CHAPTER V

DYNAMICS OF IDENTITY QUEST: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF ARUN JOSHI AND S. L. BHYRAPPA

D. N. Mujamdar said

The past must be understood in the context of the present, and the present will stabilise the future if it can find its fulfilment in the moorings of the past. There was no golden age; there can be none in the future. Life is a process of adjustment and in its unfolding, it has thrown out individuals who are misfits . . . the process that is life will continue to unfold itself, adjust and march on to man’s destiny through an integration and synthesis that constitute the core of the dynamics of culture change and culture crisis (29).

The present chapter makes a comparative study of the subject of identity and identity related conflicts as portrayed in the select novels of S. L. Bhyrapppa and Arun Joshi. There is no similarity in plots of the novels of S. L. Bhyrapppa and Arun Joshi but the characters share resemblances mainly in their experience of identity conflicts and the related feelings of crisis. Both the novelists discuss individuals undergoing conflicts caught up in a plethora of contradicting identities; both social and personal. Their consciousness always expresses a dialogue of the complex kind carried on between the different identities they partake from that of the society and the needs of the ‘self’. The major characters of Arun Joshi and S. L. Bhyrappa are no commoners but are elites in the sense of being intellectuals with good education and are highly sensitive and do have an ever alert conscience that keep nagging them of their dualities.
The socio-cultural ambience in which men of Joshi and Bhyrappa live is indeed impregnated with contraries due to the ambience of cultural diversity. In the novels of Arun Joshi it is the multicultural context of America and India that serves as the background as majority of his characters belongs to the diaspora. Except for Rathan Rathore of The Apprentice all others move between India and America. The characters of S.L. Bhyrappa’s novels belong to the post-Independent India and do live in a pluri-cultural ambience where binaries of opposing nature; east-west, oriental-occidental, tradition-modernity, regional-national, marga-desi, multi-linguistic and north-south discrepancies etc galore taxing the identity claims of individuals. Bhyrappa’s characters do live in a transitional society rift with dualities of contradictory kind and therefore the conflicts experienced by them are too pronounced and composite. It’s an ambience where neither the new values are ascertained completely nor have the old become dispensable. Another shared feature is the vulnerable disposition of the personas for identity conflicts due to delicate conscience they are imbued with. Difference between personal faith and societal beliefs, between natural impulses and cultural norms generate clashes. Any threat or imminence of change in the interiorized faith is unwelcome issuing out into varied kinds of behavioral nuances characteristic of identity conflicts. In all such moments of internal skirmishes enlightened stance and rationalizing abilities of the individuals play an important role to outgrow or resolve the conflicts positively. But many caught up in turmoil are unable to do so and thus suffer from indecision and become victims of identity crisis. How individuals react or resolve in the face of identity conflicts and attain identity stability has always been the interesting and curious concern of many scholarly studies and the present study has similar concerns in the works of S. L. Bhyrappa and Arun Joshi.
Dualities of varied kinds characterise a multi-cultural society influencing the individuals living therein. Other than the co-existing elements of different cultures, fundamental dichotomies of nature/culture, ideal/real, impulse/reason, individual/community so on and so forth keep influencing people. Loss of identities and experiences of rootlessness resulting in alienation and isolation are to be perceived everywhere. Though the capacity of Indian culture to amalgamate exotic cultural elements is much appreciated at larger societal level but synthesis or acculturation in individuals is attained not before lot of psychic upheavals are experienced. Interestingly in contexts of cross-cultural confrontations it is said that a sense of crisis is never experienced by someone capable of strong faith in one’s native culture. But resilience in faith always is more advantageous to become accommodative of the best and to reject the useless of the co-existing cultures. And also interaction between cultures paves way for evolution of the “the culture of development” (Madan 27); a culture which would initiate, promote and sustain development socially as well as economically. Cultural diversity as well generates ‘evolved sensibility’ in individuals purging them of self-complacency and xenophobic reactions. Thus the composite nature of pluri-cultural contexts along with fundamental binaries and the intricacies of the modern technocratic society, influence individuals variously and identity conflicts is one among the many. David A. Hollinger asserts the importance of identities both for a society and an individual thus:

Identity is not just a passive condition, but active, carrying expectations for social behaviour and character. To whom do you belong, to whom do you owe something always, (or to whom do you look up for special help) is closely observed. Where exactly a person should show his solidarity
(distribution of one’s affections and resources and energies) is much debated by (27-45).

In the above words we deduce ‘identity’ carries two prominent meanings; to be a member of a group (the group-centred identity) and to be an individual (individual–centred identity) Emmanuel Renault stress the primacy of the individual–centred identity over that of the group thus:

Identity is to mean what we are individually, as well as what we aspire to be, what determines or specifies us, as well as how we present our particularities to ourselves, how we refer to ourselves individually, and how we identify ourselves with groups and with the general norms (101-123).

Ever caught within the options of the group and individual centered identity preferences personas’ of Bhyrappa and Joshi’s fiction do express a highly intricate consciousness all the while experiencing lack of quietude and peace of mind significant of identity crisis. Against the background of the subtle briefings on the intricacies that cause identity conflicts (a detailed study is made in chapter two) the present chapter will make a comparative study of the select fiction of S. L. Bhyrappa and Arun Joshi to understand the intricacies of identity conflicts and crisis as it affects individuals of different dispositions. Of the five novels of Arun Joshi which the present study has picked up for analysis, the novels The Apprentice, The City and The River share striking similarities with the colossal novel Tantu of S. L. Bhyrappa mainly in the socio-cultural context against which identity intricacies is explored. The hero Som Bhaskar of The Last Labyrinth and Sindhi Oberoi of The Foreigner do share striking similarities in respective personality disposition with Manjaiah of the novel The Witness. The Strange Case of Billy Biswas and The
Family Tree stand apart but all novels together provide abundance of opportunities for the study of the intricacies of identity conflicts at individual levels.

Other than the common socio-cultural context against which men of Joshi and Bhyrappa strive there is lot of similarities in their temperament or mental disposition. The causatives of identity conflicts in both Arun Joshi and Bhyrappa’s work range from the post-independent corrupt ambience of India, to the coexistence of dualities along with the personal liability of individuals for such experiences. Or in other words the sensitive characters caught up in maze of the related vices of contemporary times, social ambiguities and personal vulnerability experience identity confusions. In both Bhyrappa and Joshi’s novels there always exist distinctive towering personalities amidst plethora of minor ones with various degrees of liability for identity conflicts. Only major characters will be picked up for analysis to prove the intricacies of the identity conflicts. In each novel selected for study there is always a distinctive towering personality with abundance of capacity for identity stability that comes from abundance of faith and sense of self-respect. They even are disposed with powerful voice of reason or enlightened consciousness to choose amongst the plethora of identities and remain steadfast to the same. But the agency of the self is thwarted by the outside forces and thus execution of the self is resisted and this results in feelings of conflicts and crisis. The clash finally ends in resolution of some kind or the other as per the personal faith of the individuals and their strength of conviction to oppose or accept the countering forces. The conflict is sometimes between two persons of varying identity faiths and sometimes it is within the individual’s consciousness itself between two paradoxical claims. Some do resolve the conflict successfully taking decisive steps to attain identity stability and enjoy the related feelings of tranquility but with some the conflict is
ever raging and unresolved ending in disastrous effects for the individuals’ concerned. The kinds of resolution they reach at also have common points for comparison and the study of the differences are as much interesting. But none of the characters live social identities obliviously as majority of the people often do as they all are highly sensitive and acutely conscious of intricacies within. What Liela Sabnis had grasped as the difference between Billy Biswas and others hold good to all major men of Bhyrappa and Joshi.

You would be surprised. There are people whose sense of identity at the end of life doesn’t go beyond: I own this house; earn so much; have four children; drive this car; have so much in the bank and so on. May be such identity is not enough for you (112).

She indeed understands the core of the problem of all sensitive men and the reasons for the liability for identity conflict in them. Joshi and Bhyrappa’s men are all the highly inquiring kind accepting nothing passively. Their alert conscience keeps interfering and makes them the prey to the intricacies of identity conflict. Their characters together represent unsettled people undergoing the dialectic clash and dialogic interpenetration between the plethora of identities of the dichotomous nature. Ever caught in the binaries Joshi and Bhyrappa’s personas do express a highly convoluted consciousness denied of tranquility or peace of mind.

Before analyzing the essential paradigms of identity conflicts in the select fiction under scrutiny a general awareness of some more of the nuances related to identity issues is essential. The ambience imminent to identity conflicts always document efforts of individuals towards identity formation, deformation and reformation to resolve conflict and attain stability. An effort is put forth to resolve
Identity conflicts through individuation or ‘identity formation’; decisive acceptance of certain identities at the cost of rejection of other/s consciously. Efforts of identity formation/ individuation leads to the development of the distinct personality based on set of accepted identities. Exertions at identity formation ultimately suppress all confusions as to the choice that is to be made from the plethora of contradicting identities. Identity formation moments thus signify the resolution of identity conflicts and attaining of what psychologists’ regard as “stable identity”- “where inner personality traits and outer behavioral traits are one and the same.” Axel Honneth as sourced in Emmanuel Renault (109) claims that to attain ‘stable identity’ is to construct a positive self-image and overcome the sense of importance of his own existence. Positive self-image in turn according to Honneth as quoted in Renault’s essay furthers positive relation with the self in initiating “self-confidence”; based on relationships connected with amicable family and affectionate relationships with others; self-respect, based on legally and morally regulated relationships with others; and self-esteem, which consists of the perception of our existence in so far as it is endowed with a social value, or it contributes in deed for the good of all” (110). Honneth also stresses the importance of successful socialization as it produces the background ethical knowledge and the recognition gained from this guarantees personal integrity. Identity thus dawned on at times may be against the expectations of the societal norms but essentially coincides well with the individual’s earnest desire to live life as per his/her personal choice. Independent evolving of an identity of personal choice should always be guided by one’s voice of reason or enlightened consciousness. Not all are capable of decisive identity formation for varied reasons resulting in suffering acute moments of identity crisis. Unresolved Identity confusions in fact have become a grave sociological problem in
modern globalized world characterized by transnational cultural confrontations. Claims of cosmopolitan or global self don’t mean complete absence of conflicts between the self and the other/s. Loss of identity, experiences of rootlessness and failure to amalgamate all cause alienation signifying of crisis. Interestingly in contexts of cross-cultural confrontations it is said that a sense of crisis is never experienced by someone capable of strong faith in one’s native culture. In Kamala Markandaya’s novel “Nowhere Man” Srinivasa’s wife, Vasanta, feels no crisis like Srinivasa because she remains an Indian all along in everything. But usually many in multi-cultural contexts experience an acute sense of being torn between variable sets of values and in consideration of such conflicts, cultural critics have coined various phrases to distinguish and to capture the distinctness of experiences.

