showed him the way to bring the reader into direct contact with
all that was going inside the human mind. The temperaments, moods,
fantasies, associative memories, momentary observations and subconscious
thoughts of the protagonists in the novels assumed greater significance than
before. The psychological novelists show a tendency to deormalization
instead of regularity of form. Diversity and complexity supplant the
former uniformity and simplicity. They feel that the sense of life is often
best rendered by an abrupt passing from one series of events, one group of
characters, one centre of consciousness to another. So they deviate from
conventional chronology. The calendar and clock time of the Victorian
novels are kept at bay. They do all sorts of tricks with time in order to
present the complex inner life of the characters. The movement from
cradle to grave is absolutely neglected and the action flashes back and
swings forward in time past and time present. The past is imminent in the
present. Woolf aptly points out, “life is not a series of gig-lamps
symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semitransparent envelop surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (220).

The psychological novelists introduced a new technique in their works namely the Stream of Consciousness technique. It describes the flux of the mind, its continuity and yet continuous change. Every thought is a part of the personal consciousness and each thought is unique and ever changing. According to James:

. . . no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before . . . we feel things differently according as we are sleepy or awake, hungry or full, fresh or tired, differently at night and in the morning, differently in summer and in winter and above all things differently in childhood, manhood and old age . . . it is palpable and obvious that our state of mind is never precisely the same. . . . (101)

Ever since India came into contact with the West, there has been a cross-fertilization of her life and literature. The impact of West has penetrated deep into the Indian ethos. Following the pattern of the West, the Indian English novelists have started trying their hands in writing psychological fiction. Modern man faces countless problems in his family and society. The economic drudgery, social pressure, the dissolution of old faiths and dogmas and uncertain loyalties mercilessly crumble the life of modern man and wound his psyche. The socio-cultural pressures propel
him to quest for his inner peace. Through self probing and self exploration, perception of the past and alienating experiences of the present, he discovers the higher values of life. Along with the psychologists and philosophers, the modern Indian English novelists have discussed the predicament of deep rooted anxiety, alienation and aberration in their writings. “Modern fiction reflects the twin consciousness, the haunting traumas and the tireless quest” as portrayed in the works of Indian English writers” (H. Prasad 75).

The Indian English novel is now an integral part of Indian reality. Although it had a humble beginning, it has taken firm and deep roots in the Indian soil. The development of the Indian novel in English can be traced from its experimental stage to realistic and then to psychological. In 1920s, the realistic novels portrayed the contemporary battles and agitations surging the nationalistic feelings. The novels written between the two World Wars were chiefly concerned with exploration and interpretation of the social milieu as is evident from the representative works of the three founding fathers of Indian English literature Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. The common themes in their novels are man in relation to society, the portrayal of poverty and hunger, the suffering of the innumerable poor because of class distinction, exploitation of women, changing values of modern civilization and issues of diaspora. Most of the men novelists recognize man in his social context. They
project an India torn between tradition and modernity and their novels display a comprehensive vision of the Indian society. Though these novels did not make any conscious attempts at dealing with the individual’s personal predicament, they underscored the impact of psychological changes in the lives of modern men. Walsh aptly writes:

> It was these three who defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate. They established the suppositions, the manner, the idiom, the concept of character and the nature of themes, which were to give the Indian novel its particular distribution. (247)

After 1950s, however, the interest of the novelists shifted from the public to the private sphere. They began to delineate the individual’s quest for the self in all its varied and complex forms and his problems and crises. White rightly records, “if anything is to distinguish Indian fiction . . . it would be the varied literary attempt to portray the conflict of the contemporary Indian” (59).

Some philosophers and thinkers have called the present age an age of alienation and hence modern man feels a sense of rootlessness and restlessness which leads to the loss of identity. As Chatterjee points out, “the paradoxes of human life are contradictions of society, contradictions which bring out alienation between man and man” (40). Alienation is one of the greatest problems confronting modern man. Alienated heroes are
aplenty in modern English fiction. It is paradoxical that despite scientific and technological achievement, the contemporary man is doomed to find himself in a tragic predicament, in the rat race of life. Man has plunged into uncertainty, perplexity and unsettlement. The consequence is confusion, frustration, fragmentation, disintegration, desperation, isolation, fission, detachment and non-involvement prevailing in the human psyche.

The best examples of the men facing existential crisis find place in the novels of Arun Joshi. Fuller remarks that “in our age man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem . . . a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his way of existence” (3). The potential meaninglessness of human existence has corroded human life from various quarters. The existential encounter with nothingness and the tenuousness of human existence are prototypical of modern life. The hiatus between what the individual aspires for and the hard reality of what he achieves, between what he professes and practises has mercilessly crumpled his life leaving an insidious effect on his inner being. The injuries inflicted and the scars left on his psyche generate a cynical attitude towards the established social norms and values and make him grope for life’s relevance. This leads to alienation and exile. The problem of meaninglessness is so pervasive that it threatens to corrode every sphere of human life.
The characters of Joshi are alienated and isolated beings in their own home and they make frantic efforts to seek, organize and affirm their position. They feel that they are misfits in the sophisticated, civilized and urban environment. They perceive no purpose in their lives and the irrelevance of their existence in a hostile world. Painfully aware of his precarious position, man experiences severe limitations in today’s set-up and an acute terror of the world augmented by its randomness. The reason for the modern man’s problems are varied. According to Fromm:

In the nineteenth century the problem was that God is dead; in the twentieth century the problem is that man is dead. The danger of the past was that man became slaves. The danger of the future is men may become robots [who] will destroy their world and themselves because they cannot stand . . . a meaningless life. (122)

In fact the absence of inter-personal relations is the greatest curse of this age. Men have become islands in the sense that some kind of inner crisis has made them alienated from themselves, their homes, their surroundings and their community. According to Pathak, the corrosive impact of alienation can be seen in the form of “generation gap, the anti-war movement, the hippie phenomenon, the credibility gap, the compartmentalization of our lives, the stunting of personal development, the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaningfulness of life, and so on”
Modern man is devoid of purpose. Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost. All his actions become senseless, absurd and useless. Joshi dexterously uses the theme of alienation as a means to lead his characters to communal living.

