Conclusion

Post Independence Indian English novel has invariably been concerned with the prevailing socio-mooring, cultural and political realities. Inherent dichotomy of social structure, socio-economic hierarchy conflicts and contradictions, domestic discord, gender bias and invasion of newly emerging mores determine the directions of the creative Indian fictional concerns. In fact pressures of reality in terms of socio-cultural and political contingencies have been the chief preoccupations of creative consciousness in India. The traumatic experience of partition, tension between caste and communities, exploitation and suppression have dominated the Indian fictional scenario.

Arun Joshi however cannot be justifiably placed in this stream of writers although he does belong to the main stream tradition in certain context. The centre focus of his fiction is on the self who is lost in the labyrinth of industrialized and dehumanized society. He feels, helplessly isolated, alienated and dispossessed. Joshi as a novelist is not content with apparent realism or with recreation of experience in realistic, naturalistic or generalistic manner. He feels a need to reshape it and to rediscover the reality which lies hidden beneath the apparent actuality. Arun Joshi's novels therefore, move vertically deep down into the psychic structuration of self into the fathomless depth of his soul. Arun Joshi in this context seems to be taking a creative stance which is noticeably difficult from that of what is often referred to as the trio of Indian English
Fiction namely Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan and Raja Rao. He transcends obvious and phenomenal world and enters into the mysterious depths of human existence. His creative imagination therefore, often takes recourse to fabrication of situations that reveal the reality beneath the external manifestations, a reality that govern human life and is essentially shapeless and ruthless in nature. His western training and exposure to European and American experiences have helped him to a considerable extent in shaping his creative vision. In his delineation of the existential and to inner dimensions of human existence, he seems to have borrowed extensively from the intellectual insights of the existential thinkers like Sartre, Albert Camus and others. The insights from the theological existentialists like Barth, Tillich and Kiekegaard are also incorporated in his fiction to underscore the questing dimension of the self.

Joshi certainly influenced by the western existential thinkers like Camus, Sartre and Kafka but his fiction does not portray their philosophical and creative preoccupations. He does not attempt any self-conscious super-imposition of existentialism on his characters. As a writer he seems to have critically noticed and assimilated the intercultural development in his country. His fiction therefore betrays a cogent and coherent fictional universe that faithfully embodies the internal contradictions of the post-independent Indian society.
The post-independent Indian society is characterized by rapid industrial growth, scientific development, urbanization, consumerism and materialism, radical changes in socio-cultural situation gave way to discontent, despair and a lack of faith in traditional values that had sustained the entire generation before independence. The deluge of materialism resulted in a growing sense of chaos and confusion, purposeless and loneliness, alienation and drift. The creative consciousness therefore shifted its endeavour towards an individual and the complex realities that go into the making of the self rather than group or external social realities. The moral confusion and the spiritual depression that the writers, like their fictional creation, suffered from were further intensified by the literary impact of the west, particularly the influence of European authors like James Joyce, D.H.Lawrence, T.S.Eliot, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. It resulted in a new literary phenomenon, the emergence of the anti-hero in Indian-English novel. He was endowed with inexplicable perplexities, complexes, alienation, fear and anxieties and devoid of any inner poise of the spirit as well as any trust in himself and the people around him.

Arun Joshi therefore, as a novelist has broken new ground in Indian-English fiction. He delves deep into the dark interiors of the fragmented self and articulates its urges and inspiration with rare psychological insights. He experiments with this medium of literature for approaching and analyzing lonely questers, their angst and anxiety, their alienation and dispossession. And in this sense Arun Joshi is a class
by himself. In his viable search for new themes, he has renounced the larger world of contingencies in favour of the inner world and has engaged himself in a purposive search for the essence of human living. He turned his attentive vision towards the explication of reality that stands beyond the normal bounds of scientific reason. This invariably involves the novelist in disintering the essential predicaments of man and in telescoping the interlocking themes of alienation and dispossession.

Most usages of alienation share the assumption that some relationship or connection that once existed that is 'natural' desirable, or good, has been lost. To claim that a person is alienated is to claim that his relation to something else has certain features, which result in avoidable discontent or loss of satisfaction. Alienation is of two kinds. The first type of alienation arises due to man's individuality or incompatibility in his personality and social substance. The second type of alienation is of the same level as the alienation expounded by Rousseau in the principle of 'social contract' in which the theme of surrender or transfer of any right is vested. The problem of alienation is intimately related to the loss of and quest for one's identity. It is loss of identity that results in alienation. Loss of identity is the dispossession of identity, the dispossessed personality's search for identity is a common place theme in the western fiction. Alienation and dispossession are inter-locking themes in Arun Joshi's fiction too.
In the discussion of themes of alienation and dispossession in Arun Joshi’s fiction, we are mainly concerned first, with man’s alienation from society, which is the most prevalent kind of alienation, and second his alienation and dispossession from his own self. In the previous chapters it has been our endeavour to trace the different facets of alienation and dispossession in the fiction of Arun Joshi. His novels veer around the central themes of alienation and dispossession as they affect the individual’s life and shape the human destinies. Most of the protagonists of Arun Joshi find themselves in the remarkable cul-de-sac situation from where they cannot escape. Afflicted by a traumatic sense of dispossession, the contingencies of culture and social conscription they keep struggling in a world of blighted hopes. It is, in one sense, a world of ruined hopes and more often than not, Arun Joshi’s heroes carry with them a sense of bleakness that does not allow them to actively participate in the diurnal business of life.