Both Arun Joshi and S. L. Bhyrappa are novelists of post-independence era. The socio-cultural ambience of Bhyrappa’s select novels represents exclusively post-independent society of India and in Joshi’s novels both the society of India and America serve as background. Both in India and America the social ambience signifies lot of dissonance or polarities; it’s the context of different life styles and different kinds of ethos. All important characters of Joshi’s novels except for Rathan Rathore of The Apprentice are globe trotters or belong to the Indian diaspora in America. They suffer from rootlessness as their inherited native roots always come in conflict with the alien socio-cultural practices causing lot of stress and strain in day to day experiences. The characters of S. L. Bhyrappa too live in the ‘East do not meet West’ ambience and suffer from schisms of varying kind but it is always against the background of the social ambience of India.
Caught inbetween the value system of their native society and the corresponding value system of the society where they live, Joshi’s men undergo varied experiences of identity conflicts. With Byrappa’s men the values of native culture come in confrontation with parallel modernist values causing identity conflicts. Of the many kinds of values moral values which applies to ideas and concepts of right action torment both Joshi and Bhyrappa’s men. In view of the primacy of values as described by Halstead J and Taylor M thus: “values or principles, fundamental convictions, ideas, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behavior or as reference points in decision making or the evolution of beliefs or actions”, we understand why its always difficult for sensitive people to be oblivious of identity conflict. The modern society other than nourishing the multiple values of varied cultures is also a witness to value debasement confusing individuals as to their righteousness of action. Therefore, in an ambience of the kind a strong need to reverse bebased values or desire for value re-orientation or enlightenment in the matter is always felt by sensitive conscience ridden individuals. It is in this direction that Byrappas and joshi’s men and the identity conflict they undergo have lot of significance.

Debased value system is an important offshoot of the modern era influencing the individuals variously. Shift in the traditional value systems and the debased value system of the modern era is expressed in excess materialistic concern, corruption, lack of historical sense and decline in ethical responsibility so on and so forth. Excessive attraction for immediate material gain, advantage or pleasure has become the rule of the day. The angst or psychological rifts causing source in Joshi and Bhyrappa’s select works is the post-independent corrupt ambience of India. In Joshi the sham pretentions of developed countries mainly that of America serves as
the added dimension. Then there is the personal liability in characters for such conflicts in the fiction of both of these writers. All their major characters are shown as undergoing sociological, psychological and existential maladjustments significant of identity crisis. They do suffer from acute feelings of depression followed by moods of alienation and isolation. The novels *The Apprentice* and *The Last Labyrinth* is set mainly against socio-cultural nuances of India, and in *The strange case of Billy Biswas, The Foreigner* the social ambience of both India and America serves as background. In the novel *The City and the River* it’s an omnipresent society of all times and any nation for that matter. The four novels of S.L. Bhyrappa are set in the post–independent Indian society. It was the time when enlightenment modernity said to have been induced by British rule in India affected the thought patterns and belief systems of the people. It was the society caught up in the throes of change or transition when the duality of the old and the new, of tradition and modernity coexisted side by side. If in Joshi’s men the problem is urootedness in the socio-cultural maze of cosmopolitan kind, with characters of S. L. Bhyrappa profound rootedness deeply in the traditional thought patterns of the society conflicts with the modern corresponding notions.

Identity conflicts in Joshi’s characters quite often are caused for socio-cultural reasons but at times impress us as having greater depths and meaning. The conflicts more than for social reasons seem to belong to the inner recesses of the self or to use Joshi’s own words in “that mysterious underworld which is the human soul”. Hence the readers always have the impression that his characters do suffer less from social dilemmas but more from metaphysical or existential dilemmas. But the reality is that the ‘I-self’ or the private self and its needs collide with the community ways or the ‘we-self’ imposed by social ascription ensuing in conflicts.
The decision to heed the needs of the ‘I-self’ will be reached only after suffering lots of contestation with the social self. Billy Biswas in *The strange case of Billy Biswas* and Som Bhaskar in *The Last Labyrinth* and Sindi Oberoi of *The Foreigner* all have studied in America and for the same reason share experiences of similar kind. Their experiences of the metropolitan ambience of America refer to all modern day problems related to industrialisation, urbanization, intergenerational tensions, and economic pressures due to the rising market economy and cross cultural dilemmas etc.

In the novel *The Forieigner* Sindi Oberoi describes his personality disposition thus: “All along I had acted out of greed, selfishness and vanity and had heard nobody very much”. These lines are a fine proof of his egoism and he suffers from the related vices. His real problem is his acute awareness of the dual voice within him; while engrossed in the thick of the activities nourishing his ego, an undercurrent of meaninglessness of all his endeavors keep popping up to torment him. Hence his vanity though is all the while well nurtured by his worldly successes yet he cannot remain satisfied until he realizes the greater virtue of selfless service than compulsive obsession with the needs of the self. Som Bhaskar of *The Last Labyrinth* is a living metaphor for human greed whose lusting after material wealth and sex is so intense that neither has he the patience to grasp the other realities of life nor is he free from the awareness of their presence resulting in identity confusions. The confusion takes him to the brink of suicide only to be saved from the grace of his wife Geetha. The novel *The Apprentice* is an attack on the post-independence decadence of India characterized by corruption in all walks of life. Ratan is the central character of this novel who has succumbed to the false values of the time and his nagging conscience give him little respite until he resolves it to
attain peace of mind. In the novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* it is the very nature of civilization and the progress and development represented by the society of America and Delhi that is attacked through the character of Billy Biswas. The action in novel *The City and the River* happens in an unknown unnamed city but the ambience of the city is typical of any or all modern cosmopolitan cities the world over. The happenings in the city are described as significant of the very history of mankind or the destiny of man world over. The novel *The City and the River* is judgemental and makes a culminating observation of human history as a cycle between regeneration and degeneration and this in turn signifies the eternity of identity conflicts in sensitive individuals. The human inability to be civilized in the real sense of the term, the prominence of material comforts affect the modern man with uncertainty paving way to existential angst. In all of Joshi’s novels the duality that causes identity conflict follows a set pattern; the routines of everyday life rooted in intricacies of social ambiguities conflict with existential meanings of life.

In the novel *The Uprooted* the traditional world views that of India and of modernity induced by west on genealogy, motherhood and marriage etc become the cause of identity conflict and in the novel *The Crossing Over* it is the issue of caste identity and the transformations within that become the causative of identity conflicts in individuals. In the novel *Tantu* value transformations in varied spaces of culture; education, politics, music, journalism, social norms, inter-personal relationships etc cause identity conflicts. *The Witness* picks up the dichotomies inlaid in the meaning of truth as it is perceived variously by various characters. The fundamentals of sexuality and desire distort the meaning of truth imbuing individuals with identity confusions.
If the social self and the denial of it by the personal self characterized by existential meanings cause anguish and angst in Arun Joshi writings, in S. L. Bhyrappa the dualities that characterize a society caught up in the theses of changes or transformations generates confusion to the extremity of invoking existential angst. More than in the plots of the novels it is in the characters’ mental disposition and vulnerabilities for identity conflict striking similarities can be traced but the differences as well signify a lot. Bhyrappa and Joshi’s men are never like the ordinary oblivious to nuances of varied values instead they are highly sensitive beings with ever alert conscience acutely conscious of the dualities they experience both in society and their own selves. Their ever alert conscience keeps interfering and interceding making them experience the intricacies of identity conflict.

Three novels of Joshi namely The Apprentice, The City and The River and The Last Labyrinth are set exclusively in India and two novels The Strange Case of Billy Biswas and The Forienger are set both in America and India. The interesting aspect in Arun Joshi’s novel is that it is not the ordinary mass that is shown as caught up in identity conflict but instead the most successful; education wise, career/profession wise and wealth wise that are affected the most. It is the affluent, the luxurious, the most successful and the overfed who feel the identity angst, a clear indication that the real happiness of man lies not in material success but elsewhere. It is not the traditional vices of poverty, caste, religious bigotry and the sham practises that affect them but the most modern of the vices torment them. The alienation causatives are not just the modern sociological and psychological conditions but also the existential haunting man since time immemorial. Or in other words feelings of social alienation and the related condition of isolation are followed up by self-alienation that generates feeling of nihilism. The other causative of crisis
other than the anomalies of the modern world are the perennial dualities that hourly confront contemporary man. The labyrinthine ways of life tradition dictated, to the most modern of the ways of life, become the source of identity dilemma. Both post-independent India and America propose labyrinths of life modes precipitating in modern man acute dilemmas while engrossed in his search to attain honour, power, riches, fame and women. In this sense it is the crisis of the present and the same will be analysed in all the novels in much greater detail. G. S. Amur makes the following observation on this matter “Joshi’s vision of the modern world and man’s place in it is Manichean and his heroes though rooted in the industrial civilization have always been at odds with it” (153). In *The Apprentice*, *The City and The River* and *The Last Labyrinth* social identity intricacies particular to India serve the background against which the needs of self come in conflict with. In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and *The Forienger* the identity niceties of American society influence the characters and come in conflict with the secret “the murmerings of the self” generating identity confusions and the related anguish. The complex of identities slapped on to an individual by the class, clan, caste, ethnicity, race etc., come in dialogue with the identities an individual prefer for himself. TRS Sharma’s observation on the diaspora “And how about those caught up in the diaspora grappling with their ever fluid identities? The problem becomes much more complex then!” (270) verbatim applies to Joshi’s men who scuttle between America and India. They all belong to the modern society, to the era of globalisation where transcultural identities and other fundamental dualities; nature-culture, reason-impulse, keep influencing their identity claims. The saying of Devy (48) that globalization has not only changed the demographic scenario of culture but also has unsettled people and cultures creating new identities and affiliations and also
generating conflicts and collaborations of varied kinds is very much true to Joshi’s novels.

