Chapter Two

Dissociation and Dilemma

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly?
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils the rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.

Arnold

The term “Dissociation” means “clevage” or “separation” (Webster). It also means keeping “aloof” or maintaining “distance” (ALD). Dissociation in the wide, sense is “an act of disuniting or separating a complex object into parts (Oxford). Dissociation in Psychology is “an altered state of consciousness characterised by partial or complete disruption of the normal integration of a person’s normal consciousness or psychological functioning” (Wikipedia). Dissociation is most commonly experienced as a “Subjective perception of one’s consciousness being detached from one’s emotions, body and immediate surroundings” (Drever).
Kolk et al. describe dissociation as “a compartmentalization of experience” (317). “Under normal conditions, consciousness, memory, emotions, sensory awareness etc. are integrated; with dissociation, in contrast these traits are discretely compartmentalized to greater or lesser degrees” (Wikipedia). The author of the concept of dissociation is the French Philosopher and psychiatrist Pierre Janet (1859-1947). He claimed that dissociation occurred only in persons who had a constitutional weakness of mental functioning. Although there was great interest in dissociation during the last two decades of the nineteenth century especially in France and England, this interest waned with the coming of the twentieth century. Discussion of dissociation resumed only when Ernest Hilgard published his new dissociation theory in 1970s. Jung described “pathological manifestation of dissociation as special or extreme cases of the normal operation of the psyche.” He theorised that dissociation is a “natural necessity for consciousness to operate in one faculty unhampered by the demands of its opposite” (“Psychological” 17-21).

T.S. Eliot, the modern literary critic uses the term “dissociation” to refer to the “chaotic, irregular and fragmentary” experience of ordinary man as a contrast to the poetic experience of the metaphysical poets (183). But Kermode refutes T.S. Eliot’s view and points out that the dissociation started from “the fall” and since then “man’s soul had been divided against itself and it would never be the same” (512-13). In this thesis the term
“dissociation” is used to denote the detachment or non-involvement of the male protagonists as they journey in their life. Despite man being a social animal, some dissociate themselves from human company and society and keep a psychological distance from others. Such persons exhibit signs of non-attachment to their family, job and place. They are afraid of getting involved in any kind of filial, marital or social relationships. This dissociation is the root cause of dilemma in their family and society. It disrupts their routine and deviates them from the normal, ordinary human action which results in innumerable problems in the personal, domestic and familial life of the male characters in the novels of Arun Joshi.

A person may be dissociated from all kinds of relationships due to various reasons like failures and disappointments in various stages of his life. This psychological dissociation leads to frustration, fragmentation, indecision, alienation and isolation resulting in dilemma. The duo of characters in the first two novels of Joshi, Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* and Billy Biswas in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* experience fission in their psyche as they encounter conflicting relationship at their work place and at home due to rootlessness and restlessness. So they keep on shifting their abodes and jobs. Knowingly or unknowingly, they exhibit their dissatisfaction in routine through their manners and behaviours. They dissociate themselves from the painful emotions and “the person may seem
emotionally flat, preoccupied or distant” (“Psychological Trauma”). This dissociation is the consequence of the failures in their expectations.

Arun Joshi’s male characters are disturbed psychologically. Sindi Oberoi in The Foreigner, Billy Biswas in The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1973), Ratan Rathor in The Apprentice (1975) and Som Bhasker in The Last Labyrinth (1981) and The Grand Master in The City and the River are examples of men who have psychological problems. These men have no focus in life and so they shift their job and residence as they are dissatisfied and disappointed in their lives. Some of the reasons for the dissociation in their psyche are their childhood abuse, parenting issues, conjugal conflict and existential problems.

In The Foreigner, Arun Joshi goes deep into the untravelled, mysterious and dark recesses of the human psyche to reveal the psychological problems of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi, a Kenyan born American Indian. The novelist presents the solitary state of mind and man’s dilemma due to his alienation from his environment, tradition and his own self. In The Foreigner commitment to life and action is opposed to passive detachment or dissociation. “It brings out the pain of detachment, the verve of longing and above all the mystic realities of experiencing life” (“The Foreigner”). In fact, the protagonist Sindi Oberoi swings between detachment and attachment revealing the fission in his
psyche. The novel relates how Sindi, an immigrant Indian suffers in the course of his search for meaning and purpose in his life.

_The Foreigner_, the maiden novel of Arun Joshi is an enactment of the crisis in the life of Sindi Oberoi. It explores the inner self, the problem that lies within the psyche of Sindi. He is “rootless, restless and luckless in a mad, bad and absurd world” (*Foreign* 8). He is a perennial outsider, an uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century. The cause of his dissociation is a sense of loss or rootlessness in him. In fact, his rootlessness is deep within his soul like an ancient curse and drives him from pillar to post, from crisis to crisis. He has no stability as he himself admits, “I have no roots” (*Foreign* 143). In response to Bannerji’s enquiries, Joshi acknowledges that the novel is “a study in alienation” and is based on observation and personal experience. He admits, “It is largely autobiographical. I am somewhat an alienated man myself” (4).

Sindi Oberoi is an immigrant Indian who suffers psychologically as he searches for the meaning and purpose of his life. Sindi’s dissociation and alienation from the world is similar to the one that many existentialist heroes in the West suffer from. Sindi leaves the impression of being an alien on all those whom he meets. The loss of personal history, culture and national identity catapults him into a role of a detached narrator of the whole drama of existence. He is emotionally detached as his fissured psyche does not allow him to stick on to a particular place or particular
person. This kind of attitude is due to certain emotional problems. Emotional detachment is the “inability to connect” with others. (“Emotional detachment”). Sindi’s various experiences in life leave him with unanswered questions, be it education, marriage or job.

A person who has a balanced temperament enjoys the company of others and forgets himself as well as his ego and is capable of responding spontaneously and productively. He forgets about himself, about his knowledge, about his position and ideas he cherishes, when he is happily accommodated with his family and friends. Unfortunately this is not the case with Sindi. He turns out to be an anomic man. The theory of alienation or anomie is expressed by MacIver as follows:

> Anomie signifies the state of mind of one who has been pulled up from his moral roots – who has no longer any sense of continuity of folk or sense of obligation. The anomic man has become spiritually sterile, responsive only to himself, responsible to no one. (84)

Sindi’s dissociation is due to factors like his inter-racial parentage and migration from East to West. At times he is in India and sometimes in the United States of America or in England. Born of a Kenyan-Indian father and an English mother, his position is quite dubious. He is a born foreigner belonging to no nation. Due to the cultural dichotomy, he is unable to follow neither the cultural code of his father nor his mother. As
Sindi does not belong to India or America, he is rootless. He interrogates, “What country had I represented, Kenya, England or India” (Foreign 43). He feels that he is not for a particular place and keeps on moving from place to place. He moves from Scotland to Boston and then from America to India. “Yet all shores are alien when you do not belong anywhere” (Foreign 92). His feelings of belonging to nowhere emanates from his estrangement from the environment, family and his true self.

Sindi Oberoi being orphaned at the age of four is broken and anchorless in his childhood. His parents died in an air crash near Cairo. He has no recollection of his parents and to him they have never existed. Only reality that he has about his parents is a “couple of wrinkled and cracked photographs” (Foreign 12). After their death, at the critical hour of his life, he was brought up by an uncle who provided him emotional anchorage. “The thought that he moved about in that small house on the outskirt of Nairobi gave the feeling of having an anchor. After his death the security was destroyed” (Foreign 55). When his uncle’s death snaps the last thread of parental love, life becomes a purposeless existence to Sindi. He becomes all alone in this wide world of never ending dilemmas. He expresses the nadir of despair:

Lying there in the bed I wondered in what way, if any, did I belong to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and
so far I had lived without a purpose . . . . I hadn’t felt that when my uncle was living. It wasn’t that I loved him very much or anything – as a matter of fact we rarely exchanged letters . . . . Now I suppose I existed only for dying; so far as I knew everybody else did the same thing. It was sad, nonetheless. (55-56)

As a child, Sindi has no parental or familial ties and he is not attached to any one. As he is all alone, he is detached emotionally. The bitter experiences of being orphaned and losing his uncle at an early age have left a profound and indelible scar in his life. An affectionate mother and a protective father inculcate in a child the feeling of human love. Unfortunately the death of his parents deprives him of meaningful interpersonal relationship with people. In Sindi’s life except for a very short time that he spends with his uncle, there is hardly any parental influence. The filial love of his uncle added definite meaning and purpose to his life. All sense of security collapsed completely at the death of his beloved uncle. The lack of love creates a vacuum in his tender young heart. C. Devi remarks, “As he is psychologically jolted, he avoids to have any emotional involvement with anybody or anything. A sense of loss pervades his mind” (“Ostracised” 197).

