CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Man's alienation, the feeling of loneliness, estrangement and the resultant frustration is a psychic problem, not confined to one particular nation, but a universal one. Joshi uses this theme of alienation as a pretext to deal with de-alienation. A turning point comes in everyone's life, and all Joshi's alienated characters return to community and attain fulfillment. This process of de-alienation is completed through others, either through friends or through women. Joshi portrays the alienation of his protagonists in the beginning of his novel and leads them to de-alienation at the end of his novels. Thus Joshi's novels serve the moral purpose of showing the way to alienated men how to de-alienate themselves.

Karl Marx in his early writings, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, published in 1932, has elaborated the twin concepts of alienation and de-alienation. Karl Marx finds the cure for alienated labour in socialism and communism. He believes that self-alienated man will return to himself in the future. He finds the de-alienation of man in the return of man from religion, family, and state to his human or social existence. Individual de-alienation will lead to the de-alienation of society. Hegel is of the view that alienation will cease when man becomes fully self-conscious, and understands that his environment and culture are only the emanations of the Spirit. According to St. Paul man is alienated from the source of all truth and values. St. Paul has suggested through his teaching that man can cure his malaise of alienation through his salvation, which may be achieved through his reconciliation with God. It is possible to cure the human nature through joining the divine with the human.
Madhusudan Rao remarks: “...calamitous events that become the basis for protagonists’ introspection and the very process that helps them recover their subjectivity. As free subject, he intuitively apprehends an Order, cosmic and moral operating in human life where he had only apprehended chaos before. The absurd here thus evolves into a karma yogi and overcomes despair and alienation” (157). The death of June in Foreigner, the seduction of Rima Kaul in Strange Case, and the disappearance of Anuradha in Last Labyrinth are the calamities, which Joshi’s protagonists encounter in their life. He further observes:

“The Arun Joshi protagonist overcomes self-estrangement and social alienation once he is metaphysically reconciled to his world. Once Sindi realizes that “there is a chance to redeem the past” he detaches himself from his empirical ego, transcends his self-containment and self-absorption and fearlessly involves himself in lives, other than his own. In confessing his crimes to the young cadet, Ratan Rathor kills his ego. In ceasing to resist “What was real in him”, Billy regains his subjectivity. Once the self-estrangement is dispelled, the protagonist finds himself harmoniously related to the other and thus overcomes social alienation” (159).

Sindi (F) says that the calamity caused by the death of June is more or less a “therapeutic process” which has cleaned his soul. He says:

But in the inner recesses of my mind the trial went on. Each day the judges met and examined the witnesses. My parents, my uncle, my lovers, Babu and June, their parents and finally myself, one by one all were called by the invisible judges and asked to give their evidence. Under normal conditions this would have been painful but after the shock of June’s death it came as a great therapeutic process. I felt as if some indefatigable surgeon was cleaning up my soul with the sharp edge of his scalpel (207).

Kalpana Wandrekar remarks: “Exploring and mending ‘souls’ is Arun Joshi’s favourite theme” (79). Sindi thinks: “I could start life anew” (187) in India, his motherland.

June’s tragedy gives him an insight into the meaning of his existence. He says: “I had...experienced my first insight into the mystery of existence. But that was only half
the lesson. Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it. The gods had set a heavy price to teach me just that” (F 204). Still Sindi hesitates to get into action. After Mr. Khemka’s arrest, Muthu, the labourer requests Sindi to save the workers from poverty by taking over the management of the company. When Sindi hesitates to get involved, Muthu gives him the much needed advice. He says: “But it is not involvement,... Sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved” (239). Sindi listens to this and thinks about it. He says: “…I saw his point. Still, the old, nagging fear of getting involved with anything, anyone, was pushing through the mists of reason... a line of reasoning that led to the inevitable conclusion that, for me, detachment consisted in getting involved with the world” (239).

Sindi feels that involvement in work brings about de-alienation of his economic alienation. After the completion of his education, Sindi says that he has taken up a project in New York connected with some people living there. In the beginning he is interested in his work. The awareness of the importance of his role in the work, in the project, has helped him to show interest in his work. He says: “Under these circumstances, not to have done my bit would have been letting them down unnecessarily. So I got interested, and a stage came when I was only aware of my work and of nothing else, not even of June or Babu” (164). He finally achieves fulfillment in life by involving himself in work after his return to India, his spiritual home.

Sindi surrenders his will when he involves himself in action. Sindi, Surrinder Oberoi, calls himself proudly as “Surrender Oberoi” (242), since he has surrendered himself to the cause of the welfare of the worker’s community. The hard realities of life
teach him the lessons of devotion to work, and self-sacrifice. The awareness of this new orientation in his life makes Sindi call himself by a new name. Sindi conquers his loneliness and cynicism, and finds his roots in his native country India. A.A.Sinha says: “Genetically, Sindi was an orientator. He finds his roots in Indian soil, in the matrix of Indian culture” (Anguish of Alienation 29). O.P.Mathur remarks: “Sindi’s home-coming opens his eyes to the miseries of this world and through this process of emotional involvement he arrives at a re-adjustment of his values. Having become a sort of ‘Karmayogi’ he finds his equanimity and salvation in the land of his birth. Thus the novel portrays the progress of a Sartrean protagonist attached only with his own self towards a realization of humanity and responsibility which brings him very close to the concept of Karmayoga enunciated in the Bhagavadgita” (From Existentialism to Karmayog (115).

Sindi overcomes his sense of guilt and alienation. Life becomes meaningful with the self’s involvement in family and in society. Sindi’s de-alienation takes place through Muthu.

Billy (SC) finds fulfillment in life when he lives among the tribal people. When Billy, disappears into the forests on one of his anthropological expeditions, the nature—the beautiful night, the rock, the stream, and the trees seem to welcome him and make him realize that the city is not the destination for him. Billy tells Romi:

'They all seemed to be waiting and watching and staring at me. It was as though I was not Bimal Biswas, graduate of Columbia, the only son of a Supreme Court Judge, husband of Meena Biswas, and father of a handsome child; it was as though I were not all this but the first man on earth facing the earth’s first night...‘Come to our primitive world that would sooner or later overcome the works of man...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' (121).
Tuula says that Billy has felt the presence of a great force, ucraft, the primitive force in him, and he has felt afraid that it may explode any time (23). Billy regrets that he has wasted thirty years of his life by living in civilized society.

Billy finds the drums of the tribal people very effective in taking him to his primitive self. He says: It is much easier for us to get down to our primitive self, I guess, than it is for the Americans. Moreover, drugs are clearly out of bounds here. It is the dancing and the liquor that bring about the explosion. Explosion of the senses, as they used to call it' (140). Billy undergoes a complete change while sitting on the rock. Billy describes the change, the 'metamorphosis', which has overtaken him. He says: "And so Billy Biswas, a refugee from civilization, sat in the shadow of a saal tree, a thousand miles away from home, and gradually underwent his final metamorphosis" (141). Billy imagines that nature is rebuking him for leading a life in the civilized society in the city: 'Come, Come. Too long have you wandered the purlieus of our forbidden city' (141).

Billy says that in the Maikala village he is able to find a true friend, Dhunia, the headman of the tribal community, who becomes his mahaprasad. He says: "...it [mahaprasad] is the greatest friend that you can make on earth....I suppose we shall gladly die for each other" (112). In the character of Dhunia as Billy's friend, Joshi stresses the need of an intimate friend for every man to guide him through the turbulent life in this world.

In Billy's view it is the civilized society, that is sick. Romi refers to it "the so-called organized world" (86). The society is alienated, and is in a condition to be de-alienated. Billy accuses society for his moral degeneration. Self-realization comes to Billy after he seduces Rima. He says: "After it was over I looked into her clear trusting
eyes, and I had a first glimpse of my degradation. I realized what a cad I had been, what a
fraud I was about to become. I didn’t even love her, not the way I pretended to. The
mendacity that I had seen all around me had finally grabbed hold of me. I was well on my
way to becoming all that I had always despised” (188). When Romi asks what the Rima
incident has to do with this search, Billy says: “It was like a warning signal. It was as
though a master mind had arranged the whole thing to give me a preview of what awaited
me if I continued to defy its call. Poor Rima had crystallized for me the alternatives
although I did not realize this until I sat outside my tent that fateful night. I had two clear
choices: I could either follow this call, this vision, whatever the cost, or be condemned to
total decay. I suppose most men are faced with similar questions some time or the other”
(189-190).

Billy says that the Rima incident is a turning point in his life though he has been
bothered by a hallucination or vision all through life. It is the vision of becoming a
primitive; but he says that becoming a primitive is only a first step, a means to an end.
Billy says: “... I realized it only after I ran away. I realized that I was seeking something
else. I am still seeking something else” (189). Romi asks him what it is that he has been
seeking, and whether he is searching for God. Billy accepts that, as Romi has suggested,
he may be searching for God. He says that he has been searching for “something like
that” (189). By following his vision Billy has saved his soul from corruption. He says that
the Rima incident is an evidence of his ethical corruption: “What could be more terrible
than corruption” (190). Dhunia thinks that God has saved Billy from his calamity. Dhunia
feels that God alone can allay our sorrows, and both sorrow and happiness come from
God.
Romi (SC) comes to know from Dhunia that Billy is a magician who performs miracles for the villagers, and that he is "some sort of priest" (190). Billy differs much from what the preachers generally are and his religion does not come under any particular religion, as his replies to Romi's queries reveal:

'What do you preach?'
'What makes you think I preach any thing?'
I imagine every priest preaches something.'
'Not in these hills.'
'You must be representing some religion.'
'We haven't got much religion up there, not in your sense, anyway'.
'What do you do then?'
'I just do little things for them; the people, I mean.'
'You mean you help them with their difficulties, their health and food and social disputes and spiritual troubles, things that I am supposed to look after and don't!' (191).