In Bhyrappa’s works the traditional notions of the native society (India) are still strong enough and keep influencing the sensibility of the characters within whom the awareness of the corresponding modern notions is alert as well. For instance, in *The Uprooted*, Katyayini in whom modern expressions are not yet strongly rooted is confused acutely in her interaction with Shrotri who epitomizes traditions of his society. In *The Witness* the high sense of individualism and personal faith in matters of sexuality and material pursuits of Manjaiah conflict with the traditional ideals of charity and celibacy of Parameshwariah. *Satvik* virtues tradition advocates epitomised in the family members of Parameshwariah conflict with the *tamasik* gunas represented by Manjaiah. *Tantu* touches upon the varied fibres of social structures; *traditional* values as to the purpose and mode of education conflict with modern notions of education; ethics in journalism represented by Talwar and Ravindra conflict with corrupt practices of the the mediums of communication in modern societies. Spiritual values tradition associated with music conflicts with commercial implications of music in modern parlance in Honnatti experiences as a musician. Primacy of sex and selfishness or the virtues of love and sacrifice in man-woman relationship is picked up for discussion in Ravindra-Kanti and Honnatti-Kanti relationship which also throws light on the changing values in man-woman relationship. In Anup’s character Byrappa portrays the effect of contradictory influences; of tradition and modernity, on the formative years of childhood and identity confusion it generates. In Bhyrappa’s novel loss of faith in traditional virtues generate the feeling of uprootedness which in turn give way to existential angst characterized by feeling of meaninglessness and boredom. Sometimes it is the
inherited traditional roots in conflict with the alien socio-cultural practices of other culture that cause lot of stress and strain in day to day experiences. Though the recourse to “acculturation” described thus: “A set of social processes by which we learn how to ‘go on’ in a culture through the acquisition of the languages, values, norms and maps of meaning that constitute a way of life” (Barker 435), is said to be advantageous allowing for synthesis or assimilation in an ambience of dissonance or polarities, the same is attained not before individuals suffer lot of uncertainties and psychic upheavals. Or in other words though acculturation provides ample scope for both the retention of selected elements of traditional culture and also the adaptation and assimilation of new elements from the ‘other’ culture, it is easier said than done.

The comparative study of the novels of Arun Joshi and S. L. Byrappa is made to recognize both the similarities and differences in relation to the subject of identity conflict and crisis. An analysis of mental disposition of the characters, their mindset and the social and personal causatives responsible for identity conflict will be studied from close quarters. The study thus will prove an analysis of the varied character dispositions and also serve as a study of the socio-cultural nuances of modern society. The repercussion of the conflict on the mind of the characters will be made for the reaction varies from different degrees of anguish, alienation to feelings of isolation followed by existential angst of meaninglessness. The modus operandi employed by the characters to resolve the conflict will be quite interesting as well. The study ultimately will prove very valuable to understand the intricacies of identity conflicts and the resultant crisis.

In all the novels of Bhyrappa and Arun Joshi semantic significations is enacted at three different levels. The nature or ambience of the society that serves as a background of the actions or events of the respective novels is the very first aspect
that is concentrated upon. The social set up attributes a lot in inducing identity
conflict in individuals and so a comparative study of the society of the different
novels is made. The second level at which comparisons is worked out is the study of
the intricacies of the identity conflict as suffered by the personas of the fiction. The
third level where lot of striking similarities are to be noticed is in the modus
operandi the characters follow to resolve the conflict and in the solutions they
evolve. A briefing on the social contexts proves that the society itself has lot to
contribute to inspire identity conflicts in sensitive individuals. *Tantu* of S. L.
Bhyrappa, *The Apprentice* and *The City and the River* have for their conte
x the post
Indian independent society as background. The novels *The Strange Case of Billy
Biswa* and *The foreigner* has the highly advanced metropolitan social ambience as
the actions happen in the social context of America and New Delhi and Bombay
 correspondingly. In the novel *The Uprooted* it is the duality of tradition/modernity
that is characteristic of a transitional post-Indian independent society that inflicts
identity conflicts in the characters. The novel *The Witness* though doesn’t make
explicit reference to the societal nuances yet it is very much the post independent
society for references to Ghandian ideals are there. The novel expounds on the
duality of the ideal and the real (in Indian parlance it signifies the duality of the
Satvic and the Tamasic gunas) as it influences the life and behavior of the
characters. In general, all the novels of S. L. Bhyrappa the social ambience has
striking resemblance with post-independence Indian society where the traditional
native ambience co-exist with the modern. In Joshi’s novels the society impresses as
more advanced and is too contemporaneous in its features. The individuals caught
between the dualities characteristic of the social ambience and the dualities of the
fundamental kind undergo identity conflicts in all their intricacies. While some
become the victim of the conflict unable to stabilize their choice of identity, some by confining to any one of the identity resist conflict, some resolve the conflict by evolving the new identity independently. The pattern hitherto discussed is traced in each novel to provide a comparative perspective between them.

The novel *Tantu* by Bhyrappa explore the socio-cultural transformation happening in the post-independent Indian society all the while throwing light on identity conflicts it generated in sensitive individuals. Joshi’s *The Apprentice* too has for its context the post Indian independent society against which the identity conflicts of Ratan Rathore is explored. The novel *The City and the River* which portrays a perineal reality of human society in general terms is very close to *Tantu* and *The Apprentice* in its thematic leitmotif. All the three novels project the demoralizing ambience of utter chaos, dishonesty and value debasement of post independent India. In *Tantu* it is mainly through the character of Ravindra, Annaiah, Talwar, and Honnatti a perspective of the disintegration in the society and the intricacies of identity conflict are revealed. In *The Apprentice* Ratan exposes the corruption of the society through his pangs of identity conflict. Dharmavir and Bhoomiputra or Master Bhooma in *The City* are the victims of the corrupt power greedy rulers epitomized in *The Grandmaster*.

The different social fibres of the society are picked for analysis in the novel *Tantu* and each field has a persona to prove the good and bad in the transformation happening. Politics, education, art, journalism, human relations are all probed simultaneously to understand the changes and value debasement within. The transformations in Post-independent India is very disappointing and and the same is regretted in both the novel *Tantu* and *The Apprentice*. The new found freedom had
been abused politically and commercialization in all walks of life and value
debasement had become the norm of the day. Ravindra’s father’s words convey the
disappointment thus: “Swaraj meant self-rule, but that first, one should rule oneself.
To do that one need skill, one needed character. Without these, what kind of Swaraj
is it?” (33). In the novel The Apprentice Ratan is disappointmented at the prevalence
of rampant corruption everywhere from the top level bureaucratic officials and
politicians to lower level of them. The freedom that has been achieved at the cost of
great sacrifice is no more than a word and a new mode of slavery had persisted
which Ratan describes thus: “Yes, a new slavery with the new masters: politicians,
officials. The rich, old and new. Swindlers in fancy cars…” (64-65). In The City
Joshi suggests very little hope though some solution is envisioned in words of
Yogeshwar. The great Yogeshwar prophesies the continuity of life and changing of
the old order by giving place to new. He tells one of his disciples thus:

On the ruins of the city, as always happens, a new city has arisen. In the city
of the future as well, the character types remain unchanged. The men have
other names but the forces they embody remain unchanged (262).

Rampant corruption and moral bankruptcy in all walks of life, failure of
democratic ideals are portrayed in both the novels. If Ravindra, Honnatti and Anaiah
and Talwar struggle in Tantu to resist the demoralizing ambience, in the novel of
Joshi, Ratan Ratore is flabbergasted by the evil propencities of the modern society.
Just as Ravindra and his father experiences the wastage of hard won freedom in
Tantu, Ratan expresses angst and disappointment at the failure of the hard won
freedom thus: “Freedom, Freedom. What is freedom but a word, my friend?
Freedom of men, of nation. No more than a word. We thought we were free. What
we had, in fact, was new slavery. Yes, a New Slavery with new masters…” (124). For instance, Bhabani Bhattacharyya who portrays the throttling of democracy in India in his novel *A Goddess Named Gold* writes thus: “Free India will die a hundred deaths. Beware, lest one such death takes place at the polling booth of this village” (114).

