CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Arun Joshi’s fictional world is the product of his actual experiences, influences on him of books, writers and philosophers from the East and the West. All his novels have in them the undercurrent of the existential philosophy. He writes about man’s inner problems like rootlessness, restlessness, existential dilemma, crisis of identity and search for meaning in the present world. He delves deep into the psyche of man, his mental agitation, tensions, dreams and desires. His protagonists reflect his conviction that every man has a significant role to play in shaping the course of his life. Right from his first novel Arun Joshi is deeply involved in the exploration of the human soul, and its lonely journey through the world. Where man is necessarily a stranger or foreigner.

The focus of Arun Joshi’s novels is on anguish of sensitive individuals continually tortured by their spiritual up-rootedness, clash and confusion of values generated by the sheerly materialistic, self-centered and corrupt society. He transcends the apparent and the phenomenal world and enters into the mysterious depth of human existence. He is mainly concerned with the dimensions of individual and social existence. He successfully reveals the subtleties and complexities of the modern urban man. His novels can be read as the spiritual odyssey of the twentieth century man who has lost his spiritual meanings. Despite some differences in their approach, all of his heroes are men engaged in the meaning of life. His novels are bold attempts to discover the
meaning of life. Those are Joshi’s brilliant satire on modern civilization. All his novels are marked by certain existentialist problems of the resultant anger, agony, psychic quest and the like.

The protagonists in Joshi’s novels reflect conviction that every man has a significant role to play in shaping the course of his life. They are lonely, misfit in the world in which they have to live and face the meaningless of life. Though they are not religious or saintly, they are humble enough to learn lessons taught to them by life’s problems. While they experience the normal claims of love and hatred, doubts and dilemmas. They try to face challenges and dilemmas. They try to face challenges of their meaningless life by out tripping the narrow confines of the difficult selves. They embody the theme of anxiety of which the existential writers of the West like Kierkegaard, Marcel, Jaspers have.

The novels by Arun Joshi have never offer any facile solutions of the external systems to the human predicament and have stressed, instead, the need for the self-exploration and soul-searching. His characters realize that the external systems are inadequate and that truth must ultimately be sought in an understanding to the self and its relation to the world. They seek a participation which is deeply personal, they are concerned about an internal system of order, and they search for the clue to the intricate labyrinth of life in the mysterious and unfathomable recesses of their souls. His protagonists prove that the search for meaning is difficult involving suffering, loss, bereavement and sacrifice, but it is not impossible. Arun Joshi believes that it is the inside of our
personality that governs the outside. The inside purity is essential to purge us of egoism, selfishness and stupidity. Human kind should concern itself with trying and not with the achievement.

*The Foreigner* enjoys a prominent place in his literary contour because of its socio-cultural dimensions and moral preoccupations. It is a seminal novel having vast intercontinental area for its geographical expansion. It is an emotionally charged narrative account of the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi’s search for meaning. He is an existential everyman of our time. The novel takes us to the lower depth of human suffering and the inferno of existential agony. It is about his loneliness and the feelings of anguish in the wake of his estrangements from his environment, tradition and from his true self. It is about the problem of involvement and detachment, diffidence and the lack of courage to face the hazards of life. The novel is about the lack of commitment and ability to accept the responsibility of one’s action. It is the portrayal of the suffering of an individual who is cut off from his financial, social and cultural ties and is lost in the intricate labyrinth of life.

The story of the novel describes Sindi’s sense of metaphysical anguish at the meaninglessness of life and his search for meaning and existentialism. The novel is the dimension of an authentic record of the extrinsic and extracacies of the human existence generated by a deep-rooted quest for self-knowledge. Sindi is an existential character, rootless, restless and luckless in a mad, bad and absurd world. He is an up-rooted hero who is away from his
home grounds and regards his past as absolutely meaningless. For him life has no hopes in the future and he feels that it will be as bleak as the past.

