CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I Existential Philosophy and Its Relation to Literature

Modern existentialism, taken as a whole, is a philosophical movement of the twentieth century dealing with man’s disillusionment and despair in the modern world. When the world was almost torn to pieces by the chaotic conditions caused by the two World Wars, existentialism flourished as a philosophical movement. The existentialist thinkers began to define anxiety, anguish, guilt, dread, despair, death, meaninglessness of the postwar world in their own ways. They achieved a compelling effect on the thought of the literary artists all over the world.

The word ‘existence’ means a state or fact of being a real or living or of being present. The Oxford Dictionary defines existentialism as “The philosophy or the theory that humans are free and responsible for their own actions in a world without meaning” (277). The Webseter’s Dictionary defines it as “A movement in the twentieth century philosophy, influenced in its development by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and popularized in France by Sartre, emphasizing the active participation of the will, rather than the reason, in confronting the problems of a non-moral or absurd universe”, “A cult of nihilism and pessimism popularized in France after World War-II, supposedly based on the doctrines of Sartre and other existentialist writers” (445).

Existentialism as a philosophical concept has been in vogue only in recent years. In the wake of the Second World War most of the countries of the
world experienced agonizing problems. Jean Paul Sartre was very much on the lips of the intellectuals, groping in the night, groping for light. Most people imagined, though wrongly, that Sartre was the exponent of the new creed of existentialism. Yet we must remember that this philosophy isn’t at all new. Even before the Middle Ages St. Augustine posed the problem of existentialism. He was followed by Pascal, Duns Scouts, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Soren Kierkgaard, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jasper, Nicolas Berdyaev, Emmanuel Mounier, Albert Camus, and Simone de Beauvoir. Some of them are known as Christian existentialists, some atheists and quite a few marxists.

Existentialism isn’t a well organized and systematic philosophy of life, nor its beginning can be pinpointed. Jean Wahl considered it as a sharp reaction of all forms of rationalism. Kierkgaard reacted against the idealist like F. H. Bradley and Brunschvieg. It is the dictum that man first of all exists and then only he thinks of it. All his contemplations and his actions are possible only because of his existence. Existence therefore is the first principle from which everything flows. According to Sartre “man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up… and defines himself afterwards” (290). He further says that “existence is prior to essence; man is responsible for what he is” (29). Thus the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely on his own shoulders. And when we say that man is responsible for himself we
do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men.

The fundamental tenet of existentialism is an insistence on the actual existence of the individual as the basic and important fact, instead of a reliance on the theories of abstractions. The central doctrine is that man is what he makes of himself, he is not predestined by a God or society or biology. He has a free will, and the responsibility which goes with it. If he refuses to choose or lets outside forces determine him, he is contemptible. Hence the literary works of existentialism insist on actions including acts of will as the determining things. The existentialists stress the basic elements in man, including the irrationality of the unconscious and subconscious act. They consider life as dynamic, a common state of flux. A human life is not abstraction, but a series of consecutive moments. They always insist on the concrete instead of the abstract, on existence itself rather than the idea of existence.

Broadly speaking, we can say that the common interest which unites existentialist philosophers is the interest in human freedom. All of them are interested in the world considered as the environment of man, who is treated as a unique object of attention, because of his own power to choose his own courses of his action. What his freedom of choice amounts to and how it is to be described. These are the topics of the central concern to all existentialists. They aim, above all, to show the people that they are free, to open their eyes to something which has always been true, but which for one reason or another may not always have been recognized, namely that men are free to choose, not
only what to do on a specific occasion, but what to value and how to live. The existentialists hope to be not merely intellectually, but emotionally and practically innovators.

Existentialism deals with values, attitudes and relationships, which determine man’s role in society and the freedom or bondage that he is subjected to. If he is under undue pressure he will have to adopt methods for survival to salvage him from an aggressive society. This will be extension of the personality, the development of new dimensions. The hollowness that man feels within the depths of his soul is existentialistic by nature, and this has to bring the individual to the mainstream of life, to rescue him from perennial isolation. Existentialism thus is an attitude towards life based upon a kind of philosophical analysis of the modern human predicament.