Annaiah of *Tantu* has tremendous faith in traditional mode of education that gave more importance to value inculcation. Annaiah believed that “people are like manure. The primary task is to make them into proper human beings ----- to recognize the difference between good and evil and gratitude and ingratitude” (129). He runs a school to promote his ideal of education. The chief aim of his school was to promote Vivekananda’s ideals of the “merits of sacrifice, bravery” (166), and Gandhi’s purpose of education “to promote the individuals all round development” (166). But the selfish manoeuverings of the local politicians and the changing values of the modern society thwart the fulfillment of his desire and one by one all his ideals of a good education fail. His feeble protest “Still, I want our school to be able to stand on its own two feet without the support of all these VIPs” (1047) is significant of his desperation. His weak protest is countered by the boisterous counter argument proposed by the retired judge of the high court thus:

This is an age of big establishments. Gandhi said that everything should be on a small scale, didn’t he? What did Nehru do? He brought in the Five Year Plan. Everything he created was big - Bhakra Nangal, Hirakud, Bokaro, Durgapur, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd., Hindustan Machine Tools and the parliamentary buildings in Delhi. Can we afford to be small in a country as big as ours? In such a big city as Delhi? (1035)
All the teachers who had joined the school brimming with enthusiasm and idealism leave the school one by one unable to transform themselves to the changing times and changing values. They all suffer from “a nagging feeling of emptiness” (750), a sign of identity crisis. The developments had affected the teachers immensely as it had undermined their entire belief system and they had all lost sense of purpose and direction in life. While Annaiah had tried to teach the younger generation the value of ‘selfless service’, Patil had countered him by the paradigm of the changed meaning of ‘service’ in modernity. Patil explains how Annaiah’s ideas would only intensify the class structure of the society by drawing a wide chasm between rich and the poor. He elaborates on the modern meaning of ‘service’ thus:

In your mind service, celibacy and sacrifice are inseparable. You seem to believe that service isn’t possible without sacrifice - that’s the traditional Indian view. But now service means agreeing to perform a certain job for a suitable fee. It means doing the job honestly and efficiently. That’s all it means… It’s a concept based on professionalism. Offering extremely good service and making money aren’t mutually exclusive. There’s no call for sacrifice, celibacy and such things here (1057).

Annaiah and his teachers’ purpose of shaping at least a few ‘honest citizens’ had nosedived caught in the quagmire of petty politics and the value debasement of modern times. One by one all the school teacher’s leave the school and joins later the school opened by Honnatti for the disabled. Even Annaiah himself abandons his brainchild Vivekananda Vidyashrama and joins Honnatti’s school for handicapped to guide him as to the mistakes he had to avoid in his new school to avoid pitfalls he had suffered with his school. Ravindra too like Annaiah had tremendous faith in the value education and had seen no virtue in the modern pragmatic education. Ravindra
in principle had always opposed education based on paying capitation fee and he described it as “acquisition of knowledge that had no human value” and students who paid heavily for education could not be persuaded to “use the knowledge they had gained to benefit society” (528). But when his own son Anup who had traditional education fails to make up to the prestigious institutions of learning and is sent to study in a regional engineering college by paying capitation fee, Ravindra is left depressed in the face of his principles dwindling in his very personal life. D. P. Mukerji’s criticism “They (British)…established a socially useless education system” is authenticated in the novel Tantu. Even Joshi is too conscious of the value debasement in the field of education. His characters caught in the turmoil of degradation protest the changes in an interesting way. In the novel A Strange case of Billy Biswas Billy is sent to America to study engineering. But he chooses to study anthropology against his parent’s wish. Billy’s choice is symbolic signifying his rejection of technology and technocracy, the knowledge of primacy in the modern society. Anthropology is the study of humans, past and present and study of human culture the world over since the ancient times to the present and Billy in choosing to study it is opposing the trends of modern modes of education and signifying the need for giving importance to humanitarian studies. Sindi Oberoi of The Foriegner like Billy Biswas expresses his aversion for modern society’ privileging of the study of technology above every other knowledge. His derision of the material and commercial impulses of the modern world is expressed in the kind of machine he invents. It is a machine that will throw twenty thousand people out of work and make them “feel so small that they would go home dead drunk”. The machine is symbolic of the disaster modern society is perpetrating by its excess dependency on machineries for all kinds of work. To have a machine to work is to deny hundreds of
people to live a forthright life, earning their own livelihood with pride and suffering no void of purposelessness. The novel *The City and the River* has similar scenes of disintegration to portray in the field of education. The Professor’s journey in search of Master Bhoma leads him witness scenes of disintegration set in, in the system of learning. As he searches the various offices of the education Minister for the disappeared Bhoma, he has a first-hand experience of the perversities rampant in the administration of the Grandmaster. Intellectual pursuit is the fundamental purpose of Education and the same is displaced by physical training activities under the Grand Masters’ administration. The Professor notices how in the Education Advisor’s Office, the chief officer’s son with tremendous capacity for physical prowess is involved in training a shock brigade of musclemen. He is further shocked to see scenes of wrestling matches and karate practices—all undertaken under the leadership of the Education Advisor’s son. The most outrageous of the scene is the way the Education Advisor’s son involves in a killing rampage of his adversaries. The activities within the office of the Minister of Education are the most offensive and derogatory kind suggesting that the world has gone askew dominated by greed for power and material success. Commercialisation of education, the evil of capitation fee and the bribery in education institutions—evils tainting the modern education system are all the part of the education system in *The City*. Intellectual activity being completely replaced by scenes of physical prowess in education institution is the worst misdemeanour one can think of. Muscle prowess had always been the matter of primacy in savage state and education always was thought of as an antidote to savagery. But in *The City* the traditional values have all turned topsy turvey. The Education Minister nourishes students mainly to use them as “human dynamite” (143) for his own selfish ends. If Bhyrappa traces the gradual transformation in the
education system of the country under the pragmatic education system of the west.
Joshi’s scenes of education are nightmarish and surrealistic. This is mainly because
Joshi has created a tale of fantasy and Bhyrappa writes within the propriety of
realistic mode of writing. Thus the novel *The City* through surrealistic scenes
suggesting deterioration in education envisions a bleak future for the humanity.

Ravindra and Talwar are idealist journalists who are subjected to acute
moments of identity conflict when they had to to thrive in the demoralizing
ambience of utter chaos and dishonesty of post independent India. To suggest the
value debasement in the field of politics the novel *Tantu* portrays the real event of
Emergency period that had controlled freedom of expression in independent India. A
similar situation is imagined in *The City and the River* to suggest corruption and
vendetta in politics in all human societies. The Grand Master clamps upon the state a
new “Era of Ultimate Greatness” (141), similar to the Emergency period in Indian
political history. Under the jurisdiction of this Era, the Grand Master declares new
rules to quell any opposition from the people against his rule. Immediately after
clamping of the “Era of Ultimate Greatness” disciplinary actions are initiated against
all sundry for the flimsiest of the reason. Series of arrests are made mainly to warn
any signs of discontentment and opposition against the government. In *Tantu* the
historical event of Emergency period of the year 1975 is relived to prove the illegal
manipulation on freedom of expression by the government and the abuse of
journalism for the propagation of government’s agendas. A series of arrests are
made which includes Ravindra, Annaiah, Honnatti, Battaru and other innocents and
the novel ends with all these languishing in the jail waiting for release. The ending is
read as an expression of Bhyrappa’s impression of hopelessness in the politics of the
country in post-independent society. The well-known critic G. S. Amur as sourced
in Shanthakumari’s book observes that ‘the ending signifies the limitation of the authors’ vision, for the dark spell of emergency “fails to leave any hope and solution for future” (40). S. L. Bhyrappa comments the evil ways of Indira Gandhi who had imposed emergency in independent India in his autobiography *Bitti* thus:

I got the opportunity of observing Indira Gandhi for about twelve minutes from as close as a distance of ten feet. What I primarily could notice was about her was her shifty, suspicious serpent like eyes darting about this way and that and talking to people from a distance trying to hide her arrogance and real vanity with a vain show of pretended politeness (545).

Value debasement in journalism make Talwar and Ravindra react strongly. When the newspaper they served *The Tribune* becomes the puppet in the hands of the corrupt government they resign and start a newspaper called *The Fact* which mainly discussed the subject of social justice. The effort is symbolic of their inner conflict. They are not ready to succumb to the pressures of debasement. But the demoralizing ambience of the society is such that their faith is confronted by severe threat from outside world. Talwar for instance is opposed by his very wife. Instead of succumbing to her pressure he thinks “No matter how much she rails, when it is the question of morals, I act according to my conscience” (941). The doctor had advised him to give up his journalistic activity to save his family. By the suggestion of the doctor Talwar had been gripped by a moral dilemma as none had cared to understand his commitment. He had thought “Over the years he had devoted himself to his family, wife and children, but now that he was older, he felt he had to act according to his conscience, otherwise life would have no meaning” (1112). The ambiguities of his life had made him contemplate of metaphysical questions.
What is life? What is family? What does the relationship between a husband and wife mean? He knew the answers Indian metaphysics offered - that relationship is related to Maya or illusion and are temporary and transient. “it could be Maya, but you still have to live through these things (1113).

Ravindra too joins Talwar’s paper irrespective of no monetary emoluments. He thinks “I’am going to be fifty in the not too distant future. If I don’t spend at least the next ten to fifteen years sacrificing my own material wealth in the fight for freedom for expression my life will be meaningless” (947).

But later Honnatti’s affair with his wife Kanti gives a serious jolt to Ravindra’s moral conviction. Honnatti-Kanti relationship signifies the disparagement of values in man-woman relationship. Kanti, Ravindra’s wife had abused Honnatti’s love for music to sexually exploit him. This relationship causes lot of mental turmoil in Honnatti which will be analysed later part of this chapter. Kanti’s affair with Honnatti turns out to be the most shocking event for Ravindra that shook his very faith in virtuous life. Ravindra had no hopes for Kanti and expected nothing better of her and he could tolerate Kanti’s infidelity. He consoled that it had been foolish on his part to expect her to conduct like a ‘muttaide’--a traditional faithful wife. The most troubling thing was “Honnatti’s fall from the grace” (1000). The effect of this event on Ravindra’s morale is described thus:

He had lost all respect, trust and confidence in this highly educated man-a man who had given up a great job to spend every minute of the day pursuing a goal. It had completely shattered Ravindra’s ethical and moral beliefs. His very faith in the goodness of human nature had collapsed, completely undermining his interest in life. There didn’t seem to be any point in starting
a new school to shape the characters of future citizens. Life was just about getting and spending money and developing one’s animal instincts - power and wealth, name and fame, sexual indulgence - that was all there. Any struggles were fought with purely with these aims in mind. Ravindra didn’t see any point in trusting or respecting anyone. This feeling seemed to provide the answer to the questions that had been hounding him. If he could accept that this was the way things were, there wouldn’t be a problem.(1000).

