Chapter III

Origin of Crisis

The word literature, particularly its fiction, produced between the two world wars and afterwards chiefly dealt with different gloomy aspects of social consciousness, on cosmic level, there was a great upheaval with political implications and war complications. The atomic age started and the very existence of humanity as a whole was and still is, in great danger because of fatal nuclear weapons invented by science. Consequently, there is envy and unrest, uneasiness and boredom all over the world. Man by and large has ceased to have a human heart throbbing with emotions and sentiments, joy and love, pity and peace. He has become a mere machine, automation, and his life mechanical. Modern man is reduced to the state of robot and is functioning as a computer, a recording machine without discrimination.

Life has grown today indefinitely vast without any proper support to hold it together from falling down. There is a gap between what the individual professes and what he really practices between what he really is and what he would like to appear and between what he aspires for and what he really achieves. This gives rise to a split personality and utter moral confusion. Man, today, says Victor Anant, lives on "an adhoc basis in a no man's land of values". He lives by opportunism, treachery, cowardice, and hypocrisy. This according to Anant is due to his "moral inertia and flabbiness" (Victor 211).

These absurd situations give rise to psychological disorders and loss of moral values. These negative attributes of human conduct compel and to commit blunders, sometimes deadly sins, that ultimately disturbs his mental peace and harmony, and produce discomfort, depression and frustration. Human consciousness by its very nature is sickly and unhappy. All the thinkers have given a serious thought and
expression to it. Nietzsche gives expression to the tragic sense of life. The Vedas and
the Upanishads make a mention of similar things and assert that in spite of being
cautious and alert in his dealing with others, he comes to a bad end. But after a close
analysis of this trend and circumstances under which it develops, it can be stated that
the kind of philosophy that Arun Joshi propounds in his fiction doesn't aim at
plunging man into despair. Its final aim is to prepare man through disillusionment and
despairs for a genuine life, a life that has some purpose, sense and meaning. Joshi's
Attitude to human beings doesn't hint at any kind of frustration and disillusionment.
He is optimistic in so far as it is a doctrine of action. It promotes man's striving for the
making of himself. It makes man realize his potentialities amidst chaos and confusion
of a hostile universe. It expounds man's search for himself and his own values. It
explains that man exists first and then he makes himself out of his conditions.
Although many thinkers disagree on many points, yet they have something in
common. They believe that existence precedes essence. They assert that man first
exists, and then he looks at the world, thinks of it and then acts as an individual. It is
only by living, thinking and acting that man defines his nature and forms what is
called his essence- "that which he is and will be" (Walter 9). The essence of man
predetermined. They think that it is man who chooses his own essence.

The dictum "existence precedes essence" paves the path for individual
freedom. It lays stress on the subjectivity of human nature, as there is always a gap
between the theory of existence and actual existence. And "the theory of existence can
never generate or substitute to itself or the actual existence which is its own
basis"(Shrinivasan, The Existentialist Concepts 3). Fully conscious as the
existentialists are of the tragic elements in human existence, they attach special
importance to the facts of life like anguish, anxiety, alienation, boredom, choice,
despair, dread, death, freedom, frustration, finitude, guilt and responsibility. They show their deep concerns with the fundamental problem of human existence. They opine that man in the present age has been dehumanized by being deprived of his freedom. Therefore, they encourage man to face the situation, to make his choice and to take his decision as free and responsible individual. It is in this way that the man can truly be said to exist and the ills and evils of modern society can be cured. It speaks of the active participation in the problems of life even in the agonizing situation of living in times of crisis when day to day decisions have to be made. These thinkers affirm that man should choose, decide and act as active participant in life situation and thereby should try to save the modern world from deep distress, distrust and dissension in every walk of life. There are thinkers who believe in the glorification of the human will and being advocate authentic living. This will is the most important aspect of all existence. Man does not strive only to live and survive but to prevail the over-power the entire universe. They are convinced that the man in the modern age is doomed to failure. However, failure is not necessarily all negative. The way in which man approaches his failure determines what he will become. Failure leads man to seek redemption. It is an established fact that the modern man is passing through a very crucial juncture of the modern age. He is free but feels no freedom because of social, political and religious factors. He is free to choose, but he is forced to choose wrong paths. He is in a fix, with anxiety, dread, depression and despair as his consequential facts of life. It should be noted that the ills of our society results from individual's refusal appeal honestly to God. According to him, man is always the way to self realization. There are thinkers who depict man in a painful situation in which accomplishment is mere illusion. Hence, such things as care, anxiety, guilt fortitude and above all death abound in Joshi's writings. Self alienation
has worse effects on an individual than social alienation. It is the more basis form of rootlessness—it is this inner crisis of the modern that has occupied Arun Joshi's primary interests in his novels that are built around the dark and dismal experiences of the soul.

Just after Joshi received the 1983 Sahitya Academy Award for his fourth novel, *The Last Labyrinth*, he told his interviewer, Sujatha Mathai that the urge that led him to writing was the "exploration of that mysterious underworld which is the human soul and its lonely journey through a whole world where it is necessarily a stranger, a foreigner"(Sujatha). He has put his own philosophical vision of life into the mouth of Som Bhaskar, the protagonist of the novel *The Last Labyrinth* as he reminisces Azizum's song:

> It reminded you of that core of loneliness around which all of us are built. Azizum and I shared it with the other two, who sat at once in the lost, in a cloud of cigarette smoke, I could see, with sudden and unparallel lucidity, that our difference apart, we belonged to the same underside of the world..(55)


Representing total destruction of all the ancient and modern civilization of the world, Arun Joshi's protagonists are "the lost lonely questers" (Thakur155). Fluttering far down the gulf their luminous wings in vain, in the dark night, in the ruined city of the soul, failing to find their way despite all their efforts. Men and women in Joshi's world are at once intent and lost reminding us of Tiresias, the quester, in T.S. Eliot's
The Waste Land. Like Eliot's in Joshi's world too, there is total aridity both physical and spiritual- men and women there terribly thirsting for the waters of faith. Joshi delves deep into the inner recesses of human psyche where he finds emotions impulses and instincts at work. It would not be out of place to mention here that for a brief period he worked in a mental hospital in the United States dealing with chronic psycho cases. His sensitive mind was pressed so much that we find his chief protagonists describe an inner life within the underworld of the soul divided against itself, its aspirations and conflicting urges turned on the will and action- the novelist's search light carefully scrutinizing its all in full focus. This is the reason why there is something deeper than empathy for such characters in his heart. It is not without purpose that out of the five novels that Joshi has written, the three – The Foreigner, The Apprentice and The Last Labyrinth are written in the conventional mode, having a vacuum in the soul, a split personality. The central motive of the novelist is the exploration of the mysterious underworld which is the human soul. He sees lives as labyrinths- hopeless mazes where you may bet lost or discover the spinning secret at the core of life.

Joshi is a great artist of psychological insight that enables him to see into the life of things. In his fictional world he tries his level best to delineate the predicament of the modern man who is confronted by the self and the questions of his existence, who is painfully aware of his precarious position in a hostile universe, who comes to feel helpless in the fundamental sense that he can not control what he is able to foresee. Man is drawn into the world of objects and has lost or is continually loosing. He finds himself in a situation where he is confronted by the questions for which he is unable to find solution. This absurd situation gives rise to existentialist emotions which Joshi has dealt with in themes of his novels. In all his novels he dwells upon
the facets of identity crisis in the modern man's life. His protagonists are essentially foreigners wherever they go. They happen to be walking metaphors of alienation.

Arun Joshi's maiden novel, *The Foreigner* is inspired by Albert Camus's well known novel *The Outsider*. It also reminds us of Raja Rao's, *The Serpent and The Rope*, Kamla Markandey's, *The Nowhere Man*, Anita Desai's *Bye-Bye Black Bird* and Nargis Dalal's *The Girls from Overseas*, as it deals with cross cultures and east west encounter. The formative part of the novel develops in the back drop of the west. The novel enacts the crisis of the present in the story of Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist who is thoroughly an existentialist character- rootless, restless and luckless in an absurd world. He is a "perennial outsider", an uprooted young man living in the later half of the 20th century who belongs to no country, no people and finds himself in the predicament of a foreigner wherever he goes. His rootlessness stems from within his soul like an ancient curse and drives him from crisis to crisis. He is one who does not have roots anywhere in the world. He feels an alien everywhere and his words and behaviors create the same impression in all those with whom he meets. Having lost his parents at an early age he is brought up by his uncle, who too dies soon. His is totally broken and anchorless in his infancy having been deprived of parental love and affection. Actually he finds himself incapable of receiving any emotional involvement and feel alienated from all humanity.