Sindi is a typical Sartrean hero, the hunted anguished creature of Sartre who is absolutely free and alone, creating himself a personal way of life out of the void of nothingness all around him. He has some similarity with Scobie, the Police Commissioner of the Gold Coast in Graham Greene’s *The Heart of Matter*. Also he resembles Roquentin, Sartre’s hero of *Nausea* who reflects the absurdity of life. Sindi’s journey from West to East symbolizes his spiritual quest as well as his search for meaning. Like Meursault of Albert Camus’ *The Outsider* Sindi believes that there is no end to suffering, no end to the struggle between good and evil. He feels that life is purposeless. He is in the predicament of outsider. Like Meursault he is devoid of emotion having no respect for society or religion. Unlike many existential characters in the West, he shows a tremendous capacity for transcendence. He comes out of the impasse after intense suffering and anguished soul-searching. His life is a saga of rootlessness, geographical as well as emotional and of his search for an anchor in a parentless world.

Sindi is presented as a confused man, a product of diverse culture. His mixed parental blood and up-bringing in an alien country instills in him a sense of rootlessness. Devoid of a spiritual and cultural anchorage and being brought up in a loveless world, he harbours in him a deep sense of insecurity and unreality. He is overwhelmed by a nagging sense of loneliness and the chaos of being. His dissatisfaction with the mechanical apparatus of life leads him to
search for meaning in life. His personality makes him something like an existential being, alienated from the superficial reality of life. He is tossed up in his life of indecisions and rootlessness. As Prufrock is archetypal everyman, the creation of Sindi is an evidence of Arun Joshi’s contemporary sensibility etching out the inner wasteland of the archetypal modern everyman.

**The Foreigner** presents how Sindi an immigrant Indian suffers towards the discovery of meaning and purpose of life. His alienation from the world seems to be similar to the one that many existentialist heroes in the West suffer from. To Sindi life is absurd as it holds no meaning and purpose for him. It is a reflection of the failure of his individual perception, his inability to see the reality in its proper perspective. The absurdity of his life and committant sense of alienation form do not result from any metaphysical loss of established order or a shock to the traditional mode of thinking, but from his ignorance, illusion, failure to adjust his emotional difficulties as well as his lack of proper adjustment of conduct. Life becomes a devitalized affair for him and he wanders aimlessly through the mazes of his existence to find peace, identity and purpose. His is a journey without maps along the roads of life, its endless labyrinthine ways. His search for meaning and purpose of life doesn’t end in a miasma of despair.

The novel records Sindi’s movement from illusion to reality, from darkness to light and from death’s twilight kingdom to the new shores of life. It describes his experience as a student of mechanical engineering in the American university at Boston and later as an employee in the firm of Mr.
Khemka, a wealthy industrialist in Delhi. He presents himself as an uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century who is in the search of meaning, purpose of his life. It seems to be a step in the right direction. He is an Indian by origin, born to a English mother and Kenyan-Indian father, and educated in London and America. He seems to be a foreigner to the world wherever he goes and at times even he becomes a stranger to himself. He thinks that somebody has begotten him without a purpose and so far he had lived without a purpose. He thinks that he has existed only for dying, he has wasted twenty-five years in search of the wrong things. He considers life just meaningless and useless so he tries to commit suicide.

The loss of personal history, culture and national identity catapults him, as it were into the role of a detached observer or narrator of the whole drama of existence. The death of his parents, his past experiences of the loneliness in his life makes him totally pessimistic and lost. He is unable to find out his roots anywhere in the world. The problem he faces is that of finding a meaning in the absurdity around him. He thinks that man is merely a toy or puppet in the hands of time, and life is full of agony and pain, he lives helplessly, nothing is in his hand, everything is imposed on him and he has to wait till the time decides the future. To him life is a mocking zero, a labyrinth and becomes conscious of life’s hollowness or vagueness.