He suffers from acute existisntial angst. He felt totally empty - going back to Vidyashala, or starting a new school, all looked meaningless for him. “He couldn’t escape the feeling that things were the same no matter where he lived or went or what he avoided” (998). In his hellish state of despondency, he feels no place to go and no human to correspond with “I must go home. Home? But where is my home?” (1001). For the first time he suffers from acute existential angst. Ravindra in all demoralizing moments had tried to maintain the stability of identity and had recuperated fast to spearhead his ideals in new forms. But Honnatti’s behavior demoralizes him so acutely that he is pushed into a “hellish state of despondency” (1001). In his desperation symbolic of existential angst, he thinks thus:

He experienced the same old feelings of emptiness. He went to the lodge and lay down for a while and came to the realization that it was his conscience that was making him feel so completely purposeless, a state that was mirrored by the whole of the society, indeed by the whole nation. Anyone who believed that they had managed to fill this nihilistic emptiness was
living in a fool’s paradise …. It was nothing but an illusion. Ravindra concluded that all he could do was to live with this existential reality (1000).

He tries to derive strength from the struggles of Annaiah, Battaru and Talwar and tries to deduce lessons from their life. They all had witnessed their life long cherished identity of idealism crumbling before their very eyes. Instead of giving way to desperation and existential angst of meaninglessness they had found out a way out of it. When they had nobody else to guide for, they had turned inwards, had listened to their conscience and had acted as it had suggested. He remembers Annaiah- who inspite of being invaded with feeling of emptiness as he witnessed the changes that were taking place at Vidyashala had not allowed it to erode his peace of mind or zest for life. He remembered Rama Bhattaru “he was certainly a man bound by tradition, but his honesty and dedication were praise worthy. He had been compelled to listen to his conscience” (1001). He had left to his son’s place after land grants for his temple had stopped. But after God had questioned his faith in dream, he had resumed his priestly duties. The saintly priest was totally dedicated to his work, and would eat only the food bought with money his son sent him, refusing to take monthly Government old age pension and Ravindra felt full admiration for this resolute, independent, proud old man. Then he recalls Talwar and his decision resign from his job when he couldn’t tolerate the newspaper selling out to the ruling party and had started a weekly newspaper on his own (fortnightly) mainly to publish the truth and to live his life with full faith in his ideals.

The value debasement explored in the novel Tantu has lot of similarities with the socio- political disparagement explored in the novel The Apprentice by Joshi. Ratan Rathore and the identity conflict he suffers epitomizes not only his personal
dilemma’s but also the social ambiguities of post-independent India. Rathan Ratore’s crisis is enacted against the background of the corrupt ambience of the Post-Independent Indian society. The main cause of the identity conflict in Ratan is the ambiguities he had interiorized while growing up by the different worldviews of his parents. His parents represent two different approaches to life that creates an ambience of dualities in the consciousness of Ratan. He grows up listening to his father’s rhetoric on the value of ideal life and sacrifices. His father’s life is the living paradigm of literally living ideals of unselfishness and sacrifice. He had literally sacrificed the joys and securities of his personal life for the independence and social wellbeing of the country. His mother had no faith in such impersonal goals and ideals and believed in personal wellbeing and security. Ratan grew up watching the two different worldviews and thus dualities had become the part of his consciousness generating identity clash in him in the different stages of his life. His personal experiences had proved that the majority of the humanity is selfish and power greedy authenticating his mother’s assessment of the world. But his father’s life had vouchsafed a different ideal reality and the feasibility of living it. But his mother being scared that Ratan was becoming like his father, had consistently brainwashed him as to the importance of money and power in life. She repeatedly told him “Man without money was a man without worth. Many things were great in life, but the greatest of them all was money” (117). She had described his father’s ideas as crazy and non-pragmatic thus:

   It was not Patriotism but money, she said, that brought respect and brought security. Money made friends. Money succeeded where all else failed. There were many laws, she said, but money was law unto itself (117).
Ratan in the course of his earning his livelihood lacks clarity as to the
definite stance he needs to take as an adult. His father’s words had prioritised
community wellbeing as more important while his mother had advised to go after
personal gratifications. It problematizes identification for him; weather to go by the
values taught by his father or that by his mother. Then the struggles of his own life
finally prepare him to compromise and take a definite stance. But the real problem
of Ratan is his ever alert nagging conscience that denies him respite in spite of all
his material progress. Ratan had engrossed in corruption and bribery and in his greed
for money commits the most heinous of the crime and involves in all sorts of illegal
deals. He signs a deal related to purchasing defective war materials for the country
inspite of the patriotic feelings he always had felt for the country. But when his
Brigadier friend is falsely accused and made the scapegoat and commits suicide out
of shame, Ratan becomes acutely sensitive to his guilt ridden life. The victimization
of his close friend and childhood saviour and an innocent soul haunts Ratan. The
intensity of Ratan’s anguish is clear in the following lines,

And all these years this terrible loneliness, something that you may not
suspect by looking at me, something that none has ever suspected. How, all
these years, I have been alone, so horribly alone in my failures, carrying
them in secret, like a thief, close to my heart, until their blazes have turned
upon me and turned me to ashes. Believe me, I have seen it happen. I have
seen my soul turn to ashes (123).

The above words of Ratan prove that he suffered not just the guilt but is a
victim of existential crisis. Along with his nagging conscience the existential
meaning he had always felt conjoins to precipitate a strong desire to confess and free
himself from his phoney life. One of the critic Thakur Guruprasad notices that Ratan’s behaviour conforms to the meaning of the “existential”; the doctrine that man forms his own quintessence in the course of his life by the kind of choices he makes. Ratan realises that it’s not just the body that he had gambled with but the soul that was in real jeopardy. Caught in the melee of confusion Ratan grasps the hints to save his soul in the words of his client, Sheikh. He is the one with whom he had signed the deal of passing the bill for buying faulty ammunition for the country. His words “My soul was killed, you put your’s to Pawn. But souls that were pawned could perhaps be retrieved…” . He assures Ratan that he had only pawned his soul and had not lost it completely by his capacity for introspecting his own deeds and the feeling of unhappiness. The dualities; awareness of ethical responsibilities and acts that contradicted them had tormented him and made him suffer from undistinct unhappiness. He like Honnatti tries traditional modes of expiation of sin like visiting temples and performing puja’. Honnatti had visited holy places to overcome his sin but with no results. Like Ravindra, Annaiah and Honatti Ratan works out his expiation from his sin in individualistic way. He is guided by the logic of his conscience and doesn’t follow the hackneyed ways the traditional institutions of morality suggested. That is because he notices all institutions including the temple; the very abode of god had been tainted by corruption. That is when Ratan rejects the social conventions followed for expiation of sin and also the dictates of religion in the matter. He does not enter the temple to worship instead he chooses to sit outside the temple on its stairs and wipe the shoes of devotees either in the morning or evening while going to or coming from office, even as his expensive car is parked outside. His decision to wipe the shoes of people who went in and out of the temple is significant of humility; a sign of his subdued ego; a suppression of self-
aggrandizement. Ratan’s acts reiterate what the great Yogeshwar had implied when he had mentioned that there is the need to “shed off egoism, selfishness, stupidity and develop capacity for sacrifice” (263). Sheikh had said “…may be souls are like muscles, Ratan Rathor. May be to develop them one has to first put them to use”. Sure, Ratan had kept his soul proactive and had fed it by pangs of regret and had saved it from complete obliteration. Some of Ratan’s deeds are indeed activities that nourish the soul; his charities, blood donation, his patriotic speech etc., and these had saved him. Ratan escapes complete desperation Dr. Faustus had suffered by his inability to regret sincerely.

The concern which the novel Tantu expresses is also the main concern of the novel The City and the River. The real world situation of the novel Tantu and The Apprentice are projected as fantasy in The City and The River. The novel is a parody of the greed for power in man and the human history irrespective of the country has revealed the same. But in Tantu there is hope in the form of individuals who have the capacity for alert conscience and ability to practise ideals they believed in amidst all oppositions. The novel The City and the River is judgmental of the failure of idealism in human society; everywhere and in all times. That is why the action of the novel is set in an unknown, unnamed city but the ambience of the city is typical of any or all modern cosmopolitan cities the world over. The happenings in the city are significant of the very history of mankind the world over. The novel makes a culminative observation of human destiny as expressed by The Great Yogeshwar as “human history is an endless cycle of periodic disintegration and regeneration.” In all other novels of Joshi, the plight of individuals had been enacted against the background of corrupt, materialistic society. But in the The City and the River the humanity itself is focussed for judgement and this is suggested in the technique of
attributing anonymity to both the locale of action and the characters within. The novel *The City and the River* discusses through a fantastic story the human vulnerability for power and the privileges that go with it. The most heinous of the crimes are committed by the power and position greedy men like The Grand Master and his followers. Varied modes of oppressions and suppressions are perpetrated by the powerful on the weak. The novel serves as a parody of the political leaders who due to their greed for wealth and power are unable to follow any of ideologies or ideally conceived manifestos they promise for the people during election. Especially the nature of functioning of Indian politicians as described by Ratan is worth mentioning here.

Words, words, words. Speeches, editorials, resolutions, handouts, slogans, posters, banners, proceedings of the numerous assemblies, exchanges with foreign countries, memoranda of the chambers of commerce, manifestos of trade unions, draft five year plans, books extolling our past. An endless barrage of words, very few of which, I soon realised, meant anything, just as they mean nothing today (54).