Modern existentialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries moved in the two different directions from the two main sources, one led by Soren Kierkegaard, Danish thinker and the other by Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher. Kierkegaard develops Christian and theistic existentialism while Nietzsche develops anti-Christian and atheistic existentialism. The German thinker, Karl Jaspers and the French thinker, Gabriel Marcel take the Kierkgaardian philosophical faith. On the other hand, the German thinker, Martin Heidegger and the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre develop it on the Nietzschean way of atheism and godlessness. Albert Camus develops the absurd existentialism.
Among the theistic philosophers, Soren Kierkgaard (1813-1855) is commonly regarded as “the father of modern existentialism, and is the first European philosopher who bears the existentialist label” (Macquarrie 53). The term ‘existence’, ‘existentialism’ was first coined by Soren Kierkgaard himself and by his explanation of existentialism. He brought a revolutionary change in the prevalent political, social and religious ideas in which men were identified by state, society and church. Being a Christian theistic existentialist, Kierkgaard believes that man acquires self-knowledge only when he has an ‘intensified awareness’ of God and based his philosophy on the subjectivity of human existence.

Truth, religion and man’s solemn responsibility for the amelioration of society are the three basic concepts of Kierkgaard’s philosophy. The nucleus of his philosophy is that reality isn’t universal. For him reality is entirely individual and particular. The characteristic features of his philosophy are that subjectivity becomes the very foundation of his knowledge. His attack was double folded; in the sphere of religion he attacked institutionalized religion (in the form of church); in the sphere of philosophy, his attack was mainly directed against the absolute rationalism of Hegel. But unlike modern existentialists, Kierkgaard used the term existence in such a concrete sense that his famous dictum truth is subjectivity and subjectivity is truth becomes the raison de tour of his whole philosophy. Karl Theodore Jaspers, the German philosopher and Gabriel Marcel, the French philosopher were supporters of him.
Karl Theodore Jaspers (1863-1969), a German philosopher accepts the Kierkegaardian way of faith. According to him man is an existential being because he is subject to chance and fortune, suffering and conflict, guilt and death. He says that “The way in which man approaches his failure determines what he will become” (Morcel 160). To him the ills of our society result from individual’s refusal to appeal earnestly to God. He realizes that man is on the way to self-realization “I am not, I have to become; I am not free, I have to become free” (Morcel 169).

He took up a stance that affixed paramount importance to rationality. The scientific and industrial development did in fact not appeal to Jaspers as these aspects fogged the mind, obstructing clear and positive thought processes. Thus, Jaspers thinks that rationality and existence are complementary to one another. The fundamental aspect of his ideas is the freedom to lead one’s own life, once an individual is born, he has consistently to construct his being moment by moment and mould it by the values and principles which he deems fit.

The French philosopher, Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) sees the modern man as passing through a very critical phase of modern age. Though he is free, he fails to assert his freedom because of social, political, economical and religious entrapments. He is confused, agonized and depressed. The atheistic philosophers. Both Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre are atheistic philosophers and are led by Fredric Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) who is opposite of Kierkegaard and an atheist. Nietzsche refuses to justify moral and
religious values. Nietzsche is, therefore, dubbed as the exponent of the doctrine of nihilism. Through his idea of “superman”, he declares that for the modern man “‘God is dead’, such a God should be abandoned. Away with such God; Better to have no God, better to setup in one’s own account, better to be a fool, better to be God oneself” (292). He insists that man must exercise his ‘free choice’, his “Will” in creating values for his own evolution into a “superman”. To Nietzsche there is nothing ultimate value, since it is no longer important to believe whether God exists or not. He, however, uses the recognition of the unchristianity of contemporary christian society as a beginning of a long awaited liberation from the bindings of christian ethics. In short, Nietzsche rejected the ‘slave morality’ and values of Christianity.

