CHAPTER 4

EXISTENTIAL OUTLOOK

As T.S. Eliot points out there is void both in spiritual and moral sphere in modern man's life. He gropes in the dark to find the meaning for his life. It has become a general phenomenon to express self-pity and poignancy for the helplessness in life. It is apt to bring an analogy of the play 'Waiting for Godot' where the protagonists strive hard to find an answer for their existence.

In modern age, the most besetting problem that man faces today is the problem of meaninglessness. As Edmund fuller remarks, in our Age "man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but from inner problem meaninglessness in his way of existence". The problem of meaninglessness is so pervasive that it threatens to corrode every sphere of human life. Man fails to perceive the very purpose that it threatens to corrode every sphere of human life. It is quite challenging for him to have the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. The fast changing values, rapid modernization due to industrialization and urbanization make increasing and disturbing demands on the individual and contribute a sense of meaninglessness of life. The malaise of the contemporary man by what Murchland calls "The crisis of the present" "Everything conspires towards a philosophy of meaninglessness, boredom and the absurd".
The total failure on the part of modern man to assimilate life is apparent almost in the entire society. The existential encounter with nothingness and the tenuousness of human existence are prototypical of modern life. Man is shocked to see that he is no longer the master of his destiny. He comes to feel helpless in the fundamental sense that he cannot control what he is able to foresee.

Arun Joshi is a trial blazer in exposing bluntly and succinctly the sordid state of affairs affecting the psyche of the modern man. Arun Joshi’s first novel ‘The Foreigner’ deals with existential thinking. The hero of the novel Sindi Oberoi suffers from emotional problem seeking fulfilment in terms of human relations and existence in general. He says "Nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important".

Sindi considers himself as a non-entity. He even considers the world as absurd. Even the overpowering love for June fails to rid Sindi of his sadness and strangeness for his is the existential problem of having been born in an absurd world which makes life purposeless. He feels he "existed only for dying" and so far as he knew "every body else did the same thing, it was sad, nonetheless". His concept of reality does not fit in anywhere because it deviates from the natural law of everyday life. No emotional problems are more threatening today than the pervasive sense of meaninglessness. He says "All that I had thought was pleasurable had ended in pain and after all this I was as far from finding the purpose of my life. It all puzzled and I spent a whole year wandering through the maze of my existence looking for an answer” (T.P. p.144).
The novel 'The Foreigner' is about an individual's loneliness and feeling of anguish in the wake of his estrangement from his environment, tradition and from his true self. It is about the problems of involvement in and detachment from the world, about the paralysis of will and lack of courage to face oneself and the hazards of life, to make commitment and accept the responsibility of one's action. It depicts the suffering of an individual, who is cut off from a proper familial, social and cultural context and is lost in the intricate labyrinth of life, and his anguished quest for a way out. In short, the novel is about "How to be! Ach! How to be!" - the dilemma wonderfully articulated by Stein in Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim. Joshi is deeply influenced by the Bhagavad Gita in the formulation and the resolution of this problem, so much so that one may read the novel, not without justification, as an illustration of the Karmic principal propounded by Lord Krishna.

'The Foreigner' relates how Sindi (Surrinder) Oberoi, an immigrant Indian, suffers towards the discovery of the meaning and purpose of his life. On the face of it, Sindi's alienation from the world seems to be similar to the one that many existentialist heroes in the West suffer from. But a close examination of the novel reveals Sindi's obvious differences from them. Early in the narrative while watching a lone beauty in one of Khemka's giant parties, Sindi becomes aware of his own loneliness and feels: "Between her and me the chasm of a living world prevailed. I had a feeling that I was watching her from the edge of the world just were Death's kingdom began." (T.F. p.16) Death's Kingdom' is reminiscent of 'death's twilight kingdom' in T.S.Eliot's "The Hollow Men". Like Eliot's straw-men, he ekes out an existence which is no better than death-in-life.
Sindi's is a sick, almost morbid, vision which is littered with the images of death. These images are the 'objective correlative' of his death consciousness. It is no wonder, therefore, that a man like Khemka should find him living, but as bad as dead. Sindi's preoccupation with death is, in fact, the obverse of his fear of life, of the burden of living in a world that holds no meaning for him.

"Twenty-five years gone in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievement; a tiresome body that had to be fed four times a day, twenty-eight times a week. This was the sum of a life-time striving".

Life becomes a devitalized affair for him and he wanders aimlessly through the maze of his existence to find peace, identity and purpose. His is a journey without maps along the roads of life, its endless labyrinthine ways. But his tortuous peregrinations so far and his constant self-questioning have led him nowhere because his adventure are not guided by any sense of direction and principle of purpose his soul, gradually melt away at the lukewarm touch of his subterranean humanism and compassion that come to focus at his encounter with the appalling spectacle of the 'bundles of soggy humanity'.

The opportunity comes in the wake of a crisis in Khemka's business empire. Khemka is arrested by the police following an Income Tax raid in his office and is accused of swindling the Government and playing fraud with his accounts. At first, Sindi refuses to be dragged into the mess'. He turns down Sheila's proposal to shoulder the responsibility of the whole thing and go to prison instead of her father. Because he has learned that
one must accept the responsibility of one's action. Mr. Khemka had to suffer for his own actions. In the past I had tried to put the consequences of my actions on others, or presumed to take over their actions as my own. Both had boomeranged. In the end, both had done more harm than good" He now believes that individual actions have effects on oneself and an others so much so that one cannot go on leading an irresponsible existence for long. Sooner or later one has to face up to what one is. He tells Sheila, "Your father is a selfish old man and now the laws of existence are bringing his avarice home to him. Who are you or I to stand in the way? He must suffer if he wants to stop being a jackal and become humane" (T.F. p.154)

In his last frenzied denunciation of crooked Khemka who tries to devolve the responsibility of the fall of his empire on Sindi's tactlessness and turns him out of his house, he says, "But why? It was not my fault. I am not afraid of going to prison but this time it is your turn..... you can't get rid of your sins by just turning me out. They will stalk you from every street corner just as they have stalked me. We think we leave our actions behind, but the past is never dead" (T.F. p.60). This candid self revelation and this demonstration of his similarities and contrasts with Khemka are important as they highlight the significance of the Karmic principle of The Bhagavad Gita (no action of ours goes unrewarded or unpunished", we reap what we sow" in this novel.
They suggest the necessity of penance and suffering as the only means of coming out of life's intricate labyrinth where men are led by their foolishness, selfishness, ignorance and delusions. At the end, Sindi has atleast one consolation: while people like Khemka keep two books - one for their neighbours, the other for God' - he can atleast 'claim the uniqueness of having just one book'. He has been honest to himself and if his search for detachment was a self-deception, he himself suffered the most for it.

Sindi could not maintain his nonchalance for long. Khemka's arrest and Sindi's dismissal leave the employees derelict with the constant threat of liquidation hanging on them. Sindi's visit to Muthu's one-roomed house in the shabby, scurvy slum where Muthu lives amidst ineffable poverty and the 'accumulated despair of their weary lives' (T.F. p.226) with eleven members of his family including his tubercular wife, hits an emotional bull's eye in Sindi. Muthu, who believes in the law of Karma and never loses faith in life, requests Sindi to take over Khemka's office, arguing, "Sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved". Sindi realizes that for him, "detachment consisted in getting involved with the world".

Life appear absurd to Sindi because it holds no meaning and purpose for him. But the absurdity of life in his case is not based on any objective recognition of the "disproportion between (man's) intention and the reality he encounters. It is a reflection on the failure of Sindi's individual perception, his inability to see reality in its proper perspective. The absurdity of his life and the concomitant sense of alienation from it
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. Again, his detachment is not permanent. It is transitional
phase on the way to his self realization.

Sindi constantly suffers, like Billy Biswas and Som Bhaskar, from
a feeling of restlessness and of restlessness and of a faceless God. His
discussion with the Catholic priest in Scotland about religion, God and
mysticism, and his anguished question to the policeman in Delhi: "Have
you seen God? are proofs of his spiritual quest. He is constantly aware of
the unreality of the objects of sense and of the inexorable law of death that
levels everything. It explains, to some extent, his reluctance for
involvement. This awareness is made more painful by his perception of
reality beyond time and change, a reality characterized by wholeness,
stability and peace.

"The Foreigner" is a first - person narrative recounted in the form
of reminiscence. It is Sindi, the self-reflective protagonist, narrating his
own story. One is struck by the authorial silence and the poignant honesty
and sincerity with which the 'foreigner' relates his quest for the meaning
and purpose of his life.

"The Foreigner" presents a participant - narrator and his
emotionally charged personal confession. With a schism in his soul (the
schism accounting for the confessional), Sindi, the narrator recreates how
Sindi, the participant - protagonist, suffered in course of his excruciating
but productive encounter with life. The first-person point of view is split between an experiencing 'I' and a narrating 'I'. The difference between the two sometimes results in ironic narrative distance.

The novel 'The Foreigner' is in the form of a spiritual autobiography, recording the protagonist's anguished quest for self-recognition and self-knowledge. Inwardness characterizes this novel that traces the journey of the self through various stages towards a perception of itself. The centrality of Sindi's truth being subjective it can be best expressed through his own consciousness and in his own idiom. The correspondence between form and substance thus becomes perfect.