Romi is filled with doubts and is not satisfied with the answers given by Billy. When he tries to ask one more question 'the most intriguing question of all...how he had come to be a priest", Romi feels the mysterious presence of God, and he says "All of a sudden I had the feeling that we were not alone, that there was another presence besides us on the darkening platform. It seemed to have come out of the large mass of the temple that lay at Billy's back....It seemed neither good nor evil, but terribly old. 'Beware,' it seemed to say. 'There are things that the like of you may never know. There are circles within circles and worlds within worlds. Beware where you enter' "(191-92). Romi understands that these matters related to God are beyond the understanding of man. Any number of debates and discussions on God, and many hours spent over arguing rationally will never make man understand the mysterious ways of God. Moreover one cannot ascribe the name of a particular religion to God. God stands beyond the religions of man. True religion depends upon personal experience and one should experience the real
presence of God to understand Him. The revelation leaves Romi dumbfounded and tired, and he abstains from raising further questions regarding God and religion.

Romi gets an enviable picture of the tribal village from Billy’s description. It is the picture of a de-alienated society. Billy says: “Nobody here is interested in the prices of foodgrains or new seeds or roads or elections and stuff like that. We talk of the supernatural, violent death, trees, earth, rain, dust storms, rivers, moods of the forest animals, dance, singing. And we talk, I am afraid, a lot about women and sex” (113).

Billy feels happy and proud to have gone and joined this primitive community, in which people lead a life in tune with nature, and where people live without any ambition. He says: “We lived at the subsistence level. What kept us happy, I suppose, were the same things that have kept all primitives happy through the ages: the earth, the forest, the rainbows, the liquor from the mahua, an occasional feast, a lot of dancing and lovemaking, and more than any thing else, no ambition, none at all” (148). Billy finds his solace and contentment, spiritual tranquility and peace—all these which the civilized society does not offer—in the primitive society. Billy thinks of his mission among the tribal people as the fulfillment of the responsibility of his soul. Romi says that Billy has pursued it ardently and has attained fulfillment in his mission. Billy’s de-alienation takes place during his life in this primitive community, through his wife Bilasia and his friend Dhunia.

Ratan’s (AP) de-alienation happens through his friend, Himmat Singh. Though Ratan accuses his friend as being instrumental in leading him to commit the corrupt deal, his self-realisation is effected through this friend. Ratan, at the end, realizes that he himself is responsible for his corruption. Ratan feels that he is the victim of corruption of
the metropolitan society. A sense of self-awareness makes Ratan to view his sins objectively, and express his desire to correct himself. He says: “Twenty years and nothing gained. An empty life time. What had I learned? Pushing files? Manoeuvring? At forty five all that I knew was to manouvre; a trickster, that was what I had let make me. Did I know the meaning of honour, friendship? Did I ever know it? Would I ever know it again?” (139).

Ratan regrets that he is not the chosen man to whom the high priest will reveal the secrets of the cult even though he says, he has been “closer to a pontiff, the high priest of an exclusive creed, of whose mystery he was at once an inheritor and a trustee” (34). Then the realization comes that he does not deserve the high order. He says: “For, I had understood, soon enough, that such enlightenment would not be available to all. It was a privilege, not a right, and one would have to, in ways still hidden from me, qualify for the order” (34). Himmat tries to de-alienate Ratan and shows him the way to reach God.

Ratan confesses to his student companion that in the early part of his life he is ignorant of the true meaning of life, and he has believed in what his colleague has said about life. His friend has argued that “Life is zero,...you can take nothing away from a zero” (148). Ratan says that he has been impressed by this argument; but he has come to realize the flaw in the argument. Ratan says: “You see, you can take things out of a zero! You can make it negative. And if my colleague were alive today I should ask him this: would he prefer a negative to a zero. Life might well be a zero, for all I know, but it seems to me that it need not be negative. And it becomes negative when you take out of it
your sense of shame, your honour” (148). Now Ratan comes to believe that life has a purpose.

Ratan does not believe in going to the temple for praying, and does not know any formal prayer. He says: “I did not actually pray. I did not know who was to be prayed to and how. What I did was I said things to myself, some part of myself that I had not spoken to in a long time. For example, standing there, reeking of liquor. I said to myself; I shall be good. I shall not be greedy. I shall not be afraid. I shall be decent” (103). Ratan becomes an apprentice and engages himself in the learning process of retrieving his soul. He starts shining the shoes of the worshippers at the entrance of the temple as an act of humility, and an act of penance, and an atonement for the sins he has committed. He makes an effort to expiate his sins of cowardice, and dishonesty. Ratan arrives at the truth that the cure for mankind, steeped in corruption, lies in religion based on humanism. Standing at the entrance of the temple, he prays thus: “Be good. Be decent. Be of use” (148). Ratan says that he is not concerned about what is going on inside the temple. He just sits at the entrance of the temple, and shines the shoes of the worshippers. Then he folds his hands smelling of leather and sends his prayer to God. Then he asks forgiveness. He says: “I beg forgiveness. Of a large host: my father, my mother, the Brigadier, the unknown dead of the war, of those whom I harmed, with deliberation and with cunning, of all those who have been the victims of my cleverness, those whom I could have helped and did not” (149). Ratan learns the lessons of humility and seeks redemption through confession of his sins, and service to humanity.

Ratan says that he has learned to be of use to others, and he wants to learn still more, and that is why he has become an apprentice. He says that he will like to learn the
following values. He says: “Without vanity and without expectations and also without cleverness. ‘Getting along’ will not do nor would ‘I’ll see the next time’ or ‘Let me first know what is in it for me’. Then there is another thing that my father used to say, something in fact that his father had told him. Remember, he would say, whatever you do touches someone somewhere” (149). Ratan’s de-alienation comes after his self-realization, which is an important step to know God.

Himmat Singh, too, shows signs of repentance. He regrets that he has made use of Ratan for his corrupt dealings. He is reminded of what his mother has said once about him. She has warned him saying that “God’s darkness has come over you,...” (145). Himmat is troubled by his mother’s advice, and he analyses the truth behind her statement. Then Himmat arrives at the truth that God may be able to dispel the darkness in his soul. He says: “But if it was God’s darkness, he asked, what was the cure? What was the cure of a crooked world. None, perhaps. Revolution, perhaps. Or, perhaps...he seemed to hesitate a long time... perhaps God Himself. God alone perhaps could remove His darkness” (145-46). Himmat regrets his dark deeds and he tells Ratan that there is hope for Ratan to save his soul. He tells Ratan: “My soul was killed, you put yours to pawn. But souls that were pawned could perhaps be retrieved....Maybe souls are like muscles, Ratan Rathor. Maybe to develop them one has first to put them to use....Try to put yourself to use,...It might be too late. You have been too long the slave,...But give it a try” (146-47). Himmat Singh shakes Ratan out of his moral inertia and teaches him to get into action.

Som (LL) is temporarily drawn towards the centers of business, America and Europe, where he goes for business, since he thinks that the busy life led in those
countries will de-alienate him, and relieve him of his psychic problems. He feels like this since Aftab’s labyrinths reflect his fear of darkness and death. He says: “I felt the miasma of Lal Haveli lifting, dissolving before the vitality of this throbbing cosmopolitan life....Nothing was more welcome just then than the roar of wide-bodied jets, the sleepless, burning universe of airports that girdled the world. The vision of men, who had designed the jets and laid out the airports, had an authority that could not be matched by the designers of Aftab’s labyrinth” (114).

Aftab (LL) refers to Som as a snake and his stealthy entry into his house. He accuses Som of wrecking his peace, and stealing away Anuradha from him. In a letter addressed to Som he writes: “...I had let a snake enter my home...while you live you will rot...when dead you shall not find peace...from one graveyard to another you will wander...a million years” (222). At this stage self-realization comes to Som that all his troubles are due to his lust, and that he should renounce all his desires in order to regain the peace he has lost. He feels the need for his salvation and realizes that this is possible only through Anuradha. He addresses Anuradha:

Anuradha, listen. Listen to me wherever you are. Is there a God where you are? Have you met Him? Does He have a face? Does He speak? Does he hear? Does He understand the language that we speak? Anuradha, if there is a God and if you have met Him and if He is willing to listen, then, Anuradha, my soul, tell Him, tell this God, to have mercy upon me. Tell Him I am weary. Of so many fears; so much doubting. Of this dark earth and these empty heavens. Plead for me, Anuradha. He will listen to you” (222-23).

Som engages himself in a perpetual spiritual quest from the beginning till the end of the novel. Som derives his identity from a particular caste in India, the Brahmins, who are generally priests, and who spend their life in the service of God. When Anuradha first meets Som, she wonders how a Brahmin can be a businessman. She asks: “A Bhaskar,
what is a Bhaskar doing in business?” (13). Som recollects: “‘You are a Brahmin’, she said as though it explained everything” (13). But Som lacks the spiritualism that he is supposed to have.

