Chapter IV

The Alienated Self

In all the novels Joshi’s heroes suffer from loneliness and crave for a meaning and purpose in life. In their loneliness the protagonist quest for peace and harmony, Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* is a born foreigner, His philosophy of detachment causes a tragic end to his American girlfriend June Blyth and his Indian friend Babu who later brings him a realization involved with the world. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* presents Billy Biswas, the protagonist suffering from a sense of purposelessness of life which is purely existential problem. He is compelled to live in a society which is out to threaten the very foundation of his existence. Right from his adolescence Billy has been conscious of a great force—a primitive force within himself. In response to it and in quest for peace and harmony, he vanished into the forest of Maikala Hills.

Joshi’s third novel, *The Apprentice* presents the most acute of alienation caused by the existentialist problems of Ratan Rathore, a government official. Who after feeling isolated from society, adopts the ways of the world to achieve power, status and material prosperity later, holding himself responsible for the tragic death of his Brigadier friend realizes his fault. His morality is completely eroded and he realizes the futility and hollowness of his life. He suffers from acute loneliness within and out of mental agony he begs forgiveness from all those whom he had wronged and as a penance for his guilt he wipes the shoes of the congregation before the temple gate on his way to his office. Arun Joshi's next novel, *The Last Labyrinth* probes into the disturbed inner world of Som Bhaskar. The protagonist suffers from an acute sense of meaninglessness of life in spite of all material possession and a happy family. He craves far deeper seeking through love finally questing for peace
and harmony. The novel raises certain pertinent questions about life and its meanings and tries to unravel the still unresolved mysteries of God and death. The agony and anxiety of alienation leading to a crisis in the conscience of Som Bhaskar.

In his political novel, *The City and The River*, Arun Joshi presents the malpractices in which people respond to them. The malpractices presented here are of two kinds: the malpractice resorted to in order to eliminate dissent. The response of the victims range from total surrender to uncompromising resistance. Another malpractice, in which a person exercising political power indulges, is that he tries to ensure that he is succeeded by his descendent.

Arun Joshi is one of the very few Indian novelists in English who have successfully revealed complexities of contemporary Indian life. He has produced very compelling works of fiction. Sensitivity alive to the predicament of modern man, Joshi has ably depicted unfortunate consequences of the actions of values and faith in life. In fact, none has excelled Joshi in projecting existential dilemma of the present day world. He has also worked out various dimensions of pressures exerted by the complex characters and demands of the society in which modern man is destined to live. This awareness of man's rootlessness and the resulting anxiety is the key note of Joshi's unique vision of the plight of modern man. His novels bring out human problems arising out of ephemeral loyalties. Joshi makes a definite departure from the general run of Indian novelists in English and his experimentations in themes and technique have added new dimensions to the art of the novel. Lionel Trilling is of the view that the novel is "a perpetual quest for reality and the most effective agent of the moral imagination in our time"(Lionel 205). The Indian novel in English is now an integral part of Indian reality. The development of the Indian novel in English can be traced from its experimental stage to realistic to psychological. After 1950's, however,
the novelist's interest shifted from the public to the private sphere. They began to delineate the individual's quest for the self in all its varied and complex forms and his problems and crisis. Robin White opines, "If anything is to distinguish Indian fiction - it would be varied literary attempt to portray the conflict of the contemporary Indian" (Robin 59).

Arun Joshi is one of those modern Indian novelists in English who have introduced new trends. In his search for new themes, he has renounced the larger world in favor of the inner man and has engaged himself in "a search of the essence of human living" (Vergheese 124). An outstanding novelist of human predicament, Joshi has highlighted in all his five novels the inner crisis of the modern man. The most glaring problem that man faces today is the problem, of meaninglessness is so pervasive that it threatens to obliterate very sphere of human life. Man fails to perceive today the very purpose behind life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. The prevailing economic conditions resulting in the abject poverty of the masses and the economic crunch of the middle class on the one hand and the economic prosperity of the newly rich, on the other, the fast changing value system resulting from industrialization and urbanization has made increasing and often disturbing demands on the individual and contribute in their own ways to the sense of purposelessness in life. Arun Joshi has tried to project through his experiences the crisis of the urbanized and the highly industrialized modern civilization along with its dehumanizing impact on the individual who is out to find out and reaffirm the value of meaningful relatedness in life.

Modern age is not only an "age of anxiety" as Auden calls it but an age of alienation as well where "man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and rain but from inner problem-a conviction of isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in
his very existence" (Roy 85). The contemporary man is constantly in search of a way in which he can confront a universe which has become disjointed, purposeless and absurd. Most of the Indo-Anglian novelists after the fifties show concern about the inner problem of their protagonist resulted due to cultural alienation. The problem of alienation and quest of identity permeates the Post-Modern Indo-Anglian fiction. Attention is focused on the select novels of Arun Joshi to study the problem of alienation, quest for Identity and search for roots. It would be rewarding to recall meaning of alienation before we delve deep into the problem of alienation in the works of the Post-Modern, Post-Independences Indo-Anglian writers. The term "alienation" has different meaning in everyday life, in science and philosophy. In everyday usage "alienation" means turning away, keeping away from friends or associates. In psychiatry, alienation usually means deviation from normality, i.e., insanity. In psychology and sociology, it is often used to indicate individuals feeling of alienness towards society, nature, other people or himself. For philosophers alienation means self alienation, the process or the result of the process by which a self through itself becomes alien to itself. G.W.F. Hegel, Ludwif Feuderbach and Karl Marx were the three thinkers who gave an explicit elaboration of alienation and whose interpretations are the starting point for all discussions related to alienation in the present day philosophy, sociology and psychology. The present day writers who use the term alienation differ very much in the ways in which they understand and define it. Some think that the concept can be applied both to man and to non-human entities. Most writers insist that it is applicable only to man. Some who apply it only to man insist that it can refer only to individuals and not to society as a whole. According to a number of authors, the non –adjustment of the individual to the society in which he lives is a sign of alienation. Others maintain that a society can also be
alienated or sick so that an individual who cannot adapt to the existing society is not, or necessity alienated. Many who regard alienation as applicable merely to individuals conceive it as a purely psychological concept referring to a feeling or a state of mind. Others insist that alienation is not only a feeling but also an objective fact, a way of being. Some writers who characterize alienation as a concept of psychopathology, others insist that alienation is not good or desirable, it is not strictly pathological. One should distinguish alienation, a psychological state of the individual characterized by feelings of estrangement, both from anomie, relative normlessness in a social system from personal disorganization i.e. disordered behaviour arising from conflict with the individual.

The twentieth century writers differ greatly in their enumeration of the basic forms of alienation. Frederie Weilwash has distinguished three basic forms: self – anesthesia, self elimination, and self idealization. Ernest Schachtel has distinguished four: the alienation of man from nature, from his fellow men, from the works of his hand and mind and from himself. Melvin refers to five: powerlessness, meaninglessness, social isolation, normlessness and self estrangement. On the basis of what has been referred to above, it is safe to distinguish between alienation of self. Alienation can be distinguished on the basis of self and on its own activity or through the activity of another. Some writers hold that one can also speak about self alienation of nature or of the world. The collective significance of scattered experience is the wisdom of The Prelude and Wordsworth's Journey Through the World is recaptured in the narrative in an attempt to invest it with meaning and continuity:

Finally, whatever
I saw, or herd or felt, was
but I stream
that flowed into a kinder ed stream.

To Freud man is a biological phenomenon, a prey to instinctual desires and their redirection in the face of harsh reality; he is therefore simply a part of nature. He insists that man is guided by free self determination. Like Freud, Jung also believed in the theory of inner consciousness. Joshi's "fictional world"(Dhawan 8) is revelation of a world where, man is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence. His search is directed at the mysterious region of uncertainty. This effort on his part makes him a great artist of psychological insight. There is something that attracts one's attention an then grips. Arun Joshi delves into the inner recess of human psyche where he finds instincts and impulses at work. He seeks a process of the apprehension of reality which may lead him to the core of the truth in man's life. He realizes man's uniqueness and loneliness in an indifferent and mysterious universe.

Arun Joshi is one of the very few Indian novelists in English who have successfully revealed complexities of contemporary Indian life. Joshi, sensitively alive to the predicament of modern man, has ably delineated unfortunate consequences of the absence of values and faith in life. In fact he has been rarely excelled in exemplifying the existential dilemma of the present day world. He has also worked out various dimensions of pressures exerted by the complex characters and demands of the society in which modern man is doomed to live Dhawan writes:

The awareness of man's rootlessness and the consequential anxiety is the key note of Joshi's unique vision of the plight of modern man. His novels delineate human problems rather than issues arising out of ephemeral loyalties. Joshi marks a definite departure from the general stream of English novelists in English and his experimentations in
themes and techniques have added new dimensions to the root of the novel. (Dhawan 44)

Trilling is of the view that the novel is a perpetual quest for reality. The Indian novel in English is now an integral part of the Indian reality. Although it began as a "hot house plant" it has "taken firm and deep roots in the Indian soil"(Iyenger,140). The development of the Indian novel in English can be traced from the experimental stage to realistic to psychological .Eventually realistic novels in English came to be written in India for the first time in the 1920s when with the surging nationalistic feelings the scene shifted to contemporary battles and agitations. The novels written before the two world wars were chiefly concerned with exploitation and interpretation of the social milieu, as is evident from representative works of Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable, R.K. Narayan's Swami and Friends and Raja Rao's KanthaPura. These novels did not make any conscious attempts at dealing with the individual’s personal predicament. After 1950s, the novelists’ interest shifted from the public to the private sphere. They began to delineate the individual's quest for the self in all its varied and complex forms and his problems and crisis.