The death of Babu and June brings realization in Sindi. He comes to known that suffering is inescapable or inevitable. In the frustrated mood he comes to India and accepts a job as a personal assistant of Mr. Khemka. There
he observes Mr. Khemka’s epicurean and materialistic world as well as the exploitation of the poor workers. He gets an opportunity to practise what he has learnt out of his long quest-action without detachment. He offers to do something meaningful. It is a step in the right direction. His sympathies with the poor workers are a result of his realization of the poor worker’s life. He is fed-up of their exploitation by Mr. Khemka. After an income tax raid Mr. Khemka tries to influence him which shocks him very much and he resolves to move away. Muthu requests him to take over the charge of office and to save the poor workers from the starvation. He observes the heroic struggle of Muthu to provide food to his and his brother’s family. This act reveals in Sindi the real meaning of life and he cancels his decision and resolves to work for the poor workers. He plunges into the battle of survival which the factory workers could not have won without his help, co-operation and guidance. He surrenders to the cause of poor workers, he calls himself ‘Surrender Oberoi’.

The novel ends with Sindi’s concentrating on a decisive action. This is the result of his getting meaning. He turns to his duty not with a selfish mind but with the self-knowledge. His illusions are shattered, his doubts are cleared. He commits himself whole heartedly to a cause. For the first time he is doing something selflessly, something in which he is not interested personally. He feels a new strength to go through with the difficult task ahead. The strength comes from within, from Sindi’s readiness to rise above him for the sake of other. He had surrendered his will to the will of God and learnt to work for the larger interest of the people.
The Foreigner records the spiritual odyssey of a confused individual from a withdrawal from life to a return to life is made possible only by his search for meaning. So long as Sindi is lost in ignorance and besieged by doubt and cowardice, he could not see himself in his inner mirror and consequently, he suffers from a sense of alienation from his true self. He could not come to grips with the world. But with the fuller perception of the self and the world that comes in the wake of Babu and June’s death, he feels reintegrated and achieves a new kind of relatedness to the world. As his earlier delusions are destroyed and he finds his identity in a spontaneity of love and unselfish act. The withdrawal from the world is only a part of his quest. It is followed by return. It is like a conversation, a new way of living, a matter of becoming a new man. This revelation of the value of living as against Sindi’s initial obsession with sickness, morbidity and death comes with the stock of conversation. This new orientation to the value of life is something achieved by him through desperate struggle and intense suffering while seeking meaning. The basis of this transformation is his companionship with the suffering mass of humanity and his willingness exits as a conscious, responsible being.

The Strange Case Of Billy Biswas revolves round the crisis of self, resultant agony, search for meaning and affirmation. It is another version of man’s quest for understanding his self by shunning the world through knowledge. The novel presents hero’s existential quest for values in a mad, bad, absurd world. It holds forth the added attraction of the dark, mysterious forces of the universe that magnetize the protagonist and drive him to the doors
of death, the last labyrinth that life holds for man is the existential vision. It attempts to explore the mysterious underworld which is the human soul. It is a sever indictment of the meaningless and spiritual up-rootedness of the post-independence, Anglicized Indian society. In general the novel is an exploration of the consciousness of hapless, rootless people and it reveals a new gas chamber of self-forged misery. It is a novel of perpetual quest for reality and the most effective agent of moral imagination. Here Arun Joshi portrays how a man of extraordinary sensibilities is destroyed by the process of individuation. He suggests that life’s meaning doesn’t lie in the world outside but within.

*The Strange Case Of Billy Biswas* is an existential protest against the superficialities of a materialistic civilization. It is a study in the total estrangement of Billy Biswas, the protagonist from a upper crust of the Indian society with its material concerns, spiritual shallowness and blind imitation of the Western culture in utter defiance of its traditional values and beliefs. Arun Joshi uses Billy’s strong primitive urge to look critically at the inner decay and sterility of the society. There is an endorsement of an anti-materialistic, essentially Hindu world-view. Here he carries his study of the human predicament in the pretentious, ostentious, morally and spiritually barren modern world. It is an attack on the corrupt modern civilized life. The industrial and technological advancement has created predicament in the society and in the individual. Man can’t realize happiness through mere materialistic possession. Eternal joy and happiness can be achieved only through self-realization and spiritual enlightenment. But modern man
unfortunately under the materialistic influences forgets his culture, morality or traditional values and attaches himself to the materialistic world. The central weakness of our civilization is being the defeat of man by the material. He is merely a puppet in the hands of materialism. In a sense the novel is a sever indictment of the meaningless existence, mechanization, urbanization, discontent, changing values and spiritual up-rootedness of the society in the modern civilization. In such a society Arun Joshi puts his hero on search for meaning.