The contemporary writers of Arun Joshi too portray the problems of man in the Indian scenario. Writers like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, Kushwant Singh, Shiv K. Kumar and Salman Rushdie explore the social, cultural and psychological crisis of modern man. These novelists have explored man’s internal life in the contemporary society.

The novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988) are internationally acclaimed for their irony and perceptive social commentary. He portrays characters who are victims of society’s unjust persecutions. In his novels, he concentrates on the greed for gold, exploitation by moneylenders, the need for rational attitude to combat old customs and human relationships with a psycho-social vision. He has given a true picture of hungry Bengal in his first novel So Many Hungers (1947). It is also a psychological study of a set of human beings trapped in a unique tragic predicament. The novel unfolds the story of a large man-made hunger that took a toll of two million men, women and children in Calcutta and Bengal. The novelist portrays the horror of it all with a pitiless precision and cumulative detail. This novel is an impeachment of man’s inhumanity to man. In Music for
Mohini (1952), Bhattacharya attempts to portray the psychological turmoil of a modern city girl who is forced by means of an arranged marriage into a repressive traditional way of life. The novelist tries to connect an old Eastern view of life with the new semi-Western outlook. The central theme of the novel is the tie or tussle between orthodoxy and modernity which remains a glaring sociological problem of the Indian society. This novel is a psychological study of the intellectual and emotional development of Mohini, who grows from girlhood to womanhood. The novelist attacks the caste system in the novel He Who Rides a Tiger in which an untouchable masquerades successfully as a Brahmin priest. It is a satire on Hindu orthodoxy.

Another philosophical and psychological novelist in India is Raja Rao (1908-2006) whose first novel Kanthapura (1938) is an account of the impact of Gandhi’s teaching on non-violent resistance against the British. The tremors of Gandhi’s impact on South Indian villages are recorded in the chatty language of an elderly widow. The story is seen from the perspective of a small Mysore village in South India. It may be summed up as ‘Gandhi and our Village’. The fusion of poetry and politics makes Kanthapura a distinctive novel and a new species of fiction. The story teller Rama in The Serpent and the Rope (1960) is sensitive, subtle, sensual and spiritual. Regarding the action of the story, it has a physical as well as a psychological side. The psychological action is important and it takes
place in the heart, mind and soul of Rama. It is an ambitious and meritorious effort at achieving a total projection of India in vivid fictional terms.

Apart from history, army and communal politics during Partition, Manohar Malgonkar (1913-2010) wrote of human relationships also. His first novel *Distant Drum* (1960) is an attempt to present aspects of army life in India during the period of transition from the last years of the British regime to the first years of Congress rule. Malgonkar fuses several elements in his novels to lead them to the convincing effect and the novels succeed as much by the careful plotting and the interior stitching as by the power of the writing to evoke situation and atmosphere alike. In *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), the role of the Second World War in effecting radical changes in the affairs of men and nations is heavily underlined. The war certainly gave a sort of shock treatment to men, nations, continents and when the war ended, the old order was no more. In the novel, the issue is first between Indian nationalism and British colonialism. But soon throwing the Hindu and Muslim division into the shade, the fundamental fight for freedom from British rule is concentrated upon. The novelist describes how communal poison sours and embitters the lives of freedom workers and converts them into communal fanatics. The novels of Malgonkar are about India as seen through Indian eyes. The socio-historical milieu of those times forms the backdrop of his novels, which is
usually of action and adventure, probably reflecting in some way, his own life. His novels are neatly constructed and entertainingly bold narratives, in which he portrays almost all aspects of life.

Kushwant Singh (b.1915) whose name is recorded in the Indian literary history is one of the finest historians and novelists, a forthright political commentator, an outstanding observer and social critic. He is lauded as a humorous writer, an incorrigible believer in human goodness with a devil-may-care attitude and a courageous mind. To his credit, his literary works are not only psychological but they also analyse the problems faced by common man. Some of his novels reveal the consequences of war which are horrible. The loss of innocent lives are deeply mourned in *The Train to Pakistan* (1956) which is followed by *Black Jasmine* (1971), *The Company of Women* (1999) *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* (2002) and *The End of India* (2003). His comparisons of social behavioural characteristics of westerners and Indians are laced with acid wit.

Shiv K. Kumar (b.1921), a novelist, short-story writer, poet, playwright, translator and critic portrays the trauma of the communal holocaust that followed the British withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent in his novel *A River with Three Banks* (1998). It captures with poignancy the suffering of the migrants. Basically it is a story of revenge and romance presented against the communal frenzy. It recreates
in a language that glows with fragrance and colour, not only the trauma that one associates with Partition but also love, compassion and forgiveness that it evoked even in the midst of communal conflict. His novels clearly mirror the society of mercenary life and the slowly but definitely disintegrating human values and relationships.

Salman Rushdie (b.1947) follows the tradition of social realists and his works contain magical realism mixed with historical details. Though his first literary work *Grimus* (1975) introduced him to the world, his fame is projected only through his novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981). It reveals the life of a child who is endowed with special powers and a connection to other children born at the dawn of a new and tumultuous age in the history of the Indian sub-continent and the birth of modern nation of India. His novel *Shame* (1983) deals with the political turmoil in Pakistan and Rushdie draws his characters on Bhutto and General Zia-Ul-Hug. *The Satanic Verses* (1988) was the centre of a major controversy and gained the protests of Muslims round the world.