The faith of an old man, who comes to die on the mountain shrine, overwhelms him. Som for the first time understands the powers of prayer, and feels that one can overcome the fear of death through prayer. He thinks, "Along with the old man we had all travelled to the other world, chanting, free from fear" (194). Som tells Gargi Mata that he is fed up of with his restlessness and requests her to help him to overcome his psychic problem. The deaf and mute lady writes on her note pad that God will send someone, someone who has known suffering to help Som. Som is filled with doubts and immediately asks her: “But what if there is no God?” (118). The lady feels amused by Som’s doubts. She just nods and smiles. Then Som says that he is reminded of the words of Kierkegaard: “Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays”, and he thinks: “Maybe, I ought to start attending temples every evening” (118). Som’s trip to the mountains to get his share of the property unknowingly becomes his pilgrimage, to know the greatness of God, and to experience the invisible power acting behind everything and everyone.

He is filled with a spiritual hunger and he is seriously engaged in the spiritual quest. He is confronted by religious questions for which he tries to find answers. He shows an eagerness to return to God. Keeping the silver Krishna, the gift from Anuradha, he says: “I couldn’t possibly throw it away. Like Aftab I, too, had wanted to start life all over again. What would have I done with it, though? What indeed?” (169). Som does not know what to do with the silver God, which he views as an artistic piece of silver. Joshi
implies that Som remains untouched by God and he does not look upon God in the hour of his need. This makes Madhusudan Rao observe: “He [Som] alone of Joshi’s protagonists remains “truncated” because he [Som] reasons relentlessly to the point where reason can proceed no further and stays in the ethos of the absurd” (159). Joshi hints at Som’s de-alienation in the future through his wife, Geeta.

In *The City and the River*, the boat people feel that the Grand Master needs to be de-alienated. Just as Billy is alienated by the civilized society, the boatpeople are alienated from the city and its ruler. As the Grand Master complains, “for half their time they spend sitting about on the sloping river bank talking, singing, meditating, playing the one-string” (14). The Headman, a woman, thinks that God creates life on this earth and the Grand Master has not understood the ways of God. She asks: “You think an ant is born on this earth without God’s will? If it is His will that there should be only one child to a mother then surely it shall come to pass. There is no need for the Grand Master or you to pass a law” (19-20). She tries to drive home the point that only the will of God is done on this earth, and no one on this earth has got the power to change His will.

The Minister for Trade tells the Hermit that he is “willing to lay down his life for this city” (69), and that he believes in action, and feels that the cure for the evils is in the right kind of action: “That is where the rub lies_ in action. Where one should raise standards of rebellion, one foolishly seeks compromises. Where one ought to call a spade a spade, one merely stays dumb_ and hopes for the best. Where is the cure, Great Hermit?” (69). The Hermit answers that “the cure, surely, is within oneself” (69). Joshi feels that the key to the de-alienation of one’s self lies in the self itself, and the cure for the world is in the right kind of action. Joshi believes in *karma*, that is action, and
dharm, the right kind of action, and tries to convey this message of Gita through his novels. The disciple of the Hermit, the Little Star says to the Professor: “Everyone is thousands and thousands of years old, tied as we are to the Wheel of Karma. Unfortunately, we forget this. Kings and grand masters forget this the most. That is the world’s misfortune” (42).

Joshi makes the Hermit pass on spiritual truths to the readers. The Hermit tells the Minister for Trade, who God is. He says: “God, too, is a king, Minister. I am sure you have heard of Him” (69). He adds that God manifests himself in everyone: “But so he is ....Here, there, in you, in me, in that beggarly boatman and his boat, in all that you see and that you do not see. The world belongs to God,...Let him be the King of what is His” (70). To the Minister’s question “what is God”, the Hermit answers: “Can we not say He is the noblest thing each of us can imagine, each according to his light. Sometime back you asked me what Truth was. Can we not say God is the highest Truth as is known to each one of us”. Then he gives him the final bit of advice: “Let not the tangle disturb you. Sufficient it always is for a man to mind his own business as truthfully as he can” (70).

The Minister for Trade feels disturbed at the coronation of the Grand Master’s son as the next heir to the throne. He feels that he may be a better ruler than the Grand Master or his son. The Hermit replies: “That is what they all say. The question is: are you willing to be a better slave? A man aspiring to rule this city must first learn to be the slave of the city. Only then can he claim precedence over the present Grand Master. The rest is words” (113). The Hermit refers to the Law which governs all; the Law, which governs all rulers. He tells the Minister for Trade that he is Lord’s instrument and he receives orders from the Lord. He says: “...there is a Master of the World beyond the Grand
Master and the rest” (114). The Hermit refers to the Lord God, who governs over everyone.

Bhumiputra advises the people not to be afraid of the Grand Master even though “this man is powerful...This man commands the city and the guns of the city” (145-46).

He tells them that no one has the power to hurt one’s soul. He says:

‘What does your soul care if a man is powerful and a man commands the guns. Guns cannot kill you,...’

‘The guns can kill your bodies, yes. Are you, then, afraid to die?’ ‘For if you are afraid to die then your soul is already dead and the great river, your mother, cannot help you, nor can the Headman help you even if she were back from the dungeons of the shadow’ (146).

Bhumiputra advises the people to be free of their fears and tells them how to get rid of their fears. He says: “If men did nothing but tell each other this parable they would begin to feel freer, lighter and this cloud of fear would lift” (155). Then he says that The Grand Master and The New Era are the shadows of the evil that lurks beneath the Seven Hills.

He tells them that these shadows will disappear if they are bold, and face them with courage. He asks: “And, if only men were to free themselves of the terror of the shadow, and look it in the eye would it not shrivel and creep back into the dungeons from where it came?” (155). Joshi feels that freedom from fear will de-alienate the protagonists.

The Hermit asks Bhumiputra to be free of fear when Bhumiputra talks of his fear of the Grand Master. He says:

‘And I learnt that nothing enfeebled man more than fear, that nothing but fear stood between him and his liberation. And I learnt that fear was the greatest ally of the kings and grand masters of the world, for without fear to freeze the hearts and the limbs of their subjects many a throne would have been toppled and many a crown blown off with the breath of the oppressed.

‘And I saw that where men had thrown off this blanket of fear there alone Truth had triumphed and great civilizations flourished and man had taken another step towards God....But knowledge and its realization are different
things. A moment comes when knowledge must realize itself in action or else become sterile' (155-56).

Bhumiputra feels ashamed of his cowardice. Joshi expresses the view that man should be fearless, bold and courageous, and stand up against all oppressors. Man should fear only God, because the fear of punishment from God may prevent him from his evil actions, and lead him in the path of righteousness.

The complete destruction of the city with the Grand Master, and his personal adviser, the Astrologer takes place because of their sacrilegious acts against the will of God. The disciples of Sage Yogeshwara, the Astrologer and the Hermit, interpret the Grand Master’s dream of the coming of a king in different ways. While the Hermit interprets it as God’s will, and His rule on earth, the Astrologer interprets it as the human will, and the rule of the Grand Master and his heir. The divine anger is revealed in the fury of the river, which engulfs the city. It paves way for the new city to be born with new rulers, and a new world of people. Joshi gives the universal message that in this universe life and death, creation and disintegration are cyclic.

The sage Great Yogeshwara, suggests the cure for the city of the Grand Master, which is also a cure for all the technologically advanced civilized societies in the world, as his conversation with the Nameless-One shows:

‘On the ruins of that city, as always happens, a new city has risen. It is ruled by another Grand Master, which, of course, need not always happen. In the new city is ...another tribe of boatmen. There is also another Council and another set of Councilors. The men have other names but the forces they embody remain unchanged’.

‘...Another New Era of Ultimate Greatness is about to begin. The Grand Master’s army is equipped as never before. The tanks are bigger, the lasers sharper, the planes fly faster than the speed of sound. The conflict that shall come will also be the same: a matter of allegiance, to God or to man’.

‘But what shall I do when I get there?’
‘That you will know when the time of action arrives. The main thing is to prevent this endless repetition, this periodic disintegration. But to achieve that we need purity’.
‘Purity?’
‘Yes the city must purify itself if it is not to dissolve again’
‘Purify itself of what?’
‘Of egoism, selfishness, stupidity’.
‘But how shall I succeed where the Hermit failed?’
‘The question is not of success or failure; the question is of trying. And it is not your success that we are speaking of but the city’s. The city must strive once again for purity. But purity can come only through sacrifice. That perhaps was the meaning of the boatmen’s rebellion’ (262-63).

The sage tells that the Nameless-One is the next Hermit of the Mountain, and entrusts him with the responsibility of leading the human beings in the path of righteousness. He says: “In any case we are only instruments_ both you and I _ of the great God in the highest heaven who is the Master of the Universe. How perfect we are as instruments is all that matters. His is the will, His is the force. But I shall be with you always” (264). Joshi dreams of a new world order based on Vedic knowledge. Joshi thinks that a proper cultural environment steeped in tradition may help to create good citizens, and noble political leaders free of economic and political corruption. Joshi tries to establish a world order incorporating all the good elements advocated by different religions because the different religions show the different paths to reach God, the Absolute Knowledge, who manifests himself in different forms.