Arun Joshi is one of those modern Indian novelists in English who have broken new grounds in his search for new themes; he has renounced the larger world in favor of the inner man and has engaged himself in search for the essence of human living. Joshi an outstanding novelist of human predicament has highlighted in all his five novels the inner crisis of the modern man. The most common problem that modern man faces today is the problem of alienation and meaninglessness. As Edmund Fuller remarks:" In our age man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine, but from inner problem, a conviction of isolation and meaninglessness in his way of existence"(Fuller, Man in Modern Fiction 7). The problem of meaninglessness
is so pervasive that it threatens to corrode every sphere of human life. It has been treated in considerable details in American and European literature. Its treatment by Indian novelists like Arun Joshi is no less interesting. Man fails to perceive today the purpose of living and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. The contemporary man, notwithstanding unprecedented scientific and technological advancement which have added immensely to his physical pleasure and comforts, is doomed to find himself in a tragic mess. The prevailing economic conditions resulting in the abject poverty of the masses and the economic squeeze of the middle class on the one hand and the economic prosperity of the newly rich on the other, the drag of social conventions and traditions, the fast changing value system, consequent upon the impact of rapid modernization due to industrialization and urbanization, the inter-generational tensions engendered with changing ethos—all these make increasingly and often disturbing demands on the individual and contribute in their own ways to his sense of meaninglessness in life.

The contemporary man finds himself participating in a "rat race" and is estranged not only from his fellow men but also from his inner most nature having nothing within or without him to fall back upon moments of crisis. The present century has seen the dissolution of old certainties and dogmas. Deprived of the benefit of ancient wisdom, which provided the much needed basis for value and meaningfulness in life, the modern man has no substitute for faith and religion except science and information. Aldous Huxley has aptly pointed out that "ours is a world in which knowledge accumulates and wisdom decays" (Huxley, Adonis and The Alphabet 124). The problem of contemporary man has been considerably multiplied by what Spengler calls "The crisis of the present". The twentieth century—especially the post-war period has been an age of great spiritual and strain and has been rightly
called "The Age of Alienation" (Murchland 22). It has shrunk in spirit languishing in confusion, frustration, disintegration, disillusionment and meaninglessness. Man suffers from a growing sense of meaninglessness which may be manifested in alienation from oneself, from one's fellow men and from nature. The awareness that life slips out of one's hand like sand, and that one will die without having lived, that one lives in the midst of plenty but is joyless.

The potential meaninglessness of human existence has reduced life to nothingness. The existential encounter with nothingness is the product of modern life. The gap between what the individual aspires for and the hard reality of what he achieves, between what he professes and what he practices and between what he really is and what he would like to appear has mercilessly crippled his life leaving an adverse effect on his inner being. The injuries inflicted and the scars left on his psyche generate a cynical attitude towards the established social norms and values and make him grope for life's relevance. Man is shocked to find that he is no longer the master of his destiny. There are forces which are out to wither his life and all its joys and hopes. He comes to feel helpless in the fundamental sense that he can not control what he is able to foresee. Consequently he suffers from a deep sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness. Life has grown today indefinitely vast and without any proper interlinkage to hold from falling apart. Man, painfully aware of his precarious position, experiences, severe limitations in today's set-up and acute terror of the world augmented by its randomness. Man is drawn into the world of objects and has lost or is continuously losing. The modern man's problems have been discussed variously and as Fromm points out: "in the nineteen century problem is that man is dead. The danger of the past was that men became slaves. The danger of the future is that men may become robots, who will destroy their world and themselves because
they can not stand a meaninglessness life” (Fromm, *The Sane Society* 120). In fact, the absence of meaningful relationship is the greatest curse of the age. Thus, the pervasive sense of meaninglessness is the most dominant feature of the human condition in the contemporary epoch. The existential estates of disappointment, isolation and meaninglessness have received enough attention in the west. All sensitive feel concerned about the unfortunate spiritual predicament of the modern man. His inner problems have been treated in considerable detail in modern literature, particularly in the fiction.

No emotional problem is more threatening today than the pervasive sense of meaninglessness. Conditions in India, though not so alarming as in the western world, have begun to take a dismal turn. Victor Anant has discussed the moral confusion of modern Indians who live on an ad hoc basis in a no man’s land of values. Heirs too two sets of customs and torn asunder by a dual code of behaviour, they live leisurely by opportunism, treachery, cowardice and hypocrisy. This according to Anant is due to their ”moral inertia and flabbiness which has given them all the grandeur and all the emptiness of a hypnotized people”(Victor, *The Hypnotized people* 311). Certain recent Indian novelists in English have made significant efforts to depict the predicament of the modern man. The work of Arun Joshi in particular reads like the spiritual Odyssey of the twentieth century man who has lost his spiritual moorings and is in quest for harmony and peace. Despite the differences in their approach, all of Joshi’s heroes are men engaged in the meaning of life. The novelist has tried to project through their experiences the crises of faith and quest for peace and harmony in the urbanized and highly industrialized civilization along with its dehumanizing impact on the individual who is ever eager to find out and re-affirm the value of meaningful relatedness in life. Arun Joshi is one of the most significant Indian novelists today. For, almost alone
among them he is concerned with the predicament of modern man and his attempt to understand the labyrinth of life. Arun Joshi’s novels are built around dark, dismal experiences of the soul. Arun Joshi’s main concern seems to explore the mysterious underworld which is the human soul. In this connection, he frankly acknowledges the influence of Camus and other existential writers on his writings and has put his own philosophical vision of life into the mouth of Som Bhaskar, the narrative protagonist of his award winning novel, *The Last Labyrinth*. The men and women in Joshi’s world are fluttering in dark night in the ruined city of the soul and are engaged in exploring the inner recesses of the human soul.

Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner* examines the problem of alienation, isolation and involvement and man’s despair at being unable to find a meaning in existence and attempts to explore its course and cure. It explores in depth the problem of Sindi Oberoi, a young man who is detached almost alienated – a man who sees himself as a stranger wherever he lives or goes- in Kenya, where he is born, in England and America where he is a student, and in India where he finally settles down. His detachment transcends barriers of geography, nationality and culture.

It propels him from one crisis to another, sucking in the wake of several other people. O.P. Bhatnagar rightly observes, "A strange feeling of aloneness and aloofness permeates the entire narrative and provides the necessary texture and structure to the novel"(Bhatnagar 52). In her review of the novel, Meenakshi Mukherjee, aptly observes, "Sindi Oberoi is an alien everywhere physically as well as metaphorically"(Meenakshi, 202). He is an existential character, rootless and luckless in a mad, bad absurd world. He belongs to no country, no people and regards himself as an uprooted young man living without any purpose and meaning. Sindi Oberoi, born in Kenya and educated in London and America does not find it possible to adjust
him to any place he has been to. His experiences in both the places have been unpleasant and colorless. These too lasting impressions of his life have taught him to practice detachment and non involvement in human emotions which cost him dearly when the final crisis of his life approaches. He goes to Boston as an engineering student and meets June, an attractive American young woman at a Foreign student’s party. He is reminded of Kathy by the darkness of June's hair, gets infatuated by her beauty and has a short lived but passionate affair. His loneliness is apparent to any one who meets and talks to him. Sindi is trapped in his own loneliness which is caused by his withdrawal from the society around him.

The novel deals with the life of Sindi Oberoi, young man, in search of his roots and meaning of life. He is a perfect foreigner not only to the two cultures between which he is shuttled but also to his soul. At deeper level, the foreigner can be viewed as an attempt to plumb man's perennial dilemma. It is about things that Sindi wants and who doesn't have the courage to be and the capacity to love. His alienation is of the soul and not of geography. He is an orphan both in terms of relations and his emotional roots. As he himself confides, his "foreignness lies within him" and drives him from crisis to crisis making it difficult for him to leave himself behind wherever he goes. Right from the very beginning he is oppressed by a desire to find the meaning of life. He himself wants to do something meaningful. While gathering experiences in life, however he becomes convinced of the impermanence of things. His entire life is geared around his quest for permanence in life. When they have been together for sometime, June suggests that they should get married but he tells her: "We are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within"(107). He argues with June on the meaning of life. He debates with June on the necessity of marriage and comes to a conclusion that, “Marriage was more
often a lust of possession than anything else. People get married just as they bought new cars. And then they gobbled with each other up” (60).

From his earlier experiences in London with Anna and Kathy, he has derived a conclusion and is firm about his opinion. He is of the view that one should be able to love without wanting to possess. One should be able to detach oneself from the object of one's love. This is "the essence of life" that he has learnt from these two women with whom he earlier fell in love. Their separation has caused him severe pain and taught him the lesson of detachment and noninvolvement. He has loved Kathy with all his heart and soul characteristic of an adolescent and it has shattered the very roots of his existence when she goes back to her husband. Since then all that he has thought is pleasurable but which generally ends in pain. Sindi Oberoi is like a person who wants to know the secret of life and yet is afraid of knowing it when he is likely to be exposed to it. We find Sindi suffering from the crisis of faith and questing for peace, harmony as well as purpose of life. He speaks of his detachment and non involvement is love and life that he has acquired through his earlier experiences.

Sindi's detachment and non–involvement in love makes June decide to opt for an alternative she turns towards Babu Rao Khemka, a student of engineering and friend of Sindi, June realizes that Sindi is "so self sufficient there is hardly any place for me in your life- except perhaps as a mistress"(136), so she turns towards Babu and she thinks that he loves her more than he loves himself. Even June is looking for a meaning of life. She wants to come out of the crisis of faith which she suffers from in her relationship and interaction with Sindi. She is questing for a definite purpose in life. She finds herself completely lonely and isolated when Sindi speaks of detachment and wants to remain uninvolved in her love. She feels all the more lonely and alienated when Sindi declines her offer for marriage. Joshi beautifully explores
the mind of his protagonist who facing the crisis of faith, strives hard in his quest for peace, harmony and meaning in life. June in her desperate search for a meaning in life inclines towards Babu who finds America to be a wonderful country and yet he suffers from the loneliness because he has no American friends. June learns from him that he feels cold and lonely, especially at night. This makes her relate her needs and realize that she can be of use to some one. She feels that she can find a purpose in her life by helping some one who really needs her help and in course of time her relationship with Babu deepens. Her growing attachment for Babu and her frequent visits to his place make Sindi suspicious of their relationship. Sindi is agonized to find himself in this crisis of faith. On the other hand June is also torn between the tug of war going on in her mind for her deep attachment for Sindi on one hand and to be of use to Babu on the other hand. At times she expresses the agony she undergoes in the crisis, to Sindi. On the other hand, when she makes love with a strange fierceness which is painful, she shows her concern over its meaninglessness and purposelessness in life. Thus we see how both the male and female protagonists suffer from the crisis, struggle in their quest for harmony and peace in life. Both of them appear to be lonely and isolated not only physically and mentally but also spiritually. Sindi aptly tells her, "marriage wouldn't help June. We are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And out aloneness must be resolved from within" (107). As a result of Sindi's detachment in love, she develops gradually more and more affinity for Babu because he has given her all she needs and she can be of use to him as "he has loved her with a dog-like devotion" (110).