David Davidar (b.1958) a recent writer, whose debut novel *The House of Blue Mangoes* (2002) is a voluminous work chronicling multiple generations set in deep Southern India and shows how one family copes with its country’s divisiveness as it lurches forward into history. In this novel Davidar gives a strong impression of India’s contradictory nature where conquerors may come and go, feuds and loyalties may divide and
unite, droughts, diseases, and misfortunes will give way to years of fertility, health and wealth, but the sun will continue to rise, bringing with it the problems, pleasures and promise of a new day. The novel brings vividly to life a small corner of India, while offering a stark indictment of colonialism and reflecting with great poignancy on the inexorable social transformations of the subcontinent. *The Solitude of Emperors* (2007) examines three famous secularists, Emperor Ashoka, Emperor Akbar and Mohandas Gandhi. On December 6, 1992, the Hindu fundamentalists pulled down a sixteenth century mosque in Ayodhya, a town in Uttar Pradesh and reclaimed the site as the birth place of the God Ram. The communal riot that followed spread to other parts of India, especially hundreds of miles south in Bombay. The novel is set against this background of religious and political violence. The novel has a didactic aim – to explore the misuse of religion in politics. Davidar creates three distinct viewpoints that of innocent, the wise man and the cynic respectively to articulate different sides of the argument for secularism.

canvas to depict the intertwined destinies of two families, displaced from East Bengal by Partition. The psychological turmoil of Partition is well depicted in this novel.

The women novelists in India resemble the British novelists Jane Austen, George Eliot, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf in their structure of characterization and portrayal of women’s psyche. Among the women novelists in India, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Sashi Deshpande dive deep into the inner mind of the repressed women by virtue of their feminine sensibility and psychological insight and bring to light their issues which are the outcome of Indian women’s psychological and emotional imbalance.

Kamala Markandaya (1904-2004) representing the older generation of women writers explores the deep rooted social evils like social injustice, poverty, inequalities and class disparities in her novels and how they cause psychological upheavals in Indian families. *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), her maiden novel is a record of the peasant life in India and the agonies and aspirations of the peasant community interpreting the real problems of the teeming millions. In her other novels like *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffer Dams* (1969) and *Nowhere Man* (1972), she exhibits the psychological turmoil of the men and women as they are exploited by either the society in which they live in or by the alien British power. Markandaya lashes at the colonial attitude of the Britishers and their
pursuit of materialistic gains through exploitation. Her novels *The Coffter Dams* and *Pleasure City* show how Markandaya bemoans the loss of the primordial beauty when technocrats and builders of international fame feel lured by the territories with the sole objective of furthering their commercial interests. She portrays the mental landscape of the sensitive suffering individuals through whose mind the contours of social conditions are projected. Indirectly, she implies the reforms that ought to be introduced, an economy which ensures a fair distribution of necessaries, and a social order which will provide equality to man. In this sense, her novels are protest against exploitation of any kind and a plea to move the hearts of the exploiters.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (b.1927) presents life with all its domestic frictions and explores the mind and the sensibility of women. As she is no sentimentalist, she does not falsify or merely idealize life. Though her novels have apparent social themes, they probe into the psyche of the characters. As a novelist she excels in treating the incongruities of human character and situations. In *The Householder* (1960), she gives a typical sample of Indian domestic comedy in the conflicts between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, the one with overt accusations, the other with silent hostility or at the most, obliquely expressed wrath. Jhabvala’s Booker Prize novel *Heat and Dust* (1975) is a love story which contrasted the events of the 1920s and the 1970s. As social documents, Jhabvala’s
works mark a conspicuous progress on the Indian women writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Nayantara Sahgal (b.1927) as a novelist lays bare the conflict of an individual in the background of politics. Her main concern is the passive attitude of the Indian psyche. In *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), the tension mounts between two states and two chief ministers on opposite camps. Her novels are primarily records of the political, historical and social changes that have affected India during the last days of freedom struggle and the years following Independence. She tries to search solutions for political problems. In some of her novels, she makes an attempt to reassess the institution of marriage and its functions in a patriarchal society. She offers an analysis of the ideal and real marital relationship. She images India’s elite responding to the crisis engendered by political change. Sahgal is very sensitive to women’s issues and has tried to centralize woman rather than marginalise her. She explores the theme of violence, disorder, chaos and anarchy both at the political and personal level in the pre and post-independent days.

The younger generation of women writers headed by Anita Desai break a new ground in Indian English fiction by shifting their emphasis from the external to the internal world. The thought of exposing the inner recesses of men and women, to delve deep into the hidden human psyche and to go beyond reality were alien to the novelists until Anita Desai came
to the literary horizon. These novelists create a psychological world of their own which they fill up with extraordinary sensitive characters. They create segmented and alienated women characters who build a wall around them and lead a life of emotional seclusion. The themes of most of the women novelists in this age are the incompatibility of couples, inharmonious relationship between spouses, domestic disharmony and conjugal collapse. What is most exciting about modern novelists is their probe into the existential problems of mankind by fixing the lens of their focus on certain individual characters. They excel in highlighting the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women tortured by a sense of loneliness and desperation.

Anita Desai (b.1937) has widened the scope of Indian English fiction by being the pioneer of psychological novel in the modern Indian English Literature. She penetrates deep into the inner working of women and externalizes their passive reaction. *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) is her maiden novel with an Indian woman protagonist Maya who is undergoing considerable traumatic experiences obsessed by mental tension. In *Voices in the City* (1965), she analyses the inner mind of Monisha who is alienated by conjugal conflict. In another novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975), she studies the mind of Sita, the protagonist from a woman’s point of view. C. Devi is of view that, “Most of her characters suffer from psychological syndromes” (“Tremors” 149). In another novel, *Fire on the
Mountain (1977), she has dealt with the emotional problems of the characters from the woman’s point of view. The characters lead a solitary life in a decaying house in the hilly area. Anita Desai is preoccupied with the inner world of women rather than the outer world of action. Unlike the majority of her contemporaries, she is interested in her characters rather than in creating the environment which is used to define them. She is a painter of varied moods, conflicting choices and inner experiences. Her characters hail from the middle class society, usually her women are emotional as a contrast to rational men. She does something unique by portraying each of her woman as an unsolved mystery. Solitude and self exploration are the recurring themes in her novels. In Journey to Ithaca (1995), she portrays the predicament of modern man caught in the contrived dialectical opposition between “What is” and “What ought to be” through Matteo’s alienation. Delineating in novel after novel, the awful plight of the alienated self of woman, Desai has rendered a new dimension to Indian English fiction.