At the opening of the novel Billy Biswas is depicted as a man of intellect profound sensibility and unusual obsessions. He is a son of a judge of the Supreme Court of India which shows his richness and upper crust. His father sends him to America to study engineering course but he keeps his father in the dark and starts Ph.D in anthropology as it is his first love. Deliberately he chooses his destination place in Harlem, the black colony in America. He belongs to the category of rebels and visionaries and loves humanity. He sets out in search of life’s meaning. He is a man of courage to translate his vision into reality. After completion of his education he returns back to India, feels thirsty, he joins as a lecturer in anthropology. He starts undertaking numerous expeditions for coming closer to the primitive people. He sees no difference between the American and the upper crust materialistic Indian who are spiritually barren, dead, emotionally empty, and interested in materialism. He is not totally frustrated, neither in the society nor at his own home does he get the
satisfaction. He feels himself as a fish out of water. He considers his life as well as the world around him as useless, meaningless and wasted.

Billy’s anthropological expeditions are his attempts at finding meaning to life; going back to root for it. He seems to be transported to a different world and when he comes back to normalcy, he seems to have return from a long and difficult journey. He retains his roots in the tradition of society and draws his strength and sense of purpose from his inner vision. He is concerned with deeper and for more serious problems, with a question of his spiritual identity with mysteries of life. He is constantly engaged in his search for meaning. He wanders through the labyrinths of the civilized life finding a dead end in it, he goes to seek the simple ways of life of the primitive man. The interest in the primitive man is the quest of his existence. On his last expedition Billy disappears into the forest, mixes up himself in the primitive people. It is the termination of the pseudo self and an initiation into the deep, mysterious, real primitive world. He withdraws from trivialities of life in the sophisticated society in search of meaning.

Billy is critical of the well civilized society. He thinks that it is a peg of money upon which everything rests. The problem hinted by Billy is that of the existential problem. His major concern is with inner world, the world of the soul and its source. In this process he suffers but his suffering is a purifying process leading towards the self-awakening. He tries to seek communion with the very centre of man’s existence. He mixes up in the tribal’s world by forgetting his past. He joins them because there he finds his affirmation of the
essence of the human existence. His search leads him to the tribal’s world. His escape is a journey from darkness to light, form restlessness to equanimity. After undergoing the regenerative process he comes out in the new roles that of a healer, a priest, a magician who cures dying children, wards off tigers and helps the tribals with their worldly problems and spiritual troubles.

The path Billy chooses is the way of Jnanayoga (the way of knowledge) that takes him to liberation at the end. He becomes a true seeker for affirmation through the way of knowledge. He and Romi meet for many times. Once he cures Romi’s wife Situ’s migraine. The civilized world come to known about his existence; the operation takes place and Billy is killed by a bullet of a constable. The problem with Billy is that no one tries to understand his problem even after his death. None from the civilized world realize that Billy is indulged in the “search for meaning”. He prefers to die rather than to succumb to the black and deep desires of the civilized world.

*The Strange Case Of Billy Biswas* is a variation of the doomed existential quest of man for affirmation in the mad, bad, materialistic absurd world. His outward journey is symbolic of his relentless search for meaning in life. His spiritual concern highlights the meaninglessness of our prosperity and civilized society.

*The Apprentice* like Arun Joshi’s other novels probes deeper into the inner consciousness of the individual. It explores the mysterious underworld of the human soul. Ratan Rathore, the protagonist is the existential hero who is in the search of meaning of life. The novel is structurally similar to Albert Camus’
The Fall. It is a severe criticism on the decaying values of a degenerating civilization. In it Joshi presents an individual who suffers from the agony of the soul not due to his escapism or rebellion but due to his conformity to victimization by a crooked and corrupt society.

The novel presents dark crisis in the soul of protagonist, Ratan Rathor is typical modern man and Joshi has made him at once everyman and nobody. We read the anguished attempt of a guilt stricken Ratan to retrieve his innocence and honor. It is the story of crime and punishment, of dislocation and search for meaning. It is a severe criticism of a rotten society with its meaningless pursuit of success and career, unscrupulous amassing of wealth in defiance of the sanctified values of its tradition like honesty, integrity of character, self-less service, honor and more than this all of the human existence.