The novel begins in the manner of a crime thriller, the climactic moment being introduced first. Sindi identifies in a Boston morgue the dead body of Babu Rao Khemka, an engineering student, who had died in a car-wreck and gives the soul-searing news to June, Babu's enceinte wife. Then, like a camera, the narrative zooms to the recent incidents in Delhi. The narrative constantly moves between the recent past in Boston and the present in Delhi and this see-saw movement succeeds in maintaining the suspense.

An analysis of the character Sindi would reveal that he suffers from some complex. Sindi is against both eastern and western materialism. This novel reveals the contrasting worlds of America and India, the rich and the poor the innocent and the cunning, vividly and realistically. Talking to Sindi, Muthu says, "That is also a Karma. Men think it is their duty to create industry. Some think it is their duty to make money. One must do one's duty". Sindi wanders aimlessly and it appears as if it is a world which had lost God.
The theory of Hedonism finds a better expression in Sindi than other. In his eagerness to find out the meaning of life, Sindi lives "in a strange world of intense pleasure and almost equally intense pain. But he fails to make a satisfactory progress and as he himself tells us, his twenty-five years are "largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places". His position is of "the dull school boy who always gets stuck with the same unanswerable questions". He wants to conquer pain and death which wipes out everything learning only a big mocking zero. He compares his meaningless existence to that of "an idiot without a keeper".

Disillusioned by the artificialities in the society, Sindi is aping for strong cultural bondage. According to Sindi, all social parties conducted by the rich people are hoarse. They talk about money and how to make money—more of it everything appears to be meaningless to him. He always feels that he was watching the beauty of life from the edge of the world just where Death's kingdom began. Sindi is an escapist. He wants to escape from the thought of being responsible for Babu's death.

The depravity of the society torments Sindi. Sindhi feels ashamed of mankind because "we never did anything spectacular. We ate when we wanted to and made love when we felt like it. We lived like animals. We think we have conquered desire and the pain and we are pushed once again on the giant wheel going around, and round, waiting for a fall" (T.F. p.180).
It is quite clear that troubled people would indulge in mutual recrimination. Sindi says that Babu was naive and a snob and yet he was sensitive and affectionate. He had no wisdom to discriminate between pain and pleasure. For Sindi "nothing seems real" and "nothing seems very important" He also says "good things and bad things appear to be the same in the long run of existence".

Arun Joshi is critical of Indian concept of 'Quid Pro Quo' in marriage. Sheila was interested in Sindi. She supported him whenever her father criticised him. He also expected this support. But temptation for self pity is stronger than devil. Though Sindi was given a good post in the company a Khemka, he felt the pain like the pain if a dead albatross was hung around his neck (T.F. p.120). He wanted peace and courage to live without desire and attachment. He unconsciously follows Buddha's preaching that "desire is the root cause for all evils". He wanted to escape from pain - pain of life. All his activities in life, his love with women, holidays and travels, his tender love making all ended in emptiness.

The concept of life is not seriously viewed by Joshi's characters. Sindi considers that "Life is not a business account. Once your soul goes bankrupt, no amount of plundering can enrich it again. Life is very long once you are born, you spend the rest of your life away from your birth". He learnt the mystery of existence, when he saw nature's wonder, the sunrise in the river. His experience with Kathy and Anna taught Sindi to be detached from others. But June's death finally broke his attachment to himself.
The cultural explosion makes countries suffer from psychological inequalities. Like America even in India, Sindi could meet people with new varieties. They merely had different ways of squeezing happiness out of the mad world. Mr. Khemka had to suffer for his own actions of swindling the money without paying the income tax. Khemka argued that what he had done was correct because one could not run a business without doing these crimes. But Sindi warned Mr. Khemka that "we think we leave our actions behind, but the past is never dead. Time has a way of exacting its toll and the more you try to hold out, the heavier the toll is"

Darwin's theory of "Struggle for existence and survival of the fittest", is the avowed policy of Khemka. But Sindi criticised Mr. Khemka that the laws of existence bring his avarice home to him. He must suffer for he behaved like a jackal. For Sindi, in many ways the past had been a waste. But it had taught him lessons. He had started adult life as a confused adolescent, searching for wisdom and peace that comes with it. The journey of life had been long and tedious and still was not over. None knew what the problem of life was even if anyone knew the problem, nothing could be done to rectify it. For Sindi, sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved.

In trying to maintain his detachment, Sindi had left Boston and taken up a job in New York. As a typical existential development, when June broke the news to Sindi that she was with Babu's child and sought his help. But he could reach Boston only to be greeted with the news of her death in the course of an abortion. That was his 'absurd' fate. He
confirms to the copy book concept of Kirkegaard in existentialism that the purpose and direction of life are unknowable. It is significant that the lines of the juke-box song in the restaurant that touched his heart most. His migrating to India have a peculiarly existentialist appeal,

Sindi is tormented physical and mentally. He asks "who knows where. The road will lead? Only a fool can say (T.F. p.182). Thus we find in Sindi a quester after absurd wants, with a schism in his soul. He is in the agony of the battle raging in his soul between the good impulse of sympathy for Sheila and the rational anger at her father's dishonesty. He seeks direct encounter with the first-hand experience of life. He keeps on probing the mystery of life. The philosophy of detachment, desirelessness enable him to meet the strains and challenges of life.

There is perpetual quest in Sindi. It is true, as M.K.Naik comments, that Sindi's transformation from a detached person into a committed individual is "either adequately motivated nor prepared for earlier". We do not fail to notice that the seminal idea behind what happens in the novel is the burden of rootlessness. 'The Foreigner' is the study of innocence and experience and the freedom of choice in the existentialist sense of the term. Sindi says to Mr.Khemka,

"And the future? In an ultimate sense, I knew, it would be as meaningless as the past"
Similarly, Ratan Rathor, the protagonist in "The Apprentice", is the narrator who "must tell all. All or nothing what use is a confession if not total". He discloses in his long confession the secret of his clandestine existence. Rathor is both the hero as well as the anti-hero of the novel. Ratan Rathor expresses his feelings and confesses his wrong doings to an anonymous friend. Perhaps, the friend may be his own consciousness. He has many nostalgic incidents narrated in this novel. Ratan says,

"One thing I remember is a day when my mother was sick. It is like living with death"

"Ah, my friend it is not easy to see your father beaten. Now is the sound of clubs against human flesh a pleasant sound".

The memories of the past make Ratan very spirited. He also rememberers how his father has sacrificed his life for the sake of freedom and his friendship with Brigadier how he has spent time sitting up the hurdles and has drunk hot milk every night and has discussed life, war and death. He speaks about the meaningless and absurdities of life. The pranks of youth appear absurd. When one becomes matured. The realistic aspect of everyman is well brought out in the novel.

The attraction in the environment makes the youth fall from their stand. Youngman studying in college is obsessed by the thought of future. Ratan Rathor says "What clouded by horizon was the future, my friend, the unknown ominous future". He intends to make a mark. On the world, a mark as visible and striking as his father's. His mother vehemently
dissuades him from taking such a step. She advises him not to be fool himself because "Man without money was a man without worth. Many things were great in life, but the greatest of them all was money".

Falsities dominate Ratan's memories indelibly. He is but a victim of circumstances. Ratan strongly believes that humiliations and not the conquest that dominate our memories. He asks so many rhetorical questions to impress the readers the intensity of faithlessness.

"And what is more shattering than the breakdown of a faith?"

Like Hardy's Characters, Ratan faces many problems. There is nothing in the world as sad as the end of hope. He confesses many a time the true nature of him to his anonymous friend. He says that at the age of twenty one, he had become a hypocrite, a liar and a sham. He felt insecure and so he lied for numerous things like food, clothing and other entertainment. He has become a master faker within a span of six weeks. People say: "Let me fake for a day, a year to get things done. But it is foolish to believe this because life itself passes but faking does not stop" (T.A. p.24).

The urge to live abounds in Ratan Rathor speaks about instinct for survival. The mode of survival of a tiger is not the same as that of a dog or a mouse. Some survive through defiance, some other through ability and still others through obedience, by becoming servants to the power of the world. Obedience and loyalty, he says was so effortless and natural. But in contradiction he has done wrong things behind their backs but never in the open. This shows that he is a perfect hypocrite.
Ratan takes the maxim "Character is destiny" in its true form. Such a hypocrite, views that our character is our fate. His humbleness to boss is bullied by his colleagues. He is very much astonished to see the ways of world. People who get scoldings before a full hall, laugh the next minute without the sense of shame, self-respect and a sense of responsibility. Ratan is mortally afraid of being rebuked. All for this single magic word "Career"

The attraction that a job brings in man is manyfold. At the same time, career has exploited many people. They were being made use for the promotion of some senior officers. This 'Career' and the boss is good impression on him made him dream a flowery life for him. His father had once said that the pursuit of careers is a bourgeois filth. Now he remembers these words because there have been moments in his life when he saw nothing but bare reality of life. No one can get away from this filth because everyone has become thick-skinned to continue our existing career for we have to live, we have to make a living.

Ratan is by his friend Sheik "darkness reveals all, darkness of night or of death" Implicitly it describes that a man's nature whether he in good or bad, loyal or betrayer, generous or miser is revealed only after his death. People speak the truth only in the death of a man.

Ratan thinks of the past revolutionary processions often and the procession particularly after the war celebrates the anniversary of our victory - Here victory is ironical "We are defeated and we celebrate victory we sink and we think we are swimming"
"That day I saw those boys in saffron and I was more to tears. Today too, when I see these young faces led like cattle I feel, in fact like weeping. That is the truth. Those boys in saffron would have lost their lives. Half-a-dozen such processions and these would lose their souls. Not much remains in a nation whose youth has lost its soul" (T.A. p.170).

