Chapter II
Themes and Techniques

Arun Joshi presents various situations in his novels where he explores the predicament of man caught in the crisis of being man. Arun Joshi’s first novel, *The Foreigner* explores in depth the problems of Sindi Oberoi. The here has been rightly described as a 'perennial outsider'. Sindi is always lonely and ill at ease in the world which he lives. He belongs to no country, no people and regards himself as uprooted man.

Arun Joshi’s fiction explores the self and brings to a central focus the way in which the self tries to assess its involvement in the alienation from the family and society resulting in crisis of conscience. For example, Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* says:

I worked in New York for a few more weeks, just enough to finish the project I had started. As it had happened after Babu's death the laboratory provided me a sanctuary where I would forget my conflicts, at least in the conscious level. I felt as if some indefatigable surgeon was cleaning up my soul with the sharp edge of his scalpel. (207)

The above passage may be taken as a thematic statement of Arun Joshi's fiction. The exploration of the self is like a great therapeutic process. By narrating his own experiences Sindi Oberoi tells us how June, Babu, Mr. Khemka and his daughter, Sheila contribute in their own way to his understanding and awareness of the problems of the self. What is more, the passage seems to convey many levels of awareness through which he passes. Mr. Khemka's son, Babu, dies in a car accident in Boston. Sindi knows at the conscious level that he did not cause it. But an unknown fear haunts him. Perhaps it is this fear that converts the inner recesses of his mind
into a court where he is tried. But the oppressive nature of the trial takes a different shape because of the shock created by the death of June, who is engaged to Babu but continues her association with Sindi. The image of the indefatigable surgeon reminding us of Eliot's "wounded surgeon" (Eliot, East Cocker 147) concretizes the therapeutic process and disinfects the self. Sindi comes to India and meets Mr. Khemka, who offers him the post of manager in his firm. Pursued by a tormenting sense of guilt and uncertainty he feels that he tried to understand why he was afraid. It was not something physical. They couldn't put him in prison. He feared something much worse- the mysterious hands groping and probing into his soul suggests that evaluation of the self is a very painful process. Sindi seems to experience the reality of the process whenever he is alone. He has come to realize that the self is a sort of labyrinth, and to subject the self to groping and probing is to pass through a maze. Sindi finds himself in a situation where he fails to understand his own self and struggles to find his identity by resulting in conscience in crisis. The image of the labyrinth signified the nature and the function of the self. In this connection we may also note that the word 'labyrinth' and its analogues occur quite frequently in Joshi's text. The core of Joshi's functional theme consists of viewing the self as a labyrinth, and any kind of assessment that the self makes itself is a therapeutic process. This thematic concern in relation to his other novels is more or less identical. The Foreigner, while developing the theme of the self/ soul/ labyrinth brings to the fore the social framework within which the theme becomes meaningful. For example Sindi Oberoi tells us;

Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose, unless you would call the search for peace a purpose. Perhaps, I felt like that because I was a foreigner in America.
But then what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter? It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went. I hadn't felt like that when my uncle was living. It wasn't that I loved him very much or anything— as a matter of fact we rarely exchanged letters but the thought that he moved about in that small house on the outskirts of Nairobi gave me a feeling of having an anchor. After his death the security was destroyed.

(65)

The above citation is not remarkable for anything extra–ordinary but is significant enough to suggest an obvious case of rootlessness. Not only here, but in various other significant spots of the narrative the word 'Foreign' and its substantive forms occurs so as to make the term not just a label but an inclusive metaphor that governs and controls the narrative. Wherever he is, Sindi is a foreigner. The foreignness is not something external but something which the protagonist feels within. In other words Sindi feels alienated and the alienation is something that affects the self and makes it sad and subdued. From Kenya he moves to England and finally to Boston where he meets Baburao Khemka. Hired by the foreign student's office to look after the new Indian students, Sindi shows at least outwardly, his interest in India and the Indians who come to study in Boston.

From the start, Babu appears to be erratic in his views and statements. It is through Sindi that Babu comes in contact with June. When June tells him that Americans are not very congenial towards foreigners, Babu remarks that Indians are underdeveloped as compared to Americans. Sindi feels that it is the feeling with which Babu talks about his own feelings that make him very confusing, if not
embarrassing but, curiously enough, June likes Babu precisely for his unself-conscious expression of his feelings. As their intimacy develops, June finds it difficult to disentangle herself from Babu, but at the same time she finds it hard to dissociate herself from Sindi. Whether Sindi really loves her need not trouble us but when she asks him to marry her, he tells her that he is not the right kind of man for her. People like him are not really cut out for marriage. Sindi seems to have preconceived views about love. He ponders over his relationship with Anna, Kathy and June and wonders whether he was in love with any one of them at any time. Here we find Sindi talking like an existentialist. But this may be a misleading inference in the total context of Sindi's rootless and alienated self. The process of discovering the self exercise us a sort of a cleansing exercise and has a diagnostic implication. In understanding Babu's self created problems, such as his failure in the examination, his obsession that he thinks a lot about women, his commitment to his home and his nostalgic memories. Sindi tries to clarify the problematic of the self and says that for the first time in many years he finds himself thinking of the future. Babu wants to be intimate with June both intellectually and physically but is not sure about the kind of response that he will be getting from June.

After years of struggle Sindi had almost achieved what he had almost wanted to be without desire. But he had bartered away the gains in an attempt to possess a woman. He had exchanged the steady tranquility of his being for the transient moments of ecstasy in a woman's body. This confession of the protagonist arises from the fact that he may loose the company of June. It almost amounts to the self struggling to have and not to have the attachment with the flux of life. This tantalizing situation is made more complicated by the sympathy June shows Babu. She writes to
Sindi and confesses that she has been seeing Babu frequently since he left. He seems to be in such low spirits most of time that her heart ache's for him.

Babu is usually depressed because he is not doing very well in his studies. In this love triangle the victim appears to be June, whose system of preferences and priorities is meaningful within the frame work of human values and human relations. Though she gets engaged to Babu, the wedding doesn't take place because of Babu's obstinacy and his repeated failure in the University examinations. The situation becomes precarious when the university asks Babu to leave because he has repeatedly failed in the examination. Moreover, June becomes pregnant and Babu's taunting comments make her awfully unhappy. One day, in one of his irritable and nasty moods, he quarrels with June and leaves the flat, driving his car in a fit of rage and despair. He hits it to an over post and dies in the accident. Sindi breaks the news of Babu's death to June and sends a message to his father in India. Sometime later, June has an abortion and dies. These complications created by his affair with June and his relationship with Babu and their deaths cause an agonizing introspection in Sindi. As he puts it;

I was seized with problem of once again putting together all that had happened to me and coming to grips with life. For twenty years, I had moved whichever direction life had moved me. I had learnt much on the way. I had learnt to be detached from the world, but not from myself. That is when the fatal error was made and ultimately led to Babu's and then to June' death. (207)

The above crucial passage sums up the thematic concerns of *The Foreigner*. As we have noted earlier, a foreigner is not one who stays in a country not his own but one who suffers from a sense of rootlessness. This feeling inevitably leads to self
alienation and a crisis in conscience. If the self is detached from the world, it may gain a certain amount of objectivity and human prospective. But this is not enough if the self has to earn the awareness that would clarify the objectivity further and make it a mirror in which images of society could be reflected. Sindi comes to India and as the manager of Khemka's firm, gets closer to Babu's sister Sheila. It is by constantly talking to Sheila about Babu and by closed reading Babu's correspondence with his sister that Sindi discovers the disastrous consequences of alienating the self from its roots. It is Sheila's solemn and controlled sadness, now and then coming to the fore during their conversations that makes Sindi gain the human perspective and understand the meaning of familial relationship in the Indian context.