Ratan is an existentialist character exemplifying the doctrine that man’s salvation depends upon the course of life he chooses to lead. Neither he is a rebel like Billy Biswas nor a rootless foreigner like Sindi Oberoi. Post-independence Indian society is the social background of the novel. He is torn between ideologies like idealism and corruption or materialism and after much suffering he reaches to a sort of salvation at the end when he decides to wipeout the shoes of visitors at the Krishna temple steps. He is the product of double inheritance the patriotic and ideal world of his father and the selfish and pragmatic world of his mother. He would like to make a mark of his own like his father. His father’s death creates so many problems in his life. His mother brings him face to face with the horrible reality of the materialistic society. His
mother’s advice that the world runs on money, since money is the most
important determinant of human life becomes the aim or vision of his life.
After completion of his education he struggles for a job. He finds that the
honour of being the son of the freedom fighter is of no practical value. Neither
his father’s sacrifice nor his educational intelligence helped him.

Ratan’s job in the department of war purchases makes him a corrupt
man. He becomes practical materialist and he compromises where he gets a
chance. He thinks that the world runs on the basis of deals. He behaves like a
Sartrean hero. In free India he becomes an officer, he starts corruption and rises
his living standard. He becomes more unscrupulous, fraudulent and
hypocritical. He sinks gradually into the abyss of darkness of corruption,
exploitation and bourgeois filth. He comes across Himmat Singh, an agent of
the corrupt system who tempts Ratan to purchase the defective war material,
which results into the death of his closest friend, the Brigadier and so many
soldiers on the battlefield and India’s defeat by China.

The deaths of his friends and soldiers affects Ratan. He realizes the evil
effects of his corruption, he blames himself. He thinks that his life, freedom,
materialistic achievements all are useless and meaningless. He considers
himself as nobody, he thinks that something has gon wrong with his life. His
existence is tormented by many questions like why he became the part of
corruption. He is in the search of meaning in his life, he tries to find the
meaning in the world around him. He would like to do repentance for his sin.
He compares himself with the good and ideal persons whom he came across.
He feels self-betrayed; his frail and fragile existence is shaken and sometimes burns. He is fed-up in the hypocritical, deceptive and corrupt materialist world. Like other existential heroes he is fully aware of loss of an existential substance of life. He is very much shocked and shaken by the Brigadier’s tragic plight and death. Although he repents but very shrewdly like a great hypocrite he answers the Police Superintendent and proves himself a true patriot. In the police station his mind is full of conflict, his conscience pricks him all the time but he never confesses his guilt before the police or society.

Brigadier’s death serves as a catalyst that shocks Ratan out of his moral inertia and initiates the process of the inner transformation in him. It puts him on the search for meaning in life. He is jerked out of his self-complacency, pseudo-security and illusions. He is able to confront with the responsibility of his gruesome crime. He couldn’t communicate his agony with anyone. He feels that he has cut himself off from everything and everyone else. He goes through terrible days and nights devoid of peace, sleep and consolation. The process of his search for meaning is already started. His visits to temple is a part of his search, he goes there to seek moral courage and peace of mind. He is caught in the dark labyrinth of life and is unable to follow the light that is within him. Ratan resolves to repent by wiping the shoes of the congregation at the Krishna temple and every morning he does it. Ratan’s existential decision to recover the lost self through an act of penitence reveals the need of realization.

Torments make Ratan think of making society free from corruption. He realizes that one cannot live for one-self because no human act is performed in
isolation and therefore each act should be done with a sense of responsibility. He believes that the salvation of people depends upon themselves, upon their capability for suffering and sacrifice. Though it is late but he doesn’t give up the struggle. With a renewed faith in life and in himself he begins the apprenticeship. He decides to retrieve his pawned soul by putting it to use in spiritual humanity and resignation to the will of god. He comes to understand that a combination of humanism and religion can be the saving grace of mankind steeped in corruption and it is an existential aspect. By standing on the doorsteps he hopes that the young generation should turn the gloomy future of India, it is the positive affirmation.