Joshi takes into consideration the various contemplation of values. There are so many 'isms' like marxism, nazism. But the struggle is not between 'isms' but between what is true and what are lies. In the end, lies would always win and his remark is too cynical and not sophisticated. Ratan has become more corruptive. Ratan is a constituent of microcosm. There is a great darkness that envelops the character of Ratan. He is not able to distinguish what is truth and what is a conceit. His life had been reduced to discontent. These created a perpetual disturbance the nagging feeling in him and the essential substance has been robbed. He asks, "What was right? what was wrong? where were the dividing line between success and failure loyalty and betrayal, love and hate?"

Sometimes, a feeling of stoicism propels Ratan. Ratan also feels that he is immune to defeat and humiliation. He thinks he can put up the difficulties easily and ward off discouraging factors.

Ratan is mistaken in his perception of life. He feels more insecure. The more he earns, the more dissatisfied he is. He has a strange fear of death which haunts him all the time. He feels restless. When the Brigadier was on the brink of madness in a military hospital, Ratan felt that some priceless essence that he had known and recognized for forty years had vanished. He came to understand that "Great friends were usually the most harmful".
According to Ratan Rathor, people are capable only of 'sentiment'. He says 'we know but what we do with "what we know"'. City life is meant for the purpose of earning something on the lines of commerce and bargains with truth. Above all, it is a striking bargain with life. He thinks that sacrificing one's life would not change the ways of the world. He realises that "The death of my father had meant only one thing to me: That it was stupid to get killed like that. Stupid and meaningless"

His friend Himmat Singh explains Rathor that the country has two kinds of people the rulers and the ruled. The rulers are frauds and know how to make speeches and be cruel. The ruled were brainless. Blackmarketing, hoarding and prostitution were done during war time, exploiting the needy people. They amassed money using the best opportunity "Nobody lost the war these days". The M.P said, "There were always compromises. The states or nations settle on a formula "An Honourable Formula". An M.P, a person expected to be of a greater concern, a trustee of the Republic expresses a sense of disaster. These are the vulgar sides of life.

The theme of reciprocity works in the life of many individuals. When Ratan saw the Brigadier he felt hopeless as though his life had sprung a leak. He could see the disaster far surpassing the general fear of war. War has caused many disasters. Mothers lost their sons, wives lost their husbands, daughters and sons lost their fathers, the nameless multitude for whom the war has not ended. Their existence on love, honour, on life itself is hung by a single thread that might any moment snap. Their access to life is conditioned not only by the whims and follies of the men who ruled them.
Joshi makes a dig at the politics and politicians. Ratan comments the people who sacrifice their life for the rule as "ignorant anonymous men". Whenever he speaks of war, hopelessness, humiliation and frustration are expressed with mental agony. He explains this through the 'Dark Sky' or 'Sleepless Nights'. The military hospital shows the damages caused by war. War had made the world stand still, silent and condemned. He could not sleep that night after seeing the havoc and disaster of war.

Even the army which is supposed to be above board, is not spared by Joshi. The Brigadier who was admitted in the military hospital, was in the state of shock because of war and his defeat in the war. Ratan is expecting the Republic Day Parade the next day. He has a secret in his mind, a secret darker than the darkness of the night. He spends many sleepless night because of his mental torture.

"But night has an authority of its own, an alchemy for distilling facts and memories until they cannot be endured... my mind is foggier than a kettle full of steam"

Even in the matter of religion, there is some compromise. According to Ratan, praying God is a bargain, such a sceptic prayed for sometime for his friend's cure. Another shock came to him when he was asked to meet superintendent of police. He went to the police station. He described the police station as "In a dingy hall, smelling of bats, strewn with tables, "he sat along with pimps, prostitutes, burglars, pick pockets and murderers. On the inside of the young murderer's left arm the word "OM" was tattooed in dark purple. The word "OM" has no significance to him. It reminded him of all the lost youth of the world including Ratan's himself.
A resolution is set in Ratan. At first, Ratan is mentally resolved to save his friend, the Brigadier. He writes his confession, but modifies it instantly and tries to justify his act. Finally, he pockets the confession letter for ever. Now his main concern is how to get out of the mess he has made. Ratan was released by the pressure given by the secretary of his Department and the Minister. Ratan later found that these persons at the highest level were the agents behind this bribery and he was simply a tool. The Brigadier could not wait for his confession and killed himself. Ratan realises that there is no end to human vanity. He also realizes that his life has been a great waste. He is not sure what exactly corrupted the society. He wants to set right the corrupted society but doesn’t know the way to clear the corruptive society.

The remedy is more than the disease. It is true with Ratan Rathor that he is shaken out of his moral inertia only by seeing the faceless head of the dead Brigadier. He feels that he is caught in the web of utter confusion. He was put in prison for releasing the defective war materials and accepted bribe. He felt that humiliation before his wife and daughter, especially before his daughter is the worst. It is as though it were humiliation not before one person but in the eyes of an entire sex; an entire generation. He was filled with shame. But he saw people in all walks of life doing crimes and accepting bribes. Ratan adds,
"And this, I knew was merely the tip of the glacier, Beneath the placid waters of society floated the rest of the great mass. Men took the bribes to facilitate the seduction of their wives, women for seduction of other women. All this I knew and had known for 20 years.

As Milton says happiness does not come through money and comforts but through right attitude. Ratan was restless, desperate and spent his life in panic and boredom yet he dropped to get comfort with money and power. He later felt that it is absurdity of life and materialistic craze of society. He was very much afraid of his guilt - afraid to confess his guilt. The fevered thoughts of confession ravaged him. He asks himself,

"And out of this turmoil, a simple, mischievous question arose, why should I confess?

Though he knew that his confession would save his best friend the Brigadier he was not ready to risk his honour, respect and life.

"This city is defeated, finished ..... what has happened has happened. What good is it now to whimper, to confess ?

Ratan feels that so many flats, glossy houses and even the temples cropped us because of the bribe given to municipality or government authorities. Even the temple mints money and makes heavy profits. In temple, the ladies are sleepless and are afraid stared at Krishna "who took from age after age when truth was threatened and evil prospered."
No one is free from darker side of life. Even the pujari, a dutiful religious man wanted to give bribe to save his eldest son, a contractor. He was a hypocrite. The pujari asked "Did it matter if some roofs had collapsed?" (T.A. p.119). People pretend and are very materialistic. But death is real. After seeing the Brigadier's dead body he felt that "a multitude crawling amidst filth, conscious of neither the need for succour nor of how it was to be obtained .... generation of cowards" (T.A. p.170).

Ratan is shaken by fear psychosis. Fear makes Ratan mad. As night advances, he becomes more nervous and frustrated. "There is no fear like the fear of madness" The soldiers who have to protect the country had failed in war and fled leaving their armour and their honour behind. The youth is of no avail against the treacheries of older men. Youth can conquer all but not the mischief of older man "Shame, Shame, Nothing But Shame" (T.A. p.186).

An awakening is struck Ratan. Suddenly he became more self-righteous and wanted to avenge Himmat Singh who was responsible for his guilt of corruption and death of his friend the Brigadier. He felt in rage that he was betrayed. He said, "It is always other people's betrayal that mess up things for us, never what we do"

Himmat Singh criticised Ratan as hypocrite, a bogus from top to bottom. Himmat says, "your work, your religion, your friendships, your honour, nothing but a pile of dung"
The miscalculation always leads Ratan into trouble. People always plan but never do, they are like travellers who always got only the wrong trains without any intention of a catching the right one. Ratan wants to kill Sheik as he thought "Revenge is a wild kind of justice". But Sheik had another heart attack. He died. Ratan thinks about his life twenty years earlier and process to make his mark. He has come to this city with full of hope, ambitions, goodwill, but all that was left was a pile of dung. He has lived only in Smog, confused, exploited and deceived, deceived beyond his imagination. Ratan pitifully remarks,

"A pile of dung - twenty years and nothing gained. An empty life time a great mistake, without purpose, without results ... the sorrow of a wasted life... My life had been a great, great waste" (T.A. p.195).

The fatalistic attitude as possessed by Hardy's characters could be discerned in the characters of Arun Joshi. Life is filled with absurdity. To know good and to know evil and to choose evil is the betrayal of the spirit. Some are born in filth and grown in filth. God alone could remove his darkness.

Ratan said, "My soul was killed but souls that were pawned could perhaps be retrieved" Sheik said, "May be souls are like muscles, Ratan Rathor, may be to develop them one has first to put them to use".

Joshi makes a categorical assessment of people in general. Doctors, politicians, teachers, businessmen, artists, before they lost honour they lost utility. When we are happy with ourselves we are "in advance of our
times, pioneers of the age. When not pleased, we are men of our times as though a criminal. Life might well be a zero, it becomes negative when we take out of it our sense of shame, our honour".

A sense of remorse takes Ratan to understand purity. When Ratan goes to temple, he tells himself. Be good, be decent, be of use. He begs forgiveness from the large hosts of his father, mother, Brigadier unknown dead of the war, of all those who are the victims of his cleverness. One must not lose heart or yield at any cost to despair. One should do what one could do as best without vanity, expectation and also without cunning and cleverness.

Ratan's attempts to get salvation for his acts of omission and commission. They never find in an easy answer. He wipes shoes at temple. It is humiliating at times to do such work but apprentices need to put in their place. The temples look deserted - frozen, petrified like our civilization. it is a pity that good is thrown away with rubbish.