Joshi delineates in the city the microcosm of the universe, and suggests that the salvation of mankind at large may be attained through self-purification, suffering and sacrifice. The sage says that if the Grand Master has set aside his ego and has tried to find out in the right way the real cause of the mutiny of the boatmen, the wheel of sacrifice may have rolled off. He further adds that the prophesy by itself says nothing: What is important is how one interprets it for oneself: “We never know when the soul of a Grand
Master is touched and in that hour his life is transformed...it is what you are inside that
governs how you read the outside. Once the Grand Master is purified within he will see
the world in a different light” (263). O. P. Mathur says: “Thus any upliftment of society
must start at the level of individuals. And once the world has purified itself, the ‘endless
repetition’, the ‘periodic disintegration’ will be prevented and a stable society, a
Gandhian Ramarajya or a Christian Kingdom of God will be established” (Contemporary
and Cosmic 151).

Joshi feels that the disintegration of the society is due to the evil effects of
industrialization, which has resulted in urbanization. E. Satyanarayana remarks that
industrialization and urbanization have led to the breaking up of the close ties between
the husband and wife:

...Arun Joshi in his fiction, displays an awareness of what makes for
human tragedy in the society. He sees that the forces of industrialization
and urbanization have exerted a deleterious influence on the life of man.
Consequently, even the relationship between husband and wife is reduced
to the condition of a commodity essentially. It is this aspect of life which
in Arun Joshi's view has marred the human essence as could be found
not only in his novels but also in his short fiction (108).

Joshi believes in the family system, and is of the view that the foundation of the
economy of India lies in the family system. The American life style is different from that
of India and it does not give room for the family system. There the people live
independently, and they are bound together only by law. Joshi criticizes both the Western
and Eastern civilizations, and the old values being replaced by the new values in the
modern age of industrialization. He condemns the growing interest of the people in
materialism, which leads to corruption in all walks of life in the modern age. Susheel
Kumar Sharma observes: “Arun Joshi rejects American way of life (June was an
American) and also the ignorant Indian approach symbolized by Babu. But, Sindi being a round character learns and modifies himself and saves himself from the doom....Joshi also suggests that there is always a way out of misery for a wise man who is ready to learn and know. It is in this respect that his vision is different from existentialists and absurdists" (Philosophical Reverberations 102).

Joshi talks of the evils of industrialization, the affluence and the poverty. The poor do not care for the rich, who form the creamy layer of the society. Som (LL) describes those who live below the poverty line as a special class of people. He says: “There were mendicants, a bewildering variety, caring neither for the car nor the other distractions of this illusory world. This was one class of humanity that Aftb’s chaffeur respected even if they cared little for the laws of traffic. Mesmerized, he stared at their ash-smeared bodies, drugged eyes, offering even a smart salute if they seemed inclined to receive one” (29-s30).

Joshi talks through Sindi that “in thousands of offices the abominable wheel of industrialization was grinding on inevitably. And we who pretended to be the masters were driven before it like torn bits of paper on a windy day” (45). Sindi tells Muthu, an employee in Mr. Khemka’s company how men think it is their duty to make money. Muthu thinks that these men are under an illusion. He says: “These men mistake the action of their senses for their own actions. It is all Maya” (45). Joshi envisages a new age. Joshi makes the income tax man say: “India is working towards a new age. An age in which each man will be equal to another” (43). Muthu opts for revolution, which may create a new order. When Sindi says that there will be blood-shed in a revolution, he
remarks that in the beginning “Sacrifice is inevitable in a revolution” (43). Sindi answers that there is no end to suffering, no end to the struggle between good and evil” (43).

Joshi denounces modern Indian women, who under the impact of West, just try to ape western culture. He condemns those who forget the Indian culture and tradition; and ignore the spiritual and moral values. Such women are led astray in their over enthusiasm to enjoy the freedom, which education has given them. Joshi expects women to be modern in their outlook. He feels that they may adopt Western culture; but that they should retain their spiritual and moral values, which the generations of the past, and the rich heritage of India has given them. Geeta is a traditional type of woman who is at the same time modern and westernised. June though an American respects Indian culture. Anuradha is very religious though she is modern in her outlook. Joshi has portrayed in his novel both types of women, the modern westernized Indian women, and the Indian traditional women. Joshi employs the traditional women with modern outlook as tools to de-alienate the angst-ridden men. They play different roles either as lover, wife or friend, and take efforts to de-alienate them.

All Joshi’s protagonists, who pass through guilt and remorse, arrive at the final perception of truth, and this is effected through the women characters who though modern still cherish spiritual values. Commenting on these women characters, Usha Bande observes: “…Joshi has created women (like Anuradha) who have intuitive realization, in Bilasia and June respectively. He uses these women as symbols to express the truth of his own conceiving. His three men_ Som, Billy and Sindi_ remain locked up in their intellect. Consequently, they lack peace and vision and become symbolic of the
restlessness of rational, scientific mind" (*Symbolism*, 159-60). Women try to soothe the angst-ridden man by instilling in him the faith in God.

The women in *Last Labyrinth*, Geeta, Som’s wife, Anuradha, his lover, and Gargi, his spiritual adviser, all play specific roles in the life of Som. Writing about the women in this novel T.Padma observes: “In so far as the women characters symbolize the conquest of ego by love and selflessness, they act as functionals in Som’s overcoming the morbid tendencies in his nature” (36). Anuradha exerts a powerful influence, which has drawn him towards her. Som thinks that there is something mysterious in her. He says: “There was a mystery about Anuradha that I had yet to crack. She should have been no more to me than a woman.... She should have been transparent. Why should she appear mysterious unless, possibly, there was a mystery within me that, in her proximity, got somehow stirred, as one tuning fork might stir another” (89). Som finds Anuradha’s influence irresistible. He says: “I wanted her and at the same time resented my need for her. I also resented that she had somehow seen more of me than I would have liked to reveal. Faced with her, in the loneliness of that haveli, I realized how inadequate I was to deal with her. Even for this I blamed her. It was silly” (121).

Gargi tells Som that Anuradha is a powerful woman, more or less a Goddess, who will show the path, and then lead him to God. She says to Som: “Go with her. Don’t quarrel. She is your *shakti*” (121). Som says that he does not understand the real implication of this advice of Gargi. Inder Nath Kher observes: “It is highly ironic that Som cannot understand the significance of his tantric union with Anuradha, his soul-image, his anima. He rationalizes the experience and continues to suffer from a sense of loneliness. The images from the Unconscious surface in his silent moments but they don’t
get fully integrated into his Consciousness” (58). Som finds Anuradha draped in a silk saree, wearing a diamond on her nose. Anuradha puts *mehndi* on her hand. Som thinks: “All this preparation, I knew, was for Krishna, but I could make believe it was for me” (133). She disappears from the house of Aftab on this holy day when God is born. Joshi implies that Anuradha is the incarnation of God, and she becomes one with God on *Janmashtami*.

Gargi tries to instill the mystical truths in him. Som becomes aware of the spiritual bond between himself and Gargi. He says: “I had no doubts because I had seen her before, walking silently about the darkness of my dreams. That is why, entering the room, I had felt at home with her. And, I was positive she knew me, too. She understands, I said to myself, the only one who understands” (99). He says that it is only Gargi who has understood him. Som feels the power of Gargi in making him talk. He says: “...the intelligent understanding eyes, evoked in me the overwhelming compulsion to talk and talk and talk. I could never understand why she had that effect on me. And so over the next half hour I talked without a break: of my illness, of our travels” (202). Gorgi tries to de-alienate him, and encourages him to make a self-effort to see God. He realizes how neurotic he has been till meeting her. He says: “…how edgy I had been all these days, like a man in a maze who, though on the right track, is apprehensive of what he might find at the center of it” (203). He finds Gargi’s face reassuring.

Women contribute to family welfare and social regeneration. Geeta, is a typical Indian woman who is spiritually oriented with firm belief in God. After Som starts to drift away from her she fills her daily routine with visits to temples. Som says: Of late, she had become a great enthusiast of temples, shrines, tombs of the godly” (62). Som has
married her because he has felt that he can trust her. Som says: “It was this trust of hers—in me, in life—that had drawn me” (63) towards Geeta. Geeta tolerates her adulterous husband. When Som taunts Geeta by his remark that he once brought a street woman to the cottage, Geeta does not react violently. He says: “No reproach or alarm or blase nonchalance. Only a shift of the hands and that enduring trust, sending out its unfailing lasers” (67). Som tells that Geeta remains “the same loving, marvellous, gentle person” (70), even after ten years of their married life. He says: “She hadn’t changed except for the sudden enthusiasm for sadhus and astrologers…” (70). Geeta remains undisturbed when he informs her that he has been having an affair with Anuradha. This makes Som admire his wife. He says: “I watched her from the depths of a terrible depression….It was this cool strength of hers that I had always admired. She was sensible, brave, aware of certain fundamentals that lay hidden from me. There was some subtle understanding of me, Som Bhaskar, which, too, alas, had escaped me” (146-47). Geeta saves Som from suicide by her presence, her soothing words and touch. Because of his trust in his wife Som is able to avert this tragedy in his life. Though Som is saved from death he remains alienated till the end because of his endless reasoning and questioning on the existence of God. Instead of making a self-effort to get redemption from God he expects Anuradha to be a mediator between him and God.