He exhorts the young to rise to the occasion and make second start, as always late is better than never. To him there is nothing in the world as sad as the end of hope, not even death. He realizes that life may well be zero but it isn’t necessarily purposeless. It is in the dark labyrinth of his soul that Ratan would ultimately find the answers to the overwhelming questions posed by his existence. He undergoes expiation and believes that purification is to be obtained not by any ritual or dogma but by making amends and this vision is the vision of bhakti in *The Bhagavadgita*. His wiping the shoes of the devotees cleanses his soul. Regeneration of Ratan takes place and he believes in the existence of God. The ‘religion of service’, humanity and the newly awakened sense of responsibility towards one and all are Ratan’s answers to the existential dilemma. Salvation from the contemporary confusion of values and suffering can be found not in self defeating isolation or unprincipled pursuit of
materialistic comforts but in communal faith, commitment and resoluteness of the humble. Humility is a first step towards devotion or bhakti and by deciding to take up this unpleasant job at the temple doorsteps Ratan initiates himself in the process of redemption through devotion.

*The Last Labyrinth* is an articulation of the contemporary phase of dilemma of modern man who is essentially groping through the labyrinth of life, existence and reality. It is an extension of Arun Joshi’s previous novels. It deals with both the inner and the outer world of a Westernized Indian aristocrat, Som Bhaskar, who has lost his spiritual roots. He is an obsessive and highly sensitive individual. It raises some important questions about life and its meaning and tries to unravel the still unresolved mysteries of God and death.

The novel holds up a mirror to the modern Indian society with its cynicism, hedonism, loss of faith, confusion of values and anxieties. Som is a man confronted by the four paths of life; Dharma (duty), Aartha (wealth), Kama (desires) and Moksha (liberation). It is based on the Karma yoga, the attainment of liberty or salvation of the soul by abandoning the six enemies of man. It is about man’s action, knowledge and devotion, and also about the liberation of the human soul attained by living in a sin-tainted world. The novel is highly influenced by the Hindu philosophy, theosophy and existentialism. It deals with the journey of man from the temporal to the immutable centre. In it Arun Joshi sees lives as labyrinths, hopeless mazes where you may get irretrievably lost or discover the shining secrets of the core of life.
The novel is a study of the modern man’s mental tumult. It treats man’s split state of mind, its causes and consequence. Som is a modern Hamlet whose problem is whether to become materialistic or spiritualistic. Relentlessly he is driven by an indefinite hunger, hunger for money, hunger for fame, hunger for body and hunger for some spiritual sublimity. It explores the spiritual agony, the turbulent inner world of an aristocratic young industrialist, who becomes a millionaire at the age of thirty. In the very beginning of the novel Som realizes that he has become a nuisance and has been fooling the people around him like a clown. He seems to be just like a hare chased by unseen hounds. Existentially he is always alone, and all his business wizardly is essentially purposeless. He wants something but he doesn’t know what he wants. It is a crisis of consciousness but not of emotion or ethics. The march of human evolution and the development of civilization down the ages have brought the modern man to a point of consciousness where he can neither believe nor refuse to believe. He is continually in his anguish of alienation, in his existential problem. His dilemma lies deep down in his own self and consciousness. It is not the outer world, the objective reality but the world within, the subjective reality which is essentially the fountain spring of despair and anxiety.

In search for meaning Som discovers a haunting emptiness and void which makes him mentally shattered, morally degenerated. He is physically exhausted with dreams of insomnia. His inflections plunges him into a bottomless pit of despair like a shipwrecked sailor sinking into the ocean. In a sense Som Bhaskar suffers from an inner crisis and is apparently at war with
himself. His unbridled sensuality and individual pride lead him only to despair and meaningless in life and hence to the impulsive decision to commit suicide. Som is neither a devout like his mother nor inquisitive like his father. The search for meaning for the unknown labyrinths touched him in his associations with Anuradha and Gargi. Everywhere and every time he is aware of the lackness of relevance in life which results into the terrible loneliness of heart. He finds the world around him as useless and meaningless. He is convinced that life is a labyrinth within the labyrinth, like the lanes of Banaras. He looks at life as vanity of vanities which he compares only to meaningless flights of stairs or a fisherman’s net. He compares his struggling self only to an ant threading through a maze, knocking about against one wall, then another. He is always haunted by the questions about life and death. His condition is like Abhimanyu in *The Mahabharata* who is not able to come out of the chakravyuva. Som loses himself in the chakravyuva of life and death, illusion and reality, doubt and faith.