Joshi brings out a fact that life is full of compromises and conveniences. In the process of these strange bargains with the world, Ratan becomes a hypocrite. His conscience degenerates totally and suffers a "crisis of character". He leads a frustrated and exhausted family life. Ratan realises that his life has been a great waste. He has lost his self and felt and anguish of loss. His existential decision to recover the lost self through an act of penitence reveals the need to realize and prize one's integrity.
The material accumulation dwindles the individual honour. The strange case of Billy Biswas is about a mystical urge which makes Billy go away from the so called civilized world of greed, avarice, riches and hypocrisy. Billy, who is an engineer and an anthropologist and comes of a high family. He is suddenly seized of a phantom from deep within himself. "A great force, unkraft, a primitive force makes him anxious to leave the society and lead a primitive life. He feels within the primitive riches and pleasures of life. So he disappears in the Saal forests.

But it is relative question of how people lead their lives. The environment does not matter much, but it is their attitude. The reason why Billy liked living with the foresters was that "nobody was interested in the prices of food grains or new seeds or roads or elections and hypocrisy. Billy had gone there in search "of my identity. who was I? where had I come from?". On meeting Bilasia he has suddenly discovered that bit of himself that he has searched for all his life and without which his life is nothing more than a poor reflection of a million others"

Driven by an urge to find new experience Billy joins the tribal people. He was happy living with the tribals who lived closer to the elements and ways of nature, responding their senses to the living presence of the spirit pervading existence and universe. Thus in the character of Billy, Arun Joshi opens a new vista of Mathew Arnold's Scholar Gypsy and the Lawrentian search for the essence of life. We could feel the strangeness of Billy's character and restlessness of his soul among the people of the civilized world. Billy's restless soul escapes from the
civilization to the jungle. He forsakes meaningless existence in the civilized world. He rejects the artificiality, hollowness and snobbery of the sophisticated people. He finds his fulfilment and the essence of human existence in the primitive tribal life. He likes living with the foresters because they are not materialistic so he hears the voice of his soul and renounces the materialistic society.

Joshi indicts the social irresponsibility indirectly. Condemning the civilized society, Billy writes to Tuula in one of his letters, "I sometimes wonder whether civilization is anything more than the making and spending of money. What else does the civilized man do?"

Billy’s preference to jungles is to avoid the tainted people in the civilized clout. Billy had always felt drawn towards tribal life which he thought held the answer to his quest for the purpose of his life. Even as a boy, he became deeply concerned about the problem of his identity. He said to himself then "Something has gone wrong with my life. This is where I belong. This is what I have always dreamt of".

It is his endless pursuit that Billy is in search of human world of emotional fullness - a world of meaningful relatedness. He is aware of the deeper layers of his personality. "No other man" than him, we are told "... so desperately pursued the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end. Renouncing his past, his family and the everyday world, the rich, sophisticated and the U.S. educated Billy goes in search of the meaning of life. His departure to Saal is an arduous quest for something beyond himself. It is not an escape from life and its realities but an escape into
'real' life far from maddening crowd and the meaningless existence in the civilized world. It is in the primitive tribal life that he finds his own fulfilment and the essence of human existence.

Billy does not find meaning of life in white America or in the upper class Indian Society. He is terribly unhappy. When he finds himself "tied up in a knot by a shifting system of expectations" of this mundane world.

A total transformation takes place in Billy Biswas. Billy is thus "a refugee from civilization". the tenacity with which he pursues his quest in "an incoherent and meaningless world" is really astounding. He remembers that all his life he had been confusedly driving towards his real self.

There is a comparison. Joshi's novel reminds us of D.H.Lawrence's, "The Woman Who Rode Away". It has been remarked that Billy's strange case represents the "Universal myth of the primitive in the heart of man ever alienating him from the superficial and polished banalities of modern civilization". That the theme of the novel is nothing less than the search for meaning in life.

It may not be easier for Billy in his search for meaning which is pursued in a very hostile atmosphere and he has to pay a heavy price for it. The sophisticated society, in its "middle - class mediocrity", makes it a point to bracket men like him with "irresponsible fools and common criminals" and does all to prevent them from seeking such meager fulfilment of their destiny as their tortured lives allowed.
One could understand Billy's inner turmoil. Billy testifies, if one is able to establish a rapport with the primitive forces in the world of nature, one can get rid of all problems of life. He might be taken to represent the soul which by its mere presence excites matter and illumines the processes of the evolution of the universe.

Billy continued his quest, "that other thing was, and is, after all, what my life is all about"

Billy, as we know, is "seeking something else" than merely a tribal way of living; it is "the search for truth" and life's meaningfulness when he comes into harmonious contact with Bilasia and her tribal world, he realizes the very essence of life and begins to behave "like rain on parched lands, like balm on a wound". This is a difficult way of solving the riddle of life, suggested by the oldest system of Indian philosophy. To quote H.Oldenberg, "The soul abides eternally released from delusion and suffering of this world, as a seer who no longer sees anything, a glass in which nothing is any longer reflected, a pure untroubled light by which nothing is illuminated".

It is quite imperative to know from Joshi's novels, that what is needed is a flightless soul’. Joshi's vision is coloured by a certain love of primitivism as against society. he is against careers and collective men. He wants acculturation of modern man. He is specially disillusioned over the post freedom trends of degeneration in India. But the human need to live is more profound in him than death. Shamming, hypocrisy and cowardice are condemned as the worst of evils.
Sindi, like Arjuna, searches for perfection and peace in life. But his whole consciousness is clouded and his mind is confused and restless. His convictions in life are unsettled. The problems of life touch him with pain. He seeks refuge in non-involvement and inaction which he misconstrues for freedom. But his detachment becomes a delusion as he cannot free himself from self-engrossment and selfish desires.

Renunciation in its true sense refers not to the act itself but to the frame of mind behind the act. It refers to the absence of desire. The Gita says "Not by abstention from work does a man attain freedom from action; nor by mere renunciation does he attain to his perfection." And he who restrains his organs of actions but continues in his mind to brood over the objects of sense, whose nature is defended is said to be a hypocrite.

A truly detached person treats equally pleasure and pain, victory and defeat, loss and gain. He puts away all the desires of his mind and is ingenuine detachment are absent in Sindi. His reluctance for involvement is, thus, not the outcome of any spiritual development. It is the product of ignorance and selfishness. Sindi's revelation is partial; he gains half or incomplete knowledge. He himself realizes this when, after June's death, he sits on a river bank and ruminates. "It reminded me of the morning I had sat on the rock overlooking the valley and experienced my first insight into the mystery of existence. But what was only half the lesson".

Unable to bear pain and accept the consequences of his action, Sindi takes refuge under the protective armour of detachment. He is spiritually detached from the world, but awesomely engrossed with himself. It is this
ego-centricity and bewildering confusion in his approach to life that result in his suffering and his failure to relate himself meaningfully to the world. Sindi's detachment is a mask which he, like Pirandello's characters, invents conveniently and as a matter of necessity to avoid reality and its ineluctable problems. In order to evade reality, which is "vague, indefinite, insubstantial.... a labyrinth where the soul wanders through countless conflicting images without finding a way out. Bhaskar, a modern anti-hero, afflicted and unbalanced, groping for a remedy for his soul-sickness. He views his predicament not so much with anger as with deep internal pain.

His anguish springs not from the chaos of the world outside but from the chaos within himself. Some relates his story after the fact, recording it is his minute-book as a kind of therapeutic process during his convalescence after a near fatal heart attack. He spends nights of insomnia, with his wife sleeping by his side and gets into arguments "with the living and with the dead, with (himselv)". He fools around in his minute-book 'like a clown performing before a looking glass' and is consumed by hunger of the body and hunger of the spirit. If he possessed the inner poise of the spirit like his wife and had faith, he could derive consolation from his prayer.

At the end, Sindi, who for the first time in his life concentrates on a decisive action. He feels, "The fruit of it was really not my concern". Sindi turns to his duty not with a selfish mind but with self-knowledge. His illusions are shattered, his doubts are resolved. He gives up all pretences and evasions and commits himself wholeheartedly 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 risk above himself for the sake of others.

This self-transcendence is rendered possible in terms of the tradition of his ancestors, a tradition that recognizes the problems which man in his ignorant pursuit of worldly pleasures encounters, and suggests acceptable solutions. With the reorientation of his life, Sindi even changes his name; instead, he surrendered his will to the will of God and learnt to work for the larger interest of the people. He has ‘obeyed’ the call of his soul. The novel ends with Sindi settling down to life and with a vague suggestion of a new relationship between Sindi and Sheila who have discovered each other amidst suffering: "I too smiled, Sindi says, "amused by the random absurdity of it all" The ‘random absurdity’ of life, which has caused intense suffering to him, now becomes a source of amusement. Like a truly detached person, he now sees life steadily and as a whole and smiles at its absurdity. Ripeness really is all.

One must admit, however, the Sindi’s transformation comes a bit hastily and that the plausibility of Sindi’s action when he takes over Khemka’s office and performs the almost impossible task of steering it, like a derelict ship, out of danger, may be questioned. But it is difficult to agree to M.K Naik’s contention that the transformation is ‘neither adequately motivated nor prepared for earlier’ which makes the ending appear to be botched up’ indeed, been prepared for this transformation.
His realization of the fallacy of his concept of detachment consequent upon the tragedy it has caused together with his latent substratum of human consideration for others, which is ignited by his first-hand experience of human suffering in Delhi, lead to this sort of conversion. This is the only commitment he can make; this is how he finds his identify as a creative and responsible individual. It is in consonance with the imaginative logic of the novel.