Billy (SC) accepts that Tuula, the Swiss girl, has exerted a powerful influence over him as a friend. He tells Romi: “We were very good friends. Like you and I are. Luckily our emotions never got into the male-female tangle….For all her friendliness she had a way of detaching herself that I did not like. As it was, I learnt a great deal from her” (175). He says that “what attracted me to her was her total disregard of money” (176).
Then he explains to Romi what he means by his statement that money has no value for her. He says:

She had quite a simple philosophy, really, bordering almost on our Hindu beliefs. She believed that to survive man needs a minimum of goods which must either be given to him by society or he must receive the exchange to procure them. This minimum, however, is very, very low, much lower than people imagine, and, except in times of great calamity, like war or famine, easily available. Once the society or your profession ensures this minimum, you should devote all your energies to the full exploitation of your gifts_endowments she called them_gifts that you are born with, and in the process contribute as much to the society as you can. Simple, isn’t it” (176).

Billy presents the picture of a de-alienated society as visualized by Tuula. He says that Tuula treated money as just paper. Billy appreciates Tuula’s view that one should be prepared to go alone, if one wants to be honest. Billy says: “I think this point affected me fundamentally” (177). Billy says that Tuula has guided him and has told him that “the search for truth,...was a lonely business” (177). He talks of Tuula’s intuition, “a sort of sixth sense” (177). He says: “What made her such a remarkable friend was a most extraordinary intuition. Things that you did not know existed, that you couldn’t find words for, got across to her in a flash.... Then she had the habit of not letting you know that she had seen something unless she was certain that you wanted to know or that you were ready to receive the knowledge” (177-78).

Billy says that Tuula has analysed his hallucination and found out what it is: “She said it was an accident. I was obsessed with a latent quest just as someone else might have an uncontrollable urge towards music or painting or the abstract sciences” (178). Tuula helps Billy to come out of his hallucinations. Since she is a psychiatrist, she advises him that he should try to be rid of them because hallucinations are dangerous. Billy says when he has started reading the magazines the hallucination cleared. He says:
"...hallucination or whatever it was, that had been haunting me since the time of my meeting with Bilasia, miraculously cleared up" (131).

Billy finds the right woman, who will embalm his soul in Bilasia, the tribal woman living in the Maikala hills. Billy feels that it is not the sexual desire, which has drawn him to Bilasia: but it is "the essence of the primitive force that had called me night after night, year after year. It was that that had drawn me to Tuula, to the study of anthropology, to the bizarre spots of North and Central America" (142). Romi finds in Bilasia the embodiment of the primal force. He says: "...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 and that in spite of our proud claims to the contrary, still lay in wait for us not far from the doorstep of our airconditioned rooms" (226) Romi admires the intense love of Billy for Bilasia: "I marvelled at the intense beauty of this human relationship that was born out of so much love and was destined, perhaps inevitably, to end in a tragedy of such terrible proportions" (143).

If Meena is the representative of the 'phoney society', the product of the civilized society of Delhi, Bilasia is symbolical of the primitive society. Romi comments,"...she (Bilasia) had that untamed beauty that comes to flower only in our primitive people. It was as though nature were cocking a snook at the Meena Biswases of the world, informing them once again how little it cared for their self-proclaimed superiority. Looking at Bilasia one could well believe that these were the children of kings condemned to exile by those rapacious representatives of that civilization who had ruled the thrones of Delhi and still continued to do so" (143). Hari Mohan Prasad observes:
“Bilasia is Shakti for Billy. This consciousness of Shakti is extensive in Arun Joshi. Anuradha (LL) becomes soon Bhaskar’s Shakti. Only when Billy meets Bilasia and unites himself with her, he finds his real self and gets liberation. He gets his goal. That the pilgrim is near his goal before his death becomes amply clear” (Crisis of Consciousness 60).

Sindi (F) is drawn towards June, who like Indian traditional woman is oriental in her views on love and marriage. In the case of June it is pity, which is the fundamental basis of love. June’s pity for the asthmatic patient, Sindi, later matures into love for him. Similarly June is compelled to love Babu, when she pities him and stretches her helping hand to Babu, who is always in trouble after his arrival in America. Babu feels lost in America when he is set free from the shackles imposed upon him by his father, who is a representative of Indian culture and tradition. The unlimited freedom, which Babu enjoys in America, makes him to walk in the path of immorality. June’s pity for Babu turns into love, when she tries to alleviate his mental pain. When Sindi, refuses to get into the bondage of marriage, June switches over to Babu, who offers to marry her. June tries to de-alienate both Sindi and Babu; but she is not successful in her effort to de-alienate them while she is alive. Sindi’s de-alienation comes only after June’s death through Muthu, the labourer. In India, Sheila becomes Sindi’s spiritual mentor.

O. P. Mathur says that Joshi’s novels “orchestrate a variety of approaches towards a comprehensive and affirmative vision. He refers to what Joshi has told about the purpose of his novels. They are “essentially attempts towards a better understanding of the world and of myself” (Existential Note 147). Joshi’s novels reflect his world vision, and writing about Joshi’s vision O. P. Bhatnagar notes: “A certain awareness of man’s rootlessness
and the consequential loneliness and anxiety is the keynote of Arun Joshi's unique vision of the predicament of modern man in contemporary Indo-English fiction. His awareness is also focused on the evils of man's material concerns.....He is more emphatically concerned with the search for the essence of human living and the need for the acculturation of man to establish him back to his roots, self and peace” (Art and Vision 249). Bhatnagar further writes: “His vision is coloured by a certain love of primitivism as against society. He is against careers and the collective man.... He is specially disillusioned over the post freedom trends of degeneration in India. But the human need to live is more profound in him than death. To be of use to others is his most emphatic assertion in all his novels. Shamming and hypocrisy and cowardice are condemned as the worst of evils” (Art and Vision 264).

Joshi has portrayed the existential philosophy of man's endless waiting, which has become an important feature in man's life. Man spends the major part of his life in waiting for something. It may be for love, hope, happiness, good future, and eternal life or death. Those who are inclined towards spiritualism wait for God, and those who are interested in materialism wait for material prosperity. Since Thomas Beckett has written his play, Waiting for Godo (1948), Godo has become synonymous with the Absence of God or someone, who does not turn up. In Strange Case, while waiting for the rising of the moon when the tribal people swirl to the drum beats, Billy thinks he has waited for the wrong things_ the happiness of the civilized man till now. He tells Romi:

He was waiting for the moon, just as sitting with me he was waiting for the dawn, as he had waited for the love of a woman, just as someday he would wait for death. Earlier he had waited for degrees, for lectures, for money, for security, for a middle-class marriage, for the welfare of his child, for preserving the dignity of his family, for being just, for being well dressed,
and for being normal and all those things that civilized men count as their
duty or the foundations of their happiness or both (137).

Billy has waited for his life among the primitive people who look upon him as their God
or saviour.

Som in Last Labyrinth, thinks that Anuradha has been waiting for God the whole
of her life. While listening to the melancholy song of Azizun he asks whether it is a “song
of a woman’s wait for her lover. (Could it be Krishna again?)” (103). Som asks whether
the wait for her lover is actually waiting for God, Lord Krishna. Shailaja’s (CR) brother
says that he waits to hear the cosmic music, the music of the Gods. He says that only
those who are pure and perfect in their ways will be able to hear this heavenly music
when it is sounded one day. He says, “It is a sound we wait for…. A nada (music), you
might say that is at the heart of all things. Or, perhaps, it could be a musical note, even a
melody. Of course not every one will hear it as and when it can be heard that is. In the
meantime, one must perfect oneself…. It already exists, is vibrating, has vibrated for
seven million years. It is just that we can’t hear it and one Saturday night it is going to be
heard” (52). The narrator says that the Grand Master is waiting for the key to the future.
The narrator writes: “Everyone, it seemed to him_ the Astrologer, the councillors, the city
itself_ was waiting for something to happen, as though for the key to the future” (55).

Writing about Joshi’s fictional technique, A. N. Dwivedi remarks: “Most of the
novels of Joshi are tripartite (being divided in three parts), prosaic, and structured on the
deeds and movements of a single outstanding character (inevitably the protagonist). Their
action swings between gloom and light, sorrow and happiness, test and triumph
(including release in death). The protagonists are not always the same, as in the case of
Anita Desai, who too is very careful in the structuring of her plot” (103). M.Madhushutan
Rao observes: “The existential concern informs the formal organization and the choice of fictional techniques in Arun Joshi’s works” (160). He quotes what Joshi has said about the structure of his novel: “In mechanical machines, the structure of a machine is designed primarily to facilitate its handling and internal functioning. As far as I knew, this is the only consideration I had had in choosing the structure of a particular novel” (160).

Commenting on Joshi’s style, M. Mani Meitei writes: “Arun Joshi’s writing reverberates with the feel of Indian life. His mastery over the treatment of Indian themes, ethos, and culture is effectively correlated by his use of a sensuous and picturesque language” (Indian Ethos 171). Joshi has used in all his novels the vocabulary taken from Hindustani, one of the Major Indian languages, in order to give an Indian colouring to the treatment of his themes.