Shashi Deshpande (b.1938) too reveals a feminist perspective, the revolutionary sentiment of the middle class women in her novels. That Long Silence (1990) voices the feelings of the novelist in favour of emancipation of women from the grip of conventional male control. She depicts how her protagonists, instead of becoming rebels against the patriarchs, reshape themselves assertively and adapt to the male dominated
society. Sashi Deshpande pens the domestic lives of middle-class women who are educated, independent and modern in outlook. Deshpande is chiefly concerned with the subtle psychological tendencies of the individual mind. She deals with the problems of career women, a new issue in Indian English fiction. The novelist unveils the process of gender oppression and differentiation in the male dominated society. Her novels begin with failures and frustrations but end in an optimistic note despite all the suffering, tension and agony that her protagonists have undergone in their lives. In her novels, *The Binding Vine* (1992), *A Matter of Time* (1993) and *Moving On* (2004), Deshpande presents characters who are capable of leaving behind their past and breaking the chains of moral codes imposed upon them by the society. All the characters realize that life has its convulsions but they have to move on with courage and confidence.

Bharati Mukherjee (b.1940) the expatriate of Indian origin focuses her attention on the condition of Asian immigrants in North America with particular emphasis on the changes taking place in South Asian women in a new world. An essential theme of her novels is racism as an important feature of the oriental and occidental culture. The novelist narrates her stories from a wide variety of perspectives, concentrating upon the concept of self within a large society. She has a special eye on characters who are adventurers and explorers rather than refugees and outcastes. *The Tiger’s Daughter* (1972) explores the protagonist’s sense of culture shock, when
she travels back to India. *Jasmine* (1989) is about a young Indian woman in America who is trying to adapt to the American way of life. In order to continue her life there, she changes her identities many times. Her novels explore the phenomenon of migration, the position of new immigrants and the sense of alienation often experienced by expatriates, the reaction of Indian women and their struggle in the alien land. Her characters are surrounded by violence and brutalities and they are victimized throughout their lives.

Shobha De (b.1948) a very recent controversial writer concentrates on the problems of women. Without showing the feminist flag, she feels very strongly about the oppressed position of women. She portrays the journey of a prominent Bombay socialite from an ordinary middle class girl to a self-sufficient woman in *Socialite Evenings* (1988). She tries to shatter the dominant patriarchal values in the Indian society in her two novels *Starry Nights* (1989) and *Sisters* (1992). The novel *Strange Obsession* conveys a picture of glamour and fashion. Her concern in this novel is of great social relevance. She highlights the issues of crumbling marital relations on various accounts leading to frustration, conflicts and loneliness.

Anita Nair (b.1966), a budding Indian English novelist is skilful in exploring the psyche of her women creations and revealing the problems related to gender. Her novels are reflections of Indian life with the focus
on the problems of survival. Her novels are woman-centred and men are kept at bay. She is branded as a feminist because she emphasizes on the liberation and freedom of women. *Ladies Coupe* (2001), her masterpiece reveals the way in which the Indian society treats its women. The novel is based on the historical practice of granting women a separate space away from the eyes of strange men in the hustle and bustle of train travel throughout India, enabling women to wash their dirty linen in public. In *Mistress* (2005), her lastest novel, Nair explores the meaning of art and life. The novel at one level looks at the turbulence in the life of a couple who are close relatives, with all the baggage of large family where dependency breeds strong emotions. Anita Nair is a positive thinking woman and the struggles of women presented in her works are modern and hence her views are universal in appeal.

Kiran Desai (b.1971) is one of the very young diasporic writers in the contemporary Indian English scenario. Like her mother Anita Desai, she too is interested in the mindscape of her characters. Her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) is set in the Indian village of Shahkot and follows the exploits of a young man trying to avoid the responsibilities of adult life. Kiran Desai’s enchanting Booker Prize winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) explores with intimacy and insight, the contemporary issues like globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, fundamentalism and terrorist violence. Her novels
centre on existential dilemma. The characters isolate themselves from their family and live alone. She has handled thought provoking issues which reveal serious existential crises faced by man in the modern age.

All these men and women novelists proceeding and succeeding Arun Joshi have dealt with psychological allied sociological issues and problems faced by their characters as they journey in their life. The themes of these writers show the differences and alikeness in the themes portrayed by Arun Joshi in his novels. All these writers including Joshi are mainly concerned with the existential dilemma and how this leads to psychological tumults.

Though psychology and literature are at cross purposes, “the study of psychology is not at all futile for a literary artist or a literary critic” (Read 425). It might help both realize such facts as the subjectivity of love and the general laws regarding human emotions and ideals. Such a study enables the novelists to provide a realistic representation of the problems of existence or an interpretation of life. No doubt Arun Joshi, as a novelist explores the psyche of the twentieth century man which is the product of the strains of living in an excessively complex world and is perpetually on the verge of alienation and isolation. Each novel of Joshi is a tale of fantasy symbolizing a certain human desire. As the unconscious mind portrays its real yearnings in a disguised form, writers like Joshi express symbolically, the unutterable and unacceptable cravings of mankind.
Arun Joshi (1939-1993) is one of the most significant psychological novelists of the twentieth century. Basically Arun Joshi is an industrialist, who cultivated his love for literature only in his spare time. In the beginning, his books were not even revealed to his neighbours. His writing is a bridge between the two worlds and cultures – East and West. In all his novels and short stories, he has analysed the psychological problems faced by both the Indian and foreign characters. They undergo traumatic experiences. H. Prasad observes:

Arun Joshi is a novelist with intuitive understanding of human psychology. In the modern times, life has shifted from the outer world to the recesses of the mind. He expresses those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probings of psychology continue to disclose to us. His novels explore the crannies of the protagonist’s mind, [and] their split-self. (89)

In order to know the merits of Arun Joshi as a novelist, it is imperative to have an acquaintance with the major events of his life.