Sindi's dilemma is socio-psychological resulting from social dysfunction. He turns out to an anomic an, responsible to no one, having no morality, no ambitions, no purposes in life. After his uncle's death he feels uprooted and life becomes a purposeless existence for him. He seems to have no settled aim in life and gets, every now and then nervous. In religion and faith he may be deemed to be on the way to spiritual sterility. When June asks him if he believes in God he finds himself in a fix
and ultimately shows his leanings towards the negative side. To him it appears as if
the world is devoid of God. Morality and immorality do not have distinction for him.
One day in a discussion with him Sheila tells him that June is not virtuous as she is
not a virgin. Her use of the word 'virgin' surprises him and very boldly he asks
whether it is all that matters. When Sheila nods, Sindi mocks at the sex–centered
attitude of morality. Psychologically speaking, a person so isolated as Sindi Oberoi is
bound to be cynical and frustrated. Many of Arun Joshi’s characters of the novel point
outs that Sindi is a perfect cynic. Right from his boyhood he gets sick of living and is
contemplating suicide. When Mr. Khemka asks him what sort of job he is looking for,
he remarks that it should be something that can make his forget himself and accepts
Mr. Khemka’s appointment in his factory.

Rootless as he is, his life takes him from Kenya to London and thereafter to
Boston and finally New Delhi the varied experiences he undergoes illustrate his sense
of insecurity. In London, he feels unhappy about his education which fails to teach
him how to live. He wants to know the meaning of his life. Consequently, he accepts
an evening job as a dishwasher in a night club. There he meets Anna, a woman of
about thirty five immediately, the girl falls flat in love with him but his response is
cold and indifferent. He confesses that he could not do justice to his love for Anna
despite her great passion because he was too engrossed in himself. His life turns over
a new leaf when he meets June, a beautiful, sensual, affectionate American girl. She is
free, frank and uninhibited. Sindi loves her deeply and has sex with her. Her love for
Sindi is more than a merely sexual gratification. Time and again she requests him to
get married to her, but Sindi is emotionally sterile responsible to no one and
responsive only to himself. His feeling of futility and meaninglessness of life prevails
within and without. He deceives himself with the notion that he has developed the
spirit of detachment; Sindi's cold detachment frustrates June and paves the way for her to go to Babu Rao Khemka who loves her with a dog-like devotion. He gives her all that she needs. He is a simple character. He has his roots in Indian soil. His values are middle class values that choked down in the glossy living of the west. To him America seems to be a dreamland of free sex, and there is no use of coming to America if one is not to play around with girls.

But he forgets that roots are like fortifications in one's self and they may destroy one in the process of disowning them. Babu too turns into a split-personality. He loves to enjoy the free life of America. At the same time, he has got his moral inhibitors as he is born and brought up in Indian orthodox background. He loves June intensely, decides to marry her but his conventional morality comes in the way. He avoids physical relations with her, while on the other hand June is accustomed to free sex life in America. She tells him of her earlier relations with Sindi. At this, Babu suddenly grows pale, calls her whore, his in the face, leaves the flat and drives in his car to his tragic end by committing suicide. June on the other hand is a complex character, she dangles between Sindi, Oberoi and Baburao Khemka. She loves Sindi intensely and has sex with him to marry her, but his cold detachment alienates June from him and paves the way for her to fall on Babu. Truly speaking, the man she really loves is Sindi and her love of Babu is merely a stop-gap arrangement. It is only on adhoc basis. The dilemma of June's character makes her an interesting study. When she comes to know herself pregnant by Babu and he being no more alive, she feels utterly frustrated, she undergoes an operation for her abortion and during the course, and she dies. Sindi Oberoi is responsible for the death of both – Babu and June. It is really his false and cold detachment that leads to the tragedy of Babu and June. When Babu comes to know that June has been sleeping with Sindi and has been
yielding to him, he goes out immediately and kills himself in a car accident. His Indian morality is terribly hurt. Babu's death signifies the destruction of oriental innocent in the strange ways of the western world. Sindi makes love in a detached manner and does not accede to her proposal of marriage. He holds that he is "not really cut out for marriage"(111), that marriage is "one big illusion that has been pounded into them by society"(112). He seems to be conscious of the meaninglessness of human life. An awareness of the absurdity of human existence can be clearly traced in his reflections repeatedly. Sindi's response to June's proposal of marriage only heightens the absurdity of human situation and proves his act absurd in line with the hero's of existentialist writers. It is natural that after his refusal she would be drawn towards Babu. It is Sindi's cold detachment that alienates June from him and sends her to Babu who badly needs her. But he finds himself too weak to possess her.

It is natural that after his refusal, June would be drawn towards Babu. And later on we find Sindi making love to several women and enjoying sex with them under the bogus garb of detachment. It is his pompous philosophy of detachment that alienates June from him and sends her to his friend Babu Rao Khemka and thus, Sindi is brought face to face with his hypocrisy, cowardice, fear, jealousy and stupidity. June's tragic death after the operation of abortion makes him restless, further rootless and lonely, drifting into meaningless uncertainties about life and existent. Her death brings about a sudden change of fortune as it dawns upon him that detachment actually means inaction. He comes to lean by bitter experience that true detachment consists of right action and not escape from it which is the lesson that the Gita teaches us. When Sindi comes back to India, he finds himself in a different situation altogether.
He soon joins the Khemka industries but appears so strange to Mr. Khemka and tells that his set of experiences has taught him a reality that is different from that of Khemka. He finds himself a stranger in India to both the corrupt richment and the poor exploited labourer. He finds that the common people have the benefit of their delusion. Their delusions protect them from the lonely meaninglessness of their life. But Sindi has no such delusions to base his hopes upon. He undergoes a series of innumerable experiences. His existentialist quest and experiment with himself simply add to his loneliness and meaningless in life. Mr. Khemka takes him to be as bad as dead and Sheela considers him the saddest man she has ever known and tells him plainly that he is still a foreigner. He doesn't belong to here. A fresh crisis comes in the life of Sindi when Mr. Khemka is sentenced to jail on playing fraud with income tax accounts. The workers of the firm persuade Sindi to take over the change of Khemka's business and save them from starvation. It is at this critical juncture that we find Sindi on way to becoming wise. His understanding deepens when he associates himself with the poor and starving. A new man, who is more humane and merciful, is being born within him. We see that Sindi, having finished his packing late in the evening gets to the station to reserve a seat for Bombay. Before he goes to sleep that night, he takes stock of his whole life and comes to realize that his past has been a waste. During the night, the temperature drops and by dawn it starts raining. The shower as in T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* is a fertility symbol. It symbolizes the stirring of life in Sindi. It is his reawakening, his rebirth his re-generation. That afternoon, when the sky is clear, he goes to meet Muthu. The clear sky symbolizes the light of knowledge that will dawn upon Sindi. Muthu becomes the human voice of the divine truth. It is Muthu who drives Sindi on the right lines. Human suffering purges and purifies him. Muthu is human suffering personified. It is this suffering in the shape of
Muthu that drives Sindi from indifference to participation and from detachment to involvement and leads him to conclude that for his detachment consists in getting involved with the world. Mohan Jha rightly remarks, “It is the nature if human distress and suffering of which Muthu, among others, is living image that drives him from detachment to involvement from indifference to participation, from neutrality to commitment” (Jha 172).

Now, he finally understands that detachment does not mean inaction escape or alienation; it really stands for right action, devotion, and involvement. Muthu is really a 'Karmayogi'. It is from him that Sindi learns the secret of non-attached action. Now, Muthu's meaning of detachment prevails on Sindi and he takes over the management of Mr.Khemka's business. Khemka's concern beings him and his total staff peace and prosperity and happiness. Certain misgivings that Sheela has about Sindi are now over and they try to understand each other better. Sindi feels amused by the random absurdity of his present involvement. He has learnt from experience that it is not inaction or escape but right action or involvement that turns out to be genuine detachment in the true sense of the term, should not only be from the world and its objects but also from one's own self. One can be of some use to others only when one is really detached from one's own self. Sindi is led to understand that actually he is the cause of Babu's and June's death. He has to struggle too hard to get freedom from fear of involvement. At Muthu's request, he takes over the management Khemka's business but works in a detached manner.

Sindi's life undergoes various changes and he happens to experience different facts of life at different stages. He has been a vain young man, a sad lover, a jealous competitor, a mechanical engineer. He settles in his life with Babu's sister Sheila. Although there were certain misgivings in the beginning, they try to understand each
"I had a feeling we were just beginning to understand each other." The following lines of the dialogue are expressive of an amicable settlement between Sindi and Sheela. "I didn't think you would come back. I thought you had become too detached to involve in this mess."