Sindi confesses the crisis he undergoes when he realizes that he is gradually getting detached from June's love. On comparing himself what he had been before meeting June, he comes to an assessment of himself. He realizes that he has struggled
against for years. But this realization is of little help to him because he has almost lost his will power as he has permitted himself "to become a battle field where the child and the adult warred unceasingly"(111). Sindi becomes aware of his deep love for June. He feels depressed, agonized and lonely when June refuses to meet him. Though he keeps himself busy with the work at college, yet June remains in his thoughts. To seek solace for his agonized soul he goes there where he had been with June earlier.

The talk of detachment alienates June from Sindi. When Sindi does not respond to her insistent plea to marry her, she turns to Babu. Though Babu is in love with her, yet he suspects her relationship with Sindi. One day after leaving Sindi when she goes to Babu's flat, she finds him in a sullen mood. She tries to cheer him up. She confesses that she spent the evening with Sindi. He accuses her that she has been sleeping with Sindi. This annoys her and she candidly admits that she has been sleeping with Sindi and has been carrying on with him for a year before she met him. Babu is stunned to hear all this from her. He looses his temper and calls her a whore and even hits her in the face. In a fit of unbeatable anger he leaves his flat and drives off blindly in his car. He dies in car wreck on the way. After Babu's death June accuses Sindi. This incident brings Sindi to a realization of his guilt.

Sindi suffers a deep sense of remorse within himself on realization of his guilt. His faith in detachment has been shattered by Babu's death. June accuses him and holds him responsible for the disaster. Like the Ancient mariner, Sindi too confesses his guilt and suffers the same agony: "the ball of pain is still hung around my neck albatross"(120). Things have happened contrary to his desire and faith. He tries to come out of this crisis. He quests for harmony and purpose. 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 satisfactory progress and his soul becomes
a battlefield where the child and the adult are at constant war. Sindi's sufferings are manifestations of a spiritual crisis which all the sensitive people have to face today. He wants to conquer pain and death which wipes out everything leaving nothing behind. His various experiences in life leave him with unanswered questions. Sindi wants to come out of crisis and supposes the probabilities. Finally Sindi Oberoi realizes his mistakes and seeks satisfaction. After paying a heavy price, he has learnt the lesson of life “Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not escapes from it. The gods had set a heavy price to teach me that” (165).

Sindi's various experiences in life lead to his decision to leave America. For Sindi going to India, visiting the land of his ancestors is a place to seek his roots. It also means escape from him but that seems to be remote as his foreignness lies within him. He comes to India to start life anew; the only difference that he finds is that he now meets new people with new vanities. As he rightly observes that his foreignness lies within him. Sindi completely finds himself an alien even in the land of his forefathers where he is working with Mr. Khemka a multimillionaire, an industrialist, who has a new set of values. Sindi finds himself rootless, a misfit, an alien and a person with no purpose in life because he feels alienated even in the land of his forefathers. He knows the secret of Khemka's growing empire. Mr. Khemka has been dwindling the government for ten years. The income tax people have already raided and sealed his office on the ground of tax evasion embezzlement and a few others. He maintains two books and pay income tax on fictitious accounts. He keeps the real ones at home. The police ransacked the house got them and taken Mr. Khemka in their custody. Miss Khemka, M.A. in History, assisting her father in business appreciates Sindi with a plea to save her father from this trouble by taking blame on
his shoulder. But Sindi flatly declines the offer. He charges and blames Mr. Khemka for his corruption, malpractices and exploitation of the poor. He further accuses Mr. Khemka of causing that great loss to him.

Sindi flatly refuses Sheila that he does not want to get involved and so will find another job as soon as possible. He found a job for himself in Bombay and had packed to go when he informed his caretaker that Muthu, one of the employees of Mr. Khemka has come to seen him. Before leaving, he goes to Muthu's house where he is immensely shocked and deeply moved by the poverty and wretchedness of Muthu's family. They live in dirty slum with bare needs just to keep their body and soul together. Muthu requests him to take the responsibility of Khemka's firm otherwise the employees would be left jobless. But Sindi is reluctant because he does not want to get involved. He wants to remain detached but Muthu repeatedly requests Sindi and tells him that it is not involvement, but sometimes detachment lies in getting involved. Sindi appreciates his point and a line of reasoning leads to him to the conclusion that "detachment consisted in getting involved with the world"(189). Thus Sindi finds an answer to his quest for a meaning in life. Finally, the novelist concludes on an optimistic note seeking poetic justice for all. Mr. Khemka in the lock up to perform for penance for his sins, and Sindi learn the lesson of involvement by taking the responsibility of Khemka firm as well as his daughter.

In his second novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, (1971), Arun Joshi explores the contemporary man's inner crisis of being isolated from the whole apparatus of convention and ritual of society upholding our glorious cultural ethos. If in *The Foreigner*, his first novel, the crisis of identity arises out of conflict between three different cultures, in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* it is a conflict between more basic and greater forces, namely civilization and primitive life or between nature
and art. In the case of Billy his experiences are mainly intellectual and psychic and he is a lonely quester, where Sindi in *The Foreigner* is person who is assisted by others in his search. "It is a movement from the almost contemplative world of Sindi Oberoi to the dynamic vital and active world of Billy" (Jasbir, *Foreigners and Strangers* 54). Billy like Sindi is in search of human world of emotional fullness- a world of meaningful relatedness." Billy is aware of the deeper layer of his personality and feels totally alienated from the superficial reality of life (Pathak, *Quest for Meaning* 54).

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a study in the total alienation of its protagonist. Billy Biswas from the modern bourgeois society of India, the only son of a Supreme Court judge with a pronounced sophisticated English accent acquired in the schools of England, is sent to America to study engineering. Well bred Billy is from the upper section of Indian society. On his arrival in New York, he takes up his lodging in the outer skirts of Harlem, famous for slums because he finds it the most human place. He abandons his study of engineering in favor of his doctoral work in Anthropology. He meets Romi hunting for accommodation in New York, with whom he shares his lodging and forms thick friendship which lasts till the end. Billy is basically an anthropologist. He studies deeply the tribal attitudes and customs. He feels deeply interested in places described in the books he reads. In fact, his whole life is organized "around his interest in the primitive man"(14). The death of Romi's father compels him to return to India where he joins the Indian Administrative Service. Billy, after Ph.D. in anthropology settles down by marrying Meena, a pretty aristocratic convent educated girl. Billy inwardly suffers from the pangs of conscious which keeps him in a perpetual state of irritation against the social set-up in which he is placed. He became highly intolerant of that society. The ordered systematized, civilized life which the contemporary man is proud of intensified Billy's problem of
identity instead of resolving it. In India he feels as a visitor from the wilderness and he reflects as Sindi does in *The Foreigner*. He admires the Swedish girl Tuula who treats money as nothing more than paper and hates the world that runs after it. These sensibilities get blunted and the Billy that Romi knows "is finished, snubbed out like a candle left in the rain"(10). Billy talks of a play running off Broadway. He has liked the play because "one can quiet imagine something like that happening to oneself "(11). This statement gives Romi a glimpse of restlessness of Billy's soul and in a way anticipates Billy disappearance in the saal forest.

The Bhubaneshwar episode makes evident how at the impressionable age of fourteen, Billy had experienced the urge to live like a primitive man in a primitive world. He had received the intimation of his primitive self from the moment he emerged from the railway station. It has seemed to him that sculptures at Konark can give him a solution of his question about the problem of his identity. Romi has a glimpse of this urge for the primitive at a music party in George's apartment. As Billy plays a pair of Bongo drums for nearly quarter of hour, a hush descends on the scene. Romi and others feel the mesmeric pull of the music which holds every one by its sheer vitality. Billy's Swedish friend, Tuula, who has come to the United States for advance training in psychiatric social work, is the "second person who had any clue to what went on in the dark, inscrutable, unsmiling eye of Billy Biswas"(19).She understands Billy's interest in the Primitive. As she tells Romi, “Billy feels something inside him, but he is yet not sure. A great force, a primitive force, he is afraid of it and tries to suppress it. But it is very strong in him, much stronger than in you and me. It can explode any time” (23).

Such is the struggle of the man who finds his identity lost in the so-called civilized world. Though this conflict is termed as a conflict between the primitive and
the civilized by Tuula who is a Swedish, yet, to Arun Joshi, it is a recurring conflict of "an essentially Hindu mind" (Reply to M.R. Dua).

Billy was a split personality, split between "primitive" and "civilized". His predicament becomes a strange case. The words "strange" and "Case" in the title have thematic significance, it is strange because in a world where everybody is crazy after civilization and its comforts Billy, the America educated engineer, anthropologist and the member of sophisticated strata of the Delhi society, opts out of civilization for the primitive. But in another sense it may not be strange because many people had felt frustrated with civilization in the past and had opted out. In India, the idea of people leaving civilization for a primitive life is not something new. Our rishis and sages in the past had renounced civilization for the primitive life as a way of realizing truth and God. In a sense this is what Billy also does to seek meaning in life in search for peace and harmony. He faces the crisis of faith when finds himself completely alienated in this materialistic world and as strives to seek his identity, a meaningfulness questing for peace and harmony. Again a sense of disillusion with a society whose superficial glamour covers up the scum beneath and impatience with the glib hypocrisy and posses of the so called successful world are not anything uncommon.