Joshi uses rhetorical devices in Apprentice. The narrator, Ratan adopts the confessional tone. C. N. Srinath remarks: “...the novelist employs a ruthlessly simple and direct style to expose some aspects of modern Indian society through the life of the narrator in a poignantly confessional tone.... It is perhaps fair to Mr. Joshi to add that the novel overcomes this delimiting factor by hinting at a combination of humanism and religion as the saving grace of mankind, steeped in corruption” (Interior Landscape 59). Commenting on the technique of interior monologue employed in this novel Devinder Mohan writes: “Joshi is a naturalistic rebel who works out the language of interior monologue with psychological acceptance of facts as facts... we all need to rebel against the tyranny of history, and listen to the persistent divine call of the images of love, hidden with the civilization” (Splintered Mirror 31).
The narrator sustains the interest of his listener by narrating his life with descriptions of tragic events, and alternates them with questions and answers. There is self-interrogation by the protagonists, and Joshi adopts the technique of Question and Answer to analyse the psyche of the protagonists. He makes his characters to ask metaphysical, spiritual and ethical questions, and makes them find answers for them. In *Strange Case*, Billy narrates the history of his life in the past ten years since he left his anthropological camp. Romi is informed of the way of life led by Billy in the village, his family life with Bilasia and his son, and his life in the primitive society in the Maikala village. But Billy is not an orator. He maintains a confessional tone; but talks hesitantly and intermittently with long gaps in his conversation with Romi who is the patient listener in this novel.

Joshi’s characters resort is letter writing. Like dairy writing, letter also reveal the inner man. Billy’s letters written to his American girl friend, Tulla Lindgren, throw light on what has happened in the inner recesses of Billy’s mind, his character and his motive in leaving his life led in the civilized society. In *Foreigner*, Sindi receives letters from June and he comes to understand the state of mind of June.

Madhusudan Rao says that instead of the usual unfolding of characters by situations, the characters determine the situations. He further adds that the characters are neither social types nor cultural representatives but individuals who chose themselves in situations. Commenting on the technique used by Joshi, Rao writes: “The emphasis on subjectivity necessitates employment of such narrative devices as first person accounts, stream-of-consciousness, confessions, use of letters, diaries and dream sequences” (160).
Joshi uses the image of the labyrinth and the image of ‘void’ in the novel, *Last Labyrinth*. Labyrinth is an important image used in the writings of all Existentialists. Jorgo Louis Borges in *Labyrinths*, and then Lawrence Durrell in *Dark Labyrinth*, have popularized this symbol, and they have become models for the post-modern writing. Writing about these images A. Ramakrishna Rao observes: “In Joshi’s text ‘labyrinth’ earns the status of a metaphor for the various levels of consciousness immanent in the Krishna legend. In the texts of Borges and Durrell labyrinths are voids emerging out of insatiable human thirst to know and vindicate oneself” (22). Som (LL) is amazed by the labyrinths of Lal Haveli, the house of Aftab, situated in one of the labyrinthine lanes of the city of Benares. M. Mani Meitei says: “The labyrinth in the novel is many-faceted. One is Aftab’s Lal Haveli, a prison-like earthly labyrinth, where Som enters and is trapped in a maze without his knowing, as if he were under a magic spell” (*Indian Ethos* 163).

In *The City and the River*, Joshi describes the labyrinths in the Commissioner’s palace. Joshi writes: “For reasons of security the town planner had designed it on the pattern of ancient labyrinths. Swift lifts carried you from floor to floor. From the lift one stepped into the arms of the labyrinth” (79). In *Foreigner*, Sindi says that on rainy days people in New York “disappeared in the labyrinth of the city” (196). While recollecting his failures in the past, Sindi says: “…in the labyrinth of my consciousness the wound still bled” (72). In *Strange Case*, Romi describes the labyrinthine nature of the souls journey during its existence on earth while commenting on Billy’s character. He says: “If life’s meaning lies not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in those dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish forever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun,
then I do not know of any man who sought it more doggedly and, having received a
signal, abandoned himself so recklessly to its call” (8).

Som (LL) experiences the void in his soul, but he is not able to understand its
implication. He says: “Then the voids returned, knocked them out of my hands, emptied
my pockets, made me rinse my mouth with their bitter gall. Some, though, have stuck
even if I can’t make much sense out of them” (77).

The other important image is the image of death. Som, the business magnate, is
seized with this fear of death. While going around Aftab’s house, Som inquires out of his
curiosity: “And what is in the last labyrinth?” (36). By this he means the labyrinth of the
house. Aftab replies, “Why, death, of course” (36). Som is puzzled by this vague reply.
The Death image symbolizes the fear that lurks in the labyrinths of man’s mind.

The other images are the image of God Shiva in Foreigner, and Lord Krishna in
Last Labyrinth. Hari Mohan Prasad says: “The archetypal image of the dancing Shiva is a
product of Arun Joshi’s collective unconscious, his racial inheritance, his Indian
heritage….This image gets a fuller dimension in the symbol of Lord Krishna that
pervades the whole of Last Labyrinth. The dancing Shiva is the paradox of truth; he is
both destructive fury and creative force. Sindi Oberoi has been passing through a process
of death and a new man is now born as it were” (41-2).

Writing about the symbolism, in Last Labyrinth, Usha Bande remarks: “To
suggest his inscapes and express the state of mind of his protagonist, Arun Joshi, like
James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and D. H. Lawrence, makes use of
symbols. He creates aesthetic, archetypal and dream symbols and through them gives an
insight into the ineffable in Som’s thoughts and feelings” (Symbolism 151). Joshi
metaphorically brings out the impurity in the heart of Som in the symbol of the leper. Som feels that he is a leper at heart, and needs cleansing like the lepers.

Ratan (AP) cleaning the shoes of the worshippers is symbolical and it symbolizes humility. In *Foreigner*, the spider walking aimlessly upside down from one corner to another, “exploring his inverted universe” (111), symbolizes Sindi’s loneliness and estrangement. Sindi sees the spider losing its hold on the ceiling, hitting the radiator and falling down. This makes Sindi to observe to June: “The moment it [something] begins to make sense you are lost” (114). Joshi brings out the self-alienation of Sindi through this spider symbol. The truck driver symbolizes the economic alienation of Sindi. The lonely road in America reflects the loneliness of Sindi experiences in America. Sindi says: “This was road-side America at midnight: bright, clean, and lonely as a heap of stainless steel” (98). The stainless steel, engines and automatic cars are symbolic of America, and its highly mechanized civilization.

In *Strange Case*, Joshi uses the myth of a legendary king, and says that the tribals look upon Billy as the reincarnation of their king. He uses the myths of creation, birth, death and resurrection. He also uses images and metaphors taken from the animal kingdom. He refers to the wealthy men attending the social parties in the house of Meena as “a kennel of dogs yawning (their teeth showing) or snuggling against each other or holding whisky glasses in their furred paws” (96). Billy feels that he is pinned down as a dead butterfly in Delhi, and Meena feels like a crushed butterfly when she wishes to be dead. Romi feels himself a cock without a head in the company of the tribals. Romi describes Billy looking at the sky “as though trying to unravel some elusive secret of the universe, searching for one particular kite” (35). While describing the emotional upsurge
of Khemka, Sindi (F) says: "the little finger twitched spasmodically like a lizard's torn tail" (213).

*The City and the River*, for example is a political allegory. Joshi has used a contemporary political situation and treated it with allegorical dimension. Mani Meitei, commenting on the technique of this novel remarks:

"The novel in its framework itself is a parable within which works another parable centering round the protagonist. Besides, the rule of the Grand Master is treated with allegorical amplitude and is reminiscent of an oppressive and anti-people dictatorial rule, such as the South African Apartheid or the Indian Emergency....Closely examined, the whole structure of the novel draws from the myths of epics of the heroic age. Joshi tries to represent the past for the present giving significance to the vapidity of the contemporary world" (Man, God, and the Nature of Reality, 55).

Joshi uses the archetypal image of woman in this novel. The river is looked upon as the Eternal Mother, the Divine Mother who sustains life, protects the interests of its devotees, and destroys evil. The Professor of Astronomy, who spends his time in study of the stars, speaks of the river as talking to him about freedom. He says that the river has asked him "Isn't it this that you want? Something like me, peaceful and infinite and free?" (29). Joshi says that man needs freedom which is infinite like that of the river; but he is denied of real freedom, though he talks much about it. The Seven Hills symbolises officialdom and the beaurocrats, who try to curb the freedom of man. Joshi's use of archetypal symbols makes Mani Meitei to remark: "...Arun Joshi seems to have fully emphasized the conflict between right and wrong or good and evil asserting the moral enshrined in the Bhagavad Gita...Nowhere else does Arun Joshi evince an interest in the archetypal symbols of birth death and renewal of life, represented by time, a cycle of
change, and the great river, as in this last novel” (Man, God, and the Nature of Reality 47-8).

This novel is an allegory — allegory of the Good conquering Evil. The characters are allegorical. The City is the protagonist of this novel, and the other allegorical characters are the Grand Master, the Astrologer, the Hermit, the Great Yogeshwara and the Nameless-One. The novel has the structure of a purana (fable), in which the story is narrated through dialogue by a sage to his disciple, the Nameless-One.

This last novel of Joshi abounds in satire. The arrest of the old man, Patanjali is satirical. When he is arrested handcuffs cannot be put on his hands because that man’s wrists, due to his old age, are so thin that they keep slipping off. So at last his hands are tied with a rope. Shyam M. Asnani says: “There is an undercurrent of satire in the scheme of presentation of attitudes of different characters and the patterns of their interaction” (A Study 70). Joshi’s humour is revealed in his satirical sketch of Dharma’s father. Every time Dharma’s father obeys the directive of the Grand Master or of the Council a hole appears in his body. When he stands before the mirror he can see the furniture behind him through that hole. The doctor diagnoses his disease as the “…Three Truths Syndrome, stasis of the soul. Atrophy of the brain and locomotor functions” (135), and says that Dharma’s father, due to the non-functioning of the soul, has become a robot. The doctor advises him to do exercise. He says: “Exercise your soul. Take it for walks. Let it speak when it wants to speak. Let it rip” (134).