The strange case does no merely record an existential protest against the superficialities of a grossly materialistic civilization and a romantic nostalgia for the simple mode of life of a primitive society. It is a study in the total estrangement of its protagonist, Billy Biswas, from the upper crust of Indian Society with its material concerns, spiritual shallowness and blind imitation of Western culture in utter defiance of its traditional values and beliefs.

Joshi uses Billy's strong primitive urge his 'unkraft' as it is called in the book - to look critically at the inner decay and sterility of this society. The tribal life of Maikala Hills in Central India becomes a concretization of this world-view and Billy's return from white America to India and his ultimate rejection of the post-independence, pseudo-western values of his Delhi society to join the primitives and accept their life, thus, turn out to be a symbol of Billy's quest for self-realization and for his identity. The story mediates between New Delhi and Maikala Hills, between two distinctly identifiable cultures that these two geographical locations embody. The juxtaposition, and also the conflict, of these two
cultures reveal the spiritual uprootedness of the Indian upper crust and the utter falsehood of its superficial glamour and refinement. The novel does not enact any idyllic confrontation between the primitive and the civilized in some no-man's land of values.

It brings into focus the spiritual decay of the Westernized Indian society and lives through - in the person of Billy Biswas - a rare spiritual rejuvenation. Each fictional device in the book-plot, characterization, setting - dramatizes this central contradiction between spiritual uprootedness and spiritual reawakening that burned his hero. He believes, like his creator, that 'Life's meanings lies not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in those dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish forever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun. It is his deep concern for his soul that prompted Billy to abandon himself so recklessly to its call and desperately pursue "the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end".

At the time of his meeting with Romi, Billy is halfway through his Ph.D in anthropology, although his father, who had once been the Indian Ambassador to a European country and is at present a judge of India's Supreme Court, thinks that his son is doing engineering. Billy himself explains his fascination for anthropology. He says, "All I want to do in life is to visit the places they describe, meet the people who live there, find out... the aboriginalness of the world" (T.S.C.B.B. p.19). Even a casual glance at his library evinces not only the 'staggering range of his knowledge' but also his 'passionate involvement with his subject'. It reveals his passion to penetrate deep into human life, not just the surface reality. At the same time, it clearly shows his deep love for the primitive
men and their life, for bizarre happenings and places. It gradually dawns on Romi that it was around his interest in the primitive man that his entire life had been organized.

Throughout the first section, Joshi suggests Billy's rich inner world and his concern with the secrets of life which lie under the veneer of civilization. Billy is aware of a reality other than the tangible one and he has occasional glimpses of the other side of life. His experience in the mental hospital in America where he works for some time and his arguments with his Justice father about the Krishna murder case (in which a petty government clerk, having received a message from a goddess in a dream, sacrificed a child to cure his dying son) unmistakably prove his perception of other world and of the inadequacy of ordinary human laws to judge men like himself who act under extraordinary circumstances. He tells his father "there are worlds at the periphery of this one, above it and below it, and around it, of which we know nothing until we are in them.... Something happens, something strange and sudden like the clerk's dream or something very gradual, and you are catapulted into them" (T.S.C.B.B. p.75).

The strange case is, similarly a critique of the upper-class Indian society. It is a therapy for the loss of traditional values in the wake of the rapid westernization of life in India. Primitivism - more specifically, literary primitivism - which is born of an anguished awareness of the artificiality and dehumanizing sophistication of life and of the misgivings about the values of civilization, has long been used by writers as a critique of civilized society and as a justification for a rebellion against it.
Billy feels like a fish out of water in the westernized Delhi society and among its members, because 'beneath the shared facade of society, there was little contact between his world and theirs. Inspite of this sense of estrangement from the lack of meaningful communication with the society, Billy decides to marry in order to settle down in life and get rid of his obsession. He feels, erroneously though, that his marriage will enable him to put a check on his 'runaway imagination'. He joins Delhi University as a teacher of Anthropology and marries in a hurry, because his strange hallucinations and constant awareness of the meaninglessness of life leave him depressed and he has grown terribly afraid of 'some part' of him.

He feels that something terrible may happen unless he does something drastic and his marriage is like 'taking out an insurance on (his) normalcy. But soon after marriage, he realizes that he has committed a blunder. His wife Meena's concern about money, lack of empathy and of a 'sufficient idea of human suffering' lead to a marital fiasco. There is absolutely no communication between the husband and the wife and their conjugal life turns into the 'most precarious of battle-fields'. Billy starts getting estranged from his family with every passing day. Inspite of a certain apprehension for her husband, Meena never attempts to understand him and know what troubles him inwardly. As she herself acknowledges to Romi, 'Perhaps I just don't understand him as a wife should'.

This failure to establish meaningful contact with his wife and with the society she represents only enhances Billy's inner restlessness and his sense of isolation. His outward appearance also undergoes a thorough change. His 'inhumanly sharp eyes' wear a tortured and haggard
expression and betray 'emotions that one tends to associate with a great predicament'. He turns introvert and lackadaisical. To Romi who meets Billy after a year of his marriage, the change seems astonishing. "Gone was the staggering intelligence, the spectroscopic interests, the sense of humour .... the Billy Biswas I had known was finished, snuffed out like a candle left in the rain" (T.S.C.B.B. p.84).

The insensitive and corrupt society with its artificially and phoniness seems to smother Bill's sensibility and claw him apart. He feels himself pinned down there, like a dead butterfly' and his sense of disgust at the civilized society finds expression not only in such Hamlet-like outburst "Oh, how dreary, how dreary" but also in occasional incidents of violence. He begins to lose his grip on life and experiences a blurring of reality. Thus even before his physical disappearance, Billy ceases to belong to the civilized world. He is estranged not only from his society and his family but also from his true self, as is evident from his seduction of Rima Kaul. The brief but shameful affair with Romi lays bare his fraudulent nature and offers him the first glimpse of his degradation.

The more Billy delays to answer the call of his inner voice, the more restless he becomes until it dawns on him that a great corrupting force is working on him. He adds 'It was as though my soul were taking revenge on me for having denied it for so long that other thing that it had been clamouring for'. The shocking realization of his own corruption accelerates his flight from civilization. In order to forget himself and the agony of life, Billy takes to anthropological expeditions to various parts of India with his students. During one such expedition he disappears into the wild and dark terrains of Maikala Hills in Central India.
In will be instructive to examine what Billy's flight from the surface for the civilized society really means. It is not civilization as such that Billy rejects, but the upper-class Indian society which is a replica of the depraved and spiritually sterile society in the West with its straitening of human life that an exclusive preoccupation with its external conditions promotes. In reply to a question whether Billy's exit implies a total rejection of modernity and all that it involves, Joshi remarks, "Tribals are very civilized according to mine and Billy Biswas's understanding." 4

Meaninglessness and triviality of life in the sophisticated society, which fail to sustain him and fulfil his primitive urge, for a meaningful life, for the realization of his identity and for integration with the organic and vital forces of nature that will heal his truncated self and lead him to a higher and intenser plane of experience. It is for him a movement from his feeling of alienation from civilized society to a sense of communion with primitive life starts. It is difficult, therefore, to accept the remark of R.K.Bhawan that "Billy renounces a life of hypocrisy and deceit to take to a life of noble savageness". 5

Sheila, Babu's sister, is perhaps an exception to him. Sympathetic and humane, she is the only person who tries to understand him and keenly looks forward to his visits to their house. A feeling of tenderness grows between them and they begin to like each other. She pesters Sindi with questions about her brother's death. The questions make him terribly afraid. He says, "It was nothing physical. They couldn't put me in prison. I feared something much worse - the abominable hands groping and probing into my own soul, ripping dry scars open and dipping into old
wounds" (T.S.C.B.B. p.112). But he has learnt enough from his painful tryst with life to be completely shaken by the past. He is undisturbed by tragedy and death which 'would outlast (him), carrying on its subtle music long after this crowd was put to the grave'. He has realized that life flows through love, sympathy, hope and compassion. The paradox is the truth.

It is significant, therefore, that at this turning point of his life he should see the bronze figure of the dancing Shiva in Khemka's drawing room: "For a moment, just one brief moment, I was struck by the intense beauty of the divine dancer. America, India, Egypt, all mingled behind him in aeons of increasing rhythm. The dance went on unheeding, and yet comprehending all. What did it matter if Babu was dead, and I living merely to keep up appearances" (T.S.C.B.B. p.116). The archetypal image of the dancing Shiva, which is a product of Sindi's racial unconscious, is a symbol of this paradox. With the expansion of his vision, levels of his consciousness unfold in which millenniums dwindle to moments. The sorrow the delights, the possessions and bereavements of the ego dissolve into unreality. All that have appeared important to him only the moment before, are now viewed by him as no more than a fleeting illusion. The transformation is effected by a shift in Sindi's point of view. His mind is now hard set to re-orient itself.

Bilasia was, as if, his missing self and the union with her made him whole. This is somewhat analogous to the Lawrentian concept of achieving the wholeness of the personality through the physical union of man and woman or the Jungian idea of the integration of split or missing selves.
through the idealized union of 'anima' and 'animus.' But Joshi is, perhaps, suggesting the union of the male and the female (the masculine and the feminine principles) in the ultimate embodiment of the human spirit as laid down in the Sankhya system of Indian philosophy.