Billy felt culturally estranged at New York. It becomes clear from Romesh's description of the party where Billy goes on sitting silently without moving, without drinking and suddenly beating the Bongo drums. Romesh and Tuula are unable to find out an explanation for Billy's strange behaviour. Even of his return to India, he does not feel homely, well- entrenched or the true son of the soil, who is culturally well rooted and socially isolated. A sense of nothingness pervades him. He suffers from a sense of loss of socio-cultural ethos, finding himself wrapped in a vacuum, which his
entire being is unable to comprehend. In this realization the whole life becomes meaningless and futile to Billy. It is at such weak moment only that a man takes certain decisions to fill up the void of his life. Billy's visit to the temple proves that he is trying to adjust himself socially and culturally. But once again he feels totally disenchanted by the Utopia which results in the realization of wasting his time by living in a civilization where people are simply busy making and spending money. Billy's antipathy to the people and their civilization is reflected in the following extracts from his letters written to Tuula at different times:

I see a room full of finely dressed men and women seated on sofas and while I looking at them under my very nose they turn kennel of dogs yawning or the so called thinkers and philosophers and men like that are merely hired to find solution, throw light on complications by this making and spending of money. We are swiftly loosing i.e. ones grip on life. Who am I? Who are my parents? My wife? My child? (96)

These letters show his concern for civilization, society, individuals and also himself. His pin pointing several weaknesses, hypocrisy and the fact of leading his life on a superficial plane, show how much alienated from all that is around him. He feels, though, he also wants to stick to it in one way or the other.

Billy is even more disappointed by the products of this "bloody old phony" and "materialistic civilization". His frequent change of "beloveds" is really a search for a true life partner. His marriage with Meena Chatterjee, a pretty young daughter of a retired civil servant, is an impulsive action but it is prompted by Billy's search for viable alternatives. He finds no better girl than Meena in that condition of mind. Perhaps he thinks Meena's bonds will be strong enough to chain up his split personality. The result is drastic because Billy does not find in her a good partner. She
is too much down to earth for Billy. Meena is worldly wise and is a product of money machine culture. She wants nothing but money and glamour to which Billy is allergic. If he has a soft, tender and delicate heart and mind of a mystic and a naturalist, Meena is just the opposite of his temperament. She doesn't even attempt to understand Billy and establish a communication with him. This alienates Billy from his wife Meena and he seeks for an alternative to find his identity and quest for purpose and meaning.

In America, Billy's Swedish girl friend Tuula used to help him to come out of the strange hallucinations. Being a psychiatrist she used to advise Billy not to give free hand to them as they were very dangerous for Billy. In India, their frequency increases suddenly. Perhaps, he thought that his marriage with Meena would put a check of the hallucinations and Meena like Tuula would help him. But Meena could never establish a rapport with him. His marriage being a case of "uneven minds" results in utter failure. Later Meena realizes that she is incapable of handling the situation with Billy she complains of Billy's alienated behaviour which reflects through his loss of temper on minor provocations. Quarrelling "all the time", "snapping at everybody", remaining in a "dark mood", not touching his wife "for six months", always making fun of Meena, not keeping his promises to his wife and the sense of resignation in Billy, which is perhaps the result of losing the battle every time. Meena simply complains: "Things are falling apart"(74) and Billy is getting stranger and stranger with every passing day. She does not make effort to improve the situation. Thus, Billy's last attempt to find refuge also goes in vain and the second syndrome of alienating becomes even more pronounced.

Billy is not sensitive but also conscious of the identity of his being. He himself feels concerned with the eternal questions like who he is. Where he comes from? Where he is going? At a small age of fourteen. At this age he could realize that
something had gone wrong with his life. He goes on making efforts to seek his identity throughout his life which he finds missing every time. He tries to seek his identity in individuals like Tuula and Meena, in societies like the American and the Indian, and in civilization like the western and Eastern, but every time he feels frustrated and thoroughly let down. During all these attempts he moves away from his own self so much so that there is danger of his identity being lost. At such a sensitive moment of self estrangement, he listens to the voice of his other self. He has been denying it either in the form of curbing the hallucination, are coming back from Bhubaneshwar where he feels, he belongs, or the call from Bilasia. His other self grows even stronger and more attractive to his temporal existence, which ultimately makes him realize that he has been running after shadowy and illusory appearances. Billy readily responds to the call in the quest of peace and harmony to overcome the crisis he is undergoing. He finally decided to abjure this world to join the tribals of the Maikala Hills to find not only his roots but also identity. Billy Biswas disappears from the face of the earth and vanishes into the saal forest of the Maikala Hills. There he tells Dhunia, the tribal chief that he is fed up of the slimy bastards who are camped across the river and he is fed up of the millions who surround him in the wretched city where he comes from. Billy has failed in his attempt to find his roots and seek his identity in the city he hails from and among the people he lives. Now he has found the right place where he actually belongs.

Billy readily responds to the call in the quest of peace and harmony to overcome the crisis he was undergoing. He finally decided to abjure the world to join the tribals of the Maikala Hills just to find his roots and identity. It is in this place that he finds peace and feels that he now belongs. Dhunia, the tribal chief welcomes him as a Mahaprasad (an intimate friend) the so-called civilized world calls him a rebel
but the tribals look upon him as their friend. He succeeds in endearing himself to the tribal by curing Dhunia's niece Bilasia he makes a concerted effort to join the other world of civilization. This is not an impulsive action but a well thought out plan. Billy thinks over this question the whole night. His abandoning of the civilization can not be termed to be a simple case of rebellion of an angry child. Billy has first tried to find roots and identify himself with individuals, society, and civilization before bidding it farewell, because all of them have disillusioned him. It is only when he is on the brink of breaking himself that he decided to join the other civilization which welcomes his entry. Billy moves out of the civilization to which he is allergic and does it so deftly that he leaves no trace of his slipping away to the "world of primitivism". He gets its rumored that he has been eaten away by a man-eater. Symbolically, it represents the permanent breaking of bonds between the "civilized world and Billy" (Sharma 164). Billy is finally successful in his quest for peace and harmony. He has been able to pull himself out of the crisis he has been undergoing. Reaching there he feels quiet at peace with himself. He finds happiness and harmony in his life in the company of the tribals where he had adjusted himself properly. His behaviour is not deviant in the tribal society. He gives expression to his exhilarating experience “ It was that passing moment that rarely comes in a man's life, when he feels that 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 the poor reflection of a million others” (142).

Billy makes this statement in order to describe his experience of desire which was around at the sight of Bilasia. This is the whole experience of Billy getting his roots. Billy reaches a world of stiff competition he has abjured. The life in this materialistic world has become so obnoxious because of several complexes that when
a man reaches a place where people are so simple that he can look through their hearts, he cannot take human relationship for granted. Romesh wonders at this equation between human beings. Billy narrates to Romesh his experiences of happiness, peace and harmony in the tribal civilization. Billy is absolutely right because:

It is the ambition which alone causes anxiety and rivalry, makes one forget one's values and finally leads a person to alienation. And only a tragic and catastrophic end lies in store for an alienated man. It is in this friendly, simple, pure and disinterested atmosphere that new vistas of knowledge are open before Billy. (Sharma 171)

Billy is not only recognized as the king of that Chhattisgarh port but also a sheer endowed with divine powers. Even Romesh realizes his power of profound faith and unfathomed knowledge when Billy could almost the impossible by predicting rains when there was no sign of relief from scorching sun and curing Situ's migraine which had escaped cure in spite of treatment given by the doctors of the civilized world for almost ten years. These are only a few examples of the knowledge possessed by Billy, which is just like the tip of an iceberg of the knowledge acquired in perfect harmony by belonging to microcosm living and non-living nature and human beings. Romesh's wife Situ is tempted to send the news of Billy's reappearance to his father and his wife Meena. The alienation of Billy from his wife Meena is not only evident from their retrospective relationship but also from Reema Kaul's statement that Billy "had nothing to come back to" (91) which makes it all the more confirmed. Reema is so emotionally attached to Billy that she starts crying at the news of his death. Reema's statement mentioned above also proves that Billy is neither attached to his son, nor to his wife and father. He is completely alienated from all of them
because he finds himself a misfit, an alien in his own family. He suffers the crisis of
faith because his faith is contrary to theirs. He cannot hold himself long in this crisis
and so is in a perpetual quest for purposes, meaning, peace and harmony in his life.
So he has disappeared from the house as an anguished rebel.

On learning of Billy's reappearance from Situ, Billy's father, a retired civil
officer reports the matter to the Chief Secretary for a massive search of his
disappeared son. The Chief Secretary threatens Romesh, the District Collector and
empowers Rele, the Superintendent of Police, to make a hectic in the massive search
for Billy Biswas but they are unable to understand Billy's problem. They fail in their
effort because their approach is rational but Billy's problem is emotional. The
government machinery is an instrument to penalize people who revolt against the
norms of society. In their massive search Rele and his men trace the village of Billy's
residence where he lives with his wife Bilasia and his two sons but the villagers do
not give any clue of Billy's existence. It is most unfortunate that the news of a
constable's death at the hands of Billy aggravates the anger of the police and they fire
at a man in a tribal dress who is no one but Billy. Billy dies uttering "you bastards"(223) which show his contempt for the values of the civilized world, which
does not hesitate, even to snatch his life. The tragedy takes place when the so called
civilized world infringes upon the world of tribals. The tragedy takes place when an
established man is forced by the people whom he hates and abandons (and in turn
alienated himself) for their pity gains to uproot himself. Nobody realizes that Billy
was making a "search for truth" which is hard to come across and even more difficult
to understand. Billy takes the refuge in tribal civilization only when there is no option
left before him and there is every possibility of his breaking down. He seeks his
identity with the civilization, society, individuals and in the process feels like loosing
his own self and identity remaining rootless. He goes to the tribal world only to
discover his roots. He goes on making efforts to remain a part of the society and
civilization by pinning his hopes on individuals but fails in all his efforts so instead of
breaking himself he prefers to abjure the civilization as such to join the world of
tribals. Instead of feeling rootless, he feels established. But when some external forces
try to uproot him from there, he prefers dying to succumbing to their wish. After
Billy's death, the strange case has at last been disposed off.

theme of Alienation, search for identity and quest for meaning or purpose in life-
ultimately leading to harmony and peace as in other novels. Arun Joshi's fiction,
according to V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad, "explores the self and brings to the central
focus the way in which the self tries to access its involvement in the alienation from
the family and society"(Prasad, *Five Indian Novelists* 173). *The Apprentice* is the
story of a young man who out of sheer exhaustion of joblessness privation is forced to
shed the honesty and the old world morality of his father to become an "apprentice" to
the corrupt civilization. One is alienated in this "phony" world unless one accepts and
adjusts to "the guilt" of the modern society in order to belong (V.Gopal 217). Ratan
Rathore the chief protagonist after his initial hesitation submits completely to the
corruption of modern society and thrives on it. He hails from an impoverished middle
class family, finds his own way and pays his own price in this world. It takes almost a
life time to reject the "petrified and frozen" world of civilization for he is the child
with double inheritance: the patriotic and courageous world of the father and the
worldly freedom of his mother. She often reminded him “It was not patriotism but
money bought respect and brought security. Money made friends. Money succeeded
where all failed. There were many laws but money was law unto itself” (90).
Ratan torn by these two conflicting philosophies of life finds it extremely difficult from the beginning to live constantly in the petrified and frozen world of civilization. He has no other way but to keep up appearances and do away with the world of ordinary decencies. He, naturally, faces tension, resentment precisely because he has to put up with totally divergent social norms and expectations. He is convinced that life is characterized by chaos, absurdity, brutality, disorganization and insensitivity. As R.S.Pathak rightly observes, “Faced with the dehumanizing materialism of today, an unfortunately circumstanced person like Ratan, who is endowed with a heightened sensibility, feels crushed under the growing weight of meaningfulness and isolation from his innermost native and surroundings” (Pathak, *Quest for Meaning* 47).