Martin Heidegger’s (1899-1976) major work, *Being and Time* presents a thorough analysis of human existence and exerted a profound effect on the later existentialists. He depicts man in an agonizing situation where man’s perfection is mere illusion because care, anxiety, guilt, finitude and death shatter his dream of perfection and accomplishments. According to him there are fundamental characteristics of existence “Possibility”, “fatality” and “falseness”. These three characteristics of the being of man constitute ‘care’.

After Heidegger, the French intellectual, Jean Paul Sartre, the leading figure of the existential movement and considered to be the most popular and forceful exponent of the despair of the post-war generation of Europe. He is a novelist, playwright, and a philosopher who is the best known thinker of aesthetic existentialism. He portrayed man as a lonely being, burdened with
terrifying freedom to choose and create his own meaning in an apparently meaningless world, Sartre proclaims:

Atheistic existentialism of which I am representative, declares with greater consistency that if God doesn’t exist there is at least one being whose existence come before his essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man, or as Heidegger has it, the human reality (124).

Robert C. Solomon writes that the central tenet of Sarte’s existentialism is the freedom of human consciousness, freedom to act, freedom to value, and freedom to make itself. According to Sartre God is subjective, and is the creation of human mind. Men throughout the world have created God only for personal convenience. God can be exploited variously. Hence atheism is the right method to be pursued. Secondly, man is in a state of hopelessness. The world outside is hostile. Hence man has to look within himself and the world within provides no relief either. Pessimism, therefore, is man’s inevitable goal. Thirdly, humanism may be tried as a panacea of world’s ills. Humanism can alter the existing corrupt society, for man has infinite possibilities.

God, for Sartre is a useless and costly hypothesis. He has pinned his faith in the subjectivity of man. Instead of believing in God, it is wise to believe in truth, which is infinitely greater than a collection of fine theories. Sartre’s existentialism is the philosophy of resistance and liberation, liberation of man’s true self from everything false and mere tricious. Sartre maintains
that “existentialism is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a
doctrine also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an
environment and a human subjectivity” (Sartre trans. 24).

According to Sartre every individual has been born with his own right
and not to be a slave to another individual or even to the circumstances of life.
Morally he is bound to assert his will and not to be crushed like helpless
underdogs, mortally scared as freedom is his birthright. Further he thinks that
when man finds life meaningless, he is led to welcome death, believing that
men are born to die. Life has its own demands that call for positive attitudes
and pragmatic despite restrains and restrictions oddities and absurdities. Man
therefore, is supposed to pass through a painful ordeal of rebuilding or
rediscovering of the self crushed under the Sysiphian burden of
meaninglessness, directionless, faithlessness and godlessness. He rightly says
that “What man needs is to find himself again and realize that nothing can save
himself, not even a valid proof of the existence of God” (Sartre trans 38).

Albert Camus (1913-1960) a modern French existentialist is the
proponent of the widely known existentialism of the absurd. The horrors of the
twentieth century, which he calls “a century of fear”, shook him and developed
in him an antitheistic existentialist thinker. Throughout his works he expresses
a longing for better life and as a positive humanist he exhorts people to revolt
after being baffled by the buffets of the absurd in their life. His revolting hero
has to create personal values for himself “Meaning has to be created, not
found, and it has to be created by the individual out of the actual experience of
revolt” (Cruikshank 7). He finds man deprived of grace and justice and wants this revolt to restore man’s dignity and honor. In his writings, the rebel protests against the human condition in general, which means all sorts of evil. In his *The Myth of Sisyphus* he explicates that “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide, and the feeling of estrangement between a man and his life, which sometimes ends in suicide, is the most elementary way of experiencing the absurd” (46). He observes “No punishment is worse than a task that is useless and without hope, the absurd in human being is wedded to life is our rock” (164).

Camus, for example imagines man to be a reincarnation of the Greek legendary figure Sisyphus. For him in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusion and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable exile. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity.