Arun Joshi's protagonists are highly idiosyncratic characters. The usual fictional themes we find in the Indian novels—for example, the theme of identity, the east west encounter, the rural India—do not appear in Joshi. Brooding and retrospective, Joshi's protagonist struggle to over reach the self. Sindi Oberoi, Kenya born Indian of doubtful parentage gets a doctoral degree in mechanical engineering from an American University, but his technical knowledge recedes to the background when he gets entangled in a mess of human relations.

Joshi's another novel called The Strange Case of Billy Biswas also aims at delineating the human predicament. Billy, the protagonist, like Sindi, is in search of human world of emotional fullness, a world of meaningful relatedness. Billy Biswas, a US trained anthropologist, in the novel, tries to harmonize his scholarly and human concern but seems to fail to achieve integration, largely because of the social hostility his actions create. The narrator of The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, at the outset of the narrative says:
Looking back---it is not so much the final resolution of his life that
interests me as I am intrigued by what preyed during the course of it. If
life's meaning lies not in these glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in
those dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish forever, hidden
from the dazzling light of the sun. I know of no other man who so
desperately pursued the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end. (8)

The narrator seems to suggest that life's meaning doesn't lie in the world
outside but within." The glossy surfaces " are contrasted with the "dark mossy
labyrinths of the soul ", this unmistakably suggests that the soul /self has innumerable
chambers whose significance can't be unraveled.

If one tries to pursue this kind of enquiry, society considers him strange and a
useful case for a psychiatrist. The narrator meets Billy Biswas in New York, where he
is studying anthropology. Though he comes from the upper classes of Indian society,
in America he lives in Harlem because he feels that America is much too civilized for
him. Even in America he keeps himself aloof and has only a few friends. He returns
to India to teach Anthropology in Delhi University. He marries Meena Chatterjee, but
their familial relationship goes wrong from the beginning. Billy's preoccupations are
such that he travels extensively and comes up with certain social facts that are not
normal. For example when Billy, his father and the narrator discuss a murder, Billy
says, “The point, however, is this: is it possible for an ordinary person a government
clerk to receive a message from a Goddess and, having received one, to pass into
another world, not for an hour or a day but for a week, a month, one whole year, at the
end of which he may return to his normal sate” (53).

Billy seems to be aware of the hostile attitude of society to any event which
has supernatural occult implications. When his father disapproves of his theory, Billy
tells him that it is only after it happens to oneself that one comes to believe. All he can say is that there are worlds at the periphery of this one, above and below it and around it, of which we know nothing until we are in them. Billy's father conducts a trial in which a clerk is accused of sacrificing a boy to propitiate the Goddess Kali in order that the clerk's young son, suffering from leukemia should get well. We are not concerned with the problem of justice the case brings to the fore; we are interested in Billy's response. The passage just cited simply demonstrates Billy's interest in fascinating for unusually psychic phenomena. His investigations as an anthropologist confirm his intuitions as a man and explain why his wife is not happy with him.

One fine morning he disappears and even the C.I.D investigations fail to trace his whereabouts. One of his girl friends Rima Kaul, who loved him passionately meets the narrator two years after Billy's disappearance and requests that the strange case of Billy Biswas be reopened. The narrator, who is also the Collector of Jhansi district thinks that it would be a futile exercise, but after reading the correspondence between Tuula and Billy sent for his perusal, he realizes that Billy's whereabouts may be traced .In one of his letters Billy says,“It seems, my dear Tuula that we are swiftly loosing what is known as one's grip on life. Who am I? Who are my parents? My wife? My Child? At times I look at them, sitting at the dinner table, and for a passing moment I can not decide who they are or what accident of creation has brought us together” (97).

The self questioning that is noticeable in this passage is caused by Billy's dreams in which he sees a strange woman who appears to be both familiar and unfamiliar. The narrator learns the significance of Billy's dreams and his psychic disturbance from Billy himself, when he visits a hamlet damaged by a terrible drought. Billy appears in rags and after exchanging formal courtesies narrates his
experiences since his disappearance from Delhi. In one of his expeditions to the rural areas in central India, when he was asleep he had a dream so erotic that it upset him. Pressurized by the psychic trouble and an inexplicable erotic compulsion, he sat under a saal tree and gazed at Bilasia dancing. Bilasia was a rural girl, whose face Billy could identify as that of his dream girl. Though he encountered a number of obstacles, he succeeds in marrying the village girl. Though he lives at the subsistence level, he is happy. He tells the narrator, “What kept us happy were the same things that have kept all primitives happy through the ages: the earth, the forest, the rainbows, the liquor from the mahua, an occasional feast, a lot of dancing and love making and more than anything else, no ambition, none at all” (148).

The narrator doesn't want to reveal Billy's whereabouts to his family, but social compulsions make him reveal the secret. The Biswas family got into action and in order to claim Billy not only for the family but also for the civilized society. They didn't succeed because in pursuing Billy the guards are compelled to shoot him sheer self defence:

The strange case of Billy Biswas had at last been disposed off; it had been disposed off in the only manner that a humdrum society knows of disposing its rebels and its true lovers. It is unlikely that Billy was unaware of all this when that torrid afternoon he for the first time stepped out of the sanctuary of the great god, of the primitive world who had until then guarded him as his own. It was also unlikely that he was not aware of impossibility in the world that he had abundant of saving men from themselves. It was this that made his end so unbearably tragic. (240)
The foregoing comments of the narrator suggest that Billy is aware of the hurdles he has to face when he leaves the primitive world to re-enter the world of civilization. We gather from the narrator's comments that Billy is more sensitive to certain experiences than to others. His affair with Rima Kaul and his marriage with a tribal girl suggest that he is prepared to take a great risk in order to test the validity of some of his institutions about life. After his re-entry into the civilized world, he tells the narrator:

Any choice worth its name is drastic. It is another matter that we whistle it down or gloss over it until it ceases to be drastic. Sometimes I think the human mind is equipped with built-in apparatus for compromises. As soon as you are faced with a difficult choice, this apparatus is switched on. Deep down we are afraid that the price of making such choices is terrible, not realizing that the price of not making them is even more terrible. (190)

The passage brings to a central focus the thematic complex of Joshi's fiction. The self/soul /labyrinth is placed at the crossroads where the conscious and the unconscious impulses meet. This we can say is a crisis which involves the self in personal and metaphysical dilemmas of existence. In Billy's opinion, the built-in apparatus for compromises with which the human mind is equipped inclines towards conventional expedients of the age, thereby suggesting the self's impotence to choose what is right. Billy calls this corruption, and adds, "What could be more terrible than corruption? (190).