The novel, no doubt is full of instances and descriptions that make it read as an existentialist quest to find a meaninglessness and absurdities of life. For an insecure man like Sindi, every thing is purposeless. He turns out to be a thorough going absurdist to whom this work is full of suffering and life is all disillusionment. He is brought face to face with his stupidity and hypocrisy. He fails to apply a check on his senses but talks if practicing detachment. He is man of false conduct and can be rightly called a hypocrite. The protagonist Sindi is a typical representative of the contemporary man who, irrespective of all sorts of scientific and technological achievements of the modern times finds himself in the true sense of the team, with all bonds of love and social relationship disintegrated. Hence his life is all hellish and there is no end to his suffering. In this connection, Grace Stuart rightly remarks, “There is heaven when one goes out to ones neighbor and hell when one turns back to oneself. Hell is the state of being without affectionate relationship and although there are always crowds there is never relationship” (Grace, 133).

Sindi's fallacy of detachment is a mask to cover his inability to belong to people and have a proper understanding of them. He finds himself utterly naked in the hands of existence. He moves around the streets of the world with the feeling of loneliness. His agony deepens when he realizes that he has no friends indeed. He is a foreigner not only in Kenya, London or Boston, but equally a foreigner in India too. It is only after his meeting with Muthu that Sindi's attitude towards the meaning of human life gets completely overhauled. Muthu's request to Sindi to take over the
charge of Mr. Khemka's business leads him to take a general stock of himself and compels to concentrate on decisive action that instills altogether new sense of belongingness. Sindi, the alienated protagonist finally arrives at peace within and calm around. He settles with the business, with Sheela and above all with himself. To quote Harimohan Prasad: "From Boston to Delhi has been a journey from alienation to sacrifice, from an anomic to himself to a member of mankind, from being to becoming" (Prasad 43).

As the mutually contradictory tendencies for "having" and "being" are always present within human beings and Sindi is no exception to it. But towards the close of the novel we see how in him the desire "to have" is replaced by the desire "to give, to be, to sacrifice and to share with other." The novel is a fine study in cross cultures. It deals with the theme of the meeting of the west and the east at the level of human emotions. K.R. S. Iyengar points out that "There is a colorless cosmopolitan quality about the novel" (Iyenger, 514).

Sindi is an embodiment of cosmopolitanism. His only identity is that he is a human being. It is large heartedness, sheer generosity that leads one to feel the entire earth or universe a family. Arun Joshi manages to deal with the theme of east-west encounter with admirable dexterity. Human beings with their vanities and illusions are the same everywhere. Sindi is as much a foreigner in India as has been in America.

Throughout the novel the idea of "foreignness" is kept before the reader. The insecurity, remoteness, alienation and transitoriness associated with the word "foreigner" for the entire structure of the novel that portrays the protagonist's sense of metaphysical anguish at the meaninglessness and purposelessness of the human conditions. The existentialist notions have been so cleverly handled by Arun Joshi that the novel is never allowed to have an over dose of philosophy like the novels of
Raja Rao and certainly it is the flow of narrative that captures our attention and makes it, as Khushwant Singh puts, "a compelling work of fiction". C. N. Shrinath rightly remarks: "it is the deft handling which transmutes a philosophical concept into fictional enactment" (Shrinath 119).

Arun Joshi's second novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, is often described as a novel resulting in crisis in one's conscience. It is concerned with the crisis of self, the problems of identity and quest for fulfillment. In one of his interviews Joshi himself admitted that he was led to writing to explore that "mysterious underworld which is the human soul" (Sujatha). The novel develops the theme of anxiety and alienation more effectively than the treatment meted out in his first novel, *The Foreigner*. It would be proper to quote K.R. S. Iyengar in this connection, "In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Arun Joshi has carried his exploration of the consciousness of rootless people stage further, and has revealed to our gaze new gas–chambers of self-forged misery" (Iyenger, *Indian Writing* 514).

Billy's quest is deeper than Sindi's. Billy is not uprooted in the sense Sindi is. Billy has family. He is not anchorless in the way Sindi is. He is born and brought up in a fairly comfortable background. He has had his education in Britain and America. He joins the Delhi University, after having completed Ph.D. in Anthropology. He has a friend like Romy, who is so affectionate to him. Yet Billy has little interest in the sordid modern civilization. The external attractions of the so called civilized set-up of society do not matter at all for him. He is much interested in the exploration of his inner being. He is not in harmony with his family members. Although he lives with them, he is all alone, isolate and alienated, a strange in the real sense of the term.

Billy's awareness of the deeper layers of his personality makes him an existential being isolated from the superficial reality of life. His is the predicament of
a split personality, his is an attempt to find out viable alternatives. Romy rightly describes Billy as a man of extra-ordinary sensitivity. In all respects he is rare, extra ordinary and distinguished. He is "One of those rare men who have poise without pose". (11) Romy has much affection for Billy and notices problem he is faced with. Unlike Sindi he listens to the voice of his soul. He has a dislike for an organized life. Though born and brought up in an aristocratic family, he is filled for hatred for the systematized civilized life which heightens his problem of identity in stead of resolving it. His predicament becomes a strange case as he turns out to be a split personality – split between "primitive" and "civilized". Billy finds modern civilization fast degenerating, as well as norm less and meaningless. He finds himself unequal to the position he is in and is in search for of a place where he may not get cut off from his own self., socially isolated, culturally uprooted. His deep love for primitivism is an inborn quality. This is why he chooses to live in Harlem, a place where Negroes live, although he could very well afford to stay in good hotels in some other areas like Manhattten. But his quest for self realization makes him live in Harlem which is the most human place he could find and where he may feel a sense of being in the real sense of the term.

From his early childhood Billy's case has been strange. At the age of fourteen he goes to Bhubaneshwar and the first thing that hits him about Bhubaneshwar is the landscape. One afternoon he visits Konark. The sculptures at Konark is capable of giving him a solution to his questions about the problem of his identity. One night, he happens to go to the tribal people with Uncle's chauffer. With deep interest he watches the tribals dancing, drinking, singing and making love. Extremely sensitive as he is he feels a strange sensation. Billy feels restless as Sombhaskar does in The Last Labyrinth after his experience in a cave. Whenever he listens to folk music or drum
beating, he feels altogether transported to the world of the primitive which is
difference from that of the so called civilized society. Like Sindi, he does not feel at
ease in American society. It is Tuula Lindgret the Swedish lady with extra-ordinary
intuition who understands the dilemma of Billy's life. It is she who knows what is
going on "in dark inscrutable unsmiling eyes of Biswas"")(19). Tuula being far away
from the commercial civilization stands as a primitive force. She has mastered
hypnotism, intuition and auto suggestion. She has an insight to see into the life of
things Billy feels at home in his company and is fond of her. She is getting advanced
training in psychiatric social work at Columbia in United States.

As a matter of fact Billy fits into the world of tribals. He is almost a stranger to
the civilized world. Romi gets an opportunity of observing the strangeness of Billy
when he finds him defending before his father, the child sacrifice by clerk to propiate
the Goddess Kali. He feels terribly sick of the so called upper class societies of Delhi.
To him, modern civilization seems to be telling upon the health and hygiene of the
contemporary man. It is found to be emptied of all the human qualities of head and
heart. He is happy living with the primitive people who live closer to the ways of
nature. He is given to understand that Meena truly speaking cannot respond to him.
There is a gap of communication between the two. Billy is east, Meena is west, and
both east and west cannot meet together. He does not even touch Meena for many
months. Even they fail to communicate and respond to each other. This calls upon
their lives and their vitality. Meena fails to understand why he is always annoyed with
her. She complains that Billy has turned out a changed man. He is no more the man
she had married. His married life turns into a miserable failure. All this results into
Billy's turning an introvert. He forsakes his responsibilities towards his family, his
wife and his son. He cares only for his responsibilities towards his soul. He is self
centered and his tortured soul terribly needs application of some balm by someone who can share his suffering. With a view to getting the right kind of solace that his injured soul needs, he meets Rima Kaul, who has loved him passionately since the day she met him. His trips to Bombay take him close to his passions lead him astray and his romance with Rima Kaul is degraded into seduction. But very soon he is given to understand that his relationship with Rina is nothing but his degradation.