The validity of such an interpretation is provided by the fact that in "The Last Labyrinth", too, Joshi alludes to a similar concept while describing the relationship between Som Bhaskar and Anuradha. Bilasia, like Anuradha, symbolizes the life spirit in woman (Gargi, the deaf-mute god-woman refers to Anuradha as Som's 'Shakti'). She represents the feminine principle of the Sankhya system which postulates two ultimate realities-Purusha (Self) and Prakriti (Primordial Nature) and the manifestation and evolution of the human spirit in the union of the two. As ladylove, she plays a momentous role in Billy's life by helping him to know himself.

Describing his meeting with her, Romi writes: "What was Bilasia? What is the playful effervescence of a mountain stream? What is sunlight filtering through a glade? What is the thunder of a volcano or the hardness of granite?... I had the distinct, if somewhat confused, feeling that I was facing not merely a human being but also the embodiment of that primal and invulnerable force that had ruled these hills, perhaps this earth, since time began and that, our proud claims to the contrary, still lay in wait for us not far from the doorstep of our airconditioned rooms."
Bilasia, thus, symbolizes the primitive ethos, its subterranean resources of psychic energy. It is only natural that she could enliven Billy's soul as Meena Biswas and Rima Kaul had repelled and dreaded it. There is not the slightest streak of sophistication in Bilasia. She is an inextricable part of the integral and rhythmic life of nature around her and an embodiment of the elemental and invulnerable forces that rule the primitive world. He says, "She had that untamed beauty that comes to flower only in our primitive people. It was as though nature were cocking a snook at the Meena Biswases of the world, informing them once again how little it cared for their self-proclaimed superiority" (T.S.C.B.B. p.143). Her graceful eyes exude 'a grief so tragic that it might well have brought tears to the eyes of a stone-god.'

After the tremendous volte-face in his life, Billy settled down in the primitive society which was characterized by innocence, peace and a vital personal relation with the natural world. He reveals, "We lived at the subsistence level... what kept us happy... were the earth, the forest, the rainbows, the liquor from the mahua... a lot of dancing and love making, and, more than anything else, no ambition."

He was least interested in economic matters and indifferent to things which provided sustenance to life in civilized society. There was no hurry in his life. His earlier restlessness was gone and was replaced by a serenity which itself was a measure of the great change that had taken place in him. What the novel achieves is not a mere sentimental extolling of primitive life but an artistic and convincing realization of an alternative
mode of living which is at once a critique of the materialistic society utterly void of any sense of purpose, direction and values, and a justification for rebellion against it. The story lives through a dramatic tension between these two opposite views of life and, thus, articulates Joshi's message in the novel.

The primitive world becomes credible because it is not elusive and substantial but something solid, based on a very well-defined concept of life. This primitive ethos is brought into focus through the contrast of Meena and Rima Kaul with Bilasia and Tuula. Tuula Lindgren is a remarkable woman character in Joshi's fiction. At once educated and humane, she exerts great influence on Billy. She is an introvert girl, 'very elusive' and, in spite of her friendliness, she has a way of detaching herself from others. Tuula is pretty and good in her job but she is absolutely devoid of self-consciousness or exhibitionism. Unlike Meena and her class and like Bilasia and the primitive people, Tuula has a 'total disregard of money.' She is the first person Billy meets in his life for whom money has no value and who treats money for 'a whole lot of paper.' She has a simple philosophy of life which borders on 'Hindu beliefs.'

A man, according to Tuula, needs a minimum of goods in order to survive. Once this is ensured whether by society or his profession, a man should devote himself to the fullest exploitation of his inborn gifts or endowments and 'in the process contribute as much to the society as (one) can.' But what affects Billy more fundamentally is Tuula's belief that the search for truth is a lonely business. She says, ".... you had to be prepared to go it alone if you really wanted to be honest to yourself."
A terrible 'witch-hunt' begins to retrieve Billy, and in the face of the direct encounter between Billy's world and the instruments of the organized society, Romi feels alarmed. The search leads to the final tragedy. Billy, who spears down a police constable in order to wrench his freedom, is shot dead:

'Billy,' I cried. 'Billy.'

He opened his fast-glazing eyes for a moment and appeared to look at me.

'You bastards,' he said hoarsely. Then he died.

This is Billy's final verdict on the civilized society which is not natural but 'dastardly' and which has put an end to his quest. Only a handful of ash in a mud pot is all of Billy that reaches the civilized world, and his 'strange case' is 'disposed of in the only manner that a humdrum society knows of disposing its rebels, its seers, its true lovers.'

The 'humdrum society' is afraid of Billy Biswases who hold up before it a mirror on which it sees its distorted image. Billy, with his vision of a glorious and meaningful life, could never rest in the dwindled stream of existence. So he made the difficult and painful choice with full knowledge of its consequences. Instead of getting lost in the labyrinth of reason and loop-holes of compromise and contemplation, he was guided by, the logic of his soul. He knew that 'nothing but blind blundering vengeance, howsoever camouflaged, awaits all those who dare to step out of its stifling confines.'
It is a confrontation whose outcome is as certain as the end of solitary boats beating against a maelstrom". He was also 'aware of the impossibility, in the world that he had abandoned, of saving men from themselves' when he 'stepped out of the sanctuary of the great god of the primitive world' to save the soul of his only friend in the civilization. This is exactly what makes him a tragic hero and wins our sympathy for him.

An important aspect of Ratan's character, as that of his confession is his candour and sincerity. He never dithers to mention the basest motives behind his acts and never tries to avoid blame, even when it appears that someone or something else might actually be at fault. The tremendous pressure of external forces notwithstanding, Ratan never shirks personal responsibility. Srinath rightly observes, "The Apprentice", shows a remarkable self-awareness in ruthlessly exposing his over subtleties, fads, self-awareness in ruthlessly exposing his over subtleties, fads, self-deceptions, preoccupations, ego and boredom of the dark phase of his life. It is this along with his present strength to laugh".6

Despite his temporary feeling of estrangement from the society that held out no hope and promise for him, Ratan unlike Billy Biswas, gradually acclimatized himself to it. Once he managed to procure the job of a temporary clerk in the department for war-purchases with the help of a fellow inn-dweller, he never looked back. He devoted himself whole heatedly to the advancement of his career in utter defiance of the basic human values. He soon forgot his friends considering himself their better 'in education, in polish, in even intelligence". He convinced himself that 'the disastrous three months spell was only a temporary set-back"."
The secret of Ratan’s successful career as a government official was not so much diligence and efficiency as his instinctive ability for survival and his docility that verged on sycophancy. From the beginning of his apprenticeship, he voted himself to the secret cult of career under the tutorship of the Superintendent, "the high priest of an exclusive creed, of whose mystery he was at once an inheritor and a trustee".

Billy Biswas was estranged from the civilized society, which was hooked on the pegs of money, due to his non-conformity and spirit of rebellion. Sindi Oberoi suffered from alienation due to his withdrawal from the ineluctable problems of life and living. But in Ratan’s case, conformity to the counterfeit values of a corrupt society resulted in his estrangement not only from those around him but also from his true, authentic self. By his conformity as well as multiple bargains with life, Ratan proved himself to be a whore to the world. He grew into an unscrupulous, insensitive and calculating man of ambition: "I felt as though some tender surface beneath my skin was congealing, hardening into cartilage and bone, forming the shell against which all future messages, advice or recrimination, well meaning or foolish, would merely bounce off leaving me untouched, free to pursue my ends without distraction".

The Gandhian purity of ‘means’ which his father believed in, was replaced by an almost Machiavellian dedication to the ‘end’ ‘Ratan’s experience, in the course of his tortuous progression through life, involves a confusion of mixture of error, incomprehensibility and frustration. The extravagant enthusiasm of a novice that he had felt at the beginning
gradually faded away. But he never forgot his first thrust of power that had almost driven a contractor bankrupt. Ratan was offered a bribe of ten thousand rupees to change his note on the file. But he turned down the proposal - at a time when he actually needed the money - and felt proud and self-righteous for his refusal. It was then that Ratan came face to face with the anarchy of the world, ‘a place without law, a planet turning in the darkness, going heaven knew where’. Everything happening around him only contributed to his moral confusion. He was amazed by the absurd servility of the same world which had almost crushed him by an unjust thrashing.

This vision of the world, hitherto unknown to him, fed his vanity and at the same time left him shaken. In utter perplexity Ratan confided his doubts and fears to the Superintendent, his mentor. But instead of clearing up his doubts, the enigmatic reply of the Superintendent only intensified them. He says, "You know, Rathor he said, nothing but God exists. You can be certain only of Him." What he meant was that there was no point in looking for truths aside from the truth of God. Money in the world always changed hands. God was only concerned with what one did with the money.

If Billy Biswas was a rebel, Ratan Rathor was a victim of the deceitful society that impelled him to make a compromise with it. He came to realize that it "is not the atom or the sun or God or sex that lies at the heart of the universe; it is deals, deals". One such deal that he made was his marriage with the niece of the superintendent. Ratan says, "In his own
inimitable way he had set the equations. If I married his niece I would stay in job; he would see to that. If I didn’t, he could not possibly be expected to help, which was a good as being thrown out."

Ratan married his niece and soon after that he was made an officer. In a mocking tone he adds, "The nation for which my father had given his life was moving and so, I thought, was I." But, in retrospect, he comes to know that his idea of getting ahead was nothing but self deception, an illusion created by him to calm his disturbed conscience. He seems to be aware of the futility of it all, the utter futility of the rat race for success. Life now appears to him as the complex sum in algebra.