Joshi's third novel, The Apprentice, elaborates the theme of corruption of the self in a society which is itself corrupt. Himmat Singh tells Ratan Rathore, "My soul was killed, and you put yours to pawn. But souls that were pawn could perhaps be
retrieved. May be souls are like muscles. May be to develop them one has firsts to put them to use"(146). The word muscles calls to mind the passage in *The Foreigner* in which Sindi confesses:" When I did go out I walked about the streets lost within my self from chamber to chamber and tissue to tissue cutting out much that was rotting. It was an awesome sight "(207). *The Apprentice* is a fictional experiment – a confessional novel which employs psycho-narration.

Ratan Rathore narrates the way in which he became a victim of corruption in a metropolitan society during the war between India and China. His audience is students, who just listen; the narrator himself puts the questions and expresses the doubts that may arise in the listener's mind. The narrative runs like a monologue of Browning, in which there is audience whose participation is just passive. The son of a freedom fighter who laid down his life for the sake of a cause, Ratan Rathore comes to Delhi during the later stages of the Second World War in search of a job. Through the good offices of a stenographer he is appointed a temporary clerk in a department for war purchases. His first boss, the Superintendent noticing his docility and implicit obedience, recommends him for confirmation. After his confirmation, Rathore becomes a careerist. He shamelessly pursues advancements in his career and agrees to marry superintendent's niece. Though all his colleagues call him a whore, Ratan Rathore turns a deaf ear to their sarcastic comments and concentrates on getting ahead of others in pursuit of his ambitions. As an officer in the military stores, department, he clears spurious war material after taking bribe from Himmat Singh, a notorious character. He has a friend the Brigadier, who absconds from the front when the Indian army is suffering reversal and humiliation at the hands of the Chinese. After the cease fire, the military authorities suspected that a shady deal was responsible for sending the useless war material to the front. Not only has it caused loss of life and disaster
but it also humiliates the country. Ratan Rathore is very much aware of this. The intelligence branch of the army suspects Ratan Rathore and authorizes an S.P. to interrogate him in a prison cell. But Himmat Singh, using his influence, gets Ratan Rathore's release from police custody. Meanwhile another serious situation develops. The military authorities institute a court martial to try Ratan Rathore's friend, the Brigadier, for deserting the army. The S.P. once again contacts Ratan and tells him that if he confesses his guilt, it may help the Brigadier escape court martial. When he makes a decision to confess, Ratan learns that the Brigadier has committed suicide. Immediately Rathore goes to Himmat Singh but Himmat Singh tells him that the secretary has double crossed him. He takes him to the secretary but by then Rathore's determination to take revenge on his betrayers looses its hold on him.

The above summary of the novel demonstrates the kind of society in which Ratan Rathore lives and pursues his ambition. The narrative is punctuated with words like "shame"," bogus", "whore", and other similar words. Rathore's father calls career making "bourgeois filth", the word filth occurs too often to go unnoticed. There is a close correspondence between the pursuit of career making we notice in Ratan Rathore and in Himmat Singh. Starting his career as a shoe shine boy, Himmat Singh becomes a pimp, a petty thief, a writer and finally involves himself in a minor black market racket. As the narrator puts it, “with the success of his rackets he was now face to face with the men who had had his foot broken, who had perhaps, made a whore of his murder. He had taken first to women then to drink and finally to drugs” (145).

The nature of corruption is such that not only persons like Himmat Singh, Rathore, the Secretary and the Minister, but the pujari in the temple which Ratan Rathore visits frequently is also not free from it, when his son's payment is stopped, he approaches Rathore for help. The pujari's son is a contractor and builds 300
quarters for slum dwellers in a record time. The new engineer refuses to pass the bills because he notices too much sand in the mortar. Even though Rathore tells him that his department is different, the pujari persists in his request. The pujari’s problem and the means he employs to solve it characterize a society in which all values are inseparably tied to the craft of making money. As it naturally happens the more the money, greater the frustration that accompanies it, the narrator in spite of his awareness fails to get out of the corruption racket. He finds his daughter and his wife always showing some sort of discontent. Even though he doesn't need money, he takes a bribe. As he reflects:

First of all I didn't need the money. I am quite sure of that, I needed no more than sitting here after two cups of tea. I may drink it because others do or it is offered free, but I need it neither for survival nor happiness. In this poor land I can be called comfortable, even well off. I have a car, a flat, a concrete roof, running water. My wife has sarees but she does not even use what she has. So, you see, I did not need the money. If I had ever needed money it was when I had been offered it the first time the contractor and I had refused. (61)

The passage while revealing the tormenting and tortuous examination of the self when it is sorting out its own problems, unmistakably suggests some of the civilized values which continue to exist in a metropolis. The self analysis makes the narrator discover that along with money one involves oneself in other new distractions like women and power, and becomes crazy about brand new enjoyment. At one place he reflects, "The more money I accumulated, the more I was dissatisfied and the more I was determined to enjoy life. And all the time thought of death"(89). The word "death" suggests that distracted life is the death of the self. This may look
like a philosophical common place, but a close look at *The Apprentice* reveals that these are ways of coming out of death. As we have noticed earlier, retrieving souls that are pawned is a painful process. The narrator /protagonist become an apprentice in order to learn the method of retrieving his own souls. Without entering the temple, he wipes the shoes of the congregation. He tells himself, "be good, be decent and be of use. Then I beg forgiveness: of a large host my father, my mother, the Brigadier, the unknown dead of the war or, of those whom I harmed with deliberation and with cunning"(148).The process of activating the self in this solemn mood of penitence which we have already noticed in the protagonist of *The Foreigner*, Sindi Oberoi amplified and given a symbolic resonance in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and in *The Apprentice*.