The irreparable loss of his parents and uncle propels Sindi to create an iron wall of detachment from everyone around him. He is at the core of
desperation and it forces him to say, “I hated to talk about my parents. I hated the pity I got from people” (*Foreign* 12). The parentlessness has its manifold implication on different facets of Sindi’s life. His entire view of life and responses are coloured by his childhood deprivation of love from his parents. “He, therefore, entertained a deep sense of insecurity, unreality and impermanence about things. First of all Sindi doesn’t love himself sufficiently well to love others. He cannot love himself because he suffers from a self-defeating sense of insecurity” (Saxena 100).

Another reason behind Sindi’s detachment is his step-mother’s slip in moral codes. Sindi lost his mother very early and was brought up by his step-mother whose attitude towards him aggravated his dislike in staying at home. The immorality of his step-mother who brings her lovers home after his father’s death, forces him to desert his house. He says, “A woman old enough to be my mother, crying in my arms saying “I want you Sindi, I want you” (*Foreign* 69). The wantonness of his step-mother creates a sense of awe in the adolescent mind of Sindi Oberoi. He becomes broken hearted because of the behaviour of his step-mom and he is emotionally shattered. He is afraid of any tie which will ditch him.

Though Sindi Oberoi looks physically normal, he suffers from health hazards like allergy and asthma. Often he sneezes and coughs continuously. He controls his spitting and sneezing, thinking that his girl friend June may feel disgusted. But Sindi feels comfortable in the presence
of June because she shows great concern for him whenever he has health problems. Sindi feels that it is meaningless to live in this world with his physical and psychological ailments and he even attempted suicide when he was a student. He says out of grief:

My lungs were bursting and I could not stop it. It has come I thought. It had come at last. Soon I would be gasping for air, turning purple and June would be watching. I felt ashamed and humiliated. Then it stopped and left my chest, heaving like a pair of bellows. (33)

The trio of bitter experiences one as a child and the other two as an adolescent have caused fission in Sindi’s psyche. Even as a boy, he was tired of living and “contemplated suicide” (Foreign 141). His past experiences in love have made him to keep both men and women at bay. He is not at ease anywhere. Once June remarks about Sindi, “I have a feeling you would be stranger anywhere” (Foreign 29). Babu Rao Kemka’s sister Sheila says, “You are still a foreigner. You don’t belong here” (Foreign 122). Sindi feels that he is a born “foreigner” and is an alien everywhere physically as well as metaphorically (Foreign 12). He is a foreigner everywhere in Nairobi, in India and even in America, as he puts it “and yet all shores are alien when you do not belong anywhere” (Foreign 55). As Sindi has no sense of belonging to any place, he feels detached. Places are alien to him and people he keeps at a distance. Sindi is “a young
man who is detached almost estranged, a man who sees himself as a stranger, an alien wherever he goes” (“The Foreigner by Arun Joshi”).

Sindi, who imagines that he is an uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century is detached from everything around him. Searching for his roots, he keeps on changing places. He moves from Nairobi to London to Boston and finally to Delhi. With an intention to study Engineering, he joins the London University where he is fed up with the tiresome down to earth classroom lectures. They are unable to satisfy his constant queries about the mysteries of life. He says he wants “to know the meaning of life. And all my class-rooms didn’t tell me a thing about it” (Foreign 142). Later he joins there as a lecturer in London University. Though his teaching has attracted multitudes of students and their love for him, he does not stick to his job.

Sindi’s non-attachment in his teaching career induces him to take up a part-time assignment as a dishwasher in a night club at Soho, not that he wants to earn but to gain different sorts of experiences. Though he works in the kitchen, he keeps on philosophizing on detachment. “Amidst the clatter of pots and pans and clouds of steam” he could think of non-involvement (Foreign 142). Later when he is transferred to the bar of the club, he meets two young women Anna and Kathy. Anna being thirty five is “plump but pretty and looked younger than her age”. She loves Sindi “intensely and unselfishly” (Foreign 142-43). She frequently makes him
promise that he will not leave her in the lurch at any cost. Yet he cannot involve himself in his affair with Anna because he still wants to maintain distance and detachment from others. Jain comments, “the real Sindi is not of the cynical image he wishes to project, the real Sindi is a lonely individual wanting to love and be loved but afraid of committing himself” (53).

Being averse to any kind of attachment, Sindi shifts his attention from Anna to Kathy. Just like Anna, Kathy too is separated from her husband. A few weeks later, Kathy leaves Sindi abruptly because “Marriage is sacred and had to be maintained at all costs” (Foreign 144). Sindi is jolted in his psyche but he agrees that the two affairs “left a great impression on my mind and I began to wonder about many things that I had hitherto taken for granted” (Foreign 144). The abrupt endings of his experiences with Anna and Kathy exacerbate his feeling of detachment highly. Even after a long time, he carries on the ailing effect caused by his broken relationship with Kathy. Swain comments on Sindi’s feeling thus, “the memory of Kathy does not allow him to develop a harmonious relationship with June who frets for him . . . . Her presence in his mind escalates his sense of guilt and aggravates his despair” (194). He realizes that Anna and Kathy have taught him to be detached from others. Throughout his life, he carries the scars caused by his broken affairs with
the two women but he remains placid and firm because strong emotions of love and affection are kept at bay in his life.

Sindi leaves for Boston for the purpose of getting Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering but the lacuna created by the women are too strong to get filled up. In Boston, Sindi’s decision to remain detached gets jolted as and when he sees in a foreign students’ party, June Blythe who resembles Kathy a little. She is an American girl with attractive features. He falls in love with her and enjoys her company. They visit places and spend evenings pleasantly. Sindi admits, “In brief, we lived like animals when we went out on these days” (*Foreign* 74). He is charmed by her enticing love. Though they are intensely in love with each other, Sindi fights hard to escape from another affair. His involvement with Kathy and her subsequent separation from him have made him realize that all attachment whether of things or of persons is illusion and all pain springs from this illusion. Despite his attempts to keep himself away from another affair, he gets involved all the more. Radha is of the opinion:

He lay in a state of coma for a time. Gradually the coma wore out. Still he behaved like a typical lover, not the man immune to all emotions as he thought he was. Every now and then he found himself in places where he had been with her. (81)
Sindi is in a dilemma. He is afraid of being involved. Though Sindi loves June wholeheartedly with the fire of passion, he wants to remain free of all kinds of bondage. Even after his affairs with Anna and Kathy, he has come out of them unsheathed but with indelible scars in his mind. He feels exhilarated in the company of June and Sindi admits:

The burden of her love lay immensely on the debit side of my mind. And there were no credits. I had nothing to give her in return. I had given her what affection still remained with me. But that was not enough. Sooner or later the balance would tip. June would ask for more but I would have nothing to give. That, I thought with a sigh, would be the end. (85-86)

June waits in vain for Sindi’s proposal. She waits for countless days and nights to get a nod from Sindi. As he is cool and complacent, June suggests that they should get married and live together. Sindi bluntly refuses:

What do you want to marry a man like me for . . . . I am not the right kind of man for you. Some people are not really cut out for marriage . . . . I am afraid I don’t really believe in marriage. I was afraid of possessing anybody and I was afraid of being possessed, and marriage meant both. (91)
He realizes that the bond of love which has once evaded him, now surrounds him and hems him down from all sides. But Sindi is determined to remain detached. Though he loves June with “an unusual fierceness” he does not react favourably to her proposal of marriage (*Foreign* 93), because he is in a terrible dilemma between detachment and attachment. June is adamant. She is determined to marry Sindi and live with him. She finds nothing wrong in possessing and being possessed. Sindi passifies her by saying:

> It is not that *all* marriages are painful. Here and there you run into odd-balls who know how to love without possessing. For the rest of them, it is one big illusion that has been pounded into them by society. For a while they go around bloated with their own pride imagining things which just are not there. And then gradually the whole thing crumbles and they begin to kill each other bit by bit. (91)

June Blythe, realizing the negative approach of Sindi towards marriage, prefers Babu Rao Khemka, the best friend of Sindi. Babu is innocent and simple because of his over protective parents who have “fed upon [him] the hygienic diet of morals” (*Foreign* 118). If Sindi is detached, Babu is too much attached to his parents. While Babu is incapable of making resolutions, Sindi does not make resolutions at all because of the unbearable pain of breaking them. The study at a foreign
university tests the nerves of Babu and he fails in all subjects. The threat of the Dean of the University to chalk him out is set right by the interference of Sindi and Babu continues his course there. Babu is too scared of his father to disclose the news of his failure in the examination. Sindi finds his friend Babu in desperation and by chance Sindi with June meets Babu in his apartment where he is shabby, drunk and depressed. June has a clever knack of consoling the afflicted. Sindi describes her nature thus:

> Whenever she saw somebody in pain, she went straight out to pet him rather than analysing it million times like the rest of us. And this is what she did that evening. She talked to Babu on whatever he wanted to talk about and told him what he wanted to hear. I was surprised at some of the lies she told, but in her scheme of things the lies were justified because they made Babu happy . . . . I was silent most of the time but I enjoyed their conversation. (97)

Though Sindi poses as a detached person, the thought of June with Babu disturbs him and he is afraid of losing her. Once he received a letter from June. She wrote thus:

> I have been seeing Babu frequently since you left. He seems to be in such low spirits most of the time that my heart aches for him. He is usually depressed because he is not doing well
in his studies. I go out with him every night because I think he needs me. I want to be of use to him. (101)

After a month, Sindi returns to Boston only to realize the intimate relationship between June and Babu. Both of them are out together most of the time. They dine and dance together. Even then June continues her affair with Sindi and tries to convince him about marriage. But Sindi replies:

Marriage wouldn’t help, June. We are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within. You can’t send two persons through a ceremony and expect that their aloneness will disappear . . . . It is different with me. I have no delusion to bank upon. I can’t marry you because I am incapable of doing so. It would be like going deliberately mad. It is inevitable that our delusions will break us up sooner or later. (107)

Thus a realization of the absurdity of human situation can be seen in his self and his refusal to marry June only heightens it. Sindi becomes a typical Sartrean hero who expresses his metaphysical anguish at the meaninglessness of the human condition. Sindi is like Roquentin, the hero of Sartre in *Nausea* who reflects on the absurdity of existence:

We are a heap of existents inconvenienced, embarrassed by ourselves, we hadn’t the slightest reason for being there, any
of us, each existent, embarrassed, vaguely ill at ease, felt superfluous in relation to others. (184)

When Sindi refuses to marry June, her confidence on Sindi and her hope of marrying him and settle in life are shattered to pieces. After her disappointment with Sindi, June is in a state of dilemma. Her expectation to become a successful married woman to run a good family is turned down. She is thoroughly disappointed and dissatisfied with Sindi.

Sindi makes it very clear that he is not a person made for marriage, bringing up children and tied by family responsibilities. As he puts it, “nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important” (Foreign 92). The indifference and detachment of Sindi hurt June. She is like the spider which has lost its hold on the ceiling and fallen on the floor. When Sindi says that he “would not be ruffled when she went away,” June replies, “I hate you” (Foreign 93). When June is about to leave, Sindi reveals his passionate love for her with tears in his eyes. Still he is hesitant to accept her wholeheartedly or to marry her.

Disappointed with Sindi’s relationship, June seeks solace with Babu. The friction with Sindi is intensified as days go by. She needs someone to fill the void created in her by Sindi. She needs someone to care for her and some one to share her problems, someone to say that he is for her. The pains and perils that she experiences because of her affection for Sindi is greater than the time and money she has spent with him. June’s
meeting with Babu is soothing the wounds caused by Sindi. After understanding the plight of Babu, June’s interest on Sindi recedes and she starts a new affair with Babu Khemka, the son of Mr. Khemka, the owner of a plastic company in India. In the article on “The Foreigner” Abraham feels:

There is a peculiar, almost a non-human detachment in Sindi which makes June accept her defeat and find comfort in Babu’s callous, but open arms. But for Babu, his affair itself proves to be disastrous for he dies even when he is half-way through his love affair. (144)

As Sindi is keeping himself aloof from human involvement, June decides to marry Babu. She becomes highly excited and awaits for her wedding. Their engagement is celebrated with pomp and pride and June wearing a sari gives her an Indian touch. But there is a pause between their wedding preparations and the wedding date because Babu Khemka belongs to an orthodox Hindu family and his fastidious strict and domineering father has damaged his character. Basically, the father and the son have no proper communication. Though he has sent him to America for studies, his father fails to teach him moral values. Khemka’s ultimate aim is to make his son an engineer. Babu, on the contrary has fallen into the attractive snares of June and he courts her. Babu’s father wants his son to marry a Marwari girl who may come with a dozen new factories as dowry. On the
contrary, he focuses his attention on June. Babu is young but slow in taking decisions. Babu respects and regards his father and he is even scared of him. The regard and respect he has for his father prevents him from proceeding with the preparation for his wedding. The date of Babu’s wedding passes on as any other day. The lapse shows that there will never be a wedding between June and Babu thereafter.

After brooding for many days, Sindi wants to renew his affair with June. But she declines his invitation to dine with her saying, “I’m sorry, Sindi, I will not be able to see you anymore, I mean not as I used to. Babu and I are getting married soon” (*Foreign* 111). Hearing this, Sindi’s all time carefully cultivated dissociation from attachment has vanished and he is totally broken. He talks of detachment but gets involved everywhere. He feels being pushed “on the giant wheel, going round and round waiting for the fall” (*Foreign* 75).

Sindi is in a dilemma. He can neither accept June nor decline her advances. Sindi even contemplates suicide. He feels that he is a misfit in the world and he explains his state as “cynical, exhausted, grown old before his time, weary with his own loneliness” (*Foreign* 31). Setting aside his concept of dissociation, he has hope against hope that June may return to him. But June drives to Babu’s apartment. When both of them quarrel, she admits that she has been carrying on an affair with Sindi.
Babu, due to his Indian mental make-up, fails to accept the American standard of conduct on love and marriage.

Babu is unable to take a firm decision about his future, his wedding and his career. Babu is sent out of college as he has failed in his examinations. Unable to come to a conclusion and traumatised by June’s earlier affair with Sindi, he loses his self-control and drives his car recklessly. In a fit of temper, he drives off his car blindly. The car with its high speed hits an overpass and falls in a ditch. Finally he is killed in the car accident. He is disowned by his father for intending to marry an American girl and to top them all comes June’s confession of her relationship with Sindi which ultimately prods him to put an end to his life. Abraham says, “the boyish impetuousness and the frank, heady passions of Babu has a strong pull for June especially after his disappointment with Sindi (144). On his part Sindi feels guilty of having driven a man to death. He states:

It suddenly struck me that something had been knocked out of me. I just was not the same person anymore. Babu’s death had drained something out of me. It was my confidence in the world. At one blow most of what I had cherished in life was taken away. What I had considered beyond good and evil had produced evil on a gigantic scale; and what I had thought to be the remedy for pain had at one
stroke created pain that was like a bombshell exploding under my nose. I felt as if there was nothing left that I could depend upon. (149)

Babu’s body is found near a ditch and the news is carried to his father by Sindi. The police report says that the car hit an overpass at high speed and “rolled into a ditch” (Foreign 148). The psychology behind such attitude is the “separation anxiety” that he undergoes within him (“Problem Children”). This problem occurs due to a trauma that generally happens within a separated couple. Babu’s rash driving is the consequence of his impulsive nature which fosters the end of his life.

When Sindi contemplates on the pros and cons of his affair with June, he comes to know that June is carrying Babu’s child. When he goes to meet her, he finds June is dead during an attempted abortion. Being dumbfounded with heart full of agony and agitation, Sindi utters, “Whereas Kathy and Anna taught me to be detached from others, June’s death finally broke my attachment to myself. It was here that my hope lay” (Foreign 164). Sindi takes the blame on him and holds himself responsible for the death of June and Babu. “The death of June left Sindi desperate. All his objectivity broke down” (Radha 87). Sindi reveals traces of the gradual breaking down of the barriers of detachment and non-involvement that he has built up all his life. He is quite conscious of what is happening and he tries valiantly to resist it, but in vain.
Sindi’s decision to remain detached under all circumstances is slowly giving way. He is yet to realize that “objectivity is just another form of vanity” (*Foreign* 119). He behaves like a typical lover, not the man immune to all emotions as he thought he was. Every now and then he visits places where he had been with June. He describes:

> Now the memory came back with painful sweetness. I got up and went to the spot where I held her last. Here is where we met, here I bought her a book, there she wanted me to kiss her, and my heart would sink with the burden of my memories and I couldn’t help whispering to myself, “My darling! Oh, my darling!” (123)

Actually these are not the words of “one who should be able to detach oneself from the object of one’s love” (*Foreign* 124).