Arun Joshi was born in Varanasi in 1939. His father was a Botanist, an academician and the Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University and later at Banaras Hindu University. He married in 1964 and has three children two girls and a boy. His wife Rukmani, an entrepreneur herself, too has great respect for writers and understands them. Right from his childhood, Arun
Joshi had ardent liking for literature, though he studied Engineering and Industrial Management. He obtained an Engineering degree from the University of Kansas and a degree of Industrial Management from M.I.T. Cambridge, Massachuessets. For a brief period in 1957, he worked at a mental hospital in the United States.

His service in the mental hospital for the chronic schizophrenics helped him a lot to bring those situations suitable for his invented characters of his novels who are made to undergo the same experience. After his service in the mental hospital, he returned to India in 1962 and joined DCM in a managerial capacity on the recruitment and training side. Then he became the Executive Director of the Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. Later, he became the administrator of a philanthropic institution co-ordinating research and training to the staff. In the 1993 dry season, before the advent of the monsoon, all of a sudden Joshi died of the complications following an asthmatic crisis, asthma being an affliction he shared with two of his main characters Sindi Oberoi and Ratan Rathor.

There are a number of literary and non-literary influences that have moulded and shaped the artist in Arun Joshi. He was influenced by Albert Camus and other existential writers. In his interview with Bannerji, he admits:
I did read Camus and Sartre. I like *The Plague* and read *The Outsider*. I might have been influenced by them. Sartre I did not understand clearly or like. As for existential philosophers like Kierkegaard, I have never understood anything except old statements. (4)

Like the works of existential thinkers, Joshi’s novels express the absurdity of man’s existence in modern world but they assert their singularity in applying them in the Indian context and deriving solutions from native milieu. He was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and the Hindu scriptures – *The Bhagvad Gita*, *The Upanishads* and *Vedanta*. In his interview with Piciucco, “he accepted that the Hindu tradition has influenced him the most” (88). By employing Indian myths, customs and religious beliefs, Joshi seems to be approximating what Jung calls the “racial unconscious” or collective unconscious that has been constantly guiding Indian English writers. He believes that through his psychological study of human mind, he understood that the basic necessities of human beings are denied and their wants are not fulfilled. Hence, the person would experience frustrations, depressions and fragmentations. Arun Joshi, through his characters, portray their hidden anxieties and fears. Psychic aberrations are seen scattered throughout his novels.

Arun Joshi’s novels reveal his interest in both poetry and fiction and also philosophical writers from both East and West. The influences of
William Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold can be traced in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. He quotes a line from *Thyrsis* “It irk’d him to be here, he could not rest” (41) as an epigraph of the novel. Influences of Western novelists and poets have also gone into the making of the novelist. They provide Joshi with a body of suggestions in terms of themes and techniques, but he has taken these influences on his own terms and fused them with the indigenous, transmuting them into organic, well-orchestrated novels with the indelible imprint of his own individuality.

The existential problems due to disappointment, isolation and meaninglessness have received adequate attention among the Indian readers. No emotional problem is more threatening today than the pervasive sense of meaninglessness. Recent Indian novelists also have made significant efforts to delineate the predicament of the modern man. Though there are some differences in their approach, all of Joshi’s heroes are men engaged in finding the meaning of life. The novelist has tried to project through their experiences, the crisis of the urbanised and industrialised modern civilization along with its dehumanizing impact on the individual who is ever eager to find out and re-affirm the value of meaningful relatedness in life.

In his first novel *The Foreigner* (1968), Arun Joshi explores the depth of the problems of detachment faced by the protagonist Sindi Oberoi. Since his father belonged to India, he has gained the culture and traditional
ethics from his father. His mother, an English lady brings him up with western standard of living. After their sudden death, his uncle takes up the responsibility of bringing him up. Sindi’s loneliness is apparent to anyone who meets and talks to him. In short, Sindi Oberoi is trapped in his own loneliness.

Arun Joshi explores the psychological problems faced by Sindi Oberoi, who is a detached and alienated man. He sees himself as a stranger wherever he lives or goes in Kenya, where he is born, in England and USA where he is a student and in India where he finally settles. The novel depicts the alienation of the protagonist and explores the individual’s anguished consciousness of being alienated from the conventions and rituals of his society. Being a highly educated person, Sindi entails himself to discover the meaning of life undergoing the tumults and tensions of life. He, as a stranger, evolves his own way of consideration and evaluation. He also has a short-lived but passionate love affair with June Blyth but he refuses to marry her on account of his pseudo-commitment to detachment and non-involvement. In India, Sindi is disturbed by man’s exploitation by man and denial of human rights and fundamental freedom. His inherent human trait is thrown into light when he saves the business of Mr. Khemka, who has lost his business because of his dishonesty. And though he seems to be a social reformer, his secret love for Sheila is another ray of
hope for an imminent reformation in his life. The novel is largely autobiographical.

The author shifts his theme in the next novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) from the civilized to the primitive controversies. The rebellious hero, Billy Biswas is a student in the university in U.S.A doing Anthropology, where he meets Romi, his narrator friend. A vibrant friendship soon grows between the two immigrants and Romi has to share Billy’s room during his stay there. Billy’s choice of the apartment is in the most degraded area of Harlem, where he is at ease in the company of Tuala Lindgren, a young Swedish psychiatrist working in the U.S.A. She finds him obsessed with a great primitive force. Billy comes back to Delhi, as he is appointed as a professor at the Delhi University. There is a large communication gap between his parents and himself and so he could not speak out his inner urge to them.