Joshi, in his novels, deals with several aspects of life opposed to one another. In The City and the River, he portrays the conflict between the eternal or the natural time represented by the river, and the artificial human time represented by the Grand Master
and the Astrologer, and the final victory of eternal time. The pyramids, which contain the embalmed remains of the ancestors of the Grand Master, seem to be immortal. The grandfather says: "Presiding over the city from the highest point, the pyramids offered their demesne an immortality far and above the immortality of Time" (232). The flood comes, and before it sweeps him away, the Grand Master wonders at death which will leave behind only his shadows, as has happened with his father and his ancestors. He wonders: "if these shadows were all that time would permit him to leave behind? And in another few minutes even his shadow would be gone" (259). The Grand Master and the Astrologer wish to take refuge in the pyramid, but they are engulfed by the tumultuous floods before they reach it. In this novel Joshi brings out the conflict between man, the ruler of the city, and nature, which is represented by the river. God overpowers man and destroys whatever is evil through the invincible forces of nature. Joshi shows that in this conflict invincible nature becomes victorious. In this novel Joshi, makes contrasts the strange and the familiar, the archaic and the modern. Pyramids are seen in the background of the city, in contrast to the city, which is quite modern, and technologically advanced.

Joshi analyses the conflicting forces, which are juxtaposed to one another in other novels too. In Billy's (SC) character Joshi portrays the conflict between civilization and primitivism, modernism and traditional past. In the character of Som (LL) it is the war of religion versus science, and faith versus reason. In Foreigner, Joshi deals with detachment which means inaction, and involvement in action, and contrast with present. In all his novels materialism is contrasted with spiritualism.
Joshi has made use of Hindu and Christian, philosophy in all his novels. O. P. Mathur says: "He [Joshi] has unambiguously referred to the Gita and its message more than once, and the anguish, the dilemma, the quest and the arrival... find a voice in his tortured fiction. Arun Joshi’s first novel, Foreigner, presents a protagonist who undergoes a sort of spiritual transformation. The relevance of some of the concepts of the Gita - action-inaction, attachment-detachment, involvement-noninvolvement has been constantly shown in relation to the protagonist" (Arun Joshi and the Gita 133). Sindi’s love for humanity and self surrender in Foreigner, Ratan’s sin and redemption in Apprentice, Som’s cry to God to redeem him from his lust and greed in Last Labyrinth, and the cyclic destruction of the city with the great deluge, and creation of a universe, and the reference to the advent of God, the King in The City and the River _ all these have both Hindu and Christian overtones.

Joshi has borrowed ideas from the Bible, and uses them in his novels. S P. Swain remarks: “‘Wiping of shoes’ has symbolic overtones of the Christian concept of Christ’s washing the feet of his disciples on Mante Thursday. Only humility could help Ratan to get rid of all the delusions that made his life ‘an endless torrent of fear’” (209). In Last Labyrinth, the lepers sit on the sides of the road to the mountains waiting to wash themselves in the tank. The guide tells Som: “There is a tank behind the temple whose waters can cure” (199). This is similar to Jesus asking a leprous man to wash his body in the water of a tank to cleanse his leprosy. People believe in faith cure and the Guide says to Som and his doctor that “faith can move mountains” (198). In The City and the River, the Hermit advises Bhumiputra to wash his face in the river, and be rid of his fears.
Nature worship is found in some religions since it is believed that God, the Omnipresent, is present in his creations, and reveals himself through the different forms of His creation—rivers, mountains, plants, animals, and also man, who is part of nature. In *The City and the River*, the Rallies Master says: “...when I believed in God I had peace. In truth I felt His presence on the river when I was a child” (76). The boatmen worship the river and how they pray to her is described in this novel. The narrator says: “All their lives, for ages beyond memory, boatmen had saluted the great river, and only the great river, who was their Mother. They saluted her morning and evening by taking from her a handful of water and letting it run down their close-cropped heads. They did not know how to salute a man, be he a Grand Master” (90).

Dhunia (SC) thinks that God is present in Kala Pahar, the black rock, which is called Chandtola because it glows white on full moon day. Billy says that it is the work of some supernatural force” (105). Romi’s rationalism makes him think of a scientific answer to the mystery. He thinks: “...the impression of light may have only been created by the fall-out of dust that for one month had created a false ceiling against the sky” (106). He thinks that the dust from the quarry nearby may be responsible for the white dust. Dhunia says that no one can understand the ways of God or Kala Pahar, which has called away Billy from civilized society so that he may know his identity, that he may know who he is. Dhunia thinks that it is Kala Pahar, which has chosen Billy to be their priest. Som (LL) wonders how people worship the eternal flame. Though Som out of his disbelief reasons out that it is a flame from a jet of natural gas, he accepts that it has given him “an ounce of tranquillity” (210).
The priest’s corruption makes Ratan (AP) not to enter the temple. He sees God in his work, in polishing the shoes of the worshippers. In the same way Sindi sees God in a meaningful action. He gets into action to relieve the poverty of the poor employees of Khemka. Sindi, Billy, and Ratan, all Joshi’s protagonists, who are alienated from their own self and from others, make themselves useful to others in the latter part of their life. Joshi believes in a practical religion based on humanitarianism, faith in God mingled with action, and service to humanity. To worship God, one has to lift up his soul to God. Joshi feels that since God is present everywhere, one can worship God even without an idol.

In *Strange Case*, the temple in the Maikala village has no idol. Billy tells Romi about the legend of the king who has been trying to make an idol. He has been chiselling an idol out of a granite stone. The face is broken, and the king fails in his attempt to make the statue complete. So the villagers go and worship in a temple, which is without the main idol. Billy says: “its sanctum sanctorum, as they call it, has ever had an idol” (171). He says that normally “no temples could be built” (184) for Fate, but feels that this particular temple is built for fate: “This temple, incidentally, is the only one I know which is built to Fate. Not by design, but by accident. What else but Fate prevented the sculptor-king from carving the face of his god” (185).

Fate is equated to God by Billy. He thinks that it is due to his fate that he is called to lead the life of the primitive. Billy echoes the Indian’s belief in astrology, and that the influence of his birth star is responsible for his fate. He thinks that no one can prevent what happens in one’s life. Romi says: “What happened to Billy was, perhaps, inevitable; as inevitable as the star-constellations in which he came so absolutely to believe” (8). Dhunia expresses a similar view when he says: “That was his fate,...
are we but little mud dolls...in the hands of fate. Who has ever succeeded in ironing the creases off his brow” (163). Billy says: “What awaited me now, I realize, was Fate” (98). In Last Labyrinth, when Aftab introduces Som to Gargi, as a prosperous industrialist whose touch would turn mud into gold, Aftab says: “The problem lies in the stars. We become what our stars make us” (98). Som says that whenever he feels frustrated, and cannot sleep, he goes to the beach and says: “…I cry to the stars” (220). In The City and the River, Bhumiputra’s fable of the naked king says: “…to be ruled by a naked king is their only fate” (176), and nothing can be done to reverse this fate.

Joshi thinks that man’s destiny is pre-ordained by God. Anuradha (LL) asks Som whether he believes in man’s pre-destiny. “Do you think all this was pre-destined” (138). Som thinks that he does not have belief in pre-destiny but yet it is impossible not to believe it. So he says: “I have had such a difficult time with life I don’t know what to believe” (138). Generally people believe in pre-destination or fate. But Joshi condemns man’s superstitious belief in fate.

Ratan (AP) blames his fate for his corruption. He thinks he is just carried away, and the circumstances, in which he is placed have goaded him on to receive the bribe. He analyses his action: "What had I done, what had I done which I should not have done? What was right, what was wrong? What was the measure for doing things or not doing them? Where were the dividing lines: between success and failure, loyalty and betrayal, love and hate? The confusion reduced me to the status of those leaves of autumn that are blown here and there, at the mercy of the wind” (73). Later when self-realization comes, he regrets that he has willfully chosen to do evil, and has betrayed his spirit. He says:
"What greater betrayal of the spirit is there? ....Who does this choosing but ourselves.
And yet we roam the world, beating our breasts, looking for scapegoats" (142).

Joshi denounces man blaming his fate or God for his misfortunes, which result
due to his wrong actions. God leaves the choice of action to man. It is man who chooses
good or bad actions according to the mode of his life he leads in this world. The Hermit
(CR) explains this clearly to Bhumiputra:

... ‘This city, this world, all this is the manifestation of the One, and not the
shadow of the grand Master’s ego, as the Grand Master might imagine.
And it is He, the One without a second, who, secretly supports and guides
all that you see, and what you do not see; and what you might have seen
through the Professor’s telescopes. And it is He who is the master of all
men, including the Grand Master, and it is His will that men follow in
every way’.

‘But if that is so’, said Bhumiputra, ‘all must
already be settled. Where in the scheme of the Almighty
do I come in?’