Sindi is emotionally disturbed after the death of Babu, his friend. He regrets and blames himself for his death. He has lost his inner peace. The fission in his psyche gets enlarged and so Sindi is restless. He regrets that his life on this earth is a waste and he has never achieved anything in this life. He admits:

> Twenty-fifth Christmas on this planet, twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places. Twenty-five years gone in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievement; a ten-stone body that had to
be fed four times a day, twenty-eight times a week. This was the sum of a life-time of striving. (80)

Sindi in his desperation happens to work in a library in a small village in Scotland. There he has plenty of time to spare and read a number of books and he obtains knowledge about various things on life. His stay in Scotland village library for three months does not only provide the acquaintance with the books galore but also with a Catholic Priest living there. Initially, the Priest tries to evangelize Sindi but when the Priest realizes the dissociation and dilemma of Sindi, he tries to find out the solution for the questions bothering him. Many a time both of them enter into profound discussions on religion, God and mysticism. Sindi expresses, “In the evenings I had long talks with priests and very often we would stay up late into the night discussing religion and God and mysticism. I have never done so much reading and thinking as I did in those three months. And then suddenly it all began to clear up” (Foreign 145).

Even though Sindi has spent a very short span of time in the library, the incidents that have happened to him there become unforgettable landmarks in his biographical accounts. During one of his morning walks he sits down on a stone to relax himself. The sun has risen and the valley is ethereal. Suddenly he feels a powerful resplendent lightening around him. In a flash, Sindi has felt that someone has lifted a burden from his
A new revelation dawns in his mind infusing him with a new vigour. It teaches him a great truth:

Absence of love does not mean hatred. Hatred is just another form of love. There is another way of loving. You can love without attachment, without desire. You can love without attachment to the objects of your love. You can love without fooling yourself that the things you love are indispensable either to you or to the world. Love is real only when you know that what you love must one day die. (145)

In order to get an emotional stability, Sindi wanders from place to place and from person to person. Pathania states, “his belief in detachment, however is a mask to cover his inability to reach out to people, to love them, to belong to them and understand them” (137). He tries his level best to shrug off Babu’s memory out of his mind. Finally his beloved June’s death wipes away his segregation completely. Swain opines, “With the passing away of June, all his objectivity and plea for detachment breaks down” (197).

To escape his horrible past, Sindi leaves for Delhi and joins Mr. Khemka’s factory as a personal assistant to Mr. Khemka and is quite sincere in his job. His mode of running the company does not suit Sindi and both of them differ in their ideas and views very often. Mr. Khemka never cares for the betterment of his workers like Muthu and others. He
approaches Sindi with money to influence him and to make him accept his views. Sindi does not like the dealings of Mr. Khemka in business matters. The mode of life and the set of values which Khemka and his friends follow offer a more sickening version of life. Sindi finds that Mr. Khemka has two accounts which is not fair as per government rules. When Sindi questions, Mr. Khemka gets angry and threatens him of sacking him out of the job. He shouts, “I wanted to be nice to you because you were Babu’s friend. But you have only brought ruin on me”. (Foreign 179). Sindi feels that Mr. Khemka is ashamed of associating himself with him and hence Sindi quits his job. “Mr. Khemka was mad with frustration and rage”. (Foreign 181). Sindi is disappointed but he gets offers from two companies from Bombay. Sindi rushes to Delhi to pick up his things to join the Bombay Company.

It is in the office of Mr. Khemka, Sindi has a chance meeting with his boss’s daughter, Sheila. Sindi notices at every context of his discourse with her father that Sheila has a soft corner for him. Sindi says, “This was the first time she had shown any interest in me”. (Foreign 120). Sindi is accompanied by Sheila wherever he goes and she helps him in all official work. Sindi’s arguments with Mr. Khemka lead to verbal fights and difference of opinions. The unpleasant atmosphere at his work spot is conducive for him to be dissociated from Sheila and does not allow him to build a tight bond with her. Sindi is in the good books of Sheila who is a
very good administrator and a great supporter of her father. She often opposes the ideas and views of her father Mr. Khemka. She questions and argues with him when she sees a mess in her father’s administration. Moreover she hates the modern corrupt world. She is an experienced business lady who has the responsibility towards her family and office.

As a devoted daughter, Sheila is determined to concentrate only on her father’s business which is about to decline day by day. Sindi is chosen by Sheila as the apt person to run the office of her father. Sheila is highly matured in her thought and she tries to bring out changes in her office. “She is next to her father in running the business concern. She loves her father and her father’s concern. She loves her father and her father’s business” (Mohanty 119). When she comes to know that her father has committed some malpractice in paying the tax, she is in utter confusion. She is afraid that he would be arrested and imprisoned. She says “I’ll be left all alone when they take him away. I will be left all alone” (Foreign 173). That is why she needs Sindi’s help as a protector and administrator.

Sheila is graceful and gentle as well as bold and confident. The trauma in her begins with the death of her brother Babu with whom she had an affectionate bond. She feels insecure and lacks faith in all other men around her. It is quite difficult for her to come back to the normal state of mind. Sheila is a traditional Indian woman who hates inter-caste, inter-religious marriages. “Sheila too represents the tradition-bound society in
India” (Dhawan 27). When she hears about the love affair between June and Babu, she says “A foreigner just does not fit in our home . . . . They don’t know the language and the customs. Their religion is different” (Foreign 52). After her brother’s death, she needs some security too and hence turns towards Sindi and forces him to administer her father’s office.

As Sheila accompanies her father in all his business trips, she is well experienced to administer the factory. She finds in Sindi a good and honest administrator. Though she attracts the attention of Sindi, she is not able to develop a good relationship with him as he has difference of opinion with Mr. Khemka. She is eager to know about Sindi’s personal life and feels sorry for him when she knows that he is parentless. She consoles him saying “time is a great healer” (Foreign 56).

Sheila tries to hide her interest in Sindi. Her doubts about her brother’s death trouble her and at times she cannot control herself. Through her body language, she reveals it to Sindi. She is dubious about the death of her brother Babu in a car accident, which is caused by dashing against a cliff. She requests Sindi, “Tell me why he died, Sindi: Please tell me why he died! . . . .” (Foreign 46).

Sheila never complains about the problems in the factory but she reveals to Sindi her interest in administrating her company. She is traumatised when all her plans are shattered as Sindi has to quit the company due to the irresponsibility of her father. When Sindi has a feeling
that Sheila and himself are beginning to understand each other, he knows that his relationship with his boss Mr. Khemka is a block and a check to continue their friendship. Mr. Khemka has identified that Sindi is aimless and rootless and he is hesitant to confidently leave his business in charge of a man like Sindi who concludes, “It gets worse everyday. I’m sure sooner or later Mr. Khemka would have to declare himself bankrupt” (Foreign 187). Later, Sheila finds Sindi taking up the office under his control as he is compassionate towards the labourers working in it. Though their ideas go together, Sheila remains unmarried till the end. She needs Sindi as her partner both in business and in life. Her earlier wish is fulfilled finally as Sindi takes the responsibility of her company.

Sindi takes the most heroic decision to transcend self-interest and help all the employees who earn their family’s daily bread by working in Khamka’s factory. There are rumours of Khemka’s firm being bought over by some other greedy sharks. Muthu, an employee requests Sindi to take over the office so that the poor workers are not ousted from job. Sindi cancels his trip and stops being a wanderer anymore. He unpacks his things and puts them “back as neatly as possible in their old places” and decides to hurl himself headlong into the battle of survival and set right the factory (Foreign 189). He decides to infuse new life into the ruined business of Mr. Khemka.
Though confused and disturbed in his psyche, Sindi at last finds a solution by rejoining his job in Mr. Khemka’s company again and taking the responsibility to make up the loss for the sake of the poor labourers working in the company. He is mentally relieved from pain and agony and he decides to work for the benefit of the workers. “It was a big pile of work and I had to stay at the office until late in the night. But the whole staff stayed with me” (Foreign 190). Sindi Oberoi’s re-entry into the company is surprising and shocking to the Khemkas, but this time, it is for the sake of his colleagues and the employees. Reddy says, “He works strenuously and with the co-operation of all the employees sets the establishment in order” (“Alienation” 135). Sindi realizes that attachment towards men and matters come when one is sincere in relationships or with matters done.

Seeing the heroic struggle of Muthu to provide food to his own family and the family of his brother, who is unemployed Sindi understands the real meaning of life which one finds in developing sympathetic understanding with other persons and responding to them warmly. Muthu, an illiterate labourer teaches Sindi the lesson of life and also brings about a major change in Sindi’s attitude to life. Muthu defines the ideal of non-attachment or non-involvement as it is preached in the Gita. This brings a change in Sindi.
Sindi is filled with the desire to serve others with joy. Such an attitude not only minimizes his psychic fission arising out of the feelings of dissociation. In his interpersonal relations, Sindi ultimately succeeds in imbibing the rare and viable quality of forgetting his separateness and detachment. He realizes his commitment to life and duty without expecting reward. Only sincerity of attachment can be the test for human relationships for him.