A month before the Chinese invasion, Ratan cleared a huge pile of useless military materials lying in Bombay. He was offered a bribe for this which, 'for some obscure reasons', he accepted. The entire deal was masterminded by Himmat Singh, popularly known as the Sheikh. Himmat Singh, a don of the underworld having much clout with the powers that be, bribed Ratan at the instance of the Minister and the Secretary of his department. This incident marked the lowest point of Ratan's downward movement and in describing it he feels awful and confused: "Religion, politics, culture. Nothing connects. Chaos and panic". He feels hemmed in and suffocated by the memory of that crime which still haunts him like the dead albatross of the Ancient Mariner which haunted the mariner.

The uncertainty of the motive behind his gruesome act is indicative of his moral confusion, of the whirlpool of contradictory values and standards that life had come to signify to him.
Like many confessional novelists of the West, Joshi employs images and symbols not simply to complement or adorn the story of his hero. He also wants to portray a mind gone beyond conventional limits, a mind which cannot be comprehended in the context of objective reality, but is so unique that only its own strange creations can properly reflect it. The images are the 'objective correlative' of the disturbed vision and the distorted consciousness of his heroes and by their cumulative effect reflect their inner being.

The purpose of these images—some of which have already been referred to—is to produce "the impression of loneliness, separation, hypocrisy, coldness, corruption, disease, death and the absence of individuality, honesty and universal human values." The world that Joshi's protagonist encounters, is replete with these evils. In such a diseased world devoid of any definite value system as well as any principle of conduct, the efforts of the lost, lonely individual to understand the meaning and purpose of his existence take on the proportion of tragedy.

One of the redeeming features of Ratan's character is his ever-alert conscience. All along the chequered path which he had traversed in the course of his graduation from the jobless village boy to a member of the urban elite, this conscience pricked him. It was smothered sometime but was never silent.

Lal Haveli is, in essence, a microcosm of the labyrinth of life and death. Som Bhaskar's obsession with it is a reflection on his deep concern for these two aspects of the human reality. But the labyrinth is not confined to Lal Haveli alone. A stage comes when it "stretches to the Maya
(one of Som’s residences in Bombay), to Geeta (his wife), to the very edges of this beach”. While climbing the flight of stairs to reach Gargi’s room at Benaras, Aftab tells Som, "This, too, is a labyrinth, my friend". The word ‘this’ refers at once to the building where the deaf-mute god-woman and the dancing girls co-exist under the same roof and the enigmatic world of the spirit that Gargi represents. It suggests a reality beyond this life.

While describing the boat-journey to Gargi’s cottage on the other bank of the Ganga, Som writes, "I felt as though I had moved not two hundred yards, but two hundred miles from the town of Benaras, from all towns, from the planet itself. I felt as though this was not Ganga but some unknown stream, in some unknown segment of the universe, leading to a reality that I had not yet known." Again and again, against his will, Som is drawn helplessly into "the labyrinth of (this) mysterious world." Som’s insane pursuit of Anuradha, another girl of her choice her body and soul, is as tortuous, as his bizarre journey to the hills in search of the missing shares of Aftab’s company. The constant humming and reasoning that go on in his head suggest another labyrinth, that of the mind: ‘This, then, was a labyrinth, too, this going forward and backward and sideways of the mind.’

Som’s struggle to come to terms with himself and with his life is inextricably related to his deep-seated desire to know everything in life, whether it is the outcome of his business shares or of one’s belief in God, ‘the secrets of the universe’ or the unfathomable mystery of a woman. He is convinced that his problems could be sorted out if he had knowledge: "If
only one knew! If only miracles were to take place, as of old, and one could suddenly, irrefutably, know. Without nagging, enervating doubts. He says, "I want. I want. If only one knew what one wanted. Or, maybe, to know was what I wanted. To know. Just that. No more. No less". He wants to know if there is a mystery in life in which every thing fits properly.

What makes things difficult for him is his rational, analytical mind that refuses to take anything for granted. Anything that cannot be known or logically conceived, does not exist for him. He wants to know and experience for himself. And hence his restlessness, doubts and anxiety. He trusts nothing, no-one, but simply clings to men and matters for fear of losing his grip on life. His possessiveness results from his fear-psychosis, because once he possesses anything or anybody he stops clinging. His anxious reflection discloses no clear conviction, nor does it provide him with any knowledge of the mystery of life. His logical analysis fails to give him a clue to the problems he suffers from.

Soms consciousness of the world with its mysteriousness, its baffling appearances, and his painful awareness of his own imperfections and frailties raise serious questions about life, its meaning and its ultimate goal. If death is to terminate all, what is the point of all these insane pursuits, these "little pleasures or little vendettas" or life? The incomprehensibility of life and its riddles make him curious about life's ultimate reality, death: "And always in various shades of coherence, the spoken or unspoken question, like a vulture, circled the corpse".
Som inherits his curiosity, scepticism as well as his logical approach to life from his father, albeit unconsciously. His father was a brilliant chemist who, 'by a fluke,' became a businessman and established a huge plastic empire. But he had a philosophical bent of mind and was given to introspection. He was more interested in the mystery of the universe than in the mystery of the molecule. As Som says, "He was given to bigger interrogations which he probably carried on during those nights of insomnia" which followed Som's mother's death. Som's mother poses a contrast to both Som and his father. Devoutly religious, she had unwavering faith in Krishna, the god. 'She died of cancer and Krishna,' Som says.

Som's mother believed that Krishna would cure her cancer and so she refused to go to a hospital and flushed her capsules down the toilet. Once, as she turned a deaf ear to Som’s importunate requests to move to a hospital, 'in a sudden, boiling rage (he) had swept the gods and the goddesses off the table,' to her consternation. Nothing and nobody could persuade her to take medical help and make her trust in Krishna, who 'sat on top of her bureau and smiled and smiled, and smiled until she was dead.' After her death, Som's father withdrew himself from the world outside and gave himself over to brooding on the mystery of life and death. He began to wonder about causes: "Causes of things, things that happen to men, to objects." He was aware of the 'fundamental unity' in the formation of the universe where everything 'happens in cycle. Birth, Growth, Decline and Death.' He wanted to know: 'Couldn't there be a first cause that would explain everything, whose nature might lie behind the
natures of all the rest?" A brilliant scientist himself, he knew that science
could not give any clue to the riddle of cause: 'I believe in science, yes, but
science cannot solve the problem of the causes.

Som has inherited the afflictions of both his father and his
grandfather—their hunger of the spirit and of the body. But none has
provided him with any remedy. In great anguish, Som says: 'And where
did I fit in?' He is aware of the deep anxiety caused by the afflictions
bestowed upon him by his genes, but not of its cure.

With a view to ascertaining what had gone wrong with him, Som
consulted psychiatrists, a good number of them, who took money and 'said
a lot of things that either made too obvious a sense or no sense at all.'
Some of them said that he was 'insecure,' and some said that he was 'afraid
of death.' At last, one old fellow offered an explanation that seemed more
or less acceptable to him. It explained his discontent, his void as well as
the nagging, strident whisper in his soul:

It is possible.... to conceive of this world as being populated not with
people of flesh and blood, with certain sexual orientations, but with
souls. You can imagine this planet humming with souls, each
wanting something. Of course, many might want the same

Unable to come to terms with himself, Som lives two lives
simultaneously. At intervals he returns from 'these penumbral regions'
(T.L.L. p.122) to Bombay to pick up the threads of his ordinary, everyday
life of common humdrums. He poses questions to God. But that is out of
the question since he is a belligerent nonbeliever: "If I believed in God I
could pray, maybe run a rosary through my fingers. But that’s out.” He enters into a prolonged argument with himself in order to understand what has gone wrong with him. Indeed, his entire life has been directed towards the understanding of the meaning and purpose of existence and his place in the universe. In great distress he asks: ‘there must be some, somewhere, who understood.

At one level, "The Last Labyrinth" is the story of a shrewd Bombay businessman trying desperately to grab an inefficient plastic manufacturing company owned by a feudal Benaras Zamindar and his pretended wife. On another level, it is a story of deeper seekings through love, the spiritual autobiography of a lost soul groping for the meaning of life and death. Som Bhaskar is a millionaire industrialist. At the age of thirty five, he owns a huge plastic manufacturing industry which he has inherited from his father who was initially a scientist but later turned to business.

Sophisticated and smart, Som apparently leads a happy life with his wife and two children. he had been to the world’s finest universities. A quarter million had been spent on his education. He was acquainted with the Western way of life, its penchant for materialism and its rationalistic attitude. Yet, he knew that ‘money was dirt, a whore. So were houses, cars, carpets’. He had learnt of Buddha at Sarnath as well as of Pascal on whom he read a paper at Harvard. In fact, Som belongs to a vibrant zone of consciousness in which the Eastern and the Western ethoses strangely co-exist.
All the ingredients of a quiet and peaceful life with a trusting and educated wife and an expanding business empire not with standing, Som is not happy. He strangely suffers from a discontent, an indefinable hunger, that disrupts the harmony of his life and always keeps his rest.

Anuradha is a woman of obscure origin and indeterminate age. Hers is a life of untold suffering, of nightmarish experiences that have scarred not only her body but also her mind. An illegitimate child of an insane mother, Anuradha was molested in her childhood and had witnessed ‘murders, suicides, every conceivable evil of the world’. She was born in Biharsharif in a one-roomed house where her mother sang for strangers in the evening and, perhaps, sold her body. Her mother did not marry anyone as she believed that she was married to Krishna. Anuradha’s name was Meera then.