The novel *The City and the River* as a political novel though seems to reflect upon the political reality of India of post-colonial times it mainly aims to capture a historical reality of all times and all nations. The terms post-independent and pre-independent, and phrases like post-colonial and neo-colonial pale into insignificance and the distinct experiences of exploitative politics is presented as a perennial reality of human society of all times. Hence Yogeshwar in the *The City* describes human history as a “cyclic repetition of periodic power gain and disintegration, an endless repetition”. Hence Usha Bande says, “the story ends where it begins and begins where it ends” (259). *The city and the River* purport an interesting authorial ideology
as a solution to the sad affair of the state which however has lot philosophical overtones. The solution is embedded in the words of the Great Yogeshwar; a god like or sage like being impressing others as “vast as the sky and as tall as the mountains” (8). He knows the means to break the cycle and change the nemesis of the city. He says that the disintegration can be arrested if humanity is capable of suppressing “egoism, selfishness, stupidity” (13). Capacity for Purity can be attained “only through sacrifice” (14) which in turn can stop the cycle of disintegration. The message Yogeshwar purports follows universal ethics applicable in all contexts. The real problem lies in human incapacity to live up to these ideals and Joshi’s The Apprentice and Bhyrappa’s Tantu explicates the same. But Yogeshwar also has a sure means to stop this endless repetition of periodic disintegration. He declares, “We need ‘purity’ and “to attain purity we have to shed off egoism, selfishness, stupidity and develop capacity for sacrifice” (13). Yogeshwar theorises on the need for virtue to counter disintegration but Bhyrappa’s men especially in Tantu strive very hard to reverse the moral chaos personally by the virtue of their faith. They resist becoming the part of the general collapse and try to work their individual salvation. Their enlightened conscience come to their aid and seek salvation for their personal malady by outgrowing their personal interests and involving in self-less service for the wellbeing of the community. The great Yogeshwar had implied the need for the same in his words that there is the need to “shed off egoism, selfishness, stupidity and develop capacity for sacrifice” (13). Joshi accords the malaise of the society to the inherent incapacity of the humanity to live idealisms of any kind practically or in the difficulty to reform. When humans fail to control the abuses of fellow human being, the city has its natural nemesis or retribution in the form of flood. The whole city and its inhabitants are washed away by the raising flood of the
turbulent river signifying divine retribution. Even in the novel *The Crossing Over* by Bhyrappa which treats the social evil of caste particular to the society of India expresses similar disappointment to convince the people of the virtuous path one needs to follow to mitigate the evil of castiesm Venkataramaniah though a traditionalist had shown tendency to change his mindset under the influence of his daughter Satyabama who had suggested to heed his conscience to understand the injustices of caste practice. But Mohandasa filled with anger and vengeance at the suffering his people had undergone in the name of caste humiliates Venkataramaniah in public. Public shame and the difficulty to convince his changed attitude he commits suicide. A day before dying Satya had heard him bable “Flood…deluge…water everywhere…the leaf of the banyan tree…a new culture…” (682). Literally a flood like situation is created by Mohandasa by his act of blasting the village reserviour in his attempt to give vent to his anger at a society that had conceived of so inhuman a practice like caste. The inability of the humans to live virtues of love, compassion and sacrifice ultimately had been destroyed by the flood in *The City and The River*. Even the novel *The Crossing Over* envisions a flood like situation – a nemesis nature has for the human failure to live ideals. In reaction to this sad state Satya had thrown away the sacred thread her father had given into the flood water and the following words had echoed in her - “Dhiyo ya nah Prachodayat” (683) - (god help us to improve our intellect and guide it towards what is right). In the face of the misguided people and misguided emotions, Satya feels only god should guide human intellect towards what is right.

Bhyrappa believes in individuals resolving identity conflicts as per their conscience. Even with Joshi alert conscience becomes the guiding principles. To solve caste evils prevailing the society, Satyabama has an answer in individuals’
conscience. Venkataramaniah is confused as to the changes happening in the society in matter of caste. He had been a firm believer of caste practices mainly because the Upanishad and Bagavad Geetha said so. But his highly educated and well-read daughter had said “The author of the Bhagavat Geetha was a man and not a God” (33) haunts him. Her words,

All the scriptures deny caste-distinction. Even the Haridasas says so. And in any case what’s important isn’t what someone said: it’s our own conscience which tells us the truth. Our experience shows us the right path. These ancient traditions obscure what our conscience tells us and hide the validity of our own experience. People with the courage of their convictions live: cowards bury themselves in the mud and grope around like worms. It’s our own conscience which tells us the truth – customs and traditions obscure it.(113).

He is disillusioned and vacillates between belief and nonbelief in matters of caste practices and is subjected to tremendous amount of conflict. Satya’s reference to conscience mainly affects him and her reference to customs or traditions that “These ancient traditions obscure what our conscience tells us and hides the validity of our experience” (113), affects him a lot. His sensitive conscience starts perceiving the experiences of his life differently. Guided by his awakened conscience he even perceives his relationship with a Dalit woman Matangi in a new light. Even with ideal characters in Tantu it is the same conscience that acts as the savior from complete disintegration. Ravindra, Annaiah, Honnatti and Talwar had listened to the utterings of their conscience to resolve their conflict and also to finalise their future action. Ratan’s sense of crisis is because he recognises his personal agency in
misdeeds committed. While involved in acts of personal gratification he is alert to the parallel notions of the impersonal. It is the capacity for ‘clear Conscience’ in Ravindra makes Honnatti suffer from guilt pangs of his affair with Kanti. What C. N. Srinath has said of Rathan Rathore is applicable to all Joshi’s men and even to Bhyrappa’s characters. C. N. Srinath’s words on The Apprentice as a “tale of conscience-torn man, with a curious mixture of idealism and docility, a vague sense of values, a helpless self-deceptive effort to flout them for the sake of a career-in short with a deep awareness of the conflict between life and living” (55).

Both Bhyrappa and Joshi have tremendous faith in Hindu tradition in certain fronts. To many of the problems assailing the modern society they seek solution in the wisdom of India’s past. They however don’t suggest blind following of the tradition. Billy’s problem is solved when he realises the real meaning of ‘selfless service’ as it is meant in Bhagavad Gita. The ageless Yogeshwar who has an answer for human greed for power and the related vices is likened to the image of a ‘seer’ and his very name is closer to Hindu mythological character. It is in Benares—the spiritual capital of India that Som becomes conscious of the spiritual meanings of life. The ‘Essay’ written by Ratan exposes his faith in traditional virtues. The essay invokes many events of the past to show its difference with the present. The essay comparatively juxtaposes the historical past of India with the contemporary history with the purpose of adjudging the difference. The past is idyllically conceived and as a proof of the same quotations from Mahatma Gandhi and Bhagavad Gita are given and references are also made to the great civilizations of India namely Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. Even allusions to the conquests of Kalinga by Asoka and his rule of dharma and truth are given. For an essay that elaborates on the wisdom and greatness that once prevailed in India, the title “Comic Document” (58) prepares the
readers to catch the strong undercurrent of irony and cynicism. The authorial purpose is to relate the great glorious heritage of India of the past with the present disintegration to sensitize the readers’ conscience as to the difference and thereby invoke regret in the readers. Ratan parodies the post–Indian independence achievements in relation to the achievements of the past. The present modern society of India is parodied in relation to the glorious past of India. The essay therefore refers to the remote past of India; the time when the Dharma Shastras had been conceived of by the enlightened souls to ward of the dark ages of the country. There is also a reference to the dark night that befell likened to the inauspicious dark nights of “amavas” (59) believed in Hindu culture. The darkage implies the time of slavery mainly the British colonisation period and the hope that could dispel the darkness of “amavas of slavery” is the freedom struggle. But the worst context of the Indian history is post–independent context which characteristically is disastrous in nature with its neo-colonial tendencies mocking the glorious history of the past. Satya and venkataramaniah of The Crossing Over mentally transform themselves to the time of Vedas and tries to trace out the real meaning of Brahmin. Venkataramaniah presumes himself to be sage Vasishta and Matangi to Arundathi. Away from the reality of contemporary society he believes in the idea of ‘Brahminhood’ as it existed before taking on the present notion of caste. While living in the past he is able to cross not only caste barrier but also gender barriers and inspired thus with a better sense of justice he initiates his daughter into Brahminhood. Satya does not reject all values passed on by tradition outrightly. For instance, though she rejects caste idea, she has faith in in “dharma” – and calls caste practices as “adharma”. She explains him that caste is more a custom and nothing to do with dharma and religion. Satya’s conviction is very strong and her attraction in the fire-ritual was because it “was
antecedent to other forms of worship” and belonged to the time of ‘Truth’, when sage Vasistha lived and the word ‘Brahman’ had not taken the caste meaning. She recalls the Upanishadic meaning of “Brahman”,

She thought about the Upanishads which she had been reading. They proclaim that all the movable and immovable things are Brahman, that every living being is a Brahman, that every soul is part and parcel of the Brahman, that there should be no discrimination, no duality. He is you, and you are He, all these distinctions of time and space are false. Brahman alone is true. It has neither a caste nor a class nor a gender (465).

She notices how none remembered the real essence of ‘Brahman’ from which the word Brahmin had evolved. Contemplation of the truth of Brahman inspires Satya to enlighten the people in the assembly and free them from falsehood. She addresses the gathering and describes them that the true principle of Brahminhood is that “Anyone with the desire to become a Brahmin . . . is in fact a Brahmin” (467) in relation to one’s desire and effort to acquire knowledge or Veda and stressed that “Every soul has a right to Knowledge, the right to acquire knowledge” (467) and condemns the caste Brahmins reducing “all other sections of the society to the status of Sudras, denying them the right to study the Vedas” (467) including their women folk.