Sindi has been remaining detached to the events of life but towards the end he finds himself involved in the lives of other people. Sindi Oberoi’s transcendence is clear in his detached and yet compassionate commitment to work in order to involve himself meaningfully in the community. He has towards the end found a heaven after the vigorous quest of meaning that has shaped his life and tormented his psyche. (Rao, “The Foreign”). Sindi Oberoi is a “foreigner” both in the Orient and Occident. After a long conflict and confusion, Sindi finds a solution to his problem. He realizes that involvement without undue attachment is a key to affirmation. With the completion of his journey from passive detachment to his attachment to life and action, Sindi becomes whole. The novel ends with the hope of Sindi settling down in life with Sheila and committing himself to action. Sindi comes to terms with his dissociation and non-involvement and feels that there are useful tasks to be done in future. Ghosh rightly comments, “The novel records Sindi’s movement
from illusion to reality, from darkness to light and from death’s twilight kingdom to the new shores of life” (45). The creed of Sindi’s non-involvement results in dissonance and despair for people with refined sensibilities. The soul which is isolated from others grows penitent of its unsocial behaviour and steps down to join the common life and share its sorrows and its joys. A search for authentic existence ends when one achieves the state of a happy co-existence and harmony with his fellow-beings.

In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Arun Joshi spotlights another kind of dissociation and the consequent dilemma, which are caused by the conflict between the norms of the civilized and primitive mode of life in the psyche of Billy. The protagonist Bimal Biswas commonly known as Billy leaves New Delhi, which is a city of splendour and sophistication and goes to Maikala Hills, a remote place far from the hustle and bustle of city life to be one with the primitive tribal community. The novelist presents the upper crust of the Indian society which stands for materialism and shallow spiritualism imitating blindly the Western culture and forgetting the Indian tradition, its values and beliefs. Romesh Sahai, known as Romi, the Collector friend of Billy narrates the story of Billy not because he has understood him but to show the contradiction or fission in man’s psyche. It is a novel in which the normal and the abnormal, the ordinary and the extra-ordinary, illusion and reality, resignation and desire, rub shoulders.
Billy Biswas returns to India after earning his Ph.D. in Anthropology from USA. He has everything – happiness, travel, education, status, wealth, job and a loving wife. Yet his inner world is rocked by a groundswell of discontent. He is consumed by a restlessness which grows steadily. “The protagonist Billy Biswas is a misfit in the modern milieu of technological jungle and seeks an escape from it” (“Indian Writers”).

Billy Biswas is an outsider in the civilized human world of sophistication. He is completely different from Sindi who deliberately detaches himself from human relationship. Bimal Biswas (Billy) is not like any ordinary human being. He is a strange man with an uncommon insight in him. A primitive force or “Urkraft” to use Joshi’s term is motivating him. Whenever he hears the distant drum of the tribal, he loses his senses completely and cocoons himself in an entirely different world far away from the hustle and bustle of the urban squalor. Billy Biswas, son of a Supreme Court Judge, educated at Doon School, St. Stephens and Columbia University, New York, abandons an engineering degree in favour of Anthropology and, “on his return to India, is eventually seduced by the mystical and sensual lure of tribal life in the hills and jungles of Chhatisgarh. He throws up everything and vanishes into thin air into an amazing life of a sort of Shaman. (“Arun Joshi’s Billy”). The dense forests and the wilderness are so tempting to him that he wants to leave away the
sophisticated world and lead a life like that of the tribals in the primitive surrounding.

There are many instances to show that Billy is different from others. Billy makes irregular timings, so irregular in fact that each day has virtually its own schedule. He does not return at night, goes to sleep after breakfast and does not wake up till supper. There are times when he types incessantly on his friend Romi’s typewriter. Whenever he has nothing else to do, he flies paper-planes through the window. Romi narrates the strange behaviour of Billy thus:

Whenever I happened to glance at what he wrote I was greatly puzzled. His output consisted of a most incongruent mixture of book reviews, poems, fantastic short stories and some very erudite essays on the science of anthropology. Of those he preserved only the last, the rest serving as raw material for paper planes which he was in the habit of propelling out of our living-room window whenever he had nothing else to do. (12-13)

When Romi met Billy, he had already passed his preliminaries for the Ph.D. and so he did not need to attend classes. He was often found in the library with piles of magazines and newspapers, puffing a cigar and reading about bizarre happenings, about expeditions and archaeological adventures and about crimes. Altogether Billy is very different from
others. Billy behaves very strangely and he cannot be understood even by his friend Romi who says:

The attempt to understand him is probably more futile. If in spite of this I propose to relate Billy’s story, it is not so much because I claim to have understood him as it is on account of a deep and unrelieved sense of wonder that in the middle of the twentieth century, in the heart of Delhi’s smart society, there should have lived a man of such extra-ordinary obsessions. (7)

The narrator Romi could not have either imagination or the obsessive predilections of Billy Biswas. But Billy’s life seems to be an enigma even to his friend from the beginning. On Romi’s first day in Billy’s room, he talks of Avocambo, an odd play in which the hero quite educated goes down to the Congo as he is lured by the primitive music. What is fascinating to Billy is “the workings of his deranged mind” (Billy 11). Billy has liked the play because “One can quite imagine something like that happening to oneself” (Billy 11). This statement of Billy gives Romi a glimpse of the restlessness and dilemma of Billy’s soul and in a way anticipates Billy’s disappearance in the Saal forests. Billy’s Swedish friend Tuula tries to understand him but he seems to be a puzzle to her too. Tuula tells Romi that Bills feels, “A great force, urkraft, a primitive force.
He is afraid of it and tries to suppress it. . . . But it is very strong in him, much stronger than in you or me. It can explode any time” (*Billy 18*).

Even as a child Billy was different from other children. He did not like to play with toys and neither was he interested in childish pranks and plans. He was extremely sensitive. When he was fourteen years old, he went to Bhubaneswar with his mother and a doctor uncle. They spent a few weeks in Bhubaneswar. During that summer, something strange happened to Billy. It was as though a slumbering part of him had suddenly come awake. A mixed feeling of excitement and anxiety filled him up which kindled a sudden interest in his identity. He felt strange questions rising in his mind “Who was I? Where had I come from? Where was I going?” (*Billy 89*). The Bhubaneshwar episode is a proof of how at the impressionable age of fourteen, Billy had experienced the urge to live like a primitive man in the primitive world.

The place Bhubaneswar was undeveloped at that time and the houses were old fashioned with partly thatched roof. The people were mostly from Oriya but everywhere Billy could see the *adivasis*. He had received intimations of his primitive self from the moment he emerged from the railway station. But at that time he could not analyse his feelings properly. He felt very different one particular afternoon when he went for a picnic to Konarak. The ruins and sculptures appealed to him. One night, when he was strolling in the garden, he saw his uncle’s chauffeur going out
for a bit of entertainment. Billy accompanied him. Both of them crossed a little patch of forest and went to a village which had a night fair. He seated Billy at the edge of the clearing to watch the dancing and hear the songs. Billy felt “a great shock of erotic energy passed through . . . there was nothing particular by erotic about the whole business” (Billy 91). He felt like one who had taken a dose of a hallucinatory drug and he said to himself “Something has gone wrong with my life. This is where I belong. This is what I have always dreamt of” (Billy 91). His mother threatened him not to go out. During the fortnight that he stayed there, the hallucination recurred several times in mild or sharp form. It flared up whenever he heard the sound of drums at night. Billy narrates his experience thus:

I would sit then in one of those fancy easy chairs, my feet up on the grotesquely long arms, and let my imagination run wild. At times it would get so strong that I could actually see the field in all the detail, smell the smoke from the fires, see the dancers, feel the displacement of air as the boy and girl, laughing, went past me once again. What was more, I could feel a girl in my own arms, a girl without a face but with a warm and full body, definitely a tribal girl. (92)

His acquaintance with the tribals kindles his inborn interest in primitivism. He becomes restless. When he hears a drum beating or
listens to folk music, he is transported entirely to a different world. Romi
describes Billy’s interest in primitivism, “It also gradually dawned upon
me that it was around his interest in the primitive man that his entire life
had been organized” (*Billy* 12). His great desire for primitive life makes
him reside in an uncivilized place Harlem in New York, where the Blacks
live.