Thus, Billy reaches the climax of hypocrisy is his way of working. He now rests assured that no woman of the phony society can satisfy his soul. Visions of a woman haunt him frequently. He is in search of a surrounding that is in harmony with his soul. He listens to the calls of the hills, the streams, the trees, the forests and the tribal people. They appear to be calling him. Billy is so much fed up with the so called civilized world of greed, hollowness and hypocrisy and feels so much drawn towards the primitive in life that he leaves his wife, his only child and his own parents. Once he gets an opportunity to take his students on an anthropological expedition to the Satpura hills in Madhya Pradesh and gets so much fascinated by the intense beauty of the hills and their inhabitation particularly with women with graceful figures and bright eyes that he disappears into the "saal" forest of the hills. With the Bhils and their leader Dhunia he eats, drinks and waits for the rising of the moon and for the first time he could clearly see the change coming over him. It was then that he decided not to go back to the so called civilized society and get caught in its whirlpool. An enormous search is launched by the police to find Billy out. When they fail to find him out, it is presumed that he has been killed by a tiger prowling in the area. Romi is posted as Collector and once on a tour of the hills, he suddenly sees hilly Billy wearing a lion cloth and nothing else. He is taken to the bungalow and spends the whole day and in night in his company listening to the story about his life after
disappearance. He comes to know how the so called civilized society has wrought havoc upon his hyper-sensitive mind. Billy is thoroughly tribalized. He wears a lion cloth and grows beard. He is led to the tribal uninhibited drinking, dancing and the open orgiastic love making. The reason why Billy chooses living with tribals is that nobody here is interested in the prices or food grains or new seeds or roads or elections or stuff like that. He is also driven to the forests with a sudden interest in his own identity. Money has no place in their life as they have conquered wants. Even if they suffer from a severe drought they do not forget singing, dancing and love making. Billy tells Romi that they live at the subsistence level. Billy's fascination for the primitive life is a search for his identity.

With a skillful weight of the details, Joshi manages to explore the protagonist's psychological instincts. Billy's enigmatic behaviour can be understood in terms of certain psychological and anthropological facts at work with reference to Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms. He only expresses something which millions of the people before him have believed the phantom that Billy once saw and has described to Tuula is vividly objectified and visualized in Bilasia, the tribal girl with beauty and dignity (Abraham 187). Bilasia, Billy understands, is the right woman to satisfy his soul, Meena deadens his senses, Rima corrupts him and the, material civilization kills his innate natural instinct. It is Bilasia who causes explosion of senses- the proper medium to reach soul. Billy renounces the civilized world and its symbols in Meena and Rima. From Rima to Bilasia is not a mere trifling in Billy's life, it is a development from sex to sympathy and from sympathy to sublimation. In Bilasia the physical and the elemental meet. She is both Laurential and Blakean. Bilasia to use Jungean concept, is his missing self, "Arun
Joshi's protagonists are Pirendelo's cluster of identities in search of wholeness. In terms of psychic analysis, Billy and Bilasia are two selves of the same personality” (Meenakshi 97). His first look at her in Dhunia's hut is captivating. Her presence transforms him altogether. In his search for Billy Romi proposes to meet Bilasia as it is obvious to him that the only hope of resolving the crisis lays through her. To him she looks not merely a human being but also the embodiment of that primal face that has ruled these hills, perhaps this earth since time began. Billy undergoes "his final metamorphosis" (141), realizing that up till now he has been wasting the priceless treasure of his life on that tip of tinsel mistaken for civilization. To him, Bilasia has that untamed beauty that comes to flower only in our primitive people. Joshi describes the beauty of Bilasia with an unforgettable lyrical fervor fusing myth and nature. Bilasia's sensuality lures Billy. She is exceedingly attracting sexually. Her hair is loose and just behind her left ear there is a red flower. Her enormous eyes only a little foggier with drink poured out a sexuality that is nearly as primeval as the forest that surrounds them.

His union with Bilasia is not only a union of two separate bodies as in case with Meena Biswas or a union of flesh as in case with Rima Kaul, but it is a union of a split self to realize the whole. Now Billy knows what he has been really wanting and what he has practically realized. He knows that he is the primitive pilgrim and it is primitivism that will lead him to his destination. He knows that his love for the primitive is a step towards his spiritual awareness, his realization of the soul, his existentialist quest for meaning and values in life. Only when Billy meets Bilasia and unifies himself with her, he realizes himself and becomes whole. Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly remarks "renunciation has always been an Indian ideal of life" (Meenakshi 97). The story of Billy resembles the life of Prince Siddhartha, who, often
afterwards became famous with the name Gautam Buddha. Like Siddhartha, Billy is born and brought up in a royal family. Like Siddhartha he sees that the life in this world is continuous sufferings, likewise, he makes a final renunciation of his wife and son in of spiritual perfection from darkness to light with a view to rising up as the Buddha, the enlightened one. Billy's withdrawal from the world is in the nature of reflex action. He withdraws in order to preserve himself from "those rapacious representatives of civilization" (143). His is not an escape from reality but escape into reality on the lines of prince Siddhartha. It is an onward movement from darkness to light. He gets self realization when he meets the tribal girl Bilasia.

Billy renounces the world and becomes some sort of a priest. He comes to experience some sort of god-hood. He is a kind of "avtar" to the tribals and a faith of this kind is in tune with the Indian tradition. He is a man having great healing powers. Towards the end of the novel we find a tragic turn Billy warns Romi not to disclose his whereabouts to anybody but ultimately the police catch hold of him and in an encounter kills him. This ends the existentialist quest of Billy for values and meaning of life in this mad, mad absurd world where none tries to understand his problem even after death. None of the people with whom Billy came into contact could understand that Billy was making a research for truth. The protagonist ultimately, has to pay price with his life for not conforming to the norms of so called civilized society and for daring to come out of its murky atmosphere. Billy's death "should not be taken as the death of an isolationist but as the triumph of his ideals and principles" (Dwivedi 313). The civilized world is all out to destroy him. Even Romi, his trusted friend and the only link from civilization that Billy keeps ultimately, betrays him. He betrays the confidence reposed in him and fails to protect Billy as things get beyond his control when his wife Situ discloses the secret to Billy's father and wife. On the other hand,
the tribal world seeks to perpetuate the memory of Billy by offering his a shrine. In *The Foreigner*, it is Sindi who infringes the society and in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, it is the society that is responsible for the tragedy of Billy.

In the title of the novel the words "strange" and "case" have thematic significance, Billy's case is strange because in the materialistic world where everybody is mad after civilization and its comforts, he being a professor in Anthropology at the Delhi University, opts for the primitive life of the tribals. His "case" is an interesting psychological case study for psycho-analysis and psychiatrists. His predicament is psychologically concerned with the inner psyche. Unlike Sindi in *The Foreigner* who is assisted by others in his quest, Billy's experiences are mainly psychic and he remains all alone a lonely quested. As per the oral tradition of story telling, the novel is a great success as the narrator and the audience both share common mythology. It is interesting to note that the union of Billy and Bilasia is taken as the union of "Jivatma" and "Parmatma" the union of "Purush" and "Prakriti". The novel fits in the scheme of Indian classics which are nothing but the collective unconscious of the whole nation. There is a mythical situation underlying the entire texture of the novel. All myths are used with a view to bringing out Billy's experience on the pattern of the "Rishi's" and "Mahatmas" of the rich Indian heritage. As Joshi himself admits that "the influence of our religious thinkers is of course there" (Reply to M.R.Dua) in the novel which is primarily concerned with religious issues – the problems of an essentially Hindu mind. The two stories, the story of the narrator and the story of Billy Biswas run parallel in the novel forming an interesting structure parallelism and contrast. Both the stories are linked together as most of the events in the life of the protagonists have a direct bearing on that of the narrator whose main purpose is to relate Billy's story and to highlight his character.
In short, Arun Joshi in this novel offers a dramatic presentation of the complex character so Billy who in the first part of the novel finds himself rootless and alienated from individuals and society and civilization as such. There is every possibility of his breaking down. In the latter part, he takes refuge in the world of tribals only when no option left. It is in the tribal world that he finds his identity, his roots. The so called civilized world destroys him by all means. Thus, the novel stands as a bitter commentary on the tyranny of the forces of phony civilization that crushes man's desire for self existence and kinship with nature.

The Apprentice like its predecessors The Foreigner and The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, probes deeper into the inner consciousness of the individual with a view to exploring what Arun Joshi calls "that mysterious underworld which is the human soul". In all these novels, Joshi delineates the painful predicament of his protagonists. Today in all the walks of life, there is chaos, confusion, corruption, hypocrisy and absurdity. The contemporary individual endowed with super sensitivity feels powerless and isolated from his self as well as his surroundings. He seems to be a victim of the "petrified" and "frozen" society of the modern dehumanized world which does not suit his temperament, and all efforts for adjustment prove suicidal to him. He, therefore, takes a bold step to reject the ways of the so called civilized world and tries his best to discover some meaning of his existence.