Billy, a misfit in the white America finds himself itching to be back in India. With the American Ph.D in Anthropology to his credit and everything to lead a happy life education, status, wealth, job and a loving wife, Billy’s inner world is rocked by a groundswell of discontent. He is consumed by restlessness which grows steadily. His soul pinches him to ply away from the civilized world. He disappears in the forests of Maikala Hills, deserting his wife, child and parents. He absolutely keeps himself aloof from the civilization with which he could not cope at all. He starts
enjoying his life happily with a group of tribals away from the phoney civilization. Billy abandons the world of materialism and a life of deceit and hypocrisy to seek fulfilment of his vision and to find out a solution for his basic existential problem. Billy Biswas is a misfit in the modern milieu of technological jungle and seeks an escape from it. He symbolises the modern man who is restless and rootless.

_The Apprentice_ (1974), focuses on the protagonist Ratan Rathor, who is in a dilemma between his mother’s wish to earn money as much as he can and his father’s wish to join the front as he is a Gandhian Revolutionary. After his father’s death, his friends refuse to help Ratan and it breaks his faith in value of goodness, virtue and humanity. He accepts bribery but is caught by the connivance of the industry concerned. The whole deal is masterminded by Himmat Singh who has managed things in such a way that there is no written proof left against Ratan but the innocent Brigadier, a friend of Ratan is charged with corruption. Guilt stricken and fear tormented, Ratan comes to know that the Brigadier has committed suicide.

Ratan understands the futility of materialistic world and its existence. Being vexed highly with this corrupt society, he determines to give up his deceit and tries to achieve redemption by cleaning the shoes of the devotees every morning at a temple. The end of the novel spreads a ray of hope and affirmation. Ratan stimulates the youth with his words of
encouragement to rise to the occasion and he resumes the second start because it is never too late.

The Last Labyrinth (1981) explores the inner mind of an industrialist Som Bhasker who has a network of turbulent war within his mind because of his Indian culture and foreign education. Som Basker sets himself as a good paradigm for westernized affluent man who has been in search of his roots but emptiness and void encounter him. In his futile pursuit of realizing his ambition, he becomes mentally shattered and physically exhausted with dreams and insomnia. As a result of his bitter experiences, he manoeuvres alienation in his life and becomes self-centered and loses his faith in God, in friendship, in marriage, and even in fatherhood. He feels total alienation from the society around him. His heart longs to posses Aftab Rai’s business and his mistress, Anuradha. She becomes the centre of his existence. Both of them involve in a passionate love affair with each other. He finds himself entangled in the labyrinth of life. His questing psyche finds tranquillity in spirituality.

Slightly differing from the preceding works The City and The River (1990) is a step forward from individuality to universality. The plot of the novel is the struggle for power. “The strong undertone in favour of environmentalism makes this novel sound more as a political novel couched in metaphors” (P. Devi, “Natural”). Through varied symbols and images, the readers can discern the conflict between the ruler and the ruled.
The protagonist, the Grand Master wields his sceptre of power in order to become the unopposed king of the Seven Hills. The Astrologer is the Grand Master’s tool who advances attractive arguments in order to perpetuate the rule of the Grand Master. The escalating tyranny of the Grand Master increases the misery of the boatmen. The innocent are tortured in the Gold Mines. Under the leadership of Master Bhoma, the boatmen oppose the Grand Master. When the City becomes corrupt, selfish and hypocritic, nature in the form of a deluge destroys the city on the Seven Hills completely. The final message of the novel is, “His is the Will, His is the Force” (*City* 64). Man’s desire is to achieve more and more and become the most powerful person. The path chosen by the Grand Master leads to perdition and damnation and the wrath of God.

Bande comments:

> Within this thematic and structural frame work the apparently simple tale of a city and a river unfolds itself, gaining multi-dimensional meanings and discerning readers can read it at many levels, as an exposition of the psychology of the masses, the ruling classes and their sycophant coteries. (257)

Arun Joshi’s excellent craftsmanship is seen in his short stories which are not in any way inferior to his novels. He has published a collection of short stories *The Survivor* (1975). “The Gherao” is the story of a principal who has participated in the national movement of the country
and how he feels aghast at the deteriorating values of modern students. He feels humiliated when gheraoed by the students. The author presents the problems of the lower rung of society in the story “The Servant”. The industrialised prostitution and the confusion of two peasant boys in London are portrayed in “The Frontier Mail is Gone”. The Pseudo-westernization is another target of Arun Joshi in the satirical story “A Trip for Mr. Lele”. The impression of a young man who returns from the Eastern Front with a first-hand experience of war is well pictured in “The Home Coming”. “This story is noted for tearing away the fake facades under which modern society tends to lie low, modern fads which are but hypocritical” (“Viewspaper”). The emotional turmoil of the lieutenant is well portrayed. “The protagonists in Arun Joshi’s short stories, like those in his novels, symbolize modern man in his groping through the dark alleys of life” (Gopalakrishnan 68). In short, the story teller in Joshi is singularly unique and he stands distinct among his contemporary writers.