Honnatti too resolves the raging conflict and his guilt of sin in the vicinity of Benares. The dualities of his personal life affected him and caused lots of anguish. The raging conflict within him he is able to have a clear perspective of only in Kashi. He feels the very ambience of Kashi exuded happiness and “peace of mind” (778). His visit to Dasaswamedh Ghat on the banks of river Ganga and the sound of
the flowing river awakens him to the true nature of music “…this was the way the music should be – it should have all the majesty of Ganga, and be heard in a sublime setting” (782). He goes to Harishchandra Ghat - “a famous cremation spot where all Hindhu’s wants to get cremated after death” (783). At Harishchandra Ghat Honnatti is profoundly affected “it was as if the story of Harishchandra had been waiting to burst into his consciousness…. His mind was on fire” (784). Memories of the legend of Harishchandra flooded back, “how king Harishchandra had lost his kingdom- indeed lost everything- because of his principles and how he was reduced to working as a watchman at a crematory. Even his wife Chandramati had decided to get cremated along with her dead son unable to bear the loss of chastity. Both Harishchandra and Chandramati had endured so many misfortunes yet were not ready to compromise their principles” (785). He wonders whether the story of Harishchandra and Chandramati had meant “the husband’s absolute honesty and his wife’s unqualified chastity as they had confronted each other in the cemetery before their son’s body --- were these things two faces of the same purushartha - spiritual goal? (783) (Italics mine). His affair with Kanti and the lack of sanctity in it glares at him in all nakedity. He feels both Kanti and he had soiled the sacredity of “managolasutra”. The myth of Harishchandra and Chandramati and the mangalasutra concept in it signified the value of the need for ‘absolute honesty’ and ‘unqualified chastity’ in husband-wife relationship. He feels inspired by Harishchandra and Chandramathi’s incredible strength; their total devotion to truth and their undying chastity and he decides to give up his relation with Kanti once for all. He realises in Kashi that he had not been free from desire for name, fame and his libidinal desire too had been intact and all this he had tried to satisfy in his relation with Kanti. His liaison with Kanti seemed “like prostitution and adultery of the
worst kind; appropriating one’s own brother’s wife” (535). Honnatti believed that “fame in the art world should be attained purely on the grounds of merit, even without any publicity...An artist had to build up a following by word of mouth, because seeking publicity by any other means compromised his artistic integrity” (632). But when Kanti with her strong business acumen plans to sponsor him to gain national and international recognition using publicity gimmicks and popular media, he doesn’t stop her. Watching the flow of Ganga waters in Kashi, he realises music should be carried in an ambience of serenity and the ‘Jugalbandi’ - a simultaneous playing of varied instruments (popular in modern times) would be mere cacophony. Everything of traditional notions are not accepted blindly. For instance, though Honnatti while trying to decipher the nature of his offence is influenced by Omkar Baba’s idea of traditional notions of ‘Satyasya satya’ – ‘the truth of truth’ which had referred to the idea of inescapable past sins, he is not satisfied. He seeks and tries varied methods tradition advocated to expiate for his sin but is unable to overcome his guilty conscience - “is there no atonement and punishment for a sinner? Is there no escape?” (635) he felt. He had tried everything, had wandered all holy places - even playing music couldn’t rid him of his feelings of guilt and betrayal. His naggaing conscience finally evolved its own path and he had decided to follow the path of Annaiah and his teachers, to become more and more ‘self-sacrificing’. The solution his conscience suggested is reinforced by words of Jayapakash Narayan - a man of Buddha like - personality. Jayaprakash tells Honnatti to go directly to Ravindra and beg his forgiveness, and advices him to suppress his feelings of hatred for Kanti and to treat her with affection. He even advises not to worry of the traditional notions of ‘Satyasya satya’. His interpretation is that as long as he atoned for his sin and never committed the mistake again it was alright, consoles him.
Honnatti is freed from the traditional idea of ‘Satyasya satya’ - ‘inescapable past sins’. Honnatti stops playing music completely, starts a school for the handicapped; the most marginalized of the people who did lead a disgraceful life of beggars. He inculcates profound love so as to attend to the physical needs of the handicap. Honnatti confesses his sin to Ravindra and after receiving Ravindra’s pardon involves ardently in self-less service of running a shelter and a school for the handicapped and feels free of guilt. He even realises that music has its own limitation in becoming a spiritual experience, an impression he receives after realising “In fact all art! He felt that art was subversive and that it wormed its way into a person’s emotional life, burrowing away until it totally undermined their moral fibre. He found that he couldn’t continue at the Omkar Vidyalaya after realising that art couldn’t expiate a person’s sins” (971). That is when he decides “Art can’t wash away our sins - that’s something that only selfless service can do. Only good works have that power. I suppose that’s what made me think of this Vidyashala” (971). The paradigm of music elaborating more on Radha-Krishna rasaleela than on Harishchandra-Chandramati’s virtues is an indication that art too “was subversive and that it wormed its way into a person’s emotional life, burrowing away until it totally undermined their moral fibre” (971). Even Kanti had sexually abused him by misusing his weakness for music. Honnatti completely abandons music with the thought that all music seemed to do was “plunge him into emotionally turbulent waters” (978). With this Honnatti stops playing music completely. Thus a more practical solution is suggested to derive meaning for life. The entire struggle of Honnatti signifies his effort to become free from dualities and attain identity stability; by freeing himself from all deceptive thoughts. All the school teachers, Annaiah and Ravindra who had been suffering from loss of ‘a sense
of purpose and meaning to life’ in the demoralising corrupt ambience of the society find a purpose and a goal to pursue in Honnatti’s ashrama. They had found release in the value of community service. All of them had strived to escape a life of self-deception and enroute had followed the murmurings of their conscience and attained tranquillity that comes with stable identity. Honnatti’s identity conflict with regard to his faith in god he had resolved through his ardent love for music. But after losing his faith in music as a spiritual experience, Honnatti had seen god in ‘self-less service’. Som Bhaskar of The Last Labyrinth like Honnatti suffers from the pangs of nagging conscience and sense of acute guilt but they prevail in obscured sense. Its only while in Benares he becomes acutely conscious of the exact nature of his raging dualities. Benares by virtue of its identity as the spiritual capital of India sensitises Som to the experiences of spirituality. In Bombay, the economical and business capital of India he is engrossed in pursuit of his material greed and mundane pursuits without any qualm oblivious to the other voice in him. Bombay where Som’s business flourished has little to offer in the form of mystical meanings. In Benares and Lal haveli (the traditional town house) where Aftab and Anuradha live he is conscious of lack of traditional virtues of compassion and spirituality in him. Som is a victim of both the worldly success that material society privileges and mystical experiences tradition expounded. That is Som is acutely conscious of mystical experience of god, spirituality and selfless service which he partakes from the traditions of his native culture and this faith conflicts with his material greed. Hindu culture is primarily mystical and ethical and expressed indifference to the transient and the sensate all the while giving importance to the attainment of the ultimate reality. Or in other words ‘fact of being’ was of lasting significance than ‘becoming’. Stress was laid on proper observance of customs and rituals controlling
one’s inner life and those values alone that led to spiritual realization. It is this ‘self’ in Som as an Indian that torments him while engrossed in plundering material wealth. Anuradha attributes Som’s confusion to his lack of self-knowledge. She tells “You are wrong even of yourself. You think you know a lot, when, infact, you don’t”. Aftab’s traditionality is mocked at by Som and his vulnerabilties is abused. Anuradha’s patience and capacity for unconditional love is also chided by Som. Gargi’s mysticism is made fun of. Aftab tries to explain the problem in Som thus:

You don’t understand us. You work by logic. By your brain. You are proud of your education or what you consider education. There is an understanding that only suffering and humiliation bring. Anuradha has that. Even I have a bit of it. You are empty of that understanding (8).

Verma in the Indian Imagination: Critical Essays on Indian in English contrasts Leela and Anuradha thus:

In contrast, Leela Sabnis’s relationship with Bhaskar is very short-lived. She believes that the sexual act is concerned only with the body, the world of matter. Her ideologies of free love and feminism, it should be noted, are distinctly different from Anuradha’s ideas of love and sexuality. Anuradha’s incorruptible notion of love corresponds to the idea of love as bhakti (self-less devotion), a kind of spiritual love that is commonly implied in the relationship between Krishna and his cohorts in the mythical legend. The tragedy and the paradox are that Som Bhaskar and Leela Shabnis belong to the same materialistic world of empiricism (206).

Som’s agony born of the dualities he wallowed in is such that he is almost about to shoot himself but is saved by his wife in the nick of the time.
Since Som is unable to resolve the raging conflicting within he is depressed to the point of committing suicide. But other men of Joshi’s novels who like Som suffer conflict but are able to resolve it at one or the other stages of their life by striving towards identity stability. The confusion is traced in the narrative voice as well by Robert Ross in “The Clash of Opposites in Arun Joshi’s The Last Labyrinth” thus:

The voice in which Som speaks tells much about the contrasting element which compose his unbending character: at times he cites Western philosopher, then turns to Hindu tradition; he makes free use of American and British slang, sometimes crude; he is at points critical, sarcastic, unsympathetic in his view of life around him, at other times surprisingly sensitive (2).