After her mother’s death (she was murdered by one of her many lovers), her aunt brought her to Bombay, changed her name and sent her to a convent where she suffered indignities, insult and loneliness: ‘Even the gutter is denied her. Such desperate loneliness amidst all those priggish daughters of the well-to-do. All those years she does not make a single friend. She thinks only of her dead, insane mother’. When she came out, her aunt managed to put her on the screen and probably made a good packet for herself in the bargain. After a year or two of success, she left the film world and began to live with Aftab in Lal Haveli.
Anuradha's combination of antiquity and modernity, holiness and adultery, suffering and faith, offers an alluring paradox. She is like the anima of Jung, the last labyrinth in the mind of man that will not be rationally explicable consort to anything created or mutable. As Som's lady-love Anuradha plays a vital role by helping him to know himself. She represents the life-spirit in woman, the feminine principle of the Sankhya system of Indian Philosophy.

Enduring the suffering, sacrifice, death and bereavements that attend all experience of the transitory, she... represents... the delirium of the manifested forms... From the point of view of the masculine principle of the Spirit (which is in quest of the enduring, eternally valid and absolutely divine) she is the pre-eminent enigma".

He is carried away by commerce and business deals. And at these moments, he is beset by doubts and uncertainties about the reality of the Haveli that always tantalizes him with its incomprehensible and alluring mystery:

Aftab knows that Som's peculiar distress results from his lack of faith. Som trusts nobody, not even himself. Yet deep inside his mind, unknown to himself, there is a desire to believe in God, a desire constantly frustrated by his doubt, his defiant and challenging attitude, his intellectual pride and his craving for evidence.
Anuradha, too, knows—despite her love for Som—that it is neither her nor Aftab's shares that he wants. To Som's proclamation that he wants her, she says, "It is not me you want... You badly want something... But it is not me." (T.S.C.B.B. p.58). When he ridicules her trust in Krishna and her belief in miracles, Anuradha remarks: "You are not as clever as you think. You are wrong about many things. You are wrong even about yourself. You think you know a lot, when, in fact, you don't." (T.S.C.B.B. p.61).

The distance between Som's and Anuradha's worlds never diminishes, nor is the insidious bug within him silenced. He succeeds in possessing her body, but her soul ever remains beyond his grasp.

Som clings to Anuradha for fear of losing her. He throws his entire weight and the turbulence of his life on her which she bears patiently. But far from satisfying his desire, she only famishes it: 'We possessed each other with singular ferocity, neither willing to loosen the clasp. Yet each meeting, far from cooling my passions, served only to fuel them.'

The little boy who accompanies the group or men, including his uncle and the family priest, is a striking contrast to Som. The men are carrying a sick, old man—the boy's grandfather—in a litter. They are coming from Jaipur and will go to a strange lake somewhere in the mountains where the old man will die. Som gathers from the boy that the latter is desperately looking for a rare pebble in the mountain which is very transparent and which contains a star at its centre. He has learnt about it from his grandmother but will not mind even if he does not get hold of
such a stone. One notices in this boy 'an intuitive wisdom or what one
calls the tough reasonableness that is characteristic of a very elderly
person who has seen life... a very unconscious and yet mature and
intuitive acceptance of existence'.

Anuradha's ultimate sacrifice for her lover's deliverance is
reminiscent of that of Sarah Miles, the saint-sinner-adulteress in Graham
Greene's novel, 'The End of the Affair'. Sarah prayed to God for the life of
her lover, Maurice Bendrix, who had apparently been killed in an air raid
while he and Sarah were sleeping together 'Let him be alive, and I will
believe. Give him a chance. Let him have his happiness. Do this and I will
believe.... I'll give him up forever.' God answered this human prayer.
Bendrix returned to life. And Sarah, instantly but without any
explanation, gave him up for ever.

On his way back, Som lies down by a stream with the bundle of
shares under his head and looks at the vast canopy of the sky. The
thought of Tolstoy's Prince Andrew in "War and Peace" crosses his mind:

"I was reminded of Prince Andrew, knocked down like a dummy
without firing a shot. He had imagined himself to be ambitious. He had
hoped Australia would do for him what Toulon had done for the
Bonaparte. Lying in the mud, cannon balls flying over him, he had stared
at the vast cosmic impersonal dome of the sky and had wondered: "My
God, where have I been all these years. Why had I never looked at the sky
before."
Like Prince Andrew, Som has, all his life, runs after one illusion or another and overlooks reality. He strangely feels defeated at the moment when his plan of setting scores with Aftab and Anuradha is actualized. The bundle of shares now seems to him to be a useless package, insignificant in comparison with the impersonal beauty of the sky. This realization of the futility of his quest, together with the conclusion he reaches at the end of his quest, and of his reflection that no external system can resolve his dilemma, that he has to solve it by himself, is perhaps, the only outcome of his journey to the hills.

Life's enigma, like the mystery of transcendental reality, cannot be it is implied in the novel-comprehended or explained by logic and reason. It is to be experienced by a direct intuition and by a wisdom that only suffering can give. As Aftab tells Som: "You work by logic. By your brain. You are proud of your education. There is an understanding that only suffering and humiliation bring. Anuradha has that. Even I have a bit of it. You are empty of that understanding."

Som is devoid of understanding since he is devoid of faith. Faith involves a leap beyond that which is known with reasonable certainty. It is essentially an attitude of trust and commitment. The man of faith is, thus, one who adopts such an attitude in the face of the world. The world as a whole is a mystery that cannot be grasped except in partial or fragmentary ways. Gargi writes, "We are all children trying to reach up to a crack in the door to peep into a room."
On this earth, where everything is uncertain and ephemeral, man's life is like 'a vast expanse of lawless sands that pile up where the wind blows.' Here everything except birth and death is illusory. 'They are the constants. All else is variable. In the rest you see what you want to see. According to the Hindu mystics, there is a reality beyond all this,' Sindi says to June. Random events happen around man forcing him to take decisions that propel him through life. Though man has no choice in his birth and death, he can take decisions about his life. He can make it meaningful by right action, self-discipline and by performing his duty to the world in a spirit of detachment.

This detachment does not mean withdrawal from life and action (as Sindi erroneously thought) but renunciation of selfish desires. But most people suffer from illusions and 'mistake the action of their senses for their own actions'. Consequently, they fall victims to selfishness, greed, possession between the artificial forms and the inner flux, both in the world and within his own self'. Sindi must attain to an integral and comprehensive knowledge about self and the world. But before he wakes up to perfect self-realization and accepts consciously the obligations imposed on him by reality, he must witness the darkness of the soul and suffer from alienation not only from the world but also from his innermost self. He must get rid of selfishness and stupidity and overcome his self-centred ego, since his is basically an ego-centric predicament. In short, he must come to grips with himself before he comes to grips with reality.
Like Sindi Oberoi in "The Foreigner", Bhumiputra in "City & River" finds the meaning of his life not in renunciation and escape but in action. His experience has turned him from a timid and vacillating teacher into a dedicated man of action. The convoluted state of affairs in the designs of the naked king and the desperate condition of the beleaguered mud-people at first fill Bhma with a 'sense of overwhelming futility.' Soon, however, at the advice of the Hermit, he agrees to stand by the helpless boatmen and rally them against the Grand Master's regime. He decides to fight with them against the shadow which is more formidable than the commissioner's police since 'it seeks to kill hope in men's hearts.' (T.C.R. p.144). He excites the demoralized boatmen by reminding them that they are the children of the sacred river, the symbol of the divine mother, and that they should not sell her soul to a man 'howsoever powerful' he man be.

They mistake the illusory for the real and, bloated with conceit, they imagine things which are not there. Their suffering springs from this illusion and narrow ego-centricity. In the end, death wipes out everything and all 'that is left is a big mocking zero' or 'a shadow' as the ego-maniac Grand Master painfully realizes before his terrible death. Man can come out of this maze by right adjustment of conduct, humility and suffering, sacrifice of selfish desires, and a total surrender to a higher consciousness beyond oneself.
This soul-making is a continuous process; it has no definite beginning or end: "There is no end to suffering, no end to the struggle between good and evil." The wheel of Karma, like the wheel of industrialization, never stops. The human cycle of birth, disintegration and death unrolls relentlessly. Man can prevent this repetition and escape from the endless cycle of becoming through purification of the soul: "The main thing is to prevent this endless repetition, this periodic disintegration. But to achieve that we need purity.... the city must purify itself..... of egotism, selfishness, stupidity."

Joshi is influenced by Indian religious thoughts which recognize man's emotional and intellectual entanglement with life as the result of ignorance and illusion and suggest a way out.

Central to Joshi's vision are his beliefs that "individual actions have effects on others and on oneself [and so] ... one cannot afford to continue with an irresponsible existence but has to commit oneself at some point" (Banerjee) and that "It is very difficult to steer one's way through life without God, or at least concepts like right and wrong." Hinduism, Joshi believes, "is a highly existentialist-oriented philosophy since it attaches so much importance to the right way to live." He is against renunciation as a mode of life.

Joshi thinks, "Everything has its effects. Detachment can be a camouflage for selfishness. Commitment to something beyond oneself is important." The Karmic claw of the Gita with its stress on choice and right action seems to him to be central: "There is no intervening agent between
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