Preface

Arun Joshi, a seminal mind is a powerful novelist of the post-colonial period of Indian English Literature, which originated more than a hundred and fifty years ago as a result of the British Raj in India. In the pre-independence era, the fiction writers were mostly pre-occupied with the nationalist and social themes and the East-West encounter. After independence the tendency of the novelists has been to turn inwards and scrutinize the self and society. The modern novelists have explored the existential dilemma and problems like alienation, identity crisis, expatriation, rootlessness and a desire for recognition.

A civilization can be better understood by a delicate dissection of its springs of thought supplied from religious and philosophical ideals. These find reverberant expression in the Literature of the time and gradually develop into the community’s archetypes, which keep on recurring in the later literature. The Indian conception of the ‘self’ – the substratum of Individual soul and the Absolute as one is such a recurring powerful archetype. The novels of Arun Joshi are not an exception in this regard. In his novels, he examines the Indian vision of life. Joshi’s novels unfailingly record the novelist’s perception, evaluation, determination and declaration about life. He makes mental exploration into the
philosophical questions, which engage the thinking man. The novelist makes journeys into the interior of the protagonists so as to achieve and understanding of the ‘self’.

Arun Joshi’s novels emphasize the absurdity and senselessness of contemporary life. The technological domination and urbanization of modern society has reduced man to a puppet trapped in life’s chaotic surge. Almost all his protagonists represent common man’s disenchantment with the materialistic pursuits. This crisis in human life leads to rootlessness, alienation and identity crisis. So man takes up a quest to understand his place in the scheme of things and to win recognition. Although various critics have studied the fictional world of Arun Joshi, they have explored his work from the post-modern perspective of existentialism and its myriad contours. They are of the opinion that Joshi’s characters find themselves in the labyrinth of existence, where they either get lost or come out only after being sequeezed. Despite being the winner of the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983, Joshi has never found the right fulcrum to climb the scale of success as he was a reserved person. The present study is a humble attempt to assign the novelist his due place among the writers of Indian English Literature. The novels of Arun Joshi are not entirely critiques of existentialism, alienation, meaninglessness and vacuity of substance,
rather they are a criticism of civilization. Arun Joshi’s skill lies in his ability to describe experience in a human voice. In his fiction, the texture of the experience comes through vividly along with his ability to convey the philosophical and moral complexities of human life, without losing life itself. The present work is divided into six chapters having self-revealing titles. This study has been a truly rewarding experience. However, this would not have been possible without the grace of God and the blessings of elders and the support of friends.....

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Rahul Kumar