Billy Biswas renounces the civilised world and attains communion with nature, past, and primitivity through his identification with the tribe and this gesture symbolises his protest at the present achievements of civilization and also helps him to avoid duality. Ratan too soothes his conscience by dawning on the attitude of humility and making it a prerogative to spread the message of his learning to humanity in the mode of the Ancient Mariner of Coleridge’s poem The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. Sindi Oberoi of The Foriegner realises the virtue of renunciation of Hindu spiritual tradition and follows the same. He understands that renunciation is the capacity for selfless service and decides to work for the safety of the workers. The Great Yogeshwar expounds the the traditional virtues Hindu mystical notion upholds. He says that the disintegration can be arrested if humanity is capable of suppressing egoism, selfishness, stupidity. Capacity for purity can be attained only
through sacrifice which in turn can stop the cycle of disintegration. Though Bhyrappa is conscious of the valuable in Indian tradition he is not a blind follower of it. Through the character of Satyabama he tries to probe into the mystery of caste exploitation by probing into the roots of the word Brahmin. He tries to show that caste connotation of the word Brahmin is a later origin and its source meaning at the time of Vedas was not discriminatory at all. Satya guides the confused Venkataramaniah thus: “All the scriptures deny caste-distinction. Even the Haridasas says so. And in any case what’s important isn’t what someone said: it’s our own conscience which tells us the truth. Our experience shows us the right path…. It’s our own conscience which tells us the truth – customs and traditions obscure it” (113). Her words “These ancient traditions obscure what our conscience tells us and hide the validity of our own experience.” affects him a lot and brings about lot of transformation even in a traditionalist like Venkataramaniah. She tries to discuss with the people in the village assembly the principles of non-discrimination and non-dualism that went with ‘Brahman’. She recalls the Upanishadic meaning of “Brahman”,

She thought about the Upanishads which she had been reading. They proclaim that all the movable and immovable things are Brahman, that every living being is a Brahman that every soul is part and parcel of the Brahman, and that there should be no discrimination, no duality. He is you, and you are He, all these distinctions of time and space are false. Brahman alone is true. It has neither a caste nor a class nor a gender (465).

Contemplation of the truth of Brahman inspires Satya to enlighten the people in the assembly and free them from falsehood. She addresses the gathering and describes them that the true principle of Brahminhood is that “Anyone with the
desire to become a Brahmin . . . is in fact a Brahmin” in relation to one’s desire and effort to acquire Knowledge or Veda and stressed that “Every soul has a right to Knowledge, the right to acquire knowledge” (467) and condemns the caste Brahmins reducing “all other sections of the society to the status of Sudras, denying them the right to study the Vedas” (467) including their women folk. Even for Joshi the traditional wisdom of Hindu culture has solutions for many problems of modern times. Sindi on realising the true virtue of renunciation is able to overcome his existential angst and find meaning and purpose in life. Som too becomes conscious of the lacuna in him only when in Benares - the spiritual capital of India. Billy Biswas of the novel The Strange Case of Billy Biswas rejects the loveless relation of modern day man and woman (which T.S. Eliot too had condemned in The Wasteland). Instead he seeks the traditional notion of the union of prakrithi and purusha in his union with Bilasia, a tribal girl. Billy journeys away from the clamour of the modern material society into the anonymity of a tribal community in the remote wilderness of Mikhala hills in Orissa where he marries a tribal girl, Bilasia. Naickaer sees the traditional virtue of man-woman relation in Billy’s union with Bilasia thus: “Their union exemplifies that of ‘anima’ and ‘animus’ in the Jungian connotation or that of ‘Prakriti’ (Bilsasia) and ‘Purusha’ (Billy) In the Indian Philosophic sense” (68-69).

To Champa Rao the union “signifies stability and coherence, which are the prerequisites for the carving of an authentic selfhood” or identity stability (71). In Bilasia, the tribal beauty, Billy finds the right woman. G.A. Ghanshyam in “The Conflict of Sense and Sensibility of Arun Joshi’s The Strange Case of Billy Biswas” says: “Meena deadens his senses; Rima corrupts him and the material civilization kills his innate natural instinct” (65).
Hari Mohan Prasad’s opinion of Billy’s union with Bilasia is highly intricate,

It is Bisila who causes explosion of senses - the proper medium to reach soul
- Billy renounces the civilized world and its symbols in Meena and Rima.
From Meena to Rima and 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 (58).

The novel *The Last Labyrinth* by Joshi discusses the meaning of life against the background of the tangle of human relationship and business engrossments. Bhyrappa’s novel *The Witness* too discusses the meaning of truth against the tangle of human relationship. Manjaiah of the novel *The Witness* expresses striking similarities with the character Som Bhaskar in *The Last Labyrinth*. Both Manjaiah and Som are highly successful men in their own rights. Som is a sensualist hedonist greedy of material success. As per social parlance Som typifies the very paradigm of a happiest man. He had studied in the world’s most famous prestigious university of Harvard in America and had profound knowledge of the philosophies of both east and west and is well versed in teachings of Buddha and Krishna. He is a business magnate with high rate of success. Manjaiah too is given to the life of sexual profligacy. He has surrendered to the mundane allurings of life mainly to material pleasures and to a life of sensuality. Just as Som epitomises material greed Manjaiah typifies sexuality in its raw sense. Both are engrossed in fulfilling their desires undeterred. But there exists a striking difference between Som and Manjaiah. Som suffers from pangs of shifting consciousness between two realities of life; spirituality and material greed. Caught in between two entirely different meanings of life, inept to strike a balance between the two he vacillates confused. He wallows in
duality; he can think cynically of money as “dirt and whore” but at the same time is haunted by an insatiable desire for more and more wealth and his rallying cry thus is “I want, I want, I want.” Even as he experiences feelings of meaninglessness or purposelessness, he craves for wealth and material success. Manjaiah suffers nothing of the kind. He believes sexuality as the fundamental right of every individual and even thinks the suppressive norms of culture over libidinal autonomy of individuals as unjust. So without any scruple he lives life as per his desire. He has sexual affair with all sundry and his affairs flouts all norms of propriety culture ordains in the matter. His strong conviction/faith has given him supreme confidence and in a way he is the harbinger of identity conflict in others. Som though deep inside is aware of the dualities his outward behaviour is in consistency with his greed for sensual experiences. Its only while in Benares (he goes here for business) he becomes acutely conscious of the raging dualities within him. Benares by virtue of its identity as the spiritual capital of India sensitises Som to the experiences of spirituality. In Bombay, the economical and business capital of India he is engrossed in pursuit of his material greed and mundane pursuits without any qualm oblivious to the other voice in him. Bombay where Som’s business flourished has little to offer in the form of mystical meanings. While in Bombay Som wallows in self-aggrandisement and pursuit of material pleasures. His image of a successful achiever in the parlance of the modern society; to have name, fame and wealth had given him a ‘a big ego’. His acute awareness of his own empowered identity is a case of “megalomania” which is described in Merriam-webster dictionary thus: “a delusional mental disorder that is marked by feelings of personal omnipotence and grandeur”. Ego in the context of Som Bhaskar means not “your consciousness of your own identity” but in the sense of an “an inflated feeling of pride in your superiority to others”. Even Manjaiah is an
egotist and his ego has its source in his sexuality and the assured success he had in the matter. To live a life of sexual abstinence as per the norms of traditional thinking to Manjaiah means a life of deception and dishonesty to oneself without serving any purpose of virtuosity. One of his lovers says “This man has got a special power over women. I am sure of it. He gets them running after him like bitches in heat” (38). Manjaiah too claims he always gave what women needed. To feed his ego he ensnares women of all age, class and sundry and is happy the way women hankered for sexual gratification by him. Som’s ego has its source in his business acumen and as a way of feeding his ego keeps on adding sick industries both to extend his business empire and to whet his skills in rejuvenating them. Both Som and Manjaiah are subjected to acute conflict only when they are denied success. For Som the conflict inducer comes in the form of Anuradha and for Manjaiah it is Sarojjaksi.

Som in the course of his business meets Anuradha and is attracted to her immensely. He falls after her and is successful in having her. But since Anuradha is already the wife of Aftab, Som fails to have her all for himself and this hurts his ego. Anuradha though reciprocates his desire by offering herself to him, refuses his desire for possessing her completely. Som who had always fed his ego by his successes, is immensely angered by his failures to possess her completely. More than missing Anuradha, the failure to have her torments him. When Anuradha disappears to thwart his hunger for her, he becomes more aggressive and decides to harm her. He follows all sorts of Machiavellian strategies to destroy her and her friend Aftab that makes Liela remark of him in her capacity as a psychologist thus: “You are much too high strung, without a reason. You are a neurotic. A compulsive fornicator” (58). Many parallels can be drawn between Som’s behaviour and that of Manjaiah’s behaviour in their compulsive obsession for Anuradha and Sarojjakshi
respectively. Manjaiah too had been immensely attracted to Sarojjakshi and had wanted her all for himself. He desires sexual union with her and when Sarojjakshi refuses and in response to his advances had slapped him, he is hurt immensely. Manjaiah is attracted to her immensely and from the very first day of his interaction with her he feels she is a different league altogether from him and also from other women he had affairs with. Everything about her he feels had an air of superiority and he feels “he had been completely bowled over, in fact he had felt a little intimidated by her, inferior to her, even” (177). His impression of her is best expressed in the following lines,

She’d made him feel like some kind of country bumpkin. He’d begun to feel self-conscious about the way he moved, the way he talked. After that he chose his words carefully, watched what he said and how he pronounced the words. He’d never felt that way before, not even when he’d been in the presence of a Deputy Commissioner (177).

His first failure at the hands of a woman hurts his ego immensely and he craves for revenge. Som had tried to ruin Anuradha by buying all her shares of the plastic industry. Manjaiah uses his talents to suspend Sarojjakshi’s husband from his job. The purpose is same, to make them suffer is the main purpose. Both Som and Manjaiah are egomaniacs and they desire for revenge on the very persons they love most when their ego is hurt. The loss of Anuradha and his sense of defeat underlying it so much overwhelms Som that he reasserts his decision to settle score with Anuradha, for refusing to be his. His desire to take revenge on the very person whom he loves most is a proof of his inability to live the virtues of love and sacrifice. Even Manjaiah thinks his father-in law Parameshwariah’s life of self-
sacrifice and self-chastisement as foolish that serves no purpose in life. Manjaiah is a compulsive fornicator, a hedonist and sexual maniac without any virtues tradition expounds. Like Som, Manjaiah goes on abusing whosoever comes his way to fulfill his