Albert Camus finds the world mad and irrational. And yet unlike most existentialists he at times strikes a note of optimism. He believes in the liberation of self. He also believes in group action as the way to human emancipation. A man, however talented or resourceful, cannot hope to achieve victory, when pitted against a hostile world. The group of men will prove stronger than an individual. He always dealt with man’s position in society and his emotional and spiritual problems. For him life was an absurdity to which man had to respond with a powerful spirit and infinite zeal. So, to survive the negations, one must adopt the role of a rebel and face life courageously.
He thinks that every individual has been born with his own rights and not to a slave to another individual or even to the circumstances of life. Morally he is bound to assert his will not to be crushed like helpless underdogs, mortally scared as freedom is his birthright. In his novels he employes his existential ideas that establishing the relationship between existentialism and literature. He exhorts his protagonist to have faith, exerts his will and in this process of realization would down in him, which would transform and transcend his levels beyond his present condition. Despite burdens and absurdity of the situations, man should endeavor to master his fate. Man’s free will should be asserted even if it calls for revolution. He should burden all alone, thus has its own demands that call for positive attitudes and pragmatics despite restraints and restrictions, oddities and absurdities. Men therefore supposed to pass through a painful ordeal of rebuilding or rediscovering of the self crushed under the Sysephian burden of meaninglessness, godlessness, directionless, faithlessness and godlessness.

Existentialism is the belief that man forms his essence, his essential being, in the course and patterns the life he chooses to lead. As applied to literature, it emphasizes man’s responsibility for forming his own nature as well as his personal decisions, personal freedom, and personal goals. Man is entirely responsible for himself.

According to M.H. Abrams, the Theatre of the Absurd, expressionism, surrealism, and existentialism all imagine that the human condition is essentially and ineradicably absurd. These movements, very much allied,
emerged after World War II as a rebellion against the essential culture and traditional literature. Central to this earlier tradition had been the assumptions that man is a rational creature who lives in an at least partially intelligible universe, that he is a part of an orderly social structure, and that he is capable of heroism and dignity even in defeat. Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and a host of men of latters have come to recognize each man as an isolated being who is cast ignominiously into an alien universe, to conceive the universe as possessing no inherent human truth, value, or meaning, and to represent man’s life, as it moves from the nothingness whence it came towards the nothingness where it must end, as an existence which is both anguished and absurd.

L.T. Lemon in the modern time argues that the universe is meaningless, and that consequently all choice is without reason yet, paradoxically, that the individual is the product of the choices he makes. The theatre, fiction etc. of the absurd attempt to depict the universal meaningless posited by existentialism. It tends to discard analysis of motivation of characters and, as far as possible, all formal structures because both motivation and formal structure suggests order, and the suggestion of order in literature of the absurd would undermine it thematic premise.

Existentialism has influenced modern literature and as such this is the concern of the creative artists no less than that of the philosopher. The human existential condition is the perennial stuff of great literature. The basic existentialist categories as applicable to literature are contingencies, tragic necessity, unlimited freedom, loneliness and absurdity. To be alive is to be
active to exist we have to act. It is just another matter that the action may be
good or evil and through our action we can pave our way either for salvation or
damnation. The atheists take recourse to their capacity of unfitted choice which
motivates them to their final salvation in suicide which even Sartre took
recourse to.

The tag of existentialism has come into currency in the twentieth century
but the idea is as old as literature and philosophy. Traces of it have been found
not only in the Biblical writings but also in Indian philosophical systems. Joshi
believes Hinduism to be a “highly existentialist oriented philosophy, since it
attaches so much value to the right way to live (to exist)” (Dhawan 19). Since
existence is a point of view about life rather than about literature, it has not
particular style or literary form associated with it; hence it is really a
philosophical school which has conditioned some highly literary works rather
than a literary school.

After 1960 the Indian English fiction, similar to its Western counterpart,
shifted its focus from the public to the private sphere. The mass destruction in
the two World Wars was caused by nuclear weapons brought envy, unrest and
boredom all over the world. These absurd situations gave rise to psychological
disorders and loss of moral values in humanity and ultimately disturbed man’s
mental peace and harmony and brought discomfort, depression and frustration.
The world literature, pertaining to these ethoses, started to deal with the
different gloomy facets of modern society. The Indian novelists, however, they
were not exclusively concerned with the exploration and interpretation of a
social milieu and dealt with new subjects of human existence and man’s quest for self in all its complicated situations. This shift of focus in Indian English fiction becomes clearer particularly with Arun Joshi who explores the agonized existence of modern man in their writings.