Critics have analysed the individual novels of Arun Joshi. They say that his protagonists are representatives of people who really suffer from mental disorders, fear, phobia and neurosis. He has selected materials from real life situations and has reshaped them by the power of his imagination. Raizada feels, “The artist’s imagination transforms material drawn from real life and fashions images from real facts and situations” (69-70). Joshi’s novels deal with the protagonists’ social and self alienation, the
resultant restlessness and their search for a way out of the intricate labyrinth of contemporary life. According to Verghese “they search for the essence of human living” (125). Speaking of Joshi and his art of writing Ghosh opines:

Joshi may be regarded as *avante garde* novelist in the sense that for the first time in the history of Indian novel in English he has powerfully exploited and given sustained treatment to a very potent theme of his times, namely a maladjusted individual pitted against an insane, lopsided society which is unhinged from its cultural as well as spiritual moorings and his uncompromising search for identity. (30)

Referring to his maiden work it is stated, *The Foreigner* shows the theme of “anxiety arising out of the chaos prevalent in modern life” (*Mathur* and *Rai* 144). Billy Biswas is emotionally detached in Arun Joshi’s *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*. “Emotional detachment” refers to an inability to connect with others in an emotional level. “It is a type of mental assertiveness that allows people to maintain their boundaries and psychic integrity” (“Emotional Detachment”). He is emotionally detached from his wife. Dhawan comments, “The sophisticated Meena represents New Delhi’s anglicized ruling class immersed in the phoney materialism whereas the primitive Bilasia represents the Satpura Hills” (35). *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a fictional representation of the “universal
myth of the primitive in the heart of man ever alienating him from the superficial and polished banalities of modern civilization” (Mathur and Rai 35). Ratan in *The Apprentice* is constantly tormented by the hollowness within his soul. M.K. Bhatnagar says, “The higher he rises, the more unscrupulous and fraudulent he becomes” (93). It is the tale of a conscience–torn man with a curious mixture of idealism and docility, a vague sense of values, a helpless self-deceptive effort to flout them for the sake of a career” (Srinath, “The Fiction” 127). Som Bhasker in *The Last Labyrinth* is psychologically affected and found immersed in hallucinations and behaves like a schizophrenic. Hence, he becomes a “wanter” and “seeker”. Pathak comments, “Having failed miserably to comprehend life and its dilemmas, he cries towards the end of the novel, requesting Anuradha to listen to him” (“Human” 135). According to Tiwari, “*The Last Labyrinth* is unique in the sense that it demonstrates very clearly inherent patterns of collective consciousness” (25).

In short, Arun Joshi’s characters undergo all types of psychological trauma. An indepth psychological study of the characters would give a better idea about the survival and existence in this world amidst materialism and industrialization. By delineating the turbulent inner world, Arun Joshi’s protagonists highlight the need for a profound change in the mode of living that emerges not only as a psychological demand but also as a means to show the way for “the universal desire for a meaningful human
existence” (*Pathania* 134). “They are alienated from society which is the most obvious kind of alienation and then from their own self” (Srivastava 15). P. Kumar says that “they endeavour to face challenges of their meaningless life by outstripping the narrow confines of their distraught selves” (187).

Very little attention is focussed on the women characters of Joshi. Though the novels of Joshi have few important women characters, they are dwarfed by the men protagonists. Of all the women characters Anuradha and Bilasia play pivotal roles in the lives of men characters. Many of the women characters are sophisticated and materialistic. According to Radhakrishnan, “only three women Anuradha, Rima Kaul and Bilasia seem to breathe any life. The others appear to be stereo-typed and cardboard fixtures” (79). Nawale feels “The sophisticated Meena and the primitive Bilasia reveal a sharp contrast between two faces of woman” (“Women”). As Vashist opines, “the women characters are the torch bearers to the ones caught in the labyrinth” (“Women Characters”).

In the last novel *The City and the River*, the author has followed the style of an epic with images and symbols scattered everywhere. “The novel is a criticism on man’s relationship with God which is deteriorating due to materialism” (Nawale, “Existential”). In this work Joshi approaches a new literary canon akin to a modern fable, a parable of contemporary times, “a commentary on the times” and its significance can be interpreted
through recurrence to a symbolic code (Mazumdar 28). Although taking an entirely new path, the novel “re-elaborates a number of “old” topics as Joshi re-exhumes Ratan and the young cadet, dresses them in epic robes and obtains the Great Yogeshwara and his disciple, the Nameless One” (Piciucco, “Companion” 175). According to Meitei, it is “a point of denial of God in man” (“Man” 48). The author “dexterously weaves a graphic and poignant tale of modern day politics” (Beniwal 274). In Hariharan’s view it is a “political parable” (7). In addition to this the novel abounds with “Symbols, images, aphorisms and patterns of irony and humour” (Abraham, “Narrative” 198). It is a “trend-setter in the use of fable” (Narayan 2) and an “affirmation of India’s wisdom” (Amur 153).

Various critics have commented not only on the individual novels of Arun Joshi but also highlight Joshi’s merit as a novelist. Ghosh remarks that “Arun Joshi is one of the distinguished Indian novelists. His fiction delineates the modernity of human condition and explores some fundamental problems of human existence” (“Arun Joshi’s Novels”). Rajeshwar and Chary show that, “Arun Joshi’s fictional forte is the exploration of man’s inner life. He plunges into the unfathomable depths of human psyche and brilliantly illumines the subtle ways in which it deals with the onslaughts of disturbance to its balance” (97). “His novels are delving into existentialism along with the ethical choices a man has to make” (“Arun Joshi”). Bande opines, “In all of Joshi’s novels there is the
constant theme of man’s struggle to find life’s meaning. By synthesizing the various symbols, a reader can explore the heart of Arun Joshi’s thinking and complete the picture of modern man who wants to find life out of the chaotic dissipation around him” (161). Urmil says that, “Arun Joshi portrays protagonists who are singularly individualistic but symbolize the characteristics of the modern age” (43). According to Nawale:

Arun Joshi adds a new dimension to the genre of Indian fiction in English by introducing the theme of alienation in his novels. His fictional world is characterized by the alienation of the individual, shown through a crisis of the self in an emotionally disturbed environment. (”The Theme”)