Modern man may either try or adjust to the others, to society or the system, abdicating his true self, or he may strive to keep and develop his individuality and thus alienates himself from society. In Ratan Rathore we find both these types of alienation, he begins his quest with high ambitions and ideals to be honest, true to his self and, like his father make a mark in the world. But he finds himself misfit in the modern world. He has to abdicate his true self to fit in the corrupt society and make out a living. He is alienated from the true self in the process.

In his pursuit of careerism, Ratan submits himself to all sorts of corruption and to the ways that the modern world offers. His sense of individuality comes into conflict with the life of hypocrisy. He fully succumbs to the worldly pleasures. After feeling alienated from the corrupt society he has no other way left than to adapt him to the ways of the world. At every stage, he puts up an initial resistance only to discover the futility of his endeavor like so many of his kind. With his infused zeal, Ratan intends making a mark on the world, a mark as visible and striking as his father's. He
cherished the ideas of his father and even decides to join the army of Subhash Chandra Bose. His mother, however, vehemently dissuades him from taking such a step. She advises him not to befool himself because man without money is man without worth. Many things are great in life but the greatest of them all is money. In R.K. Narayan's *The Financial Expert*, the protagonist, Mergayya, comes to the same realization: "Money alone is important in this world. Everything else would come to us if we have money in our purse" (18).

Ratan leaves home in pursuit of a career in the metropolis of Delhi as it is a city of opportunities. To fail in Delhi would be taken to be the very sign of the greatest incompetence. Ratan failed to get help from his father's friends, contrary to his expectations alone, disheartened, deflated the world appears to him "as a bundle of mirrors tempting and some how held together. But on the brink always as if falling apart" (70). Ratan's humiliating experiences of job hunting make him realize the cruelty of the human lot. He himself becomes "at the age of twenty one a hypocrite and a lawyer, in short, a shame" (27). Getting a job is by no means an easy task, as no job could behead without maneuvering. The novel exposes the way vacancies are filled in offices. Ratan ultimately gets a job as a temporary clerk in a government house for war purchases, with the help of a room mate at the inn. No matter if it is a temporary one, Ratan looks forward to rise in life. Hence, forth, his only aim in life is to make his career and gain materialistic prosperity. In this rat-race Ratan quite often remembers the father's mocking reference to an average man's desire to prosper in life, to make a career with his father derisively called "bourgeois filth". The irony comes in full swing when his son denotes wholeheartedly in the building of his career by means fair or foul. He is, in fact, shattered by the breakdown of faith and suffers the crisis. Ratan has to agree to marry the Bosses niece in order to get confirmation of
his job. By now he has come to understand well that the world runs on the basis of deals. If men forget how to make deals the world will come to a stop. It is not the atom or the sun, or God or sex that lies at the heart of universe, it is deals.

Though Ratan progresses upward in rank, he becomes fraudulent and unscrupulous. The more money he accumulates, the more he is dissatisfied and the more he is determined to enjoy life. He confesses that he has become a master "Faker". He has added a new dimension to his life and has become a hypocrite at the age of 21 and a liar. He acquires a sense of docility and obedience. He readily accepts bribes and now owns a car, a flat, a refrigerator and also has twenty thousand rupees in the bank. During the time of Indo China war, Ratan feels strongly for his country which has come to such a sorry pass. He contemplates as to who should be held responsible for the debacle in the war: the ill equipped military or the impotence of the politician. And he comes to conclude that what is at the root of our downfall is neither the military, nor the politician nor yet the treacheries of the weather but the Indian character. In his essay on "Crisis of Character", he hits at the corruption in the society and describes the Indian people as glorious monuments in ruin. Ratan struggles through political and ethical questions involved when making war purchases until one day he comes in contact with Himmat Singh, popularly known as Sheikh and accepts a bribe from him. He becomes a "whore" in pursuit of his career and ends up by accepting a bribe when he least needs money. Ratan attributes this to the prevailing degenerated atmosphere. He finds himself trapped in the corrupt system where men are made in money or power as he has no other option. He thinks how he can be his own master when a system is his master. Ratan justifies his guilt and tries to seek solace from the living example of corruption prevalent in society of which he gives a vivid picture:
If I had taken a bribe I belonged rather to the rule than to the exception. Peons were frequently bribes so were government officials and traffic police man and railway conductors. A bribe could get you a bed in the hospital, a place to burn your dead. Doctors had a fee to give false certificates, magistrate for false judgments. For a large sum they declare wars. Men took the bribes to facilitate the seduction of their wives, women for seduction of other women. At this I knew and had known for twenty years. (112)

Ratan signs a deal with Sheikh at Bombay and takes a bribe for the supply of sub-standard war material. He derives satisfaction from the fact that everyone is busy amassing wealth by exploiting opportunities provided by the war. Some had started hoarding commodities such as baby food and antibiotics, in which there was bound to be black market. Even a member of parliament, a trustee of the Republic feels unconcern about the war,"Nobody lost a war these days," the MP said. "There were always compromises." To be candid, he whispered "who cared for wilderness that we were quarrelling over" (82).

Perhaps it is Sheikh who has penetrated the Indian reality more than anybody else. He remarks that the country has two kinds of people – the rulers and the ruled. The rulers are a fraud, phony who knows only how to make speeches and be cruel and the ruled are brainless. He despises both the categories. Before entering the deal, Ratan shows more reluctance for the fear that ultimately people would come to know. But the Sheikh admonishes him by telling that only fools like him believe that there is law laid down by God which they must follow. The most striking change in Ratan is his interest in wine and women. So for he has lacked courage to give vent to his desires but now he ogles at the women around. The war is allowed to be lost and the
Brigadier has a nervous breakdown on his return to home. During the war he had deserted the post due to the supply of defective war material approved by Ratan Rathore. Surprisingly the Brigadier happens to be his boyhood day's friend who has saved his life.

Ratan's morality is completely eroded. He cannot confess before the authorities and starts visiting temples in quest of peace, harmony and purpose. Even this he finds a priest to bribe him, in order to save his son, a contractor who used sub-standard material in the construction resulting in the collapse of roofs and was to face punishment. Ratan is shocked to know that even the religious places and men are not free from corruption. Even God can be bribed and pleased by gifts of black money to his temples where the priests themselves are corrupt like him. Ratan realizes the futility and hollowness of his whole life. Having lived for two decades, he is tired of body and spirit. Penitent after he learns that even the temple priest condones bribery so he takes to cleaning shoes of the congregation. Each morning before going to work he goes to the temple to wipe the shoes of the people and begs forgiveness of his father, his mother, the Brigadier and all those he has harmed with deliberation and with cunning. He thinks this symbolic act of penance will bring him forgiveness and humility. To Ratan though the future of the country appears gloomy and yet he has faith that the young generation might be able to stop the rot from contaminating the country. Arun Joshi pins his hopes on the new generation and ends the novel on a note of affirmation, “There is hope as long as there are young men writing to learn from the follies of the elders. Willing to learn and ready to sacrifice, willing to pay the price” (144).

Thus Ratan Rathore exhorts young men to rise to the occasion and make a start. It is never too late and late is better than never, Ratan, keen on finding out the
purpose of life, takes almost a life time to free himself from the shackles of the valueless urban civilization. He finally overcomes the crisis and is successful in his quest for restoring mental peace and harmony. He takes up the most difficult penance in the world- every morning on his way to office he wipes the shoes of the congregation out side the temple. The novel is a creative comment on the crisis of character. The crucial decisions may plunge the self into an unknown terrain where the self, the family and society acquire a new meaning. The new meaning emerges as a sort of cleaning of the soul, a therapeutic process. The self becomes an apprentice to itself so that it may explore the labyrinth which is it. Ratan, the narrator protagonist becomes an apprentice in order to learn the method of retrieving his soul. With deep remorse, he realizes the futility of life and decided to be of some use to others. He, finally, realizes that one cannot live for oneself because no human act is performed in isolation and without consequence. Therefore each act should be performed with a sense of responsibility. Hence out of an acute sense of alienation and a quest to understand the meaning of life Ratan undergoes "the sternest apprenticeship in the world"(V.Gopal 218). Unlike Billy Biswas who opts out of the modern world in a bid to seek his communion with the primitive world to seek mental peace and fulfillment in serving others in the humblest form in the symbolic act of shoe-shining and at the same time trying to keep himself untouched with the impurities of his modern world. The Apprentice exemplifies that the theme of alienation in Joshi has been growing right from his first novel, as it moves from alienation to community.