II Influence of the Existential Philosophy on Arun Joshi

Arun Joshi’s fictional works are the products of the various influences upon his mind and art. He is influenced by the writer and philosophers from both East and West. There are a number of influences which have their profound impact on him and his sensibility. Among them the most dominant are the existential philosophy and Hindu scriptures like *The Bhagvatgita*, *The Upanishadas* and *The Vedanta*. Similarly he is influenced by the existentialist writers like Albert Camus, J.P. Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard, Kafka, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, Buber, Paul Tillich, Beckett, Saw Bellow and others. They provide Arun Joshi with a body of suggestions in terms of themes and techniques, but he has taken these influences on his own terms, and transmuting them into organic well-orchestrated novels with the imprint of his own individuality. In his interview with Purabi Bannerjee, Joshi, Confesses that “I read Camus and Sartre. I Like *The Plague* and read *The Outsider*. I might have been influenced by them. Sartre I did not understand or like. As for existential philosophers like Kierkegaard, I have never understood except old statement” (Bannerjee 4).

Like the works of modern existential thinkers, his novels express the absurdity of man’s existence in modern world but they assert their singularity in applying them in Indian context and deriving solutions from native milieu.
He has recorded modern man’s traumas and agonies in his novels with rare competence and gravity. His fictional world is revelation of a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. He writes about man’s inner problems as like rootlessness, restlessness, existential dilemma, search for meaning and crisis of identity in the present world.

Right from his first novel Joshi is deeply involved in the “Exploration of the mysterious underworld, which is the human soul, and its lonely journey through a world. Where it is necessarily a stranger, a foreigner” (Mathai 8). M.K. Naik regarding the roots of Joshi’s heroes writes that “Joshi is a novelist seriously interested in existential dilemmas and equally and acutely aware of both the problems of Post-Independence Indian society and the implications of the East-West encounter” (231). In his *Last Labyrinth* Joshi refers to Kierkegaard saying that “Prayer doesn’t change God, but changes him who pray” (180).

The influence of the existentialist authors and philosophers cannot however be denied. Hari Mohan Prasad has rightly pointed out that Joshi’s characters “embody the theme of anxiety of which the existential writers of the West, Kierkegaard, Marcel, Jaspers, Buber, Paul Tillich have given concepts” (112). Like existentialist writers and philosophers he is also aware of man’s feeling of anxiety and alienation. But his alienation is qualified by Indian philosophical optimism. Alienation and quest for identity of his heroes are not final; rather these are the steps in the quest for meaning in life.
There are a number of literary influences which have their profound impact on Arun Joshi and his sensibility. Besides the Western philosophical systems, he has a good grounding of the Indian philosophical systems of the ancient times and even Gandhism of the modern times. He has recorded modern man’s traumas and agonies in his novels with rare competence and gravity. His main thrust is on the individual psyche of the protagonist.

Though Joshi’s profession has been related to management and industrial relation, he had tremendous interest in literature. He was influenced by *The Bhagvadgita* and authors like Sartre, Camus, Freud, Wordsworth, Arnold, kafka, Saul Bellow, Elison, Malamud, Kierkgarrd, Joseph Conrad, John Updike, T.S. Eliot, and M.K. Gandhi.

The philosophy of attachment versus non-attachment of *The Bhagwatgita* can be observed in Joshi’s novels. In *The Foreigner*, Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist finds his roots or identity in the world. His alienation and crisis of his identity are concerned neither with geography nor with the roots, but it lies within him. Again it leads him from one crisis to another. Billy Biswas, the protagonist in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* escapes from the civilized, sophisticated, aristocratic life of Delhi and finds pleasure in the primitive tribal world.