The Foreigner is a first person narrative recounted in the form of reminiscence. The choice of first person narration deserves especial critical attention. Because, first person narratological device primarily attributes authenticity to the narrative. It adds to the aesthetic and emotional appeal. Personal touch, in fact makes the agonising experiences of isolation and estrangement more credible and effective. It is Sindi Oberoi, the self-reflective protagonist, narrating his own story. The novel is written in the form of things past. The narration keeps moving from the recent past in Boston to the present in Delhi. Joshi has a
vast range and makes a novel out of the wide variety of scenes. During the course of the novel, he takes us to Nairobi where Sindi, the central character as well as the narrator of the story, was born; to London where he studied; to a night club in Soho where worked as a dishwasher and barman; to Scotland where he worked at a small village library and discussed, God and mysticism with a Catholic priest; to Boston where he studied for six years and met June and Babu; and to Delhi where he ultimately settled down. He drifts from one end of the globe to another in search of peace and emotional stability. His narration however, finally establishing that he continues to be a foreigner wherever he is.

Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist is portrayed as isolated from the world. He is alienated and dispossessed from society. He falls prey to inaction and indecision. The novel is about, Sindi's loneliness, alienation; disposssession and feeling of anguish in the wake of his estrangement from his environment, tradition and from his true self. It is about the problems of involvement in and detachment from the world, about the paralysis of will and lack of courage to face oneself and the hazards of life to make commitment and accept the responsibility of one's action. It depicts the suffering of an individual, who is cut-off from a proper familial, social and cultural context and is lost in the intricate labyrinth of life, and his anguished quest for a way out. The tragedy shocks Sindi out of self-complacency and reorients his attitude to life. Through sincere self-examination and intense suffering, which impel him to face the consequences of his actions and accept their responsibility, Sindi learns
that true detachment does not mean inaction and withdrawal from life. It means right action without any desire for its fruit and involvement with the world without the atrophy of one’s dispossessed identity. With the integration of his self, his unity with the world is achieved in spontaneity of love and unselfish work. Had he realized this earlier death of two persons and his own alienation and dispossession from self could have been avoided.

The Strange Case of Billy Biswas is a study in the total alienation and dispossession of its protagonist, Billy Biswas, from the upper crust of Indian society with its material concerns, spiritual shallowness and blind imitation of western culture in utter defiance of its traditional values and beliefs. Arun Joshi uses Billy’s strong primitive urge – his ‘urkraft’ to look critically at the inner decay and sterility of the society. There is an endorsement of an anti-materialistic simple life, with its few needs, lack of ambition and its harmonious relation with nature – a life given to the cultivation of man’s inborn endowments as well as of the higher things of life – is represented in the novel by Tuula Lindgren Billy’s Swedish girl friend, and Bilasia, his tribal wife. The primitive tribes of India – living far from the corrupting influence and polished banality of the so-called civilized society have a clue to the vitalizing spirit of this life. The tribal life of Maikala Hills in central India becomes a concretization of this world-view and Billy’s return from White America to India and his ultimate rejection of the post-Independence, pseudo-Western values of his Delhi society to join the primitives and accept their life, thus, turn out
to be a symbol of Billy’s quest for self-realization and for his identity. The novel depicts a meta-physical quest and is concerned with a deeper exploration of the human soul. The vision that haunts Billy in this novel, has haunted the seers, the mystics and the visionary in all ages and in all countries. It is a similar urge that leads Mathew Arnold’s “Scholar Gypsy” to free from civilized society with its innumerable ills to the company of primitive community.

The novel points to a growing extent of alienation and dispossession that are appearing in contemporary India among the sensitive youth, artists and intellectuals Billy’s predicament results from his bi-cultural situation. His is the authentic problem of a perceptive young man belonging to the Westernized Indian society that has lost its spiritual anchorage. He suffers from discontent, dispossession, alienation and a sense of irrelevance of life. The novel, despite its harsh indictment of the material concerns and spiritual degeneration of the upper-class Indian society. It is undoubtedly positive about the need for a guiding vision, whether mystical or moral to encounter the contemporary confusion of values. It is this vision that ignites the imagination of his non-conformist hero and enables him to look critically at the root of the decay that corrodes our culture from within and without, to see what has been lost and how it can be regained.