Joshi’s Sahitya Academy Award winner novel, *The Last Labyrinth*, probes into the turbulent inner world of an industrialist, Som Bhaskar who becomes a millionaire at the age of twenty. He is constantly tormented by a great roaring hollowness inside his soul. His flourishing business is reduced to a big mess on account of his infatuation with Anuradha. In all his novels Joshi employs first person which is disapproved of by Henry James, the champion of the well made novel. As Percy Lubbock says:

> it is very useful for enhancing the value of a picture, where none but the pictorial method is available, where we are bound to rely on intervening story teller in some guise or other, it is much more satisfactory to know who the story teller is and to see him as a part of the story, then to be deflected away from the book by the author. (Lubbock 140)
A significant point that Lubbock makes in the above citation is that telling his own story within the framework and conventions of realism, the hero or the protagonist cannot cover himself. In the three novels of Joshi, we have just discussed, the first person narration has restricted the meaning and the scope of the hero's role, thereby curtailing the significance of the novel as a whole. In *The Last Labyrinth*, Joshi seems to find a solution to this creative problem. He employs symbols well known in the western literature and invests new meanings on these symbols. As Gabriel writes, "from the cunning passages contrived corridors and issue of 'Gerontion', through the mazes of Kafka, Proust, Becket and Borges, The Labyrinth has been the favorite image of modern literature" (Gabriel 314). The myth of The Labyrinth has been creatively used and variously interpreted by the writers mentioned in the above citation. The traditional reading of the myth brings out worth of man as a hero and a quested. Borges in his story "The House of Asterion" de glamorizes the hero's triumph. Borges story emphasizes the essential loneliness of man and the pitable nature of his existence and the brittleness of all speculative instruments that analyze it. The profound implications of the tale are suggested in what Theseus tells Arinandne, "the Minotaur scarcely defended himself " (Borges 172).

It looks as though the relevance of the Cretan Myth to our own time consists in the Minotaur's awareness of his loneliness and conscience in crisis and not in the triumph of Theseus. The Borgesion reorientation of the Myth is relevant to our understanding of Joshi's *The Last Labyrinth*. The theme of alienation and loneliness in *The Last Labyrinth* is repeatedly suggested by the frequent use of word "void". For example, Som Bhaskar, while crossing the Manikarnika reflects:

and here on Manikarnika where voids with a bang, both within and without. That was probably how it had always been except that I had
been too cocky to notice. You have to have a little incident or get a telephone at midnight about so and so popping off or catch your wife with another man or to be told you have cancer to see the voids within.(52)

The above passage brings into the fold of void birth, copulation, and death. It is at the root of Som's obsessive cry, "I want, I want, I want." The following dialogue between Leela Sabnis and Som repeats the point, "I am not fond of you, she told me one evening. That would be lying, but I am concerned, I am worried. Tell me, what makes you tick." Like the other Protagonists of Joshi, Som Bhaskar seems to suffer from an excessive and unwarranted introspection. In one of his introspective moods he picks up the image and the passage has a diagnostic implication:

I had failed to make Geeta happy, be anything more than a stranger to my children. My friends thought me a nut. I had been neglecting my companies. I had not even got over my mother's death or my father's death or the oppressive turbulence of the voids that never let me alone. Then there was greatest sorrow of them all and that was the sorrow of idleness. (109)

Leela Sabnis's psycho-analysis, the various psychiatrists he consults and his doctor friend Kashyap, can not help Som fill the voids in his existence. The specificity and the evocative brilliance of the void image are comparable to the Borgesian story mentioned earlier. But Joshi uses "labyrinth" as a metaphor that signifies soul/self not only in this novel but in his other novels also. In *The Last Labyrinth* it appears as a creative comment on the void image. Som's voids, obsessions and fornications disturb Aftab Rai, Anuradha and their residence, Lal Haveli in Benaras. When he visits Aftab Rai's residence for the first time, Aftab tells him that "It is all run down now, this haveli but its labyrinth remains"(37).
Death appears to be the dominating motif in the text and recurs in crucial contexts. Som Bhaskar seems to sink in the voids within and make a desperate attempt to disentangle himself from the voids without. His consciousness, in its attempt to over reach itself for a total explanation of the void gets stuck in the Labyrinth which Aftab, Anuradha and Gargi find meaningful in terms of their private vision. The death motif is amplified in the text so as to make it converge on the Labyrinth image, as for example in the following passage:

Was this maroon blue room a part of the labyrinth too? If so, what was I doing here amidst these strangers? If some one man or god had watched my life from a great height, would I have appeared to him like an ant threading through a maze. This, then, was a labyrinth too, this going forward and side ways of the mind. I felt again the faint stirrings of a curiosity that I had first felt near the marble sarcophagus, a secret curiosity that I dare not share with another. (53)

In the passage, the central images of the novel are subtly brought together. Som Bhaskar's cry, "I want. I want. I want" points to the void in the back ground. The image "an ant threading through a maze" and the word "miracles" bring the labyrinth to the foreground. The miracle is associated with Gargi who is a deaf mute. But she communicates through signs, gestures and writing. The daughter of a Sufi peer, she is a devotee of Lord Krishna and worships Shri Chakra. We learn that her father gave Aftab his eyesight. Her grandfather had promised God his life if God spared his son's life, the son lived and the father died. Anuradha gives up Som Bhaskar in order to make Gargi give him a new lease of life, Som's escape from certain death caused by a stroke is indeed a miracle. His wife, Gita and his physician, Dr.Kashyap and Som go to the hill temple to receive Aftab's shares from Lord Krishna (i.e. from the temple
authorities). Kashyap tells Gargi, “I am a medical doctor. I do not believe in things in which Anuradha believes. But I know for a fact that Som had no chance whatsoever and want to know. Did you save him? Som would be dead either way. Is this true? Please tell me” (206).

But Gargi refuses to give any positive reply. From the foregoing analysis it follows that Som's voids are not unreal. He seems to comprehend life only in term of alienation, aridly of feeling and a sense of inner frustration. The persistent cry in the void appears to be "I want", which is juxtaposed with the whisper "I give", which constantly echoes in the labyrinth. This can be clarified by analyzing the character of Anuradha.

Anuradha is the daughter of a disreputable woman, who was killed by one of her desperate lovers with a broken whisky bottle. Anuradha, an orphan, grows up under her aunt in Bombay. Her original name is Meera. The name is very significant because of its various visual and aural images of Krishna that filter through the text. Rechristened Anuradha spends some time in the film world and gets out of it with the help of Aftab Rai who introduces her to Gargi. She meets Som Bhaskar in one of the meetings of the share holders connected with the production of plastic goods. Even in their first meeting she fascinates Som, and he is prepared to loose anything to retain her love. Whatever her endowments may be, Anuradha is a labyrinthine woman, at once young and modern, and furious in lust and divine in love. She is everyman's woman and no man's wife. She tells Som, "I can imagine I am married to Aftab. I can imagine, I am married to you. My mother used to imagine, she was married to Krishna"(128).