The sophistication in America, his education as an engineer and
anthropologist do not make Billy happy. To him, America seems to be
highly civilized. As he wants to be aloof from civilization, he chooses to
live in Harlem. He is at ease with the American blacks. Though brought
up in a palatial bungalow, with rich food to eat and comforts to enjoy, Billy
finds solace only in the inconvenience of the Negro slum. He becomes one
among the slum dwellers, speaks their dialect, plays their drums and
dances with them. He feels that he belongs to the world of primitivism.
S. Sharma in his article on “Billy” reflects:

> It is not only in India that Billy is unable to cling to his roots, but also in white America during his sojourn there. Billy stays at Harlem in New York though he could very well afford to live in some other area like Manhattan for he comes from an upper – upper crust of Indian society. But his persistant quest for self-realisation beckons him constantly to
live at the most human place where he may nurture a sense of belonging. (165)

Billy goes to U.S.A. for his higher studies in engineering course, but he becomes interested only in Anthropology and he obtains his doctorate degree in it. Prasad aptly says, “Anthropology brings Billy closer to the life he dreams of” (50). The study on tribal people’s mental working and response, and their attitude to life are some of the important aspects which attracted Billy towards tribal world. Prasad comments, “. . . he finds more meaning in their reactions than in those of the so-called cultured man” (50). He starts getting visions of them frequently. In the beginning, the stimulants which transport him to his dreamland are alcohol, dance, folk song or drum beating. Later his visions do not need a stimulus. They come automatically. Frequently Billy is in a trance which throws light on his vision. “It would be like a great blinding flash during which I would be totally unaware of anything else” (Billy 130).

The more interested Billy becomes in tribal life, the less care he throws on organized life. In fact, Billy has a dislike for an organized life. It is exposed in the condition of his apartment in Harlem. When Romi notices Billy playing on a tango-drum, he does not display dexterity, but he is inspired and full of vitality. His drumming is different. It has an air of primitivism. Once in George’s apartment in Harlem, Billy held one of the drums in his lap, the other stood flush between his toes. He played them
and it attracted every one in the room. Billy was immobile staring at the orange globe of light that hung in the centre of the room. “Billy’s session . . . lasted for nearly a quarter of an hour . . . . It had a mesmeric pull . . . with its patterns of sound” (Billy 17). When he finished playing the drums, his face was full of perspiration and “he looked very tired as though he had returned from a long and difficult journey” (Billy 17). Romi describes the effect of Billy’s drumming:

They blazed through our liquor-stimulated sensibilities, like little meteors through the astral night, lighting up landscapes, hills and valleys, gaping chasms of the mind that are otherwise forever shrouded in the black mist of the unconscious. They had brought into the room a reality that had not been there before, or if it had existed, it had existed so deep down that nothing, not even the hand of God, could have ferreted them out. (17)

Billy Biswas always enjoys the company of girls. When he studies in U.S. he becomes friendly with Tuula Lindgren, a smart, good-looking Swedish girl. He likes her very much because she has total disregard for money. He feels that “she was the first person I met for whom money had no value” (Billy 126). The Swedish girl friend of Billy, Tuula Lindgren, though aloof from the commercial civilization, has mastered hypnotism, intuition and auto – suggestion. She has a strong liking towards India,
especially the Indian tribal people, “a subject about which Billy knew enough to keep her engaged not one but a hundred nights” (Billy 15). Tuula has understood the inner urge of Billy who always has hallucinations and is continuously nagged by the old depressing feeling as if something has gone wrong. Occasionally he discusses his problems with Tuula who in turn tells him that “such hallucinations occurred in everyone” and gives him a friendly advice that Billy should not encourage such hallucinations (Billy 130). Billy likes her approach and her movement with others.

Billy Biswas often gets dissociated in the civilized society in which people are simply busy in making money and craving for material benefits. Though he tries hard to stick to the civilized world, he feels that he is a misfit in the phoney society which is hypocritical and he is alienated from everyone around him. He has a strong feeling that he has come from another world and he is alienated in the posh society. “A sense of nothinness pervades him . . . he finds himself wrapped in a vacuum, which his entire being is unable to comprehend” (S. Sharma, “Billy” 166).

To keep up a high profile in the society, Arun Joshi’s men marry in order to oblige the parental authority and to comply the social pressure. Billy Biswas is the best example of a man who has married out of parental compulsion. The husbands in Joshi’s novels are dissociated from their family. Billy’s family is originally from Bengal and his grandfather was once the Prime Minister of Bengal. His father wants him to become an
engineer. Even his stay at New York does not suit him because he hates the sophisticated life of the urbans.

The marriage of Billy with Meena Chatterjee, a young and pretty daughter of a retired civil servant is an impulsive action, but is prompted by Billy’s search for viable alternatives. Meena is just the opposite of Billy Biswas. As a contrast to Billy, Meena is worldly and is a product of the sophisticated phoney society. She wants nothing but money and glamour which Billy hates. Billy feels that Meena would put a check on the hallucinations and dreams that he has about his unknown quest. His outings with Meena are not giving him pleasure. Meena often becomes irritated with him, when Billy is preoccupied with something. Billy has even thought of breaking his betrothal because he feels that Meena is not his right partner. Meena, the representative of the civilized world, in spite of her love and respect for her husband, cannot engage his soul and his inner urge. She complains that Billy always quarrels with others. Billy says, “Did you see how she looked me up and down? . . As if she herself was no less than Miss India or something” (Billy 52). Meena is not temperamentally different from her husband and Billy feels that she is not a suitable wife for him.

Billy accompanies Meena to grand parties and glamorous dance performances but never enjoys them. Billy reports “Meena and I attended a performance of the Odissi . . . . It was a wonderful performance executed
by one of the country’s top dancers. For me, who had always been rather indifferent to India’s classical arts, the experience was novel as well” (Billy 41). Billy never keeps promises made to her. Meena finds Billy indifferent in all his behaviour and so she cries very often. “Tears ran down her cheeks” (Billy 59). As a wife, she finds Billy neglecting her and there is no emotional involvement between them. His attitude makes Meena question him why he married her.

Billy is not interested in any familial duties. Even he has no filial bond towards his child. Meena considers all these as deliberate failures on the part of Billy as husband and father. Meena belongs to a rich household and she is unaware of the state of Billy. As a wife she expects Billy to satisfy her needs. She cannot understand Billy’s quest for primitivism. He realizes that Meena fails to quench his real thirst. She cannot stir the spirit of his soul. He feels that he is not the right partner for Meena. Meena too can observe this vicissitude and complaints that Billy is indifferent and she has married the wrong man. Romi remarks on the change in Billy after marriage:

It was as though some part of him had gone on strike. All my words simply sank upon his listless mind without so much as causing a ripple. Gone was the staggering intelligence, the spectroscopic interests, and the sense of humour. He had either turned banal, something I had seen happen often
enough, or, unknown to us, he was turned upon some obscure segment of himself, ferreting out a bitter secret, settling an old score. (51)

Billy is a man with extraordinary obsessions. Though he has conventional roots, he feels alienated. He feels as if he were a fish out of water. Though he is among family members, he does not feel integrated with them. He is not in harmony with them. He is alone, isolated and alienated. He writes to Tuula:

Why else this constant blurring of reality? Who am I? Who are my parents? My wife? My child? At times I look at them sitting at the dinner table, and for a passing moment I cannot decide who they are or what accident of Creation has brought us together. (70)

As Billy has a strong feeling of dissociation from his family and its ties, he undertakes expeditions to tribal belts which give him momentary peace. In a letter to Tuula he writes:

When I return from an expedition, it is days before I can shake off the sounds and smells of the forest. The curious feeling trails me everywhere that I am a visitor from the wilderness to the marts of the Big City and not the other way round. (69)
Billy’s close attachment with primitivism confers on him a feeling of detachment from his surroundings. He feels he is a stranger in the civilized world and he is estranged from the civilized men. He has an intense hatred for them. Out of his profound hatred on material world, he says:

I see a roomful of finely dressed men and women seated on downy sofas and while I am looking at them under my very nose, they turn into a kennel of dogs yawning or snuggling against each other or holding whisky glasses in their furred paws. (69)

The image of dog that Billy uses indicates how much Billy hates the modernized life of the urban people. H. Prasad comments:

He [Billy] has no love last for the modern civilization. Like Wordsworth of “The World is Too Much With Us,” Billy feels that this civilization is a monster. It is not a civilization, but a degradation. (52)

To describe his great hatred for this materialistic world, he says, “. . . whether civilization is anything more than the making and spending of money. What else does the civilized men do?” (Billy 69).