Som pays no heed either to his business or to his lovely wife and growing children. The departed Anuradha becomes the core of his life, his existence, the meaning of life. Like a true devotee, he is unconcerned with the world. His agnosticism seems to be lined with affirmation and with the possibility of a dawn of faith. In the course of his journey through people like an old man, the little boy and the priest, he comes to realize that only faith can liberate him from the fear of death as it has done by the old man and earlier did
by his own mother. With unaltering trust in god, he can travel fearlessly and resolutely to the other world.

*The Last Labyrinth* suggests that the faith can be attained only after passing through a painful ordeal and overcoming the impasse of intellectual doubt through knowledge of human suffering and through spiritual commitment. In the ultimate analysis the novel becomes a warning against a particular state of mind that devoid of faith, death and God through Western rationalism and discursive reasoning. It also suggests that egress from the intricate labyrinth of life can be found not in hedonism or rationalism and self-imposed isolation from one’s cultural heritage but in love, sacrifice, communal faith, and adherence to one’s tradition that may provide one with a positive framework for individual self-definition and meaningful existence.

*The City and the River* like previous novels of Arun Joshi projects existentialism. It explores the very foundations of faith and right action. In it the individual crisis is of the city which represents the whole humanity and symbolizes the collective identity of the mass. The novel throws significant light on the relevance of meaning of life. However there are various themes which are interlinked with the spiritual and the metaphysical dimensions of the human existence.

The novel is a story of the endless repetition of the periodic disintegration which can be prevented only through purity. It is a parable, a commentary on the times. At one level it is a parable of the times, at another, it deals with the existential theme that how men in essence are entirely free to
choose, create by their choice the circumstances in which they live. Here Joshi’s view is an ascetic. It is an affirmation of the Indian wisdom that has taken cognizance of the egocentric predicament of man and offered an acceptable solution. It explores the existential predicament of man. Here Joshi goes one step further in struggling man’s metaphysical reconciliation as an answer to all his worries, agonies and alienation.

He believes that God exists in everything and everywhere. He gives his final message as ‘His is the will, His is the force’ and so an unquestionable faith in God and surrender to Him is the only solution to problems. The question is not of an individual success or failure but of the collective efforts for the common good of the mass. The novel deals with the nature and with the god, the ordering of loyalties towards man and towards god, the nature of struggle of good against evil for its very survival and the progress of mankind through spirals of time operating through disintegration. It throws significant limelight on the relevance of meaning of life. Here the existential problem takes on supernormal proportions of the endless repetition and destruction of life on the planet wrought by nemesis and retribution. It is about the quest for spiritual commitment, for an inner spirit that is beyond the religion. The karmic principle of The Gita is at its center. Also it centers round the basic principles of the Hindu philosophy which teaches an affirmative attitude to life.

Bhumiputra is Arun Joshi’s mouthpiece presenting his Hindu existential vision. As lord Krishna guides Arjuna, Bhumiputra guides the boatmen about the God, immortality of human soul, personal and collective salvation. He is
the brain behind the conspiracy. He finds meaning of life in action. He teaches, inspires and guides to rebel for the birth right, he tells everyman has the freedom to rise and fall and his future is in his own hands. The novel ends with an affirmative hope. The Great Yogeshwara sends his disciple to people to teach the significance of prayer, faith and understanding. Arun Joshi points out that it is the inside of our personality that governs the outside. The inside purity is essential to purge us of egoism, selfishness and stupidity. He gives us the final message that everyone of us must have unquestionable faith in God and a surrender to Him is the only way for the purification of soul and salvation to our threatening existence.