While Sindi in The Foreigner depends on his philosophy of non–involvement Ratan in The Apprentice holds on his careerism and involvements. Sindi gradually learns through his experiences in life that the real detachment lies in involvement. In the same manner, Ratan's sense of alienation of humanism and religion can be the
saving grace of mankind steeped in corruption. The novel is a study of the loss and the retrieval of one's soul. It commends the value of humility and self purification. The cause of alienation and inner emptiness of Ratan is neither the rootlessness of Sindi not the unusual urge of Billy. The compelling force of the civilized society, not only shatters the idealism of the young Rathore, but also makes him feel an alien, a misfit in the contemporary world and finally compels him to turn cynical and hypocritical. It presents the crisis of the soul and its effect to come out of it in quest of mental peace and harmony which Ratan seeks in shoe shining outside the temple gate.

Arun Joshi's fourth novel *The Last Labyrinth*, (1981), in addition to the other three novels is built around on the theme of human loneliness, "an incessant search for a meaningful stance of life"(Prasad, *The Crisis of Consciousness* 57). The quest for a definite meaning and direction in one life has been the primary concern of Arun Joshi as is evident from his novel. *The Last Labyrinth* offers an exploration of, "that mysterious under world which is human soul"(Sujatha 8). Som Bhaskar, the narrator protagonist, grappling through the labyrinths of human existence, takes us on a journey through the events of his life searching for a meaning of life and death. Som confronts the dilemmas and contradictions of his own beings, finding him lonely and alienated. The novel raises some pertinent questions about life and its meaning, and tries to unravel the still unresolved mysteries of God and Death. Man is basically a rational and social creature. Being a part of its social structure, Som Bhaskar, does not find himself at home in these religio-social norms. He feels uprooted because he wants scientific evidence for everything. Frustrated within himself, he finds this world alien. For him this world has no value, no meaning or truth. He is not able to find the cause of the "First Cause", i.e. where and when the life becomes an eternal journey from nothingness to nothingness leading to an existential dilemma. Men caught in this
crisis of faith strive hard to come out of it, questing hard to come out of it, questing for a purpose a meaning of life.

Som Bhaskar the chief protagonist, son of an industrialist millionaire, educated in the world’s finest universities, becomes lonely when his mother dies of cancer and his loneliness deepens further when his later father dies of a heart attack, leaving him a millionaire at the age of twenty five. Three months later Som gets married to Geeta, a woman of her choice. She is an extra-ordinary woman who bore him two children; His marriage is a happy one, as he can't imagine life without her, who is a loving and caring wife. Despite all material prosperity and a happy family life, Som feels "voids" in his life which he tries to fill up by acquiring the failing industries to enlarge his own business empire as well as lusting for new sex partners for his sexual gratification. He finds himself lonely even when he is with his wife, who reflects his feeling of isolation and alienation too, “I want, I want, I want. Through the light of the days and the blackness of my nights and the disquiet of those sleepless hours beside my wife, within reach of the tranquillizers, I had sung the same strident song: I want, I want, I want" (11).

Som has the means to possess almost anything he wants, but he suffers from a terrible sense of emptiness. He experiences meaninglessness in life which troubles him. Som's alienation and loneliness is neither physical nor geographical but it is spiritual. He suffers from alienation of the self and quest for a definite meaning in life which may offer him mental peace and harmony. The theme of alienation as rendered by Arun Joshi in the characterization of Som also runs in co-incidents with the works of the writer like Blake, Neitsche for example. Joshi too, like Lawrence gains an insight into his own spiritual dilemmas and their resolutions. At the age of thirty five Som is reduced to "worn out weary man incapable of spontaneous feeling"(114) that
he is haunted by the litany of "I want, I want, I want"(111). Without even knowing what he actually wants, Som Bhaskar suffers from the hunger of the body as well as the hunger of the spirit," and he wants to satisfy both without sacrificing anything, without making an effort to achieve a balance. He wants to meet someone who can solve the confusion of his life, his inner disharmony without being personally involved in what Joshi calls "the process of individuation", which is "a process for maturation or unfolding". Som is afraid of death as he says there is nothing he hates more than he hates the sight of death.

Som had earlier witnessed the death of his mother who died of cancer when he was young. She did not take medicine because the family believed that her Lord Krishna would cure her, so she flushed her pills away and the disease already ate away her lungs. Later he witnessed the death of his father who died of an attack. These two deaths which took away his parents and left him alone had left an indelible impression of "nagging fear of cold, cold-death" in his mind which worried him of his existence and a definite meaning in life. His fear of death was further deepened when he visited the Dargah at Aftab's request where the sight of graves reminded him of his preoccupation with death. It was here where he got an opportunity to be close and open to Anuradha whose beauty fascinated him and in sighted an urge to possess her permanently. Since then he started craving passionately for Anuradha to possess him and win her for himself permanently. Som Bhaskar undergoing the crisis of faith quests for peace and harmony. This is his quest for a purpose, for a meaning in life which may offer him peace and harmony. Som in agony of his desperate search for a right soul meets Leela Sabnis a professor of philosophy, "emancipator of women, married and divorced, believes in free love, harbinger of a new order of things, reformer of the body and a mechanic of the spirit, a good lover" (75). Who even fails
to solve Som Bhaskar's problem. Som is able to satisfy the hunger of the body temporarily by making love with Leela Sabnis, but his hunger of the spirit remains insatiated, for she has not proved to be the right soul for which he is in quest for. Leela Sabnis reads too much, she analyses too much but she understands little about the roots of the world's confusion. When Som Bhaskar asks her to tell him as to what she thinks is the matter with him. In reply, she says that he is much too high strung. Without reason, she says, he is a neurotic. Leela Sabnis ceases to fascinate Som Bhaskar because his hunger of the spirit remains insatiated and so their affair fizzles out after six months because the world of matter and the world of spirit do not meet in Leela Sabnis. He analyses the reason and explains, “In the world of matter we had fade on sex and how we were satiated. In the world of spirit we still enjoyed conversation. The two worlds did not meet, could not meet. What I needed perhaps was something somewhere in which the two worlds combine” (77).

This is what Som is in search for through out his life. This is what he is in quest which can fill up the voids in his life, which has made him restless, lonely, isolated and alienated from the world in which he lives, and also from his wife and children who are so dear to him. Even Leela Sabnis observes his alienation and loneliness which is not external but internal, of his inner self. The conversation between Leela Sabnis and Som Bhaskar reflects their mental state of alienation and loneliness as this theme has been recurring through out the novel in terms of the repeated use of the symbol "Labyrinth" and "voids". Leela Sabnis has obsessions for explanation like Som's father. She expresses her sense of mental isolation and gets out from Som. Leela Sabnis's psycho analysis, the various psychiatrists he consults and his doctor –friend Kashyap cannot help Som fill the voids in his existence. The fold of
"void" birth, copulation and death, is at the root of Som's obsessive cry, "I want, I want, I want" (11).

Som Bhaskar meets Anuradha of indeterminate age and origins, tall, beautiful and obsolete at Delhi in an Inter Continental Hotel on a conference of the plastic manufacturers association. She was accompanied by Aftab Rai, Som's industrialist friend. She was a film star for a short while but retired after she met Aftab for marriage. She assisted him in running his company. She was so attractive that Som was intentionally charmed by her enigmatic beauty. Som is infatuated by beauty and he lusts for her with feverish intensity. She becomes more and more the centre of his entire existence. He is relentlessly driven by undefined hunger which he successfully seeks to satisfy by possessing her permanently. He is prepared to loose anything to retain her love. In pursuit of her love, he frequents his visits alternating between Bombay and Benaras, where she lives with Aftab Rai in Lal Haveli. His initial aim is two-fold: "to capture Aftab's business and to satisfy his physical hunger for Anuradha, Aftab's mistress, who had inflamed him with desire during their first meeting" (20). On his visit to Benaras, Som Bhaskar is encountered with its narrow, dirty lanes, dancing girls and spiritual aura where Anuradha lives with Aftab, Gargi, Azizum and her niece in a large decaying Haveli. It is in this Lal Haveli that Som gets trapped and lost. He get caught in its maze and lost in its labyrinth.

In his pursuit for a definite meaning in life, copulation and death he gets trapped again in the same problem without finding an answer to his quest. He is trapped here "In a maze of narrow lanes like a fisherman's net "(37). He keeps on questing for mental peace and harmony by passionately pursuing Anuradha's love, but fails in his attempt to satisfy the "hunger of his spirit" though he is able to satiate "the hunger of the body" to some extent. Som finds himself isolated and alienated in Lal
Haveli even in the company of Anuradha, Aftab, Gargi, Azizum and her niece. Even here in Benaras, in pursuit of Anuradha's love, he finds his efforts meaningless and his quest purposeless. Even the dancing girls and Azizum's song fail to fill up his "voids" and the whole atmosphere prevalent in the Lal Haveli reminds him of loneliness and isolation. Som remains alienated and trapped in the maze of his futile attempt to quest for a definite direction and meaning in life. Som finds himself alienated among the members of Lal Haveli who appear strangers to him. He compares his loneliness and himself like "an ant threading through a maze" and his desperate but futile attempt to find a definite meaning or purpose in life. His aimlessness is further highlighted by the litany of "I want, I want, I want", without knowing what he wants. Som seems to comprehend life only in terms of alienation, aridity of feeling and a sense of inner frustration. V.V.N. Rajendra Prasad writes, The Persistent cry in the void appears to be "I want", which is juxtaposed what the whisper "I give" which constantly echoes in the labyrinth" (Prasad, *Five Indian Novelists* 126). This concern can be clarified by analyzing the character of Anuradha.