We feel T.S. Eliot’s influence on Arun Joshi. Like Eliot’s J. Alfred Prufrock, Joshi’s Ratan Rathor continues his dramatic monologue commenting upon ‘time’, Joshi has quoted from Eliot’s “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufork”:

There will be time, there will be time,
To prepare a face to meet the faces,
That you meet (70).

The impact of existentialism on Arun Joshis is felt in all his novels from *The Foreigner* onwards to *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* have in them an undercurrent of the existential philosophy. *The Foreigner* is a study in alienation in the soul of Sindi Oberoi. The crisis of his identity is concerned neither with geography nor with the roots. It lies within him and leads him from one crisis to another. In it Joshi also explores some of man’s perennial qualities. The way out of these lies at last in the philosophy of attachment versus non-attachment borrowed from *The Bhagwadgita*.

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* explores the inner psyche of Billy who is not able to bear with the so-called civilized façade of modern life and as such he escapes into the unlimited freedom of choice that awaits him in the tribal world. *The Apprentice* is also an attack upon the post-Independence civilization with its scope for lying, hypocrisy, bribery, graft, drunkenness and womanizing. Ratan Rathor at last realizes all this and to purify his conscience he performs a very humble job of a shoe-shiner on the steps of a temple. In *The Last Labyrinth* the existential theme is that of the problem of life and death and God. Som Bhaskar is a multimillionaire at the age of twenty five; but from the obsessive quest of the labyrinths of Lal Haveli at Benaras he steps on for the quest of the last labyrinth which relates to the mysteries of life, death and God. One of the themes of *The City and the River* is related to how men in essence entirely free to choose, create by their choice the circumstances in which they
have to live. It also explores the relevance of God to man’s choices in which it is God and no one else who owns and governs the world.

III The World of Novels of Arun Joshi

Arun Joshi, deals with the various problems of modern Indian youth, which is altogether different from the themes of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Joshi tries his best to depict the mental crisis, identity problem, alienation, moral degradation, and impact of Western modernism on Indian people. He portrays the reality of modern urban educated man, who always pretends in every walk of life. Unlike Mulk Raj Anand’s themes of exploitation of the poor by the rich class; R.K. Narayan’s escape from hard realities of life and finding aesthetic pleasure in an imaginary town like Malgudi, Arun Joshi deals with complexities, rootlessness, crisis of consciousness and search for meaning of Post-Independence urban youth, who is deeply influenced by the Western ideas.

For Joshi, the fiction is neither a source of entertainment nor an instrument of publicizing some sets of ideas. Like Mulk Raj Anand, he neither use his genius for propagating any political or social creed, nor does he escape from the world of human struggle. He experiments with the medium of literature for studying man’s predicament, particularly in the light of motives responsible for his action and the reaction of his action on his psyche.

His fictional world is revelation of a world where man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. He deludes into the inner recesses of human psyche where he finds instincts and impulses at work; he seeks a
process of the apprehension of reality which may lead him to the world of care of the truth of man’s life. He realizes man’s uniqueness and loneliness in an indifferent and inscrutable universe.

He occupies a distinctive place in the post-colonial history of Indo-English novel. He writes about man’s inner problems than his outer problems as like rootlessness, restlessness, existential dilemma, crisis of identity in the present world. It is to be said that he is the child of modern world both in its national and international contexts. His novels have an outer world, no doubt; but are simply in the form of a background to his love for the inner world which is psychological.

Arun Joshi is a major contemporary Indian English novelist who has attempted to grapple with the predicament of modern man. His main thrust is on the individual psyche of the protagonist. His fictional world is the portrayal of crisis, dilemma in the mind of the modern man. His novels deal with the basic contradictions of Post-Independent Indian society, with its scientific and technological development, rapid growth of materialism, spiritual degradation and confusion of social values. He ruminates over the problems of Westernized Indians, who have lost spirituality, culture and self-identity. Post-Independence modern urban man suffered a lot due to various reasons. But mental suffering is more hurtful than physical and financial.