As Billy realizes that he is not in harmony with his surrounding, his family, his wife, and his soul, he has to retire within himself. The questing thoughts that have been in slow movement get stimulated and start pulling
Billy forcefully and set him off in quest of primitivism. Now he is brought to a clear understanding of the things that he needs in life. He realizes that his life with Meena and his child does not relieve him of his tension. Meena and Billy cannot communicate and respond to each other as they are made up of different stuff, Meena with her intense urge for civilization and Billy with his unquenchable thirst for primitivism.

Meena does not posses either empathy or sympathy for human suffering. Had she been possessed with the sufficient knowledge of understanding others or Billy’s suffering, the marriage could have been saved. It is her domineering personality and lack of understanding that widens the chasm in her relationship with her husband. It is depicted in the words of Billy, “So the more I tried to tell her what was corroding me, bringing me to the edge of despair so to speak, the more resentful she became” (Billy 133). H. Prasad comments, “Meena is an associate of this phoney society, a product of the sensational civilization” (54). Billy has a bizarre view of the civilization and society around him and Meena. He tells about the degraded state of the civilized society. The people of the modernized society are very pompous and worldly.

In family life, Billy feels alienated and needs someone who can share his thoughts, who can respond to him, who can heal his wounded and tortured self. Therefore he is pulled towards Rima Kaul who has been in love with him since the day she met him. Rima lives close by the house of
Billy and he has known her since her childhood. He begins an intimate relationship with her because he says, “the strain between Meena and me increased . . . and I noticed a peculiar turn in my relations with Rima” (*Billy* 134). She showers on him her passionate and profound love. His visit to Mumbai brings him very close to her. For Billy, Rima is a symbol of love which Meena lacks. Billy felt happy when she said, “Oh, how misunderstood you are, my poor boy, I know how you feel. Those who harass you should be put to death straightway” (*Billy* 135). Billy is temporarily satisfied by the sympathy shown to him by Rima. When he was in Simla, he took Rima to a cheap hotel and seduced her. Billy thinks, “I seduced her and why I seduced her that still at times can keep me awake the whole of a night” (*Billy* 134).

In order to escape from the dilemma and the agonies of life, Billy takes his students of Anthropology to the tribal areas of the Satpura, accompanied by Rima Kaul. Billy is even prepared to divorce his wife Meena and marry Rima who is an embodiment of that empathy which Meena lacks. But later, he realizes that his relationship with Rima is a shameful and morally degraded affair. He knows that the relationship with Rima is temporary. When Billy hears about the accident and her death, he literally cries out of grief. Soon he feels that no woman in the phoney society can satisfy him and even Rima’s sympathetic words disgust him. He decides to start his journey to realize himself.
Billy wants to seek self-realization for a union with the missing part of his soul. He totally becomes pensive, alienated and segregated from society and family which cannot provide him peace and joy. At this time he understands that the material society corrupts him, degrades and estranges him from his own soul. Billy is haunted by a sense of alienation. Therefore, he longs to free himself from the clutches of the phoney society and its surrounding.

After his successful completion of his Ph.D. in Anthropology, as against the expectation of his father, Billy returned to India and took up a job in Delhi University. His trance continued and he was ill at ease in his position as a teacher. His students organised an expedition in central India and Billy was guiding it. They camped near a mountain stream in late September. They were busy erecting their tent but the pack of ropes got lost. Billy had no time to waste because it was getting late with the threat of wild animals. Billy went into the tribal village to get the help of Dhunia, the village chief. Dhunia was willing to help Billy but he had to wait till the return of Bilasia, his niece. Billy reveals his thought:

I wonder sometimes what my life would have been if that boy had not lost that package or Dhunia had some ropes available with him right then. I wonder if all this would have happened if I had not waited for Bilasia to return home from the forest. It was as though, during that half hour, it was not
Bilasia I had been waiting for but my future, my past, indeed the very purpose of my life. (82-83)

Soon the anklets of Bilasia was heard foretelling her long expected arrival. She invited Billy in to have the ropes. Billy was looking at the anklet of her in the oil lamp and at that moment Billy realized that something unusual was happening to him and he was behaving abnormally.

Bilasia, the tribal beauty was in her rust coloured lugra, her black hair tied behind her neck and her firm golden base shoulders lent a voluptuousness in the play of the oil lamp. Billy had met her two years back as a sick girl. Dhunia invited him to see the tribal dance the next day. When he reached the camp, the boys have made the tent. Billy went a little distance away and sitting on a rock he started to cry. He describes:

I sat down I started to cry, actually weep, something that I hadn’t done for ages. I sat with my hands pressed against my eyes. I don’t think I made much noise but my chest heaved something terrible . . . . I knew something was going to happen to me. I was terrified, as a child is terrified in the dark. Ever since I had left Dhunia’s home, rather left Bilasia, I felt as though I were passing through one of my numerous dreams. Or as though all else had been a dream and I had just woken up. (87)
In the tent, Billy was lying in his bed suddenly got up sweating. He had “a dream, a dream so erotic, the like of which I did not know could still be conjured up by my unconscious” (Billy 87). When he was in deep trance sitting outside his tent in the last expedition, he could feel the inner voice of nature. He started responding to that sweet melody of the hills, forest, untamed nature and the tribal people. That voice was distinctly calling him.

Nature seems to be awaiting Billy’s arrival. He forgets completely to think about his high social status of being a graduate of Columbia, son of a Supreme Court Judge, husband of Meena Biswas and father of a handsome child. All that he thinks is that he is the first man on earth enjoying the serenity of nature. He can now feel the intense pressure of nature’s call on him towards the primitive world. Billy describes the forceful call of nature thus:

“Come”, it said. “Come to our primitive world that will sooner or later overcome the works of man. Come. We have waited for you . . . . Come, come, come, come. Why do you want to go back? You thought New York was real. You thought New Delhi was your destination. How mistaken you have been! Mistaken and misled. Come now, come. Take us. Take us until you have had your fill. It is we who are the inheritors of the cosmic night. (88)
Apart from the enticement of nature, Billy’s meeting with Bilasia, a tribal beauty is a turning point in his life. He realizes that he has found out the right woman. His soul is at peace whenever he is in her company. The beauty of Bilasia whom Billy met in Dhunia’s hut empowers him. He describes the extraordinary meeting:

As I stepped forward I had the distinct, if somewhat confused, feeling that I was facing not merely a human being but also the embodiment of that primal and invulnerable force that had ruled these hills, perhaps this earth, since time began. (162)

Billy has completely forgotten his old self and the civilized world which were the causes for his dissociation. Billy has a contented and happy life with Bilasia in the tribal setting. He feels that Bilasia is the right woman for him. H. Prasad is of the opinion:

Meena deadens his senses, Rima corrupts him and the material civilization kills his innate natural instinct. It is Bilasia who causes explosion of senses, the proper medium to reach soul. From Meena to Rima and from Rima to Bilasia is not a mere trifling in Billy’s life, it is a development from sex to sympathy and from sympathy to sublimation. (58)
Bilasia is the apt woman whom Billy has been searching for throughout his life, in the crowded streets of Indian and Western metropolis. He abandons the cultured world and its symbols in Meena and Rima. When Billy has got an opportunity to meet Bilasia alone in the festive moonlit night, he is attracted and titillated so much by her primeval beauty. “Bilasia, when Billy saw her, appeared to be the essence of that primitive force that had called him night after night, year after year” (Prempati 191). After their personal meeting and enjoyment, Billy feels that those moments are passing moments that rarely come in a man’s life. Billy, out of his ecstasy, exclaims, “. . . he has suddenly discovered that bit of himself that he has searched for all his life and without which his life is nothing more than the poor reflection of a million others” (Billy 103).

Billy enjoys seeing her clothes clinging on to her wet body. He says, “This woman keeps crossing my dreams causing in me a fearful disturbance” (Billy 162). Bilasia, to use Jungian concept is Billy’s missing self. In terms of psychoanalysis “Billy and Bilasia are two selves of the same personality” (H. Prasad 46).

Fascinated by the Maikala forest and the life style of the tribals, Billy tries to control his “runaway imagination, bordering on hallucination” (Billy 128). Billy is satisfied that he is waiting for this period in his life and he has experienced it. Billy admires the way Bilasia carries the bundle of sticks. Billy enjoys the drumbeats of the villagers and dances with
them. The tribal people have been waiting for the tribal king. “They were
waiting for the rising of the moon” (Billy 99). Billy enjoys the company of
the half drunken tribal community.

Finally, as he enters into the primitive world, Dhunia, the chief of
the tribal class makes him stay among the forests. Billy feels at home
when he stays with them. He has a feeling that this is the kind of life he
has been waiting for. “Even before his physical disappearance into the
jungles, Billy ceased to belong to the world” (Pathak, “Human” 109).
Billy Biswas who feels out of tune with the civilized world is constantly at
peace within himself as he enters into the uncorrupted tribal world.