We may add that she is also married to Krishna. In Joshi's novel The Labyrinth earns the status of a metaphor for the various levels of consciousness. As
Som Bhaskar puts it, "There was nothing simple about Krishna. Had it been so, he would not have survived 10,000 years. He would have died along with the other Gods. Krishna was about as simple as the labyrinth of Aftab's Haveli" (173). Som Bhaskar's revengeful pursuit of Aftab's shares takes him to the hill temple where Gargi lives. What he sees there- for example, an old man making a hard journey along with his grandson to breathe his last in full awareness of entering the realm of death – makes him think of his question to Aftab and Aftab's answer: "And what is in the last labyrinth? ---In the last labyrinth?" "Yes" "Why?" "Death of course"" I looked at him puzzled." "I meant the labyrinth of this house" (37).

As we noted earlier, in discussing the apprentice, the self, in shaping and learning the art of retrieving itself from voids, may sometimes enter a labyrinth, which is the metaphor for itself. In Joshi's novels the juxtaposition of the void and the labyrinth images seem 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. As we have seen in Burges's retelling of the Cretan myth, there is a shift in the meaning and the perspective of the myth. The Minotaur is not a monster imprisoned in a labyrinth. He seems to suggest the theme of alienation and the imprisoned self that has lost its moorings ever since the death of God. In Joshi's novels, this is signified by the void image. As Billy Biswas puts it "any choice worth its name is drastic and leads to a labyrinth". (The Strange Case 190)

Conventional expedients of the age lead to a void. 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. The labyrinth as a metaphor for the various levels of awareness the self can attain is not without echoes of Mino's legend. The Minotaur that one has to face in life's labyrinth is ultimately the self. Lila Sabnis in
spite of her adherence to Descarte's Cogito keeps the two worlds - the world of matter and the world of spirit separate. As Som puts it, "in the world of matter we had fed on sex and now we are satiated. In the world of spirit we still enjoyed conversation. The two worlds by her lights did not meet"(81). While Leela Sabnis, a student of philosophy fails to make sense of life and fails to make Som's life meaningful, fusion of matter and spirit, Anuradha achieves it and saves Som from certain death.

Arun Joshi's themes have contemporary relevance and socio-cultural significance. The Apprentice, for example, is a creative comment on the crisis of character with which we have been familiar for a long time. But what we should not forget in reading the novel is its claim to be considered a novel, not a sociological study of the roots and causes of corruption. This observation applies with equal force to the other novels as well. The strange case of Billy Biswas is not about the manners and customs of the primitive tribes in Jhansi district but about Billy's sensitive response to certain unusual psychic phenomenon and his whole hearted pursuit of the meaning behind them. The narrator finds it difficult to convince his father and his wife that Billy's desertion of the family and society was prompted by some incoherent spiritual pursuit. They feel that:

Billy had probably done something undesirable on a momentary impulse (I think she had something sexual in mind), something even more degrading than his affair with Rima Kaul, and did not have the courage to face his family. He might even have done it under duress. All along he had wanted to go back to them but was not sure how he would be received. (206)
But the narrator readers know the psychic compulsions behind the leap by Biswas into an unknown region. Explaining to the narrator the peculiar situation, Billy says:

It was as though a mastermind had arranged the whole thing to give me a preview of what awaited me if I continued to defy its call. Poor Rima had crystallized for me the alternative, although I did not realize this until. I sat outside my tent that fateful night. I had two clear choices: I could either follow this call, this vision, whatever the cost or be condemned to total decay. I suppose most men are faced with similar questions sometimes or the other". (189)

As we have noticed earlier, the choice to make a leap so that the self may be retrieved from decay is brilliantly exemplified in Anuradha, in *The Last Labyrinth*, when she takes the painful decision of snapping her links with Som Bhaskar so that he may live. These crucial decisions may plunge the self in to an unknown region where the self, the family and society acquire new meaning. The new meaning emerges as a therapeutic process, a sort of cleansing. The self becomes an apprentice to itself, so that it may explore the labyrinth which is it. As Ratan Rathore frankly confesses "then there is another thing that my father used to say something in fact that his father had told him. Remember, he would say, whatever you do touches someone somewhere". *(Apprentice 149)*

Thus Arun Joshi’s novels dramatize the truth embodied in Rathor's confession by forging an aesthetic pattern in which we come across dreams, stories within stories, characters experiencing hallucinations and visions verbalized and reconstructed Arun Joshi has produced very compelling works of fiction sensitively alive to predicament of modern man, Joshi has ably delineated unfortunate
consequences 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 character and demands of society in which modern man is doomed to live. This awareness of man’ rootlessness and consequential anxiety is the keynote of Joshi's unique vision of the plight of modern man. His novels delineate human problems rather than issues arriving out of ephemeral loyalties. Joshi marks a definite departure from the general run of Indian novelists in English and his experimentation in themes has added dimensions to the art of novel.

Lionel Trilling is of the view that the novel is a perpetual quest for reality and that it is "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. Joshi has chartered in all his five novels the inner crisis of the modern man. The most besetting problem that man faces today is the problem of meaninglessness. This problem is so pervasive that it threatens to corrode every sphere of human life. It has been treated in considerable detail in American and European literature. Its treatment by Indian novelist like Joshi is no less interesting. Man fails to perceive today the very purpose behind life and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world. Not with standing unprecedented scientific and technological advancements which have added immensely to his physical pleasure and comforts, the contemporary man is doomed to find himself in a tragic mess. The prevailing economic conditions resulting in the stark poverty of the common people and the economic squeeze of the middle class on one hand and the economic affluence of the newly rich on the other, the drag of social connections and traditions, the fast changing value system consequent upon the impact of rapid modernization arising from many factors – all these make increasing
and often disturbing demands on individual and contribute in their own ways to his sense of meaninglessness of life.

Painfully aware of his precarious position, man experiences severe limitations in today's set up and an acute terror of the world appeared to threaten his existence man is shocked to find that he is no longer the master of his destiny and that there are forces which are out to destroy 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"(Mills 157). In fact, the absence of meaningful relations is the greatest curse of this age. The pervasive sense of meaninglessness is thus the most dominant feature of the human condition in the contemporary epoch. The plight of the modern man has been discussed by Simon under a set of five interrelated operational conditions, such as powerlessness, normlessness, isolation, self estrangement and meaninglessness, which he considers to be different forms of alienation. He analyses the search for meaning in terms of "functional rationality" as functional rationality increases, there is a parallel decline in the individual's capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of ones own insight into the interrelations of events. This state of affairs is most likely to generate feelings of authenticity and meaninglessness.

The existential states of disappointment, isolation and meaninglessness have received adequate attention in the west. All sensitive people 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 an ugly 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". 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" (Anant 61).

Certain recent novelists in English have made significant effort to delineate the predicament of the modern man. The work of Arun Joshi in particular reads like the spiritual Odyssey of the 20th century man who has lost his spiritual moorings. Despite some differences in their approach all the Joshi's heroes are "men engaged in the meaning of life" (Jasbir 52). The novelist has tried to project through their experiences the crisis of the urbanized and highly industrialized modern 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.

Joshi's latest novel called *The City & the River* continues to treat in its own ironical manner the predicament of his character in a hostile world. The crisis of the individual however has been replaced by the socio political crisis of the city, which is a conglomerate of individuals and can be said to represent the whole humanity. In this novel also Joshi poses significant questions about identity commitment and faith. But these questions are approached from the stand point of politics. The novel also throws significant side lights on the relevance of meaning in life. The plot of the novel revolves around the familiar theme of power struggle. The Grand Master, who rules the city by the river, is determined to become unchallenged king. His intentions are reinforced by the existence on an old prophecy. The prophecy is, however, read differently by the palace astrologer and the Hermit of the Mountain. The ensuing events are highly complicated by the Grand Masters over ambitious councilors, the defiance of people like Bhumi Putra which literally mean the son of the soil, and the rebellion of the boatmen who owe their allegiance only to the great river and are willing to die for the allegiance. The river to them, as the Headman says," is highly
sacred; it is a symbol of the divine mother." The novel is imbued with universal and eternal significance. The action of the novel takes place in a Nowhere city. The two important characters in it, the ageless Yogeshwar and the Nameless-one, symbolize the process of regeneration and decay. The Grand Master and the boatmen represent the urge to dominate and desire to assert one's identity respectively. The cyclic march of humanity continues, a new city is born like phoenix on the ruins of the old. The river of life flows on and a new king and the hermit appear on the scene to play their roles. This is probably the most significant part of apparently irrelevant and meaningless life. Although the novel is a political allegory, it can be read as a commentary on life. For common people, life is merely a strange tale comprising pointless episodes. The novelist seems to suggest that, with sincere efforts, one can make one's life meaningful. There is no dirt and misunderstanding between two individuals guided by the sincerity of their beliefs. Interestingly enough there are frequent references to life's meaning and the purpose. Most thing, persons and acts in this purposeless world are thus said to have purpose of their own. The change in the novelist's attitude is also brought out by mentions of context and cosmic harmony and other such things. The celebrations held in connection with the festival of the river fail to arouse the desired response because they have moved away from their roots, being simply the product of the heated imagination of the Astrologers and the Grand Master. On the contrary the boatman's rebellion has a meaning behind it. The narrator in the novel also mentions an occurrence which proves that according to the novelist public funds are misused by some rulers to gratify the needs, the wishes or even whims of their near and dear one, rather than the needs of the people. In this novel, the road called the Avenue Great River is straightened because the Grand Master's wife wants it to be for no reason other than one of having a nicer view. Even though this involves
making people living there lose their homes and hearths. It is sheer tyranny to deprive people of their homes and hearths only to make the view look nicer to the ruler's wife. Views do matter, no doubt, but they do not matter more than homes and hearths. That efforts are made by rulers to cajole people to continue tolerating poverty in the name of leading a life of spiritualism has been shown in the novel when the people who have been deprived of their homes and hearths are urged to accept poverty on the ground that they belong to a country the civilization of which is spiritual rather than material, as if spiritual civilization fails to provide people even home and hearths. Here spiritualism is being used as a narcotic to keep people homeless and reminds one of the religion which, as Karl Marx put it; "was made to work as opium".

Another political malpractice hinted at in the novel is the authorities manipulating the prices and the task of commodities in order to earn money for the state or for oneself. It is this malpractice that has been hinted at in the following piece of conversation between pinstripe and the minister for trade. Pin stripe went on: “In the light of the approaching festival of the river cooking oil can bring excellent revenues. Prices can be pushed very high if the produce of the gold mines is cornered. I shall do what I can do" (64).

A government needs money, no doubt but its role is different from that of a trader. Yet another political malpractice presented here is the ruler's declaring that peoples demands will be accepted even when he has no intention to implement decree and thus cheating people. Malpractice has been employed when the Grand master instructs the Astrologer to issue a decree but not to think of implementing it. The ruler who makes arrangement of this kind is a cheat rather than a statesman. The malpractices employed by a ruler in order to eliminate dissent, as presented in the novel are again various. One of them is using coercion in order to frighten people into
loyalty. In this novel, a large number of boatmen are sent to prison only because they refuse to declare that they are loyal to the Grand Master. The Boatmen are arrested not because they have committed any crime but because they have refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Grand Master and have raised a voice of protest against the Grand Master's hypocritical announcement of the beginning of "the era of ultimate greatness".

Another such malpractice presented here is one of restricting the freedom of the press and not letting any independent newspaper flourish. It is this state of affairs that prevails in the Grand Master's city in the novel. The fact has been brought to light by the little star who informs the professor that there are two newspapers in the city. One of them is owned by a trust of which the Astrologer is the head, the other owned by a girl who is five years old and cannot manage a newspaper. It is managed for her by the Master of the Rallies. The master of Rallies also controls the satellite on the Grand Master's behalf because the satellite is his private property. It is almost impossible for people trying to find facts through newspapers and radio to find them in a country where such a situation is prevailing. Here people can know only the establishment's version of facts. Since most people are too credulous to distrust the press and the radio, they are misled into accepting the establishment's version and taking fiction as facts. In the novel, the Grand Master and his men are successful in spreading the fiction that master Bhoma has hatched a conspiracy to unseat the Grand Master. The press is further restricted in the novel by forcing news men not to use their papers against persons in power. Another malpractice adopted to discourage dissent is that of harassing dissenters and causing those inconveniences in one form or another. It is this malpractice that has been highlighted in the novel when the Grand Master gets the boatman's musical instrument destroyed only because he himself is
allergic to music. Yet another such malpractice is that of creating a phobia of external threats. It is this malpractice which the astrologer takes resort to when he cautions the people of the city against danger which is nothing but a figment of his imagination. A barbarous malpractice adopted here in order to suppress dissent is one of disabling dissenters. The malpractice has taken the form of blinding the Headman, the Lady Chief of the Boatmen. Still another political malpractice to discourage dissent presented here is that of the ruler's trying to restrict the growth of the population of the section of the people who are not loyal to him. The Grand Master tries to freeze the population of the boatmen, as they are politically conscious that at the slightest excuse they indulge in rebellion. The novelist rejects the very logic behind the philosophy of population control when he says through this headman that nothing comes into this world without God's will. One more malpractice to discourage dissent adopted here is that of laying the blame for every unhappy incident at the dissenter's door irrespective of facts. The wrong doer blames the victims even for his own repressive measures and, thus, tries to direct the edge of people's anger towards the dissenters. The fact comes to light when one finds the great master blaming every boatman for his having been using the police and the army against the latter.

The responses of the ruled, is presented in the novel range from total surrender to armed struggle. They can be grouped into to broad categories namely those of non-resistance and resistance. The path of surrender falls in the first category and that of struggle of any kind active or passive, physical or intellectual, literary or non literary can be included in the second category. The path, the common people other than the boatman chooses to adopt is that of non-resistance. We can conclude that the great Yogeshwara's words, "it is ruled any another grand master, which of course, need not always happen," (262) signify that the novelist does not regard it as inevitable for one
to behave like other grandmaster of the novel and so he does give a grand-master freedom of will to choose, to behave like this grand master or otherwise. One naturally comes to the conclusion that the fault is with the post rather than the person holding it.

Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner* examines the problem of isolation and involvement of man's despair at being unable to find a meaning in existence and attempts to explore its course and cure. The novel has remarkable degree of maturity and technical competence. Fiction is "movement"(Robert 15) says Robert Scholes. A story is a story because it tells about a process of change. A man's situation changes or our understanding of him changes. These are the existential movements of Fiction. The action in the novel has a definite movement despite the fact that Arun Joshi has used the techniques of flash back and perceiving things through the eye of the protagonist. After coming back to India Sindi looks back at his life and events in Boston and London and thus, the present grows out from the past, and past directs the present. Further the qualities the novelist attributes to his character determine the action and the action in term of progressively changes the character and thus the story is carried forward to the end. Thus *The Foreigner* has a beginning middle and an end. The language is well suited to the narrative imparting seriousness to the novel. Most of the images in the novel are related to death and are from technology as Joshi himself admits, "the world which I knew well is the industrial world which has not so far been handled as a novel” (Purbi,The Sunday Statesman).The author uses metaphors and symbol for variations of mood and intensity of emotion. Sindi Oberoi, the main character in the novel is akin to a tree without roots. He is an orphan whom the only reality of his parents is "a couple of wrinkled and cracked photographs" and he does not particularly miss them. The sudden fall of the spider from the ceiling
which aimlessly walks upside down "exploring his invested universe" and the playing of cards on the symbols of the man's deplorable position in the universe. Thus the title *The Foreigner* gains a symbolic value in the larger context of human existence. The idea of foreigner is kept before the reader throughout the novel. It again portrays the protagonist's sense of metaphysical anguish at the meaninglessness of human condition. The unreality, and insecurity associated with the word "foreigner" form the entire basis of the novel providing the necessary texture and structure to it. From this point of view *The Foreigner* has a remarkable degree of maturity and technical competence well suited to the theme.

In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* 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. In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* there is a conflict between more basic and greater forces, namely civilization and primitive life or between nature and art. In the case of Billy he experiences mainly intellectual and psychic and he is a lonely quested, whereas Sindi in *The Foreigner* is a 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. In a way the novel speaks for spiritual regeneration in contrast to the spiritual decay. In no way is it an encounter between two different worlds. Though Arun Joshi does not use any symbols in any significant way in the novels, one can find in this novel a few events and happenings which are symbolic. For instance, when Romi, his uncle, and Billy stand watching the kites, one of the pair is cut off from its roots and with a tragic dignity it floats to the ground across the roots and lanes ominously fore shadowing Billy's disappearance and finally his death.
What may appear to be a mere report on the surface is saved by a mode of narrative, the tone of which has a combination of concern, disinterestedness, casualness but all under superb control. The novel is a dramatic presentation of the complete character of Billy, who, though his values are profoundly human, is aspiring to get beyond this advertised world. The fact that Billy's reappearance is only accidental and that he has already lived like a tribal for ten years signifies the undramatic manner in which the most dramatic act of Billy is presented. In fact, Arun Joshi doesn't depend for the success of his narrative art on devices of dramatization or use of symbols or images. Without recourse to any of these devices, he is able to produce a totality of effect which is dependent purely on the force of his narrative which again is objective and free from all sentimentality or subjectivity. Thus, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* makes a complex and interesting piece of narrative structuring which is based on principal of parallelism and contrast. Into this complex narrative structure are interwoven myths and legends, which add a new dimension to the meaning and significance of various events and characters. These myths and legends tend to add an allegorical dimension to the novel. To add to all this there is use of symbols, images, aphorism and patterns of irony and humor which deepen the meaning and significance of each event. What is, however, particularly striking about the narrative method followed in the novelist that it combines detachment and objectivity in the part of the narrator with his involvement in and concern for all that happens in the novel. In short, the narrative methods control effectively the action, the meaning and the character of the novel.

Arun Joshi's *The Apprentice* rendered in a confessional form is a telling commentary on the decaying values of a degenerating civilization. It's a story of young man who out of sheer exhaustion of joblessness and 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. Ratan Rathore the protagonist of the novel after his initial hesitation submits completely to the corruption of modern society and thrives on it. It takes almost a life time to reject the petrified and frozen world of civilization for he is the child of a double inheritance: the patriotic and courageous world of his father and the worldly wisdom of his mother who tells him that it is not patriotism but money that matters more than anything else? As money is law into itself. Ratan realizes that his life has been a great waste. He is not sure what precisely corrupted the atmosphere of the society. He feels the need of doing something for changing the prevailing situation. But he is full of doubt about the way to rid the society of the pestilence. His existential decision to recover the lost self through an act of penitence reveals the need to realize and prize one's integrity. Ratan takes upon himself the task of cleaning shoes of the congregation in order to get away from the conscience in crisis.

In *The Last Labyrinth*, Arun Joshi is concerned with the search for the core of life which he has tried to convey through external symbols like "Haveli", "Benaras" and "Bombay". These symbols give the details of the setting of the Lal Haveli, the central motif of the novel. The description is so vivid and direct that the clear picture of the whole building can be reconstructed. Details are unfolded not in a systematic way that one part of the Haveli is described after another but as the narrator sees it and thus making the description pictorial and natural. The vocabulary is of common experience or day to day use except for a few rare words. Arun Joshi creates a visually perceptible Haveli mostly without metaphoric illusions. Only at one or two places does one come across metaphors or similes. Lal Haveli in itself is used as a
metaphor. Here the Haveli has been compared to a "fragment of an over heated imagination." The word "overheated" has concealed in itself a metaphor. Imagination is much heated which means that imagination goes so high that the heat evaporates the imagination and turns it into vapors and he is not able to see it. So he is made doubtful about the existence of Haveli. Lal Haveli has been identified with the maze also which is again identified with Labyrinth. In the novel, the thought of the Haveli comes to the mind of the narrator and he begins to evaluate the description, the sentences become longer and hence complex as we know that Lal Haveli is important in the context of the novel so it is quite possible that to draw the attention of reader to it, Joshi started off the very idea of the Haveli in this manner. The thought of the Haveli takes him to Benaras and through the Ghats of Ganges he is in the Haveli with Anuradha and Aftab. We find Som with Aftab who takes him on the round to show the Haveli. Here the visual quality of Joshi's narrative is noticeable. The reader is made to see only what the characters themselves see and hear without the intruding authorial voice at any time. The pictorial quality is sustained throughout the novel wherever there is description.

The organized arrangement of the visual images results in a narrative closely akin to a film script, a script that includes concrete and precise direction of camera angles frames etc. The long shot of the camera takes the reader to Aftab and to the narrator standing in the middle of the garden. It simply means how the elegant variations at different level help the reader to build up a coherent and consistent picture of the haveli. On the whole, the stylistic pattern chosen by Arun Joshi in this novel is quite capable of connecting the reader not only to events but also to the characters figuring in the novels and the crisis in conscience they appear to be passing.
A close look at Arun Joshi’s *The City and The River* reveals two facts: First that it is a political satire and second that it follows the mythical narration pattern of a story with a story told by an old wise teacher a Guru to his keen disciple, preparing him for a quest and a mission with this thematic and structural framework, the apparently simple tale of a city and a river unfolds itself, gaining multidimensional meanings and a discerning reader can read it at many levels: as an exposition of the psychology of the masses, the ruling classes and their sycophant coteries, as an existential commentary on the absurdity of human situation, as a parable of the river and of time, as treaties on the question of man’s allegiance to God or to man. While these thematic contents tend to draw the attention of reviewers and scholars, the structural patterns slide into that ground as being reductive.

However, a close study of the novel reveals the mythic perspective by which it becomes a unifying and integrating literary experience. The novel has a prologue and epilogue and nine chapters. The prologue recounts the last day of the nameless one the day of his initiation with the great Yogeshwar, his teacher. celebrates his pupil's thirtieth birthday by telling him who he is? The Grand Master, in order to fulfill his dreams of becoming the unchallenged king lets his coteries adopt ruthless measures to crush the masses, stifle all dissenting voices and compromise all ethical norms. A corrupt regime where sycophancy in-efficiency, selfishness and nepotism thrive is revealed to the reader, finally power struggle and in-fighting leads to complete annihilation and the city is doomed. Nearer home, the events portrayed here have obvious links with the emergency time in India, at human and universal level. However, it is an exposition of human folly and the futility of human aspirations devoid of moral codes. The novel condemns corruption in public life, selfishness of the rulers and the patronization of the criminals. It is interesting to note that the author
achieves his goal of delivering his message without giving us psychologically realized characters. Apart from *The City and The River*, the novel makes use of archetypes such as the old wise man, the great mother, the demonic, analogical imagery which runs through the story. The sequence of the novel is chronologically arranged. The Prologue and the Epilogue join the beginning and the end. The story ends where it begins and begins where it ends. The entire drama of the rise and the fall of the city remind one of T.S. Eliot's lines: "In my beginning is my end". (Eliot 147) In the beginning of the novel, the city is there along the bank of the river. It has grown over the years. It sees ups and down, and is ruined by human stupidity. But, that is not an end. On its ruins a new city grows, it has its grand master and others. This continuity gives a circular movement to the novel. Moreover, by joining the Prologue to the Epilogue the author ensures a cyclical motion. There is also the prophecy which runs all through the story and on which the action depends. The prophecy stated as an epigraph and then repeated at the end, embodies linear as well as circular movement.

*The City and The River* works on three distinct levels: mythic, primitive and modern. The mythic elements are represented by the Great Yogeshwar, the Nameless one, the Hermit, the Little Star and the River. The primitive forces are signified by the boatmen, their rites and rituals, the modern components are illustrated by the weapons the lasers and other engines of war which are in fact ultra-modern. These three factors unite the structure of the novel. Mythical parallels woven with the lived reality raise certain controversial issues and give the work an existential depth. Arun Joshi creates the measured rhythm of the myth, legends and archetypes to make his work realistic despite the absence of psychologically realized characters. As a realistic fiction, the novel becomes an indictment of social and political corruption, at the archetypal level; its rhetoric builds up the tempo quest. By the time a reader finished the story, he
achieves a sense of having completed a quest. It is a universal human quest for purity through the sacrifice of ego. The question is not of individual success or failure but of collective efforts for the common good.

Roger Sharrock, in *The Figure in a Landscape*, says that a poet is "not a camera, but a consciousness" (Roger 113). This profound observation is very useful in analyzing not only in poems but all creative writings. The novels analyzed above are not photographs of life as it is lived; they are recreation of life as perceived and transformed by the Novelist's perception and imagination. A Novelist as a person need not conform himself to a system of values, but as a creative writer his consciousness is molded by a sort of value system. Arun Joshi is not committed to any one system except that of the self and its relation with ourselves. A sociologist may think that society derives its form not from individual selves but from the functions these selves perform. But a creative writer's idea of the self emerges from his consciousness and acquires a shape and a vision by being made an organic part of a dramatic action which is meaningful. Most Modernist writes, while dramatizing life as a struggle between opposites like the sacred and the secular, faith and lack of faith, society and individual, artist and man, integration and alienation, the outer and the inner seem to forge an aesthetic in which these opposites are reconciled or at least remain in a state of mutual co-existence. Arun Joshi is modernist in his writings and we notice affine fusion of the transcendental and the humanistic traditions in Indian thought. As Aldus Huxley says of tragedy, “such a rebuke, whether tragic or not, gives only a half truth, it gives only one, abstracted perspective on actuality, but that may be an essential truth, a radical truth not to be ignored”(Huxley 17).

Arun Joshi's fictions and its relevance may be construed by making use of some of insights embodied in the above citation. His fiction carries a sort of built-in
rebuke to the mechanism of our age. *The Apprentice*, for example, is an incisive comment on the contemporary Indian scene, closely modeled on Albert Camus's *The Fall*. It attacks hypocrisy, and corruption, although the protagonist's role seems to salvage the crumbling self. The protagonist like Ratan Rathore of Joshi sees the falsity of his existence and tries to salvage his fragmented self. He narrates his experiences in such a way that the norms of our civility are placed in their proper perspective. In *The Foreigner*, Sindi Oberoi passes through therapeutic process in which he feels that an "indefatigable surgeon"(207) is cleaning up his soul with the sharp edge of his scalpel. This suggests that Joshi's protagonist, while submitting himself to clinical probe, gets an awareness which makes his own self a Labyrinth. The image of the labyrinth controls the narrative perspective of Joshi's fiction. The consonance and the dissonance that characterize the self, the family, and society are metaphysically suggested and authenticated by the following passage from *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*:

If life's meaning lies not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in those dark mossy labyrinth of the soul that languish forever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun, then I don't know of any man who sought it more doggedly and, having received a signal, abandoned himself so recklessly to its call. In brief, I know of no other man who so desperately pursued the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end, no matter what trails of glory or shattered hearts he left behind in his turbulent wake.(8)

In fine Arun Joshi's fiction without appearing as an overt sociological exercise gathers within its fold most of the issues that trouble and torment the post independence generation. The way out of the labyrinth is not to make the self a mirror
but liberate it by constantly reminding oneself that the labyrinth is not an unsafe place to exist, provided one is apprenticed to the sublime principle of giving which is very well exemplified in Anuradha in *The Last Labyrinth*. It is the crisis in conscience which seems to have overtaken not only the protagonist but also all those with whom he is connected.