The Apprentice, is a confessional monologue. It is about a dark crisis in the human soul. It depicts the anguished attempt of a guilt-
stricken individual to retrieve his innocence and honour. It is a story of crime and punishment of dislocation and search. It contains a severe criticism of a rotten society with its meaningless pursuit of success and career, unscrupulous amassing of wealth in defiance of the sanctified values of its tradition like honesty, integrity of character, selfless service and honour. Sindi Oberoi and Billy Biswas do not make compromises with the world, and are dispossessed and alienated from it but Ratan Rathor does in The Apprentice, and becomes its victim. He dreams of achieving material success and in the process is dispossessed and alienated from his self. It takes him whole life to realize the futility of everything. He experiences the pangs of civilization. The novel concentrates exclusively on the narrator's point of view and his internal struggles. The action of the novel takes the form of a quest. In the course of his monologue, Ratan gradually strips himself of all protective pretences and reveals more of and more his hypocrisy, cowardice, corruption, debauchery and finally, his great betrayal. The gruesome details of his self-revelation are as much important as the method in which this is done. By his skilfully manipulated confession, interweaving what concerns him and what concerns others, Ratan builds up a portrait that holds a mirror to his contemporaries. The novel does portray the moral crisis not only of an individual but that of the entire society also. It is for this reason that Ratan is recognized as 'a man of our times' and It is, in this sense Joshi calls Ratan 'Everyman'.
The Apprentice, like the earlier two novels, The Foreigner, and The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, explores the themes of alienation and dispossession. In The Foreigner, the alienation and dispossession of Sindi Oberoi are from the world, from his beloved, from his friend Babu and himself. In The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, Billy’s alienation and dispossession are largely from society and his family. In The Apprentice, Ratan Rathor, the protagonist reconciles himself to the world but in the process gets alienated and from his family, his friends and even his own self.

The Last Labyrinth, portrays the spiritual alienation and dispossession of a millionaire industrialist, Som Bhaskar against the backdrop of a haunting world of life, love, God and death, the last labyrinth. The structure of the novel is extremely complicated. So much so that the book itself reads like a labyrinth. Joshi here employs a more intricate technique of narration. The diary form of the novel is combined with introspection and flashback as well as little bits and pieces of the brain as they collide in the brain of the protagonist. There is no unity of time and places. The narrator constantly switches from one level of time to another and the locale shifts as quickly as his fast moving thoughts. The way he zigzags into his memory resembles a maze and is a reflection on his inner turbulence and restlessness. Characters and places are set against one another. Som Bhaskar, is a contemporary Anglicized Indian who seeks to unravel the mysteries of life, death, and God with the help of science, discursive learning and logic. His western – trained intellect is
sceptical of Indian religions thoughts and beliefs. But his rationalism and
hedonistic approach that ironically betray his lack of inner stability,
provide him with no clue to the dilemma that he is faced with. His
alienation, loneliness, dispossession and uprooted ness remain and the
sort of affirmation that his predecessors - Sindi Oberoi, Billy Biswas and
Ratan Rathor - attained at the end of their excruciating but productive
encounter with life, eludes him. He is lost to the end in introspective
encounter and waits for his encounter with the last labyrinth, death,
which alone can, perhaps, resolve his doubts and contradictions.

The City and the River, carries the inconclusive quest of Som
Bhaskar beyond the intellectual level to find an internal system of order.
Such an order not only demands total commitment as well as personal
and collective responsibility but also offers a hope of salvation from social
and political evils. The predilections of Arun Joshi his preoccupation with
the themes of alienation and dispossession persist in The City and the
River, though apparently the novel appears to be different in tone,
texture and thematic treatment. His canvas here is wider and the crisis of
an individual replaced by socio-political and existential crisis of the
“City” and by implication of the whole humanity. These themes of
alienation and dispossession are contextualized in terms of politics. The
City and the River, is a parable of political society - the endless
variations of the relationship between man and power and mythic truths.
At one level, it is an allegory of Indian history, containing a bitter satire
on the authoritarian tendencies let loose by the corrupt and power -
crazy political leadership. At another level, it is a parable of human choice between allegiance to man and allegiance to God. It also explores the mystery of God and His relevance to man's choice.

Arun Joshi's short stories also take into their creative account, though on a minor scale, the central thematic concern of his fiction. It is his protagonist's, intense awareness of alienation and dispossession that ignite his anguished quest for survival in the intricate labyrinth of contemporary life. In Joshi's fictional world, the traditional patterns of life are stalemated with the pseudo-western values and the expedience of the age, the dream of freedom fighters is shattered, the old songs and poetry, myths and legends are lost in the deafening noise of jazz and lewd film songs, the natural human emotions of young men and women are repressed in the name of morality old men forget their 'dharma' and lust for youth and sex, an unemployed youth lacking faith and direction, wait for a dawn which will never break. It is a complex state of existence where man finds himself lonely, unrelated, alienated, dispossessed, and unfulfilled and desperately seeking the meaning and purpose of his life. Cut-off from his spiritual moorings and from the roots of his being, he gropes through maze, through the cunning passages and contrived corridors of contemporary history, for light and direction. The self here takes recourse to Paul. Tillich's idea of 'courage to be' and also to Kierkegaardian 'faith' as faith, is a 'leap' out of despair. The 'self in exile' finally comes to the full circle - he survives; irony, satire and fantasy make his circle artistically eventful and aesthetically colourful.