Anuradha is the daughter of a disreputable singing woman living in a house with one room in Bihar-Sharif. Every evening she used to sing for the strangers. One evening one of her customers refused to leave and stayed with her. He gave her a suitcase full of bank notes and a crate full of bottles to drink. Gradually she too got addicted to drinks. Later when he shifted her to his bungalow at Gwalior where they lived together and quarreled occasionally. He often insisted upon her marrying him but she refused on the pretext that she was already married to Krishna. So one night out of utter frustration, the man stabbed her twelve times with a broken whisky bottle. Anuradha, an orphan grows up under the guardianship of her aunt in Bombay who picked her up and put in a convent school for her education. Her original name is
Meera. The name is very significant because of the various visual and aural images of Krishna that proliferate through the novels text. Re-christened Anuradha, she spends some time in the film world and gets out of it with the help of Aftab Rai to be his mistress. Aftab brings her to Lal Haveli where he introduced her to Gargi, a deaf-mute, the daughter of a Sufi Pir, a devotee of Lord Krishna and worshipper of Sri Chakra. Her father gave Aftab her lost eye sight. She lived with Aftab Rai who treated her like his sister. Anuradha is a Labyrinthine woman at once young and old, ancient and modern, and furious in lust and divine in love. She is every man's woman and no man's wife. She tells Som Bhaskar: "I can imagine I am married to you. My mother used to imagine she was married to Krishna" (128). In this novel, the labyrinth earns the status of a metaphor for the various levels of consciousness immanent in the Krishna legend. Som Bhaskar's vengeful pursuit of Aftab's share takes him to the temple where Gargi lives. What he sees there is an old man making a hard journey with his grandson to breathe his last in full awareness of entering the realm of death. This sight reminds him of his question to Aftab while he was meandering through the meaningless flight of stairs.

In Joshi's novels, the juxtaposition of the void and the labyrinth images seems to suggest that there are two significant ways of making sense of life and the self. Life is not meaningful without the self's involvement in the family and society. He seems to suggest the theme of alienation and the encumbered self that has lost its mooring. In Joshi's novels this is signified by the void image. As Billy Biswas puts it, "any choice worth its name is drastic" (The Strange Case 190) and leads to a labyrinth. Labyrinths are meaningful and make sense of life. They offer a total explanation for life and flux. Voids and wastelands are at best only half –truths. Leela Sabnis, in spite of her adherence to her idea of life, keeps the two worlds – the world of matter and
the world of spirit – separate. While Leela Sabnis, a student of philosophy, fails to make sense of life meaningful, a fusion of matter and spirit, Anuradha achieves it and saves Som from certain death. Som Bhaskar in pursuit of his undefined hunger, lusts for Anuradha, yet she is not able to relieve him of his loneliness which is, of course, very internal.

Som finds his life "a mysterious world, as meaningless as the "holy bulls of Benaras"(108). He keeps on lusting after one woman or the other in search of spiritual as well as physical peace but fails to find the two in a single woman. He finds himself alienated even in the company of his wife who is not able to offer him both, the matter and spirit in unison. He finds himself lonely even in the company of family members. The communication gap between his wife Geeta and his children as well as his accounts officer Mr. Thapar, further deepens his sense of alienation and feeling of loneliness which develops in insomnia, “I had long spells of insomnia which left me drained and depressed. It was during one such low that, walking down the aisles of a book store, I ran into Leela Sabnis” (110).

So he took off with Geeta for Europe and America on a trip, presumably for business but mainly to get rid of his inner loneliness and to find mental peace and harmony with a definite direction in life. But even abroad he was haunted by the same obsessive thoughts and failed to find anything that could fill up his voids. Som Bhaskar, obsessed with the thought of Anuradha, lusted after her but realized how inadequate he was to deal with her when he faced her in the loneliness of that Haveli. Gargi, the daughter of a Sufi pir, the devotee of Krishna inspired him with her words: "Go with her, don't quarrel. She is your Shakti"(121). Som to this day did not understand what Gargi meant by that but the same night he realized how indispensable Anuradha was for him. Som passionately loves Anuradha. In spite of all
love making and the companionship of Anuradha, that she has, he still feels himself alienated and the loneliness within him still persists: "deep inside my heart I knew I was a leper, that I needed a cure"(126).

The affairs between Som and Anuradha gradually deepen and the secrets of Anuradha's life are gradually revealed. Som has started making a move to grab Aftab's company and in due course of time purchases all the shares to take over the company completely in his hands. He does it in order to wreck vengeance on Aftab because he is taking away Anuradha on a trip to Europe. This news shocks Som and makes him feel alienated. Som is unable to bear the shock of separation of his beloved Anuradha. He looses his stability but then he realizes that "womanizing and boozing" will not help him to settle the score. Som has a loving wife but still he does not want to lose his beloved. He can not free his mind of her obsession and as a result suffers from terrible loneliness by the thought of her going away with Aftab to Europe.

Som feels tired and high-strung at the thought of Anuradha in her absence. He is unable to resolve the mystery of reality: "reality was so like an iceberg. You never saw the whole of it"(161). Som finds himself alienated and lonely even in the company of his wife who is a modern, free and frank woman. Som becomes envious of her when he finds her becoming too chummy with a man and on such occasions he begins to suffer from loneliness as a result of communication gap. He speaks of Geeta, his wife:

She was quiet a sexy woman. She was used to sex a lot too . . . . a used to be quite jealous of her. At parties I did not mind her talking with men but I resented if she laughed too much or became too chummy. From out of this resentment I picked up quarrels with her. She didn't understand what was going on and that bothered her. (162)
Diametrically opposed in temperaments and convictions, as well as communication gap between Som and Geeta could be one of the factors of Som's alienation and feeling of loneliness from home and family which created voids in him. In such a crisis arising out of the conflict between husband and wife, Som at times feels resigned and longs for a final peace: "A peaceful death that is all I want. You are being torn apart by your own doubts. Your doubts are the wolves that are going to eat you up" (164).

Thus we find Som undergoing the crisis arising out of conflict between faith and doubt which is unable to answer his query. Rather leaves him confused and finally resigned to which he feels that "death" can be the only resolve. This also brings him to the realization that "I was frustrated until I remembered loathing for Benaras, for Lal Haveli" (164). On the other hand Aftab is happy to regain Anuradha once again from the clutches of Som who had badly influenced her. He remains happy to lose everything for the sake of Anuradha whom he finally posses. But Anuradha who deeply loves Som cannot leave him alone by erasing all the sweet memories of their past experience. So before leaving Som she hands over a package to him with a brief note which contains "I got this from Gargi. You must always keep it with you"(169). It is a silver statue of Lord Krishna which carries her perfume. That is the only gift he gets from Anuradha which inspired him, "to start a new life all over again"(169) like Aftab. Finally Aftab's untraceable share which was laying with Krishna, a man holding shares of Aftab's company and in the meanwhile Som decides to go to the mountains. On the way to mountains Krishna's temple in the hills, to get Anuradha's share, Som meets a boy who is searching for a special stone – a crystal pebble with a star. Som asks him as to how he would feel in case he doesn't find the pebble. In reply the boy says that in that case it will be all right. This incident brings
Som to a greater realization that even a small boy has a greater sense of detachment than Som himself who is in his relentless pursuit of Anuradha and her shares. Som is thus enlightened and his quest for peace and harmony in life is thus fulfilled. On reaching the shrine Som is surprised to find Gargi there. To his surprise Som learns from Dr. Kashyap that when he had an attack it was Gargi who saved his life on Anuradha's earnest request and she promised to leave Som for ever after giving his a boon of new life. Gargi hands over the package of Anuradha's shares to Som.

“I was going to take the shares . . . . and just not shares. My heart bursting with sorrow and my old demented love for Anuradha, I vowed was going to reverse the whole things” (208).

Som returns Aftab's shares and tries to persuade Anuradha not to leave him but she insists on leaving. The next morning he is informed by Aftab that Anuradha disappeared last night from the temple, when Janmashtami, the birth of Lord Krishna was being celebrated. Anuradha vanishes into Krishna, in the blue-man-high flame. The enigma of Anuradha deepens and Som continues to be frightened and shaken by the dreams of Lal Haveli and its death images. He is constantly "fleeing in the face of death. Tired of his angst ridden existence, Som pleads for mercy, “Anuradha, if there is a God and if you have met Him, and if He is willing to listen, then Anuradha, my soul, tell Him, tell this God to have mercy upon me. Tell Him I am weary of so many fears, so much doubting. Plead for me, Anuradha. He will listen to you” (223).

Som recognizes Anuradha as his soul-image, the mediator between him and God. So he is ready to die to meet God face to face, but his wife, Geeta saves him and ironically pulls him back to the world of doubts, insanity, voids and meaningless death. She brings him back from detachment to involvement, “Geeta watches me as I come in. I pull out the revolver, take a step towards the cabinet, then turn around and
put it casually to my temple. Geeta steps forward alarmed- puts her hand on my arm” (223).

Som fails or perhaps partially succeeds in his quest for meaning. As Indernath Kher rightly observes:

The novel effectively dramatizes man's struggle to authenticate him even though he negotiates most of the time in bad faith. It enacts the spiritual dilemma of a modernized and imperialist skeptic and his inner despair and anxiety. Geeta's undimining and unquestioning trust may restore peace and harmony to Sum's horrid life. (Kher 63)

Arun Joshi's fifth and last novel, The City and The River (1990) consists in its being a departure from as well as a continuation of Joshi's earlier fictional endeavors. It is a commentary on the times and a political parable. It presents a critique on the political sceneries of the time. There are obvious parallels between the emergency regime of 1974-75 in India and the one portrayed in the novel. The bulldozing of the poor people to widen a street reminds us of many such deeds in the name of beautification at the time of the emergency. The power-structure of the city bares a close resemblance to that of the emergency. The consolidation of power by the Grand Master to the extent of anointing himself as the king with unlimited powers is the reminiscent of the then dictatorial rule in the Indian History. The coronation of the Grand Master's son as the heir apparent is suggestive of the then Prime Minister's son becoming all powerful. Cruelty and coercion, violence and destruction, selfishness and corruption, hypocrisy and deceit dominate the political and administrative fabric of society in the city ruled by the Grand Master. The events portrayed in the novel are reminiscent of the days of the emergency in India, the after-effects of which prove as ruinous to the political image of the Grand Master as it did in the case of the then
Prime Minister of our country. The novelist holds the view that one who misuses power cannot escape punishment. Even if the wrong-doer succeeds in getting rid of all his worldly adversaries, the even handed Divine Justice comes forward to punish him. Thus, in so far as the novel exists as a powerful commentary on the political scenario of the past, the present and the future, it rightly claims a privileged place among the political novels of our literature. But in many ways it remains the continuation of Arun Joshi's earlier novels. It is an existentialist commentary on the absurdity of human situation. Like his earlier novels here in too, he continues to explore the hostile world. Critiques are almost unanimous about this aspect of his novels which have a distinguishing mark of their own. Madhu Sudan Prasad writes,"Arun Joshi's novels are singularized by certain existentialist problems and the resultant anger, agony, psychic quest and the like" (Prasad, An Anthology of Critical Essays 51).