Joshi's third novel, The Apprentice , which is inspired by Albert Camus's The Fall, also depicts the pitiable plight of the contemporary man "sailing about in a composed society without norms without direction , without even, perhaps a purpose"(74). It is a confessional novel wherein the narrator –protagonist unfolds the story of his life in the form of an internal monologue. Ratan Rathore, who is both the hero and the anti –hero of the novel probes into his inner life and exposes he perfidy,
cowardice and corruption of his own character at the mock -heroic level. He is a thoroughly existentialist character who conforms to the doctrine that man forms his essence in the course of the life. He chooses to lead, and as Sartre would put it, "in his choice lays his freedom". He is neither a rebel like Billy Biswas nor a rootless foreigner like Sindi Oberoi. He is a practical man who getting his idealism shattered in the corrupt society proposes to survive by sycophancy and practically adapts himself to the mysterious ways of the world. The novel is both a treatise on current social and political scene and a lament of tormented soul. It reminds us of Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. Here the social reality becomes the nucleus of the novel wherein Ratan, like Sindi and Billy comes out yet another reflective introvert whose life corresponds to bitter social norms and consequently undergoes suffering and a course salvation towards the close:

The novel enacts three stages in the human divine comedy of Ratan. The pre-independence period is the dawn, the period of idealism, the phase of innocence, the post independence India is the broad day light of experience, the inferno of corruption, the last part the area of expiation, is the door to purgatory. (Hari Mohan Prasad 65)

Thus the novel stands as a psychological study into innocent experience and expiation of the protagonist's history.

Ratan Rathore is a young man whose self has two distinct parts- the higher self and the lower self. He is the child of a double inheritance- the patriotic and ideal world of his father and the worldly wisdom of his mother. He is greatly inspired by his father's active participation in the country's freedom movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. His father abandons his practice as a lawyer, gives away most of his wealth to join the revolutionaries and is ultimately shot dead by a
British Sergeant while leading a procession of freedom fighters. Ratan is reminded of the advice of his father:"to be good! Respected! To be of use!"(19) and to join the army of Subhash Chandra Bose, but his mother poor and tubercular woman advices Ratan to earn money. Ratan is in a fix regarding his choice between the two conflicting philosophies – one shown by his idealist father the other by his practical mother. He becomes a split personality. His higher self is trying to hold a check on his strange bargains with the world. His lower self is dictating him for the pursuit of career in life. Being a self less idealist .like his father, he holds his ideals above everything else. He feels deeply shocked at the atrocities committed by the British and holds himself somehow or other responsible. But suddenly he falls a prey to his lower self his enthusiasm disappears. After his father's death, Ratan goes to all the friends of his father for help in getting a job. He meets frustration wherever he goes and finds himself miserably alone, disheartened and disillusioned. His faith in the positive values of goodness, virtue, humanity and sympathy is broken. He is convinced that chaos, absurdity, brutality, insensitivity, hypocrisy, fear and restlessness are but different aspects of life in the so called civilized world. His surroundings as well as his true self have the crushing effect on him, and he feels alienated from both. The humiliating experiences of job-seeking, of being examined, interviewed, interrogated, and rejected tell upon him like anything. He himself described his own deviations from the right way with a sense of self awareness:" I had become, at the age of twenty-one, a hypocrite, a liar, in short a sham. I had been insecure before and full of strange fears"(28). Although his father regarded man's desire to make a career as bourgeois filth"(33), his son ironically is devoted whole heartedly to building his career to make a headway in this indifferent world by fair or foul means, he is in fact shattered by the breakdown of faith.
Ultimately, with the help of a roommate at the inn, he gets a job as a temporary clerk in a government office of war purchases. This adds a new dimension to his life. Hence forth, his only aim is to make his career. Being the son of an idealist father and having a spark of idealism amidst ashes of corruption left in him, he feels restless in the unjust world. But soon, he flouts human values for the sake of a career and experiences the notorious trades of the so called civilization like bribery, hypocrisy, drunkenness and womanizing. He feels sad after refusing the enormous bribe of rupees ten thousand offered by a contractor's son. The desire for getting promotion makes him his identity. Ratan who grew rebellious to think of "carriers and bourgeois filth "(41) becomes "a thick skin and a wash out"(41). He understands that a successful career is not to be realized through hard work but through flattery and cunning. Now, he is guided purely by ambition. He becomes fully a man of modern times -cunning, deceptive, selfish and easy going. He marries the cousin of his boss only to please him. In return he gets confirmation of his job and is up graded as an assistant with a dozen clerks working under him. He is later awarded with the job of an officer in the department. By now he is convinced that the world runs on the basis of deals. In fact, his own marriage is a deal for is career. But we should not lose sight of the fact that the division of Ratan's self is all the more sharpened when he agrees to marry the cousin of his boss. There is a bitter inner conflict between his higher self and his lower self. Rattan's dilemma is actually Hamletian and he is painfully aware of the division of himself.

Under the predominance of his lower self, he as a free individual exercises his choice to pursue his material ends on the existentialistic line of ideology. Ratan clings to the doctrine that man form his essence in the course of the life he chooses to lead and that in his choice lays his freedom. After marriage Ratan becomes an officer and
rises in life through corrupt practices. He readily accepts bribes and now owns a car, a flat of his own and a good bank balance the higher he raises, the more fraudulent and hypocritical he becomes. The hopelessness of life makes Ratan feel guilty at times. His higher self brings about a change in his behaviour. He frequently recollects his father's ideals. He begins to behave as if he were one of greatest patriots of India. He always talks about the miserable condition of the country and often collects donations for the soldiers at the war front. With a view to bringing about a change in the existing set-up, he also writes an article entitled "Crisis of Character" (51) in which he holds the Indian character mainly responsible for the downfall and decay of the country. He resorts to all sorts of corruption prevailing in our society and describes the Indian people as "a glorious monument of which even the foundations had caught cancer" (59). In spite of his promotion and material gains, he does not feel at home in the corrupt society. The tragedy of Ratan lies in his consciousness that practically "he has been gradually sinking abyss of darkness of corruption", (20) yet he has the satisfaction of swimming and not sinking. Arun Joshi's ironic comment on this aspect of human existence is worth quoting: "We sink and we think we are swimming" (53).

With a troubled conscience Ratan goes to Himmat Singh, popularly called Sheikh, who gives him enormous bribe and tempts him into a big bargain. He stoops down to indignities and Okays defective war material which results in the death of his friend, the Brigadier. Various kinds of corruption harden him so much that he looses the capacity to be shocked. He feels that being trapped in the corrupt system; he has no option but to seek solace from the annals of corruption. In Bombay, he finalizes and signs a deal with Himmat Singh and takes a bribe for the supply of sub-standard war material to war fronts. There he sees everyone busy amassing wealth by exploiting the opportunities provided by war. Even a member of parliament, a trustee
for the Republic, is not worried at all about the fate of the war. When Ratan shows his unwillingness for the fear that people would come to know, the Sheikh sets his conscience at rest by telling him that only fools like him believe that there is a law book laid down by God, which they must follow. He feels that he is going to accept the bribe when really does not need money. Like Billy, he feels "a mesmeric pull and it leaves him" with the old depressing feeling that something had gone wrong with my life, I wasn't where I belong" (The Strange Case 61). Thereafter he is always at war with himself. The moral dilemma of Ratan Rathore is at its climax. His existence is shaken by the agonizing by question. He finds some consolation to see the custodian of civilization like ministers, secretaries and officials deeply engrossed in the worldly ways of life in the present society. But his higher self shows deep concern for the increasing decrease in the moral standard of man. He finds himself in a pitiable plight. Thus, the inner conflict displayed in Ratan's consciousness gives an existentialist dimension to the novel. The mental torture of Ratan results into his physical disfigurement. His body bends to one side. He loose physical briskness and comes to have a feeling of being "used up". The sheer vitality seems to have gone forever because of mental tension. A sensitive soul as Ratan is he realizes the hypocrisy of his existence. He knows that he can deliver a fine speech on Marxism outwardly but he suffers from intense boredom inwardly. He is panic stricken to see the country loosing all sense of norms. Self above service, fraud, corruption and immorality have become the new norms. At the time of the Indo-China war, when the Chinese threatened the nation, the leaders in stead of preparing the nation are engaged in preparing their fiery speeches. He is surprised to find the minister making wrong statements about the refugee problem and the price rise. He is more surprised to see the behaviour of the minister who is thinking of enriching himself by conspiring with his secretary and
Himmat Singh to dispose of sub-standard war material, when the security of the nation is at stake. This fills his heart with guilt and belief in the essential goodness of human heart. He is so much confused that he fails to distinguish between the right and the wrong. He is busy exploring the dividing lines between success and failure, loyalty and betrayal, love and hate.