Reddy expresses that, “Arun Joshi is sensitively alive to the human predicament in modern times. The absence of values and the acts of bad faith in post-war world have defrauded human worth. Joshi has brought the poignant contexts of alienation in his fiction, leading the protagonists to existential choice” (“Alienation” 133). Raizada observes that, “Arun Joshi weaves the stories around the psychic imbalance and impulsive actions of his characters and thus introduce uncommon occurrences into the customary recognisable world” (72). Bhatnagar is of the opinion:

Arun Joshi’s fictional world is most strange. Peeling the multiple layers of artificiality, his protagonists seek to confront the mystery of life beyond the last labyrinth. His
work represents a unique depiction of the dual between the
internal and the external, the intuitive and the imposed. ("The
Novels")

Mathur points out that, “Arun Joshi has highlighted most effectively some
of the eternal metaphysical and ethical questions” (132). A.N. Dwivedi
remarks that, “Arun Joshi is one of the younger Indo-Anglian novelists
who excel in their themes and techniques and in their exploration of human
psyche” (97). To use Bandopadhyaya’s words, “realism in his hand
becomes the consequences of psychological elaboration” (5). Guruprasad
opines that, “Arun Joshi’s novels are built around dark, dismal experiences
of the soul” (94). Dhawan says that, “Joshi’s fictional world is a revelation
of the world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his
existence” (18). “Arun Joshi is a novelist who, more strongly than most
has brought to his work that detachment from the everyday activities, while
still acknowledging its existence, which is perhaps India’s particular gift to
the literature of the world” (“Biography”).

Padma observes that “Arun Joshi’s professed aim to go beyond
psychology to the metaphysical roots of human identity is in consonance
with the Indian tradition of viewing psychology as an integral part of
philosophy” (32). Ghanshyam and Nadig are of the opinion:

Joshi’s novels provide an Indian response, although a critical
response, to the challenges of our time. This process of
adjustment of the time-defying Indian wisdom to the new cultural values of the West are studied through the crises of Joshi’s westernized heroes from the upper-crust of Indian society. (126)

Meitei points out that, “Joshi has made sincere efforts to authenticate his thematic projection by Indianization of English language. His choice of words from the Indian source gives him a mode of expression to go with his Indian experience” (“Indian” 94).

Arun Joshi mixes up the tradition, culture and standard of both east and west. The main characters get lost in their identity crisis. The plot of the novels is about the struggle of the heroes in the labyrinth of men and women lost in their identity irrespective “of the social class to which they belong” (Gopalakrishnan 68). The protagonists in the novel possess the Indian traditional values mixed with western culture.

Joshi’s philosophical thoughts are acceptable by the twentieth century readers and hence he is able to reach the mass. He tells the world to be aware of the piercing American style of living. His philosophy is highly associated with disillusion and a sordid view of life mixed with post-war movement” (Naikar 15).

The style and technique of Arun Joshi in all the five novels are unique and he caters to the taste of the modern readers. Arun Joshi has moulded these novels with the subaltern themes of the degrading moral
values in India, the influence of the west on the east and the creeping in of corruption in the political field. To express his ideas, the author has judiciously used images, symbols, ancient myths and philosophy. The style and techniques that he has followed raises him to surpass most of his contemporary writers. “... The fictional techniques adopted by Arun Joshi surely contribute to the uniqueness of his novels and so the novels are tagged as fictional experiment” (Piciucco, “Companion” 170-71). Asnani remarks, “Arun Joshi’s skill lies in his ability to describe experience in a human voice so that the texture of the experience comes through, and his ability to convey the philosophical moral complexities of human life without losing the life itself” (113).

Joshi’s narrative skill is explicit in all his novels Dhawan, a critic of Joshi reveals the technique of narration in his criticism on the novels of Joshi. In The Foreigner, the story is narrated in the first person by the narrator protagonist Sindi Oberoi. “The narration keeps moving from the recent past in Boston to the present in Delhi.” As Bhatnagar points out, “A strange feeling of aloneness and aloofness permeates the entire narrative and provides the necessary texture and structure to the novel” (9). The Strange Case of Billy Biswas is narrated from the witness narrator’s point of view. “It examines Indian vision of life” (Iswarya, “Struggle”). “Romi performs the task as an involved friend and as a detached narrator.” The Apprentice is cast in the “form of a dramatic monologue.” “As a
technique, the letters of Billy achieve the desired effect in lighting up the inner recesses of Billy’s mind without his having to verbalize such vulnerable thoughts even in private conversation” (Srinath, “Crisis” 39). Ratan “tells his life tale to a silent listener”, a young N.C.C. cadet who is rehearsing for the Republic Day parade. “The Last Labyrinth continues in the tradition of the first person singular . . . and the narrator hero relates the events of his life in flashback” (Dhawan 17-48).

These critical interpretations of Arun Joshi’s novels show that the novelist has dealt deliberately with psychological themes like detachment, alienation, trauma, dilemma and aberration. He attracts the attention of readers on the evils of material concerns. He shows examples of the problems faced by the modern man. Joshi’s condemnation of the industrial, the civilized and the materialistic world is not guided by a sentimental extolling of Indian Philosophy, but by a genuine faith in the integrity of primitive values. Essentially he is a soul searching novelist and his novels undoubtedly constitute a positive contribution to Indian-English fiction” (M. Prasad 113). All the novels demonstrate the power of the psychical over the physical. It is evident that psychology provides an important clue to the meaning of the problems of life and enables the readers to understand their effect. It is the narrator-protagonist’s psych-emotional experiences that provide the matrix of the plot. It is the obsession of the characters which keep them aloof from their familial and
social surroundings. So a psychological interpretation of Joshi’s novels, it is presumed will bring out the problems faced by modern man.

The first two novels of Joshi portray two alienated individuals Sindi Oberoi and Billy Biswas who feel segmented from their family and environ. They are ill at ease in the sophistication and materialism of the modern world. As fragmented men, they dissociate themselves from fellow-men. Hence **Dissociation and Dilemma** forms the core of the next chapter.