As a recognition of his works and contribution to Indo-English fiction, Arun Joshi was awarded by the prestigious Sahitya Acadami Award for his *The Last Labyrinth* published in 1981. Though, basically it is a love story, it
explores the young urban Indian, Som Bhaskar’s search for meaning in life. About his novels Sujata Mathai writes that “Right from his first novel Joshi is deeply involved in the exploration of the mysterious underworld, which is the human soul, and its lonely journey through a world where it is necessarily a stranger, a foreigner” (8).

Primarily he is concerned with man’s anguished efforts to find mooring for himself in the tumultuous sea of life. E.J. Kalinnikova rightly comments that “the essence of modernism in the Indian English novel manifests itself most distinctively in the existentialistic tred, to which, in the present time, the creative young Indian writers like Anita Desai and Arun Joshi can be referred” (174).

Arun Joshi mirrors an aspect of our self-accounting through his novels. 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. He modifies his mode of analysis from one novel to another. He is concerned more with the inner turmoil of soul rather than external setting. In an interview with Sujata Mathai he points out that his novels aim at exploring “that mysterious underworld which is the human soul” (Mathai 8).

Arun Joshi is a major contemporary intellectual novelist who has attempted to grapple with the predicament of modern man. His main thrust is on the individual psyche of the protagonist. He addresses himself to the very essence of being in a world that is confronted with spiritual vacuity and moral
bankruptcy. His novels express the anguish of sensitive individuals continually tortured by their spiritual uprootedness; clash and confusion of values generated by the sheerly materialistic, self-centred and corrupt society. He transcends the apparent and phenomenal world and enters into the mysterious depth of human existence. Almost all his novels deal with the issues of existential anguish, alienation and dispossession. His novels reveal a constant engagement with the factors that go into the making of modern mind and his unrest with various socio-cultural and political connotations.

He is mainly concerned with the dimensions of individual and social existence. His central focus is on the self who is lost in the labyrinth of industrialized and dehumanized society. Always he moves down into the psychic structure of self into soul. He enters into the mysterious depths of human existence by transcending obvious and phenomenal world. He reveals the reality beneath the external manifestations, a reality that governs human life and is essentially shapeless and ruthless in nature.

Post-Independence modern urban man suffered a lot due to various problems. But mental suffering is more dangerous than physical and financial. Edmund fuller admits that “Man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem… a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his way of existence” (Dhawan 43). Arjun Joshi very successfully revealed the subtleties and complexities of the modern urban man. Very powerfully he has delineated unfortunate consequences of the absence of values and faith in life. The awareness of man’s rootlessness and consequential
anxiety is the key-note of his unique vision of the plight of the modern man. About his themes C. Paul Verghese writes that he has “renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man and has engaged himself in a search for essence of human living” (124).

In the modern age man fails to perceive the very purpose of life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. The modern man finds himself participating in a ‘rat race’ and is estranged not only from his fellow men but also from his innermost nature, having nothing within or without him to fall back upon in moments of crisis. In the modern world knowledge accumulates and wisdom decays. The work of Arun Joshi reads like the spiritual odyssey of the twentieth century man who has lost his spiritual mornings. Despite some differences in their approach, all of Joshi’s heroes are “men engaged in the meaning of life” (Jain 14). He therefore has broken new ground in Indian English fiction. He delves deep into the dark interiors of the fragmented self and articulates its urges and inspiration with rare psychological insights. His experiments with this medium of literature for approaching and analyzing lonely questers, their alienation and dispossession. He turned his attentive vision towards the explication of reality that stands beyond the normal bounds of scientific reason.

His novels recreate the experiences of the Indian characters either abroad or in India. They have naturally in them terms of expressions typically Indian. Joshi also uses occasionally expressions that may be called Indianism.
His fictional technique is guided by several factors. It is not that he read theoretical books on the art of fictional technique adopted by the writers who influenced him. It cannot, however, be denied that he acquired the fictional technique from the study of his favorite authors. The most complicated things, which are hidden in the corner of mind, are expressed by him very lucidly.
Works Cited