Dhunia, Bilasia’s uncle has the superstitious belief of the tribals in
Chandola’s reappearance when the King comes alive. He relates this belief
to Billy and confirms that Billy is the king and his niece Bilasia is Queen
Devi. He also makes Billy stay with him among the Hills, in spite of
knowing that Billy is married already. He thinks that the Chandola lost by
Bilasia in her life will be lit by Billy. Hence, he has decided not to send
Billy back to his village and covers the fact that he is alive by uttering lies
to Collector Romi who comes in search of Billy. He mesmerises Billy by
saying that Bilasia is none but queen Devi, the King’s wife who ruled
Maikala some thousand years before. “Devi, his queen, immolated herself
on her husband’s pyre prophesying that she would return when her
husband returned to the forest” (Billy 113). Dhunia has high regards for
Billy and elevates him to the level of a high priest. “He is our Priest”, says Dhunia (Billy 114). Dhunia believes that Billy is the reincarnation of their King and is endowed with magical and supernatural powers. He says that he has seen Billy send away a tiger which had been roaming in the jungle for a week killing their cattle. Dhunia has full trust on Billy and he is surprised to find Billy restoring his grandson’s life. He believes that Billy’s return signifies the end of their evils and miseries. Dhunia says, “He is like rain on parched lands, like balm on a wound. These hills have not seen the like of him since the last of our kings passed away” (Billy 115). Billy is believed to be the king of the forest. “He emerges among them as an archetype of their collective consciousness” (Mohan 203).

Billy Biswas seeks solace among the hills and is living there till the end of his life. He is firmly fixed in the tribal soil and has a strong tie with the tribal relationship he has gained for himself. Never has he had the wish or desire to go back to his native land where his wife and child live. He likes living with the foresters because they are not materialistic. He feels that nobody there in the forest is interested in the price of food grains or seeds or elections. He likes the primitive life style of the tribal community. Billy’s life in the woods makes him feel fixed there. Billy is fused with the primitive soil in the Maikala forests. Even in the busy streets of Delhi, he has seen a strange woman crossing his thoughts and dreams, first with the resemblance of Bilasia and he has danced with her and has lost himself.
One of the essential sources of his joy is Bilasia who represents real love for Billy.

At the lap of the hills, Billy changes completely. The frills of his illusion have left him. He discards the dress of the fashionable society and wears just a loincloth like a typical tribal. He drinks and dances with the tribal pals. He sings and waits for the moonrise along with them. In his new life in the primitive realm, he learns a lot of essential things such as how to experience real happiness from his involvement with nature, from the primeval passions and the rhythm of harmonized as well as united soul. The joy he derives out of his life with nature keeps him away from money and the materialism of the civilized society.

As Billy is leading a life with nature, he finds his real self as well as primitive self and goes forward to accomplish his spiritual quest. Along with Bilasia, he is happy in the uncivilized world. The primitive life provides him spiritual tranquillity that he has been searching for. His carefree life with nature – the earth, the forest, the rainbow, the liquor from the Mahua, a lot of dancing and love making provides him an inner peace and soothes his longing soul. Though Billy is at peace with himself, the civilized world force in the form of Mr. Biswas, and Rele, the Havildar keeps on searching for him. They do not seem to leave Billy to live in happiness.
Situ, the wife of Collector Romi suffers from migraine accompanied by severe backache. All she needs is some naturopathy as all other means of treatment are just failures. “What made things worse was the fact that of late her migraine was accompanied by a severe backache towards the end of the spine” (Billy 140). It is when Situ suffers at the Collector’s Bungalow, Billy happens to drop in. Situ is fast asleep, when Billy gets permission to enter her room. It takes nearly an hour to complete his treatment and then Billy leaves. Situ gets up only in the afternoon of the next day. She finds some changes in her room. She says, “Some one had been to her room the previous night and that he had given her something to smell . . . touched her with a metallic rod” (Billy 143). Situ is curious to know who that person is and pesters her husband to tell her who and why he had entered her room without her knowledge.

Situ becomes a nagging wife, when she hears about a stranger’s entry into her room. She is impatient and questions her husband incessantly. Romi hesitates to reveal the fact of Billy’s entry to her room as she would definitely leak about Billy’s existence to others and the other cause is that Billy has entered into her room when she is all alone. Situ’s curiosity to know who entered into her room and why he entered increases and hence she nags her husband. The nagging is more than the pain she underwent out of migraine. Finally, her husband has to reveal the fact of Billy’s existence.
The moment she hears about Billy and his treatment to her, she becomes very anxious to reveal the matter of Billy’s existence to Meena, her friend. Situ goes to Meena’s house and immediately tells Meena and the Biswases about Billy and his stay among the hills. If Situ has not revealed the fact, Billy would have been at least alive in the forest. The knowledge of Billy’s existence makes Meena and Mr. Biswas go in search of Billy among the forests. Thus, “much against her husband’s warning, Situ lets Billy’s wife and father know about Billy being alive.” (Dhawan 35). The fact of Billy’s existence comes to the fore through Situ.

Basically, Situ’s father is an authority on the Bijapur kingdom. Her brother has made some name in Radio Physics and Situ is an M.A. in Psychology. Unlike many other ladies, Situ is quite plain in her attitude. She does not hide anything from others. She tells everything that she knows to others. She represents any talkative Indian woman who gossips about the happenings around. Situ has been “anxious to know about his whereabouts.” (H. Prasad 57). She brings the fact of Billy’s existence to the world but her plans are not successful. She becomes matured in mind and consoles Meena when her effort to bring back Billy to the village is a failure.

Billy tries his level best to escape from the clutches of civilized society. All his efforts become vain before the ruthless materialistic men who kill Billy with the stengun. In spite of his abrupt death, Billy
irrefutably proves his victorious run to keep himself not to enter into the society which is unfit for him. He has obeyed the nature’s call – “come, it is with us that you begin and with us that you will end” (*Billy* 102). At the death of Billy, Romi comments thus:

Gradually it dawned upon us that what we had killed was not a man, not even the son of a ‘Governor’ but someone for whom our civilized world has no equivalent. It was as though we had killed one of the numerous man-gods of the primitive pantheon. (169)

Dhunia also reflects Romi’s opinion of Billy. According to him Billy is their ancient king because Chandtola which had become quiet, gloomy and lifeless after the death of the last King and Queen of the tribal community begins to glow, when Billy visited it along with Bilasia. Dhunia opines, “When the *Kala Pahar* calls you, there is nothing you can do but go. There is nothing you can do but go . . . the Black rock is the Master of us all” (*Billy* 115).

Billy’s stay in the tribal abode has left a lasting impression on the tribal community. Srivastava comments aptly on Billy’s spiritual quest:

His embrace of primitive life is a part of the maturation of his independent being when he estranges himself from his family and humdrum world and begins to realize his own self. This was, what he often talked of, a great attempt of man to find
himself. When he does find his own self in the forest and among the primitive people his maturation process is complete . . . with an almost total calmness. (19)

Billy Biswas has discarded the civilized material world as he is on a spiritual quest. He is not disillusioned because he is successful in finding spiritual tranquillity in the wilderness, in the primitive abode of the tribals far away from the urban world. According to C. Devi, “Through the strange case of Billy Biswas, Arun Joshi satirises the unsupportable suffocation caused by the modern materialistic society” (“Quest” 35).

Though Romi tries to help Mr. Biswas in tracing Billy among the woods, he cannot help him to catch him alive. Romi seeks the help of the Havildors to trace Billy. His plan to bring back Billy alive is a failure as Billy is shot dead by a Havildor, when he tries to catch him. Romi experiences severe pain on knowing the death of his dear friend Billy. The concluding line of the novel “the fissures in the road had been repaired” (Billy 173) is uttered to console the bereaved narrator and the readers including the Biswases who cannot bear the death of Billy.

Sindi and Billy, the two protagonists of the first two novels of Arun Joshi are dissociated individuals. Both of them keep the bond of human relationship at bay and cocoon themselves in the world of their own. Sindi is afraid of getting involved with others and Billy is scared of the civilized world. Both of them are troubled with dilemmas of different kinds but
their dilemma ends when Sindi discards his fear of getting involved and Billy is tranquil in the tribal community.

The duo of protagonists Ratan Rathor in *The Apprentice* and Som Baskar in *The Last Labyrinth* lead their lives with a guilty conscience and in their own way they quest for their redemption. Hence the next chapter bears the title *Agony and Anxiety*. 