Joshi beautifully displays the inner discord that lends existentialist stance to the protagonist's personality. He feels himself betrayed. He also realizes that he has lost all significance in life. He feels fed up with the life of hypocrisy, deception, and all round corruption. He gets isolated and estranged from the society as well as from his own self. Joshi shows how Ratan Rathore carries his inner emptiness while enjoying life in Bombay in the company of Himmat Singh. The main problem before him at this critical juncture is the existentialist one regarding the loss of identity as a human being. In order to seek peace, consolation and moral courage Ratan happens to visit the temple, but to his utter disappointment, he finds even religion is not free from corruption as the priest is ready to grease his palms to save his dishonest son from punishment. Now Ratan grievously realizes the futility and hollowness of his whole life. After the Brigadier's suicide, for which he is wholly responsible, he feels completely shaken and restless. Now he decided to live authentically and undergoes the most difficult penance for his earlier misdeeds. Every morning before going to the office he goes to the temple, cleans the shoes of the congregation and begs forgiveness of all those whom he has harmed. He maintains his individuality, as he remains unconcerned with what is going on inside the temple. He only stands at the door steps and folds his hands. The awareness of stark realities of human existence becomes the measure of Ratan's achievement in terms of realization that "one must try and not yield at any cost to despair"(149), and that there is nothing wrong to make a
second start and it is not too late to mend. With this positive realization, he appears to be an affirmative kind of existential figure, and the personal value he discovers for himself surely lends meaning to his existence. V. Gopal Reddy writes in this connection: "His existential decision to recover the loss self through an act of penitence reveals the need to realize and prize one's integrity" (Reddy 41). The novelist purposely, of course correctly, ends his novel with a dawn which is both inward and outward. To sum up, in the words of Madhu Sudan Prasad the novel is "A striking study of belief in Karma and purification of the soul and it commends the abiding values humility and self purification in human life." (Prasad 60)

Arun Joshi’s most talked about novel is The Last Labyrinth which won him the prestigious 1983 Sahitay Academy Award. It explores the dilemma of existence with greater intensity and against a wider backdrop of experience. It probes into the turbulent of inner world of its protagonist Som Bhaskar, a millionaire industrialist, who represents the contemporary phase of the dilemma through of modern man groping through the labyrinths of life, existence and reality. It exhibits the confluence of the existentialist anxiety as exemplified in The Foreigner, the "Karmic" principals of detachment and action on the pattern of the Bhagwat Gita as shown in The Apprentice, and the ceaseless longing for the essence of life being obsessed with a latent quest for a great force as observed in The Strange case of Billy Biswas. Thus, the oncourse of the "Triveni" on the form of the mystical urge of Som Bhaskar is presented in the never ending longing for the vitals of life and existence.

The narrator hero, Som Bhaskar, relates in flash-back the events of the life involving him and another man's woman named Anuradha for whose possession he risks his life and business. His inexorable pursuit of this woman he craves for but can not properly acquire, despite possessing her physically becomes the be all and the
end all of his existence and assumes the dimensions of his quest for the meaning of life, love, God, and death, the greatest of all mysteries—"the Last labyrinth". Som, a young, educated and intelligent industrialist is married to Geeta, "an extra ordinary woman" (11), who has borne him two children and yet he is led by undefined hunger of the body as well as hunger of the spirit. From his grandfather he inherits his fondness for women and drink, from his father the scientific interrogative attitude, towards the first cause, and from his mother staunch endurance. Som knows that a life with Geeta can not be imagined, yet he runs after several women. He feels hungry for the joys of life and undergoes new experience in business and sex. But, ironically enough instead of having a sense of fulfillment, he comes to have a terrible sense of emptiness of voids within and voids without. Som's insatiable hunger is physical, mental, material and spiritual. He seeks substitute satisfaction in sex, wealth and fame but grows very anxious and increasingly restless. He grows very anxious to know what he really wants. The desire to know as he says is a labyrinth: "to know just that, no more, no less. This then, was a labyrinth and back ward and side ways of the mind"(53).He possesses a passion to know and perhaps to believe, but he simply cannot believe as he is torn by doubts and contradictions.

In fact inflictions of contradictions are very much there in his blood. He happens to inherit these opposite influences from his parent's. Contrary to the scientific temperament of his father his mother is a woman of religious, temper. Her temperament is that of profound faith and endurance. She has the courage to suffer for her deep rooted faith, she develops cancer but she does not take the pills. She believes that only Krishna would cure her. Form his mother, son inherits faith in religion and love for Krishna Thus the two- science and religion -create a strain within his self and torture him. He suffers from an inherent sickness, a Hamletian incertitude. Like
Hamlet, he is in a fix, whether to abide by the faith of his mother or to welcome inquisitive scientific attitude of his father whether to live in the world of illusion or that of reality, whether to opt for spirit or the material world.

Like Sindi, Som has the genes of two cultures in him. Being born in India and brought up under the care of his religious mother, he imbibes religious faith and spiritual learning's. But he has studied abroad at some of the finest universities of the world. During these years outside India he absorbs something of the western outlook. The west contributes to his reliance on reason, materialistic outlook, practical wisdom and, above all the scientific temperament, that are further strengthened by his father after his coming to India. Thus, Som becomes a labyrinth within his own self. The contradictory pulses working within his self make him restless. From his grand father he derives a love for womanizing, drinking and impulsiveness. The father impulse provides him a strong inclination to know and interrogate. On the other hand, the mother–impulse goads him trust and surrender. Thus, his consciousness wanders in the mazes of the contradictory impulses and he is torn within. The opposite impulses of reason and intuition, doubt and faith, illusion and reality, resistance and submission create a tension in him. He develops a feeling of a rudderless boat being tossed on turbulent waves. Som becomes a psychological case he delineates very deftly those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probing of the psychology disclose to us. *The Last Labyrinth* explores these recesses of Som's mind. Hari Mohan comments, "Like Jungian man, he is full of inner disharmony and is a loose luster of masks or fragments of identity" (Prasad 89). His, mind is a labyrinth. From his early childhood he feels insecure. He looses his mother at the age of 15. At the age of 18, he visits Ajanta and experiences a terrible void. He is in a struggle to
auspicate his life. In order to experience security, he rushes to the arms of innumerable women but after every relationship he feels more discontented.

Throughout his life, Som seeks some one who can resolve his contradictions and provide him relief. It is with the keen desire that he makes love to Leela Sabnis, a scholar knowing Marathi Sanskrit, French and German besides English, Hindi Tamil, well versed the thoughts and ideologies of philosophers like Freud and Jung. She is an embodiment of reason. She offers him the joy of her small and sweaty breasts as well as she analyses all his problems. She tries to analyze the root of Som's obsessive cry. Leela Sabnis thinks that all his disillusions and undefined fears have their roots in his problem of identity. Som's misery is the result of the conflict within his mind. He is psychologically speaking a split personality. He is torn between his two selves – the one is the scientific analytical and almost drawn towards ideologies of his father and grand father, the endurance of his mother, trust of his wife Greta and their joy in suffering with a view to cleansing the soul. His rational self attracts him to Darwin, whereas his primal self urges him to aspire for intuitive faith. Both are at daggers drawn. This results in his mental torture. Cultural clash has formed basis of experience very beautifully in this novel. The beauty lies in presenting the contrast between the west and he east in the life of Som Bhaskar. The two worlds, western and the Indian ways of life are the two inner selves of Som. They are agreeably represented by the objective co-relatives of certain characters and places of India. The split personality of Som reminds us of Hamletian dilemma and the sad state of affairs he has to undergo.