‘But the Almighty can manifest through men only what men allow
Him to manifest. That is why men and cities and nations must choose.
There is the upward path that leads to freedom and there is the downward
path that, for the moment at least, must lead to perdition. The city is free
to choose either. So, my son, are you” (156-57).

Arun Joshi and the minor novelists who have written in the post-Independent
era have followed the trend set by the Western existentialists. Since they have modelled
their writings on the works of the existentialists, a definite pattern is found in the novels
dealing with the inner world of man, man’s distrust in himself and others, his mental
phobia, his obsession with many kinds of fears, his feeling of disillusionment, his mental
depression causing a spiritual crisis, his frustrations, and his attempt to end his life by
death. The major Indo English novelists, who have produced their writings after 1960,
and who have modelled their works on the Existential novels, have paved the way for the
Minor Indian English novelists in the use of themes and the narrative techniques. Raja
Rao's novel *Serpent and the Rope* is an experimental novel, in which he has used almost all the techniques used by the psychologists. Rao has made use of the technique of stream of consciousness and other techniques of the psychological novels—the flash back technique, diary entries, and self-analysis. These techniques have been adapted by the minor novelists, and by Joshi, who is a prominent writer among the minor Indian English novelists. A comparative study, of Joshi with other major and minor Indo-English Novelists who have treated the theme of the alienation of man, will show how Joshi resembles them, and also where he differs from them.

In *Serpent and the Rope*, Rama (Ramaswamy), the central character is the narrator of the story. Srinivasa Iyengar observes: “Rama's mind is a seething whirlpool of cultural currents and cross-currents” (*Indian Writing* 400). Rao portrays through a symbolic language Rama's physical pain caused due to consumption, and his spiritual anguish. The snake symbolizes the physical and mental agony, and the rope symbolizes hope.

Kamala Markandaya's *Nowhere Man*, projects the alienation of the protagonist, Srinivas who is an Indian immigrant living in London. The life of Srinivas becomes a tragedy due to the crisis of identity. Raja Rao's *Serpent and the Rope*, and Kamala Markandaya’s *Nowhere Man*, deal with the alienation of their protagonists placed in an intercultural situation due to the East-West encounter. Joshi's protagonist, Sindi in *Foreigner*, echoes the rootlessness of Srinivas. Joshi has used the image of a foreigner as a dominant motif to bring out the loneliness and isolation of the rootless young man, Sindi.

In *Open Season* by Manohar Malgonkar, Jai Kumar is alienated from his native country, India. When he visits his parents in India, the bursting dam near his village
opens his eyes to the crying need of India for trained experts. Jai Kumar involves himself in action and finds his moorings in India. Sindi, like Jai Kumar, returns to India, and finds his roots in his native country, and finds fulfillment in his involvement in action.

Arun Joshi’s Strange Case of Billy Biswas, and V. S. Naipaul’s A House for Mr. Biswas are similar in their titles and deal with the theme of identity crisis. Though the theme seems to be the same there is a difference in its treatment. Naipaul’s Biswas, is a non-entity who searches for his identity as a journalist and as an owner of a house. When his house is burnt, he returns to Hanuman House, which is the unifying symbol in this novel. C. N. Srinath sees the difference in these two novels and remarks: “...in Mr. Naipaul’s this crisis manifests itself in assertion, his hero yearning to carve out a personality of his own, to own a house, in other words. But in Mr. Joshi it is one of surrender, his hero renouncing his past, his family and the world of everyday life, fleeing from civilization into the jungle to lead the life of a tribal and to create for himself an inner center of peace and serenity” (Crisis of Identity 61).

Nayantara Sahgal’s later works deal with the theme of alienation. In her novel, This Time of Morning, Kalyan Singh, the protagonist is the adviser in the Ministry of External Affairs. His loneliness and estrangement are in-born, since he experiences them from his birth. He has a humble beginning as a boy working in a sweet shop, and runs errands to for politicians. Then he rises to be an influential politician and a shareholder of flourishing companies. He feels alienated from people because of his greed for money and wealth. Nayantara believes that capitalistic society is responsible for causing such alienation in people.
K. Radha says that Arun Joshi’s novel, *Foreigner* though similar in title to Kamala Markandaya’s *Nowhere Man*, and Camus’s * Outsider*, the titles used by the existentialists, is different from these novels in the sense that Joshi leads his protagonists from negation to fulfillment, from isolation to involvement. She remarks: “But the contrast between the heroes of the other two novels Srinivas and Monsieur Meursault is obvious. Sindi, as we have seen, progresses from isolationism and alienation to involvement. But Srinivas progresses (or retrogresses) in the opposite direction....Sindi is also different from Camus’s hero Monsieur Meursault, in * Outsider*. Meursault remains the outsider, detached and indifferent to whatever happens to him,...(90).

Hari Mohan Prasad says that Joshi is like the existential writers in his portrayal of the alienation of his protagonists; but he is different from the Western as well as Indian Existential novelists like Raja Rao or Sudin Ghose, in so far as he tries to de-alienate his protagonists. He writes: “Joshi is also different from a Western novelist like Camus or Kafka or Sartre or dramatists like O’Neill, Ionesco, Pinter or Beckett because he does not accept alienation or absurdity as the contingent condition of life....But in Arun Joshi the existential dilemma, the anguish of alienation and the absurdity of situation never remain the final predicament” (*Crisis of Conscious* 113). The difference between Joshi and other novelists is that Joshi de-alienates his protagonists. Pratap Chandra Dash is right when he remarks: “Joshi is not merely imitating Camus or Kafka by exploiting their techniques at his own expense, rather he is recreating the theme of existentialism against Indian milieu, ethos and culture to give the existential predicament a universal dimension” (53-4).
Joshi’s novel City and the River, resembles, in literary technique, the novels of the young generation of novelists, Salman Rushdie, Professor Shahane and Amitav Gosh, who have produced their literary creations after 1980.

There is a marked resemblance between Joshi’s City and the River, and Narayan’s A Tiger for Malgudi. Narayan has borrowed a fabulist episode from Vishnu Sharma’s Panchatantra, and has made the protagonist, a tiger unfold the tale against the backdrop of the modern village, Malgudi. The tiger tells the tale in a reminiscential mode. This novel is mythical and allegorical. The tiger is the king of the animal kingdom. The author presents both the animal and the human world using irony, humour, parody and satire. In The The City and the River, Joshi uses the parable of the naked king to focus on the ugliness in politics. Using the reminiscential mode, the Great Yogeshwara unfolds the story of the City governed by an absurd king. This novel is an allegory, and Joshi presents a story full of satire and humour. The novel gains mythical and allegorical overtones with the author’s desire for a new cosmic order. Narayan’s treatment of the theme of alienation in his novel is socio-political; but Joshi’s satirical treatment of politics is psycho-analytical.

Joshi’s novels resemble the novels of Anita Desai because both of them are not interested in the surface realities; but they probe deep into the inner man, and the sufferings to which the soul is subjected to due to the happenings in the external world. Joshi’s novels are psycho-analytical like the novels of Sahgal and Desai. Elena J.Kallinnikova remarks: “The essence of modernism in the Indian-English novel manifests itself most distinctly in the existentialistic trend, to which, in the present time, the creative young Indian writers like Anita Desai and Arun Joshi can be referred” (174).
Anita Desai, in *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), has delineated the depressed mental life of Maya, who is married to an old man, Gautama. The aberrant mind of Maya who feels neglected and alienated is revealed through the form of interior monologue. Desai is influenced by the renowned psychologist Proust. She has also followed Virginia Woolf and James Joyce and adopted their technique of the stream of consciousness. Desai's *Voices in the City* (1965) is like Camus's *Outsider*. It is an existential novel, which explores the despair in the mind of Monisha, Nirode, and Amla, the narrators of this story. In *Fire on the Mountain*, the protagonist, Nanda Kaul chooses to live a lonely and desolate life, and she identifies herself with the barren rocks of the mountains. In *Clear Light of Day*, Desai presents psycho-analytical insights into the protagonist Bim, her lonely and tragic life filled with disillusionment. Elena J. Kellinnikova remarks: "...in the novel of Anita Desai, existentialistic themes of the absurdity of existence and the fear of the inevitability of death are combined with truly traditional clarifications of the Hindu spirit. A similar synthesis is typical not only of the Indian-English novel, but is also one of the specific traits of literary modernism in India" (176). The same is true of Arun Joshi.

Desai depicts women protagonists while Joshi is interested in delineates the male protagonists. Shyam Asnani observes: "With the exception of *Bye-Bye Blackbird* and *In Custody*, all her novels have females as central characters, and all of them are either misshapen or hypersensitive, solitary and introspective" (68). He says that Desai's women protagonists—Maya, Monisha, Sita, Nanda, Bim—are driven into some extremity of despair and show a marked tendency towards neurotic behaviour. In the novels of both
Desai and Joshi, we get the psycho-analytical insights into the character of the protagonists.

R.S. Singh pays a tribute to Joshi, when he says: “Anita Desai and Arun Joshi are undoubtedly among the most gifted Indo-Anglians writing today, and it can be reasonably hoped that their fictional art will mature and will reveal through their writings the psychic reverberations of the whole generation in the same way as the conch, when blown into, gives insight into the uncanny depths of the sea” (*Aloness Alone* 177). If Joshi has lived longer he will have produced some more praise worthy novels in Indian Writing in English. Joshi’s originality is revealed in his unique treatment of the alienation of his protagonists.