Romesh K. Shrivastava observes: "Most of Arun Joshi's heroes are alienated beings"(Shrivastava, Six Indian Novelists 312). R.K. Dhawan believes that "Joshi's fictional world is a revelation of a world where man is confronted by self and the question of his existence"(Dhawan, The Fictional World 18).

In The City and The River, Joshi seems to be pre-occupied with certain existentialist issues. One thing new in the novel is that, here his canvas has grown larger. He turns his focus to the public. In stead of his pre-occupation with the existentialist predicament of an individual here he deals with the socio –political and existential crisis of the entire "city" and thus of the whole humanity itself. In this novel, too, he takes up his favorite existentialist issues of faith, commitment, choice, responsibility and identity. But the way he handles them is somewhat a different from that of his earlier novels. Here he looks into these issues with the spectacles of politics, equipment he has not been used to, raising the novel to the level of politico –
allegorical satire. The main plot of the novel revolves around the theme of power struggle. The Grand Master rules the city by the river and is determined to become its unchallenged king. His scheme meets with stiff resistance from the boatmen who refuse to fall in line with the seven Hills. Their refusal gives rise to conflict. The conflict between the city and the river, between the Grand Master and the boatmen, between the urge to dominate and the desire to assert one's identity. This conflict is the life and the soul of the plot. The atmosphere of the city is absolutely unnatural and chaotic. It reminds us of T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. In such a world as this the protagonist is bound to create his own values which determine the way of his life. Judged from this point of view, it is only the poor boat men living in the mud huts by the side of the river who lead an authentic existence. They are prepared to pay the price they are supposed to for the life they lead. They have the courage to be honest and bold. The novelist presents them as clearly as possible. What he wants to suggest is that the lower class and the middle class people lead a simple life. They do not protest but comparatively they are not so thick skinned as the people belonging to the highest class are. More often than not, the middle class men slowly come to confront the reality of their situation. They come to realize their hypocrisy and begin to live under the shadow of "bad faith". The highest class people most terribly lack in authenticity. They are the most corrupt and morally bankrupt. The Grand Master declares the era of Ultimate Greatness for the welfare and prosperity of the city. But the main motive behind the declaration is to consolidate his own position and pave the way for the realization of his dreams of becoming the king.

Now-a-days, with the rise of industrialization, commercialism and capitalism, the self is being threatened. Hence, the aspect of authentic existence has become an important issue and the question of authenticity against corrupting influences
operating in society is being dealt with domineeringly in modern literature all over the world. The novelist of protest and rebellion popularly known as "the Angry Young Man" in England and "Black Humor" and "Absurd Movements" in America underline the need to protect the authenticity of self against the pressing power of the state, the military bureaucracy and social institutions. In this novel, Arun Joshi has dealt with the universal predicament of modern man who is attacked from all sides by the forces that are working all the time to weaken him. The nature of the modern existence is expressed through the barren nature of the city where there is "so much water and yet no grass or flowers" (36). Like T.S.Eliot's *The Waste Land*, there is aridity and sterility in the city where the modern man is doomed to be dry, dull and disillusioned. Living as he does in the atmosphere of gloom, he is ever prepared for the tragic catastrophe. The city is doomed to destruction when the river becomes the enemy. But the mystic river washes away the sins of the city by the deluge and the cyclic march of humanity continues. On the ruins of the city, a new city springs up. The river flows on eternally and the city is ruled by another Grand Master and another set of councilors. The great Yogeshwar speaks of this cyclic march to the Nameless – One in detail. It is this repetition of things that imparts a new significance to life in the novel. The story ends where it begins and begins where it ends. To some one this replay, this repetition of things, might appear as a joke, but the conflict is perennial. The novelist seems to suggest his own solution to the problem arising out of one's awareness of the lack of purpose or meaning in life. A realization of the meaninglessness in life is a prelude to its diagnosis and cure. Becker holds that various states of alienation, including meaninglessness, tend to become in proper hands quests for value, significance and meaning (Becker, *The Birth and Death*, 3). In *The City and The River* "only the great river knows the true meaning" (228). The city, however, abounds in "tall structures of
steel and glass, but it is falling apart"(199). In this novel, Arun Joshi seems to suggest that the cure of all sorts of problems is to be found within oneself. Human heart must be pure and this purification can come only through sacrifice. Like *The Last Labyrinth*, this novel too, emphasizes the significance of prayer, faith, understanding and truth. Whatever life's problems are, we have no option but to trust and pray if we want to lead a really peaceful life. As Kierkegaard says: "Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays". Prayers and Vows perfect a person. In this novel Joshi puts forward his hypothesis through the Astrologer: "Ours is a spiritual civilization. It is through vows that a man perfects himself "(100). Understanding brings inner peace and enables us to learn only by ourselves. A clear understanding or intuitive self knowledge unfolds truth which "destroys the falsehood at its very roots, and leaves all men free to choose as they will"(112).

The novel explores the relevance of God to man and affirms that the world belongs to God and to no one else. "God is the highest trust as it is known to all of us"(70). He is the noblest thing each one of us can imagine. The belief in God restores peace to human soul. The only solution to life's problems lies in complete surrender to His will." In the great hand of God we stand and can only do our best. For the rest, it is His law and His will"(157). Although the skeptics like the Grand Master have their skeptical views regarding the existence of God, the final message is however summed up in the Great Yogeshwara's word spoken to the Nameless –one by way of consolatory advice, “In any case we are only instruments of the Great God in the highest heaven who is the master of the universe How perfect we are as instruments is all that matters. His is the force. But I shall be with you always” (262).

The nature of the novel is explained in the blurb of the book which reads as under:
Narrated with humor and gentle irony, *The City and The River* strikes an entirely different theme from Arun Joshi's earlier novels. At one level, it is a parable of the times, at another; it deals with how men, in essence entirely free to choose, create by their choice the circumstances in this they must live. *The City and The River* also explores the relevance of God to man's choices and whether all said and done, the world indeed belongs to God and to no-one else. (Arun Joshi)

Structurally speaking the novel has a prologue, an epilogue and nine chapters. The story is imbrued with an eternal significance. The scene of action is a no-where city. The two important characters in it are the ageless Yogeshwara and the disciple. The Nameless-one symbolizes the processes of re-generation and decay. The Grand Master represents the urge to dominate and the boatmen stand for the desire to assert one's identity. The story brings out an eternal conflict, a perennial tension; The River of life flows on and a new king, another hermit of the mountain appears on the scene to play their respective roles.

The atmosphere of the city described in the novel is absolutely unnatural and suggestive of something barren and dry. Nothing in the novel is suggestive of the vibration which both men and women need in order to be in harmony with them. Most of the people depicted in the novel are not guided by any ethical principles. As a result, they tolerate every injustice perpetrated on them by the Grand Master. There are few people who are concerned about the authenticity of their selves. One of them is the professor who gives up everything, including his life in search of his pupil Bhoma who is supposed to have been picked up by the police in one of their night operations. In spite of the warning to abstain from doing so, he goes on with his
search. Consequently, he is caught and made to suffer and one day he ultimately dies. The grand father, who rears unique roses on his farm in the barren city, is another person who dares to oppose the powerful rulers. It is he who keeps Bhoma at his farm and thus, risks his own life. Ultimately he along with Dharma and Bhoma dies in the massive attack launched by the armed forces of the Grand Master.

Thus, *The City and The River*, is far more optimistic than Arun Joshi’s earlier novels He holds that the element of evil does exist but it can not last forever. Moreover, since God resides in each soul, there is always room for hope. We never know when the soul of a Grand Master is touched in that hour and in that hour his life will be transformed. Joshi repeatedly reassures that "all should be well "(29), that there is a reason for everything and that time will settle everything. In the novel Arun Joshi faithfully depicts the moods of anxiety, alienation and boredom in the human world. The temperament of the modern man has proved congenial to existential passions. It is not surprising, therefore that in a world challenged by the extinction of certain existentialist writers like Nietsche, Camus and Sartre captivated human attention. Albert Camus highly valued courage as a necessity to face the radical in congruities of life and to affirm human dignity by rejecting the ultimate temptations of suicide and murder. The existentialist concerned to advance the solidarity of human kind through freedom of choice, love, and responsibility is further strengthened by the thoughts of Sartre and Camus. These existentialist writers see the existent individual confronted with the norms of faceless bureaucracy modern technical civilization and other static systems, and the confrontation usually results in the feeling of alienation, loss of identity and crisis of values. The affluent society, its ethics of worldly wisdom and its faith in material progress has deeply affected the individual's psyche and his consciousness. Man has been left in a peculiar situation and finds no exit from it.
With its emphasis or individual's consciousness and his subjective ethics, it is existentialism alone that offers modern man a new way of salvation.

Arun Joshi's review of human predicament assumes an existentialist pose when he pin points that identity human contact and meaning are all contingent to concede the basic facts of his existence. He is critical of the modern man who adores only material progress while plunging down deep into a spiritual abyss. Like Wordsworth he is extremely sorry how and why man cares only for his worldly advancements and never thinks seriously of his spiritual deterioration. He reveals an insight into the inner dilemma of his character and has pointed out the absurdity of existence which is made perceptible in a social context. His characters spell out the absurdity of the human condition wherein the modern man is a part of the world of his own making, of his own choice. Joshi's motif in the novel is quest for identity and roots, In *The City and The River* the cry for grace is established as firm faith that leads a human being to perfection. Joshi puts forward his hypothesis through the astrologer. He opines that the belief in God restores peace to human soul. The novel explores the relevance of God to Man and affirms that world belongs to God. The final message of Joshi seems to be that only solution to life's problems lies in complete surrender to God's will. He further states that God is the highest truth as it is known to each one of us. Joshi seems to be more drawn towards Kierkegaardian line of philosophic faith, "a metaphysic of hope" which is very much akin to Hindu thought that is essentially optimistic and never finally tragic. It so appears that it is the Hindu vision of life that offers solace and consolation to Joshi's mind and art.