It is the mysterious and mystical Indian way of life that can administer some sort of consolation and peace to Som. The characters symbolizing this particular way of life are Geeta. Gargi, the Sufi Pir, Aftab and, above all Anuradha. Geeta has shared
life with Som and yet she is engaged in cleansing her soul. She loves Som as well as Krishna. The Sufi Pir is a prince who leaves princely comforts in search of God. Gargi, the daughter of the Sufi Pir, is a god-woman a living proof of God's presence. She holds that suffering and sacrifice cleanse the souls of all impurities. She is deaf and dumb because she hears only divine and communicates with only souls. She has realized God and her look soothes Som. Her words refresh Anuradha and her touch works as a balm on ailing Aftab. Some how, Som develops an aridity of feeling, a sense of inner frustration and a kind of detachment from almost everyone and everything, till he encounters Anuradha for the first time in a hotel. Anuradha casts a spell on him. He looks attractive and he is drawn towards her. At the invitation of Aftab Rai, Som visits him and Anuradha at his residence the Lal Haveli which is "built like a labyrinth "(36).He is rather surprised to know that Anuradha just lives with Aftab and is not married to him. Surprisingly enough, Anuradha, Aftab Rai, and the Lal Haveli represent obsolete antiquity and or a mystery, a labyrinth of life and reality. Above all Anuradha, who exercises such an overpowering fascination over Som that he neglects, his business, his family and his health to possess her, turns to be a mysterious entity. She is the most absorbing inhabitant of the world of Labyrinth. Joshi has distinguished her from others.

Obviously, Anuradha looks mysterious, and there is a mystery within Som also. In this mysterious world everything is a haze. Aftab and Anuradha take Som to a cottage by the side of Ganga where he meets Gargi. On coming back to the Haveli when Aftab goes to sleep and Anuradha is left alone with Som, she tells him the mystery of Gargi, how Gargi's father was prince who turned a Sufi Pir and lived with Aftab's father and gave Aftab whatever eye sight he has. Later on we find her voice suddenly getting rude. She pushes him away and is gone. Som stumbles over wine
and women again and again to undergo a new existential crisis. Although Som's pride is wounded by Anuradha's cold rather insulting farewell, he is compelled by unconscious urges to visit her again in Benaras. While sleeping in Aftab's haveli, he dreams and feels restless. When he wakes up, he finds Anuradha standing by his bed side. He lusts madly for her and that night he succeeds in winning her, having a physical contact with her and he gathers the impression that she is as much in need of physical contact as he.

Som with his wife Geeta takes off for Europe, America and Japan with a view of forgetting Anuradha but comes back still more discontented. He goes to Gargi to seek help for his restlessness. She avoids him to go to Anuradha, patch up and have no quarrel with her as she is his "Shakti" Since then, he feels that Anuradha is indispensable to him and returns to the haveli over and over. He wants to possess Anuradha fully. Anuradha allows Som to love her and have sexual contact with her but never to be separated from Aftab. This hurts him and makes him wreck vengeance on her and Aftab. He buys all the shares of Aftab and pays no attention to the advice of his physician not to hound Anuradha as he knows no other human being who has suffered like her. Symbolically this journey of Som becomes a reaching out to his soul, the essence of human existence. He seems to come out, by and by, from the labyrinth of reason into the straight forward clarities of faith. He seems to turn his back on the world of reason, luxury and sensuality. It is not the world where mind grows and heart clutches, that attracts him now, he seems to be captivated by the mystical urge to realize his identity. His yearning for the realization of his soul now, he takes Anuradha to be his soul. From his earlier stage of ignorance when he believed that there is no God he now steps into an altogether different world, the world of belief and faith, that God exists. Only the realization is not there. Now, he
has moved on the right path that will lead to the destination, the realization he knows that God should be realized, not learnt and that realization is a continuous process of attainment by constant efforts. He notices the change coming over him. He had desired to purchase Aftab's shares and engages himself in possessing Anuradha and pining for his identity. He makes a frank confession to Anuradha that he wants to become one with the soul of God through her soul. This honest confession wins Anuradha's approval. She tells him that she loves to hear him talk like this open heartedly. He discloses his agonies before Gargi, Anuradha and Aftab. All of them have their answer to his quest and cooperative by extending a help towards realization. Som learns from the history of Anuradha and Gargi how all our actions can be an offering to Lord Krishna.

Som goes to the mountains to encounter Krishna. When he reaches the temple, he is surprised to see Gargi there. He is again surprised when doctor tells before Gargi how on learning from him that Som is dying of heart attack and there is no hope for him. Anuradha has repeatedly requested Gargi to save him. Som seems to be unperturbed by Gargi's advice. He gathers the package of shares and returns to Bombay. He goes to Benaras to retrieve Anuradha from Aftab who persuades him to leave them alone. However, Som finds some peace and tranquility in the company of Anuradha as reason, then, is united with, if not finally wedded to, faith. There is a gradual development of Som's soul on the lines of faith and trust. The dirt and filth hindering from having visions of God are being cleaned by his suffering. His journey towards the temple at the mountains to encounter Krishna symbolizes his attempt towards reaching his soul. His soul has not been cleansed perfectly. His vanity is still troubling him. He wants to feel his evidence by confrontation. The path of
confrontation simply cannot lead to perfection. Ifs and buts are hurdles and so he is
given to understand that God has punished him as he has lost Anuradha forever.

Som's position, no doubt, is that of absurdity, but, he is not like Camus's
Meursalt indifferent to all that happens around him. He actually participates in the
activities he is concerned with. He wants to hear from Anuradha in the guest room
about the God in the hills. He request fully asks Gargi not to misunderstand him and
that he really wants to believe. When Aftab permits Som after much persuasion to see
Anuradha, who in turn requests him to go away at once for his life may be in danger
there. He leaves the Haveli that night only to come back the next morning to claim
Anuradha. Next morning he is surprised and shocked to learn that she has
disappeared. Suspecting a foul play he reports against Aftab to the police which make
a thorough search of his house to trace her but in vain. His dilemma remains
unresolved. After the disappearance of Anuradha, he almost rants and raves like
Marlowe's Dr. Faustus and makes the pathetic prayer of a defeated existentialist for
forgiveness. This intensely lyrical outcry coming directly from the very depth of his
seems to suggest that Anuradha, his departed mistress, has become "the core of his
existence, the crystallization of the meaning of his life."(Mathur and Rai, 152). Verily
speaking Anuradha is a living mystery; she has a rare insight and intuitive strength.
The novelist conceives her from a vantage point. Her life has been a continuous
suffering a general drama of pain. Both Aftab and DR. Kashyap present a long list of
her suffering. This serves as a cathartic measure for her purification. All her vanities
- vanity of birth, of flesh, of beauty, of wealth, of knowledge - have been completely
eroded. She feels for one and all. She has grown so much generous and large hearted
as to embrace everybody. She loves all; she lives with Aftab and sleeps with Som.
She is not married to anybody and she will never marry anyone. She is for all. She
offers her body to Som when he badly needs it. She herself is not interested in sexual 
pleasure as she develops herself spiritually. She liberates herself from shame and fear 
and acts in a detached manner. So for her the Lal Haveli is not a labyrinth, she is a 
labyrinth herself, elusive and mysterious for others. She is familiar and charming as 
well as elusive and distant. She is always ready to sacrifice. She vows to Gargi that 
she would give up Som if he is saved. She makes the greatest sacrifice by 
disappearing from the Lal Haveli when Som pursues her to snatch her away.

Som is left staring at the dark sea and brooding. He is a lovely existentialist 
who has come to realize that the core of loneliness is something around which all are 
built. He finally looses himself in the labyrinths of life and death. All his mystical 
cravings remain unfulfilled and he is doomed to remain unalienated. Unlike Sindi, 
Billy and Ratan, Som does not progress from alienation to existential affirmation. 
Like an utterly defeated existentialist, he seems to be looking for his own self but does 
not find it. Finally when he makes a suicidal gesture by pulling out his revolver and 
putting it casually to the temple and tries to kill himself he is stopped by his wife, 
Geeta from doing so. The novelist perhaps seems to suggest that it is Geeta whose 
trademark is trust and faith which ultimately brings him to his senses. It is this 
understanding that only suffering and humiliation bring that seems to have been 
presented as a solution to life's meaninglessness. The novelist also seems to suggest 
that labyrinths of life can be resolved through unwavering faith, trust, and intuition 
rather than science, logic, brain and rationalism. But Som is not the type of person 
who would readily trust. He possesses an analytical mind, an altogether non believing 
mind and is made of a sterner stuff as he himself says at the start of the novel. He is 
always guided by reason and logic and remains almost always at war with himself.
Arun Joshi's existentialist stance assumes a metaphysical dimension and a mythical proportion here. He portrays Som as a new Indian with a crisis of conscience. Bhaskar's crisis is not a crisis of emotion or ethics it is a crisis of conscience. The march of human evolution and the development of civilization down the ages have brought the modern man to a point consciousness where he can neither believe nor refuse to believe. Bhaskar is continuity in his anguish of alienation, in his existential problem and in his questing, but he affects a departure in the realization of the fact that man's dilemma is no longer merely a consequence of causes or situations but is rooted in man himself. Bhaskar's dilemma lies deep down in his own self and consciousness. It is not the outer world, the objective reality but the world within, the subjective reality which is essentially the fountain spring of despair and anxiety. This is a metaphysical awareness of human loneliness of human inadequacy of human unfulfilment. Joshi's odyssey has been from man suffering from a cause to man suffering for being Man with consciousness. Bhaskar's dilemma has crystallized the sociological, psychological and metaphysical dimensions of human existence into Joshi's unique vision of Som Bhaskar is a representative of the new man and *The Last Labyrinth* is a fictional presentation of the chaos of existence and the crisis of consciousness as rationalism only aggravates the problems, it is unwavering faith alone, the absolute trust that can bring peace to life. Som's mother has it and she prefers to die rather than give up her trust. Trust is Geeta's trademark. Anuradha's mother too, has it in abundance. Anuradha herself, who is no body's wife, claims to be faithful and feels it inside her. Gargi is all faithful and advices Som that there is no harm in believing that God exists. Only Som fails to achieve this faith as he fails to make a complete surrender of every thing belonging to him including his logic and intellectual rationalism. The only way out, therefore, for human beings is to trust and
pray if they want to lead a really peaceful life. The novel seems to suggest as Kierkegaard says: "Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays"(118).

Som's existentialist anguish is heightened by the fact that life to him offers no simple solution as it does to the boy he meets in the hills. The boy has been looking for pebbles that one can see right through. When Som asks him: "and what if you don't find the pebbles?" the boy replies:" even then it is all right" (186). Som is surprised to find in the boy another "Pascal". He is depressed to find that child so young, should have, been contaminated in such a manner. Some sort of existentialist fatigue has been with Som right from the very beginning till the end. The hopelessness of his predicament is exemplified in the crumbling of the west, in whose "orderliness" he always believed. Towards the close of the novel, he himself speaks of his weariness. The Labyrinth metaphor is spread out thick all over the text of the novel, starting from the little itself. It is used as a symbol signifying all that Som, the protagonist, finds inexplicable. Time and again, it is emphasized that the last labyrinth is death. There are different kinds of labyrinths that a man comes across in this life.

There is the incomprehensibility of the world itself in which man is like an ant threading through a maze. Then, there is the labyrinth of the mind. The desire to know is a labyrinth. At times, the reader, little Som also feels caught in the labyrinth. Each character besides being a living creature is a symbol. The Lal Haveli is a symbol of life itself. Its last labyrinth symbolizes death. Som's mother, his wife Geeta , and Gargi symbolize endurance, trust, and religious faith. Som's dilemma springs from the double inheritance -the Western and the Indian ethos. There is much of the subjective element in the character of Som. Both the protagonist and the novelist are made out of the dual force. Som, like Arun Joshi, is an Indian with a western orientation. Som's dilemma is born at the meeting point of the Western and the Indian
ethos. Godlessness is a common feature of many of Joshi's protagonists - Sindi Oberoi, Ratan Rathore, Som Bhaskar and his father. At the same time the symbol of Krishna coming in many forms inside the novel is akin to the Indian concept that God is in every atom. The connecting line between two world's western and Indian -is the protagonist Som Bhaskar. The back and forth, movements of Som's mind as it moves between the two worlds, are artistically interwoven that he finds himself lost in the labyrinth.

Like his father, Som is vexed by the mere thought of death. He is so caught in the dark labyrinths of life that he is unable to follow the light that is within him. He appears like a modern existentialist Hamlet who adds to him dilemma "to be or not to be" the additional horns of "to believe or not to believe". H.M. Prasad rightly comments “In his quest, in his intent to unravel the cosmic mystery, Bhaskar is a modernized, secularized, skeptical person who has been denied the faith and resolution of the upnishaic model” (Prasad, Fictional World of Arun Joshi 238).

Joshi's fifth and last novel, The City and The River and its specialty consists in its being a departure from as well as a continuation of Joshi's earlier fictional endeavors. At one level, it is a parable of the times, at another it deals with how men in essence are entirely free to choose, create by choice the circumstances in which they must live. It also explores the relevance of God to man's choices and whether all said and done, the world indeed belongs to God and no one else. The novel is a departure in as much as it is "a commentary on the times and a political parable" (Githa Hariharan). It presents a critique on the political scenario of the times. There are obvious parallels between the Emergency Regime of 1974/75 in India and the one portrayed in the novel. The bulldozing of the huts of the people to widen a street, reminds us of many such deeds in the name of beautification of the city of
Delhi at the time of emergency. The power structure in the city bears a close resemblance to that of the emergency. The consolidation of power by the Grand Master to the extent of anointing himself at the kind with unlimited power is reminiscent of the then dictatorial rule in 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. Like wise, there is presence of a coterie of fawning councilors surrounding the Grand Master and always misleading him and thereby remaining in the lime light and improving their hierarchical position in the administrative set up of the government. The Grand Master has sycophants, like the Rallies Master, who organizes rallies in his support to prove that he is loved most by his people. The Commissioner of Police, the educational advisor and the Master of Rallies formulates the strategy and makes the schemes of private ends. The Grand Master and his syndicate adopt all kinds of methods to perpetuate their rule.

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 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. Not only the political image is shattered but the wrong doer must suffer also. The novelist expresses the view the one who misuses power cannot escape punishment. Even if the wrong doer succeeds in getting rid of his worldly adversaries, the even handed divine justice comes forward to punish him. Here in *The City and The River* all the dissenters absolutely fail in their rebellion. Thus the novel appears to be a powerful commentary on the political scenario of the past, the present and the future. But in many ways it remains a continuation of Joshi's earlier novels. It is an
existential commentary on the absurdity of human situation. Like his earlier novels, here in, too, he continues to explore the existential and hostile world. R.K. Dhawan believes that "Joshi's fictional world is a revelation of a world where man is confronted by the self and the question of his existence" (Dhawan, *Fictional World of Arun Joshi* 18).

In *The City and the River*, Joshi seems to be pre-occupied with certain existential issues. One thing new in the novel is that here his canvas has grown larger. He turns his focus from the private to the public, Instead of his preoccupation with the existentialist predicament of an individual, here, he deals with the socio-political and existentialist 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 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 political allegorical satire. The main plot of the novel resolves around the theme of power struggle. The Grand Master rules the city by the river and is determined to become its unchallenged king. His schemes meet with stiff resistance from the boatmen who refuse to fall in line with the seven hills. Their refusal heightens the conflict between the city and the river, between the grand master and the boatman, 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 Waste Land*. It is natural that in an unnatural atmosphere like these even sensible persons suffer from certain crisis of conscience like alienation, weariness, rootlessness, boredom and meaninglessness. For instance, there is the
rallies master who is known to be an unhappy man, and the real cause of his unhappiness is rootlessness. The Professor is weary and tired of the ways of the world, as he says to Little Star "I am tired of being careful, Little Star. I am weary"

(87). Bhumi Putra having been crushed by solitude and burden of human misery feels utterly alone and alienated. Thus, life of a human being is reduced to a strange sorry tale, comprising meaningless and pointless episodes signifying nothing. In such a world as this, the protagonist is bound to create his own values which determine the ways 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 to live an authentic existence. They are prepared to pay the price for the life they lead. Simple as they are, they have the courage to be honest and bold and are able to call a spade.

The high class and the middle class people lack in authenticity as they get themselves adjusted to the circumstances they are put in and they never protest. The level of authenticity varies in inverse proportion to the social status of the inhabitants. The highest class people most terribly lack in authenticity. They are the most corrupt morally bankrupt hypocrites. They are big frauds. The Grand Master declares the era of ultimate greatness for the welfare and the prosperity of the city, but the main motive behind the declaration is to consolidate his own position and pave the way for realization of his dream of becoming the king, whereas a representative case of the authenticity of the mud people is the old man named Patanjali who is arrested as a substitute of Master Bhoma. The Boat Men remain free even if they are imprisoned as their liberty consists in their resistance. Now a day, with the rise of industrialization and commercialization the self is being threatened. Hence, the aspect of authentic existence has become an important issue and the question authenticity against corrupting influences operating in society is being dealt within modern literature all
over the world. They novelists of protest and rebellion popularly knew as "The Angry
Young Man" and "Black Humor" and "Absurd Movements" in America underlines
the need to protect the authenticity of the self against the pressing power of the state.

In this novel, Arun Joshi is dealing with the universal predicament of modern
man who is attacked from all sides by varied 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). The
novelist seems to suggest his own solution to the problem arising out of ones
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. 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 through only sacrifice. The novel explores the
relevance of God to man and affirms that the world belongs to God and no one else.
The belief in God restores peace to human soul. The only solution to life's problems
lies in complete surrender to His will. 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.