Chapter – 1

Introduction

The Indian English Novel and Arun Joshi
Novel is a new genre in Indian literature. The novel has come to India as an art form from the British. Lokesh Kumar says, “The novel is an exotic plant on the Indian English literary ground.”¹ Though it came late to India it dominated the other forms. It has gradually progressed if not steadily from the time when just a handful of novels were written intermittently in the second half of the nineteenth century. Though some novelists attempted to write novels, they appeared in Journals as tales unlike novels.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) is the first introducer of the novel as a major literary form in India. His first and only novel in English Rajmohan’s Wife was published in 1864. It was a significant start for the Indian English Novel. The presence of mystery is a remarkable phenomenon in the novels. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was a master of the romantic as well as historical novel. But at the same time he was no stranger to humour. His novels The Poison Tree (1884) and Krishnakantha’s Will (1895) deal with social problems, a frequent theme in Indian fiction. It is quite obvious that his historical novels inspired Sir Walter Scott to write the historical romances. His chief pre-occupation is with patriotism and so making of the novel has become a means of political education. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee is truly considered as the father of the novel in India. Krishna Kripalini says:

It was Bankim Chandra who established the novel as a major literary form in India. He had his limitations, he too
was romantic, effusive and indulged a little too freely in literary flashes and bombast and was no peer of his great contemporaries, Zola and Dickens, much less of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. There have been better novelists in India since then, but they all stand on Bankim’s shoulders.²

Next the appearance of women novelists is considered as an important development in Indian English novel. Women writers wrote from the feminist point of view on the societal problems. At the end of the nineteenth century only three women fiction writers were well known. They are Toru Dutt (1856-77), who attempted an unfinished novel *Bianca* or *The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878), a romantic love story set in England; Krupabai Satthianadhan wrote *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1895), and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) and Shevantibai M. Nikambe produced *Ratanbai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895).

The next important figure on the literary scene was Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Though he received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his poetical work, Gitanjali, he was also a well-known novelist. Tagore came like a colossus on the Indian literary scene. Tagore started by first imitating Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, till he found his own voice with *Choker Bali* (1902), which is later translated into English as *Binodini*. It is the story of a young widow. His other novels are *Gora, The Home and The World, The Wreck, Four Chapters* and *Farewell My Friend*. All these were
translated from Bengali to English by himself. Tagore’s novels helped the Indians to rediscover themselves and also created a new awareness about their culture.


In the 1920s the arrival of Gandhi on the national scene galvanized the nation into tremendous activity. Gandhi’s inspiring leadership turned the independence movement from merely a political struggle into an emotional experience. Commenting on the independence movement, Meenakshi Mukerjee remarks:

> It was an emotional as well as an ideological experience spread over a much longer period of time than any other nationalist movement in history.³

The arrival of Gandhi did not set only the political scene alight but the literary scene also erupted into tremendous activity. At the same time, regional literature too played a major role in shaping the
sensibility of the Indian English novel. Gandhi’s the nation-wide movement not only inspired but also provided the Indian novelists in English with some of their major themes as – the struggle for freedom, quest for identity, East-West encounter, the search for justice, and the communal problems, the problems on various social, political and economic issues.

An attentive study of all the novels written by Indian novelists in English since 1864 reveals those Indian writers have successfully achieved their desired goals i.e., highlighting social, political and cultural issues. As K.S. Ramamuthy opines:

The earliest writers in the field like Bankim Chandra, Toru Dutt and Ramesh Chandra Dutt were by no means ‘imitators’ but conscious experimenters who adapted an alien form and medium to a socio-cultural situations and sensibility which were specifically Indian.4

The arrival of the great big Triumvirate, Mulka Raj Anand (1905-2004), R.K.Narayan (1906-2001) and Raja Rao (1908-2006) was the most remarkable event in the realm of Indian English fiction in the thirties of the twentieth century. William Walsh aptly used term ‘the founding fathers’ of the Indian English novel for these trio who brought a new vigor and direction to the novel. William Walsh opines:

... distinguished not only for their own work but as the inaugurators of the form itself since it was they who
defined the area in which the Indian novel in English was to operate, drew the first models of its characters and themes and elaborated its particular logic. Each used his own version of English freed from the foggy taste of Britain.5

Anand was at the height of his power in the thirties and early forties when a sociological approach to literature was very much in vogue ... in India as well as outside.\textsuperscript{7}

R. K Narayan, a product of the South Indian middle class family kept himself aloof from the contemporary socio-political issues. He built an imaginary small town named Malgudi and explored the South Indian middle class life in that town in his works. His novels \textit{Swamy and Friends} (1935), \textit{The Bachelor of Arts} (1937), \textit{The Dark Room} (1938), \textit{The English Teacher} (1946) are produced before independence. Narayan’s other novels after independence show some maturity in his fictional art. His other novels are \textit{The Financial Expert} (1952), \textit{Waiting for Mahatma} (1955), \textit{The Guide} (1958), \textit{The Man Eater of Malgudi} (1962), \textit{The Vender of Sweets} (1967), \textit{The Painter of Signs} (1976). In his nineties R.K.Narayan added four more novels to Indian English fiction namely \textit{A Tiger of Malgudi} (1983), \textit{Talkative Man} (1983), \textit{The world of Nagaraj} (1990) and \textit{Grandmother’s Tale} (1992). R.K. Narayan depicts delicate intermingle of gentle irony and sympathy, quite pragmatism and fantasy in his novels. C.D.Narasimhaiah remarks that: “Narayan explores the staying power of the society... whose hundred ills have not destroyed the moral and spiritual base of the individual.”\textsuperscript{8}

The youngest of the triad, Raja Rao strongly identifies himself with the Gandhian movement, and gives it passionate expression in his novel \textit{Kanthapura}. The novel covers the movement of Gandhi in
the 1920's and ends with the Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931. Choosing a talkative old woman as his storyteller, Raja Rao uses a small village as a symbolic representation to depict the gathering storm on the political horizon. Moorthy, the protagonist, is a Gandhian in both thought and principle. The trials and tribulations of the simple villagers participating in the freedom struggle are captured vividly, with the description altering between the serious and the comic. The flexible pattern of the novel gives the novelist the room to weave together the allied threads of the Gandhian revolution, such as propaganda against evils of drinking, exploitation of coolies, the evils of superstition and other social evils. C.D. Narasimhaiah appropriately sums up the focus of Kanthapura when he opines:

The entire action (in the novel) comes out as an artist's enactment of Nehru's image of the impact of Gandhi on the Indian scene together with a hundred particulars that illuminated many hidden spots in the life of the country during that period.\(^9\)

The successors of these pioneers of the Indian novel in English, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Nayanatara Sahgal and Anita Desai have given authentic fictional treatment to Indian life from varied angles. The changing landscapes of life - politics, geography, hunger, love are explored in their fiction, as the literature of the country's past. They not only experimented
with the current literary styles but also grappled with what is ever present in the Indian world coexistence of tradition and modernity.

Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1989) was intensely influenced by Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. His themes are very close to social reality and are based on real life experience. His novels *So Many Hungers* (1947) and *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952) deal with the theme of hunger. In *Music for Mohini* (1952) deals with the new semi-western culture. *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960) portrays on lust for gold. In *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) he depicts the integration of rural simplicity. In his last novel *A Dream of Haveli* (1978) deals with the theme of East-West encounter. Bhattacharya himself says with Sudhakar Joshi:

I have not missed a single opportunity of observing incidents, happenings where I can gain something for the writer in me. Most of my characters have shaped themselves from real earth.\(^{10}\)

In Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s (1927-2013) novels, social background is given greater stress than the characters that enact various comedies of Indian urban middle class life, tragicomedies and farces. Her first novel, *To Whom She Will* (1955) deals with arranged marriages versus love marriages. The author seems to be favour of customs and traditions of the Indian society. Her other works are *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The Householder*

Harish Raizada opines:

In all her novels Kamala Markandaya has treated the theme of the East-West confrontation more comprehensively than any other Indian English novelist ... the views the difference in the traditions and values of India and the West as a neutral observer and and portrays different situations and characters objectively.¹¹

Anita Desai (b.1937) is the most well-known among the Indian English novelists. In her novels, she added a new facet to the triumph of Indian women writer in fiction. Her first two novels *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965) concern with exploration of
sensibility, the inner world rather than external world of action. Her other works are *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975) and *Fire on the Mountain* (1977)

After 1950s the Indian novel in English has become enriched with variety in respect of its multifaceted themes. There was a shift of emphasis from the public issues of the society to the private agonies of the individuals. K.B. Vaid opines on the themes of Indian novelists that their preoccupations are

Portrayal of widespread social evils and tensions, examination of the survivals of the past, exploration of the hybrid culture of the dislocations and conflicts in a tradition-ridden society under the impact of an incipient, half-hearted industrialization.¹²

Yet some other novels in the post-independence era concerned themselves with the country and its vagaries. Kushwanth Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956) and Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) are imaginative records of the partition period of 1947. B. Rajan’s *The Dark Dancer* (1959), Manohar Malgonkar’s *Distance Drum* (1960) and *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) deal with the origin of the two nations’ theory.

However, the Indian English fiction in the present has created its own reputation at the international level. Most of the modern Indian English novelists migrated to the West for various reasons,
such writers are called the writers Diaspora. The term ‘Diaspora’ literally refers to dispersal – the scattering of the people. It was first largely used in the context of the Jewish experience outside the Jewish homeland. ‘Indian Diaspora’, as currently used to refers to the people of Indian origin scattered over a wide range of countries. Most of them left their home in search of better opportunities. As Viney Kirpal says:

It was the need for a market for their books and the colonial ideal of assimilation to the coloniser’s ways that prompted the large-scale emigration of writers from British/French colonies to the metropolitan countries.\(^\text{13}\)

The writers of the Diaspora are the products of a dual cultural background, native and the western. They bring a wide and rich range of experience to their literary output. Writers of the Indian Diaspora like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharathi Mukerjee, Kamala Markandaya, Vikram Seth and **Arun Joshi**, to mention a few, have enriched the world literature with their works and have won worldwide acclaim.

Arun Joshi (1939-1993) was born in a well-educated family in 1939 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. His father was a famous botanist and rose up to the post of the Vice-Chancellor, first of the Punjab University and later, of Benaras Hindu University. Arun Joshi had a brilliant academic career. Joshi attended the schools in India and the
United States of America. He got an engineering degree from the University of Kansas and further he acquired a degree in the Industrial Management from M.I.T. Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1960.

Arun Joshi worked in a Mental Hospital in 1957 in the United States of America where his uncle was a Psychiatrist who dealt with chronic psychological cases. His sensitive mind was impressed so much that one can find his chief protagonists describing an inner life within the inner world of the soul divided against itself, its aspirations and conflicting urges turned on the will and action with the novelist’s searchlight carefully scrutinizing it all in full focus. This is the reason why there is something deeper than empathy for such characters in his heart. Joshi says in an interview with M.R.Dua, “My novels are essentially attempts towards a better understanding of the world and myself.”

Joshi reveals in an interview with Sujatha Mathai that he has been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and Jaya Prakash Narayan. The same questioning spirit, that is common to the heroes of his fiction, makes Joshi drawn to Jaya Prakash (JP) because of JP’s uncontaminated, political career and the charisma of his honesty and simplicity. So, Joshi moved to JP Narayan’s movement in Bihar. Joshi is also attracted by the figure of Jesus Christ and is very much interested in the Christian ideology and thought. He is also influenced
by the western existential writers. In an interview with Purabi Banerjee he says:

    I did read Camus and Sartre ... I liked The Plague and read The Outsider. I might have been influenced by them. Sartre I did not understand clearly or like. As for existential philosophers like Kierkegaard, I have never understood anything except odd statements.15

Several influences upon him have made him a writer. His entry as a writer is not sudden happening. His family background, education, financial status, contemporary social values, political condition, circumstances and his own experiences play a vital role in making him a writer. Joshi returned to India in 1962 and joined the Delhi Cloth and General Mills Co. Delhi at a managerial capacity on the Recruitment and Training Department. Next he worked as an Executive Director at the Shri Ram Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. After 1965, he started his own industries. All these events –his ancestry, his educational experiences in India and the USA, his working in a Mental Hospital and his entry into the industrial field --- paved the way for the future novelist.

Arun Joshi is one of those modern Indian novelists in English who have broken the new grounds. In his search for the new themes, he has “renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man and has engaged himself in a search for essence of human living.”16 An
outstanding novelist of human predicament, Arun Joshi has explored the inner crisis of the contemporary human being in all his novels.

Arun Joshi’s contribution to Indian English fiction is in the form of novels and a collection of short stories. They are:

2. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971)
4. *The Survivor* (1975) (Collection of Short Stories)
5. *The Last Labyrinth* (1981) and

Had he not died (1993) prematurely, he perhaps would have written a few more works of distinction.

The post-war period has witnessed a great spiritual crisis; therefore it has been rightly regarded as ‘The Age of alienation.’ In this age, man is brought face to face with confusion, frustration, disillusionment and disintegration. Though the alienation made its first appearance in 1935, it has already existed in the classical, sociological works of the nineteenth century and early the twentieth century writers like Karl Marx and others.

Arun Joshi’s first novel, *The Foreigner* (1968) is his real life experience. He was hardly 20 years when he started writing this novel.
He had begun to write this novel, when he was a student in America. Like Joshi, the Protagonist of the novel, Sindi Oberoi obtains his engineering degree from an American University. His other two protagonists Billy Biswas in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and Som Bhaskar in *The Last Labyrinth* also study in the United States of America. The first three novels shows Joshi’s personal experiences in India and abroad. In his other two novels *The Apprentice* and *The City and The River*, the characters in these novels are unfortunate in lacking the benefit of foreign education.

Arun Joshi’s first novel *The Foreigner* (1968) searches in depth, the problems of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi. He is an anguished soul who by the virtue of the circumstances of his birth, parentage and upbringing, feels that he is without roots, moorings, estranged from his environment, tradition and culture, and above all from his own self. He views himself as a ‘foreigner’ to all of them, wherever he might be. A few calamitous love affairs in his teenage make him rush to the conclusion that life is without any meaning and purpose. Consequently he evolves for himself a theory of what he regards as ‘detachment’ and non-involvement, and refuses to involve himself in society, and in any attachment be it friendship or love. Ironically he becomes, without being aware of it, more and more absorbed in himself. He advances arguments Justifying his so-called ‘detachment’, which is actually an evasion and escapes from personal and social responsibility. A personal disaster forces open his eyes to the fallacy of
his theory. His guilt-ridden conscience makes him to seek a way out of this predicament of isolation and estrangement and work himself towards meaning and purpose in life, and integrating himself socially.

S. Rengachari opines that the theme of The Foreigner has the shadows of T.S. Eliot. He remarks:

The themes of alienation, of rootlessness, of insanity and purposelessness of human existence, of moral vacuity, spiritual bankruptcy and apathy – the themes which are associated with Eliot’s early poetry figure prominently in The Foreigner. Sindi seems to be a typical Eliotean character almost throughout the book.17

Joshi’s second novel, The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1971), is continuation and development upon the first novel The Foreigner. In this novel the theme is presented from the stand point of two societies which are just opposed and antithetical to each other. One of them is civilized, westernized and superficial society of Delhi representing modern India, which is governed almost entirely by materialistic values, and the other is the simple, vital and primitive society of a tribe in interior central India. The protagonist Billy Biswas, born of prosperous parents of the upper crust of Delhi society, educated abroad and trained to be an anthropologist, finds himself in the sophisticated high society of his birth and upbringing as a totally alienated and estranged man. He cannot find his identity in this
imitative, banal and spiritually sterile society. Impelled by the *Urkraft* (the primitive force) in him, he intentionally disappears into the tribal society of the Maikala Hills, turning his back upon what seems to him to be the corrupting and dehumanizing civilized world, in search of a human world of meaningful relationships and purposeful life. He does not run away or escape from life’s responsibilities and commitments. Nor does he want to become a mere ‘primitive’. But his daring step is part of a quest for self-realisation and for something greater than himself and man, above and beyond, which he very hesitantly names as ‘God’. Having made his moral choice he pursues his goal with remarkable tenacity and perseverance.

Billy Biswas achieves a sense of social solidarity and communion in the tribal world by identifying himself totally with the tribals and their society. They also find in him a great friend who feels socially and morally responsible for them. Thus Billy preserves the integrity of his self. Interestingly Billy does not ignore altogether the civilized world of his parents, his friend Romesh Sahai (Romi) and others, and even takes the risk of meeting and renewing contact with Romi. What he rejects is the shallow, materialistic and dehumanized part of it. He is sensible to the fact that even this banal and mediocre world could produce a person like Romi, one of unqualified integrities, who is sensible, sympathetic, understanding through agnostic, and whose sense of values has not been sullied by his society. The primitive tribal society is neither celebrated nor glorified in the novel.
at the expense of the civilized society. Despite the protagonist’s structure against the values of the civilized world, it is not condemned. The two societies are contracted and implicitly evaluated, by being juxtaposed.

B.D.Sharma and S.K Sharma are of the opinion that Joshi:

Narrates the story of a person who finds himself alienated from individuals, society and civilization as such. Though Billy goes on making efforts to remain a part and parcel of the society and civilization by pinning his hopes on individuals (the smallest unit of a society), yet he fails in his every effort. Billy instead of breaking himself (self-estrangement) prefers to abjure the civilization.\textsuperscript{18}

Arun Joshi’s third novel, *The Apprentice* (1974) presents another version of the theme of the inner awareness of the human soul. In this novel Joshi has chosen the protagonist as an average man of ordinary intellectual abilities belonging to the middle class of the Delhi society. The protagonist Ratan Rathor, unlike Sindi, is not uprooted man. He has his roots, and above all the living example of personal integrity, honesty, selflessness and sacrifice in his Gandhian father who gives his all including his life for the great cause of the country’s freedom. Yet he takes to the ways of corruption, and as a consequence experiences the anguish, and the wretchedness of loneliness and isolation, deprived of all familiar human ties. He has to confront
emptiness, darkness and torment in his soul because of his searching guilty conscience. In spite of his youthful idealism to follow the example of his upright father, he becomes an ambitious careerist and makes compromises, partly under the pressure of circumstances and partly because of his own inner deficiency. In the midst of his ambiguous worldly success and the consequent moral degeneration in him, his conscience remains disturbingly alert. It takes note of the erosion taking place within his soul despite his attempts to smother and silence it, and makes him aware of his guilt. He reaches the nadir of his moral fall when he betrays the Brigadier, his close friend and benefactor. The fact that he becomes corrupt in a society and he is aware of it does not make him feel exonerated nor does it lessen his torment of isolation and estrangement from his true self and from his society. D.R. Sharma a critic of Joshi Compares Ratan with Joshi’s other heroes:

Like Sindi and Billy who revolt against the moratorium on the moral resources of man, Ratan Rathore in ‘The Apprentice’ is another reflective insider. His problem is again of educating himself in order to ‘be use of’ to the fraternity of mankind.19

Fortunately both Sindi Oberoi and Ratan Rathor are able to realize the truth about themselves and free themselves from their personal agonies and guilts which had apparently alienated them from the society, as they acquire a sharpened awareness of their social
responsibility and obligation to their fellow beings. In Sindi this awareness takes the form of his assuming the responsibility of setting right Khemka’s business and thus helping its hapless employees. In Ratan it sets him on earnestly wiping the shoes of the devotees visiting the temple everyday, as an act of penance. These decisive and determined acts of selflessness on their part take them back to the fold of society and unite them with it.

After his three novels Arun Joshi has published only one collection of short stories - *The Survivor* (1975). Like most of his novels, his short stories also provide an illuminating commentary on the erosion of values in contemporary society.

Arun Joshi’s fourth novel, *The Last Labyrinth* (1981) depicts the complicated path of Som Bhaskar, the protagonist who is an exception to the pattern of withdrawal or isolation and final integration. The novel probes into the turbulent and labyrinthine inner world of Som Bhaskar who is so obsessively preoccupied with himself, his dilemmas and doubts and despairs that he remains totally indifferent to and estranged from society. A millionaire industrialist and educated in the West, he swears by rationalism. He is skeptical and full of spiritual ideas and religious beliefs, and deeply disturbs all that lies beyond the limits of rationalism. But he is constantly tormented by hollowness, a ‘void’ within himself and outside. He feels wearied and bored with life and craves for something vague and undefined, a ‘want’ as he calls it, to gratify which he takes to possessing objects, business enterprises
and women. But the yawning ‘void’ continues to harass him without let-up. To his clouded perception life appears to be ‘vanity of vanities’ without meaning and relevance.

Among Joshi’s protagonists Som may seem to resemble closely the protagonists of some of the Western existential novels. However, he differs from them fundamentally because, in spite of life appearing to him to be irrelevant and meaningless, he still feels an irresistible compulsion to seek and knows the meaning of life and existence. He is not comfortable to be in a state of uncertainty. However he is too much of a prisoner of his egoistical self and too much self-absorbed to have a clean focus and it properly or to transcend the limits of his self to think of others or feel concerned about them. And the failure of reintegrating himself with his society lies in his inability and even reluctance to recognize the limits of human reason and give a try to the time-tested beliefs and spiritual values of his society. This fact is driven home by his own hedonistic but frustrating pursuits and responses to other situations and by such other characters as Anuradha, Aftab and Gargi associated with him. These characters in contrast to Som, remain integrated with society and people, in spite of the rough and tumble of life and the raw deal they have had in it. According to Sanjay Narasimhaiah:

Som Bhaskar represents the contemporary western educated, affluent bourgeoisie who is feverishly searching for his roots and in the process discovering a haunting
emptiness and void. He gets mentally shattered, morally degenerated and physically exhausted with dreams and Insomnia. 

The foregoing account of the protagonists of the first four novels indicates that while their experience of loneliness and estrangement from society and themselves bring them a sense of fragmentation of their being, they, with the exception of Som Bhaskar of The Last Labyrinth, regain a sense of wholeness of being when they unite themselves with society with a fuller knowledge of themselves and those around them.

The last novel of Arun Joshi’s The City and The River (1990) presents yet another version of the theme of the existential predicament from a new angle. It marks a departure from his other novels in that his focus shifts from highly self-conscious individuals to the social group. The city and the river in the novel are not given specific names probably to suggest that they represent all cities and all rivers, and therefore together the world at large. Society itself is viewed not as an abstraction but as a meaningful coming together of so many individuals endeavoring to live in peace and harmony. The novel is about various individuals and social groups living in the city and by the river. It depicts their motives, choices and actions which often sharply conflict with one another, and the cumulative and disintegrating effect they have on their destiny and their city. It is suggested that the peace and harmony of their lives, individually and
collectively, depend upon every one of them realizing and fulfilling their social responsibility by making the right moral choices, acting according to them. In the final analysis, the novel is about humanity and the values that inform and guide the lives of people as individuals and groups. A well-known critic O.P. Mathur observes that:

The political, cultural mythical and metaphysical features of the novel merge into the spectrum of a microcosm of the universe in which men can attain salvation and conquer the recurrent cycles of birth and death, creation and disintegration through self-purification.\textsuperscript{21}

It should be fairly obvious by now that there is no repeat in Arun Joshi’s handling of the themes in his novels, even though he confines himself to a limited segment of Indian society the urbanized middle-middle and upper middle classes. He displays impressive maturity and technical competence in devising appropriate narrative strategies to explore his themes. According to M.Schorer, narrative technique is “the only means (the novelist) has discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning and finally evaluating.”\textsuperscript{22} The narrative modes Joshi employs are determined by the nature and needs of each novel. As Mark Schorer defines, if technique is “any selection, elimination or distortion, any form of rhythm imposed on the world of action by means of which our apprehension of the world of action is enriched or rendered,”\textsuperscript{23} then one can not profitably discuss the themes of a novel without closely
attending to its narrative technique. In other and simpler words, matter and manner cannot be separated, in modern treatments of the art of prose fiction, the point of view from which the novelist tells his story is specially emphasized, because the point of view is the means by which defines his theme positively. As M.A. Abrams explains,

Point of view signifies the way a story gets told – the mode (or modes) established by an author by means of which the reader is presented with the characters, dialogue, action, setting, and events which constitute the narrative in a work of fiction.24

According to Meenkshi Mukherjee,

It would be of little help, therefore, to discuss situation, theme, plot or characters as they are separate elements existing by themselves, because there are determined by the author’s point of view.25

There are different ways of presenting a story and a single work may, and often does, exhibit or employ more than one device. The problem of the novelist is after all adequate transmission of a story. Very broadly two predominant narratives, each with subdivisions or classes, have been classified by scholars’ third person and first person narratives. The most recurrent in the Indian novels in English has been the first person narrative. As Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks:
Since the theme of some of the best work is the quest for self, this technique is often the most suitable and has been applied in widely diverse situations by the Indian novelists.

The first four novels of Arun Joshi use the first-person narrative, and the fifth, *The City and The River* uses the third-person narrative. As in his handling of his themes, Arun Joshi does not repeat mechanically his narrative modes, and shows considerable skill and sophistication in this regard. In *The Foreigner, The Apprentice* and *The Last Labyrinth* the protagonists are the narrators, and all of them are engaged consciously or otherwise in understanding themselves. Each protagonist, who is the central consciousness of the particular novel, tells his story from his point of view, as he perceives, understands and assesses it. In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* a variation of the first-person narrative is employed. Instead of the protagonist Billy Biswas his trusted friend Romesh Sahai (Romi) is made the chief narrator of his ‘strange’ story. That part of Billy’s life about which, Romi has no knowledge at all and which is narrated to him by Billy himself is faithfully reported in his own words by Romi. Thus there is a sort of braided narrative in this novel. In *The City and The River* unlike the other novels, Joshi employs omniscient third-person narrative. Joshi says:

I have never really plotted a novel. I know the plot of *The Apprentice*, in the sense there was a man who took bribe
and hurt someone. In The Foreigner I know the American bit of the novel. The plotting got threadbare in Billy Biswas and The Last Labyrinth.27

The real experiences of Arun Joshi have been a recurrent source of all his novels. He has written all his novels and a collection of short stories with a vision to share his personal experiences with his kith and kin and the readers. Joshi has studied contemporary human being’s predicament and his awareness and gives his study the shape of novel. Joshi himself observes:

My novels are essentially attempts towards a better understanding of the world and of myself... if I did not write, I imagine I would use some other medium to carry of my exploration.28

The suggested research work makes a very modest attempt to explore the novels of Arun Joshi for the themes of alienation, primitivism versus civilization, the inner awareness of the human soul, quest for meaning of life and the existential predicament. The present study not only examines the sufferings of contemporary man’s alienation, aloneness, detachment and identity crisis but also discovers the philosophy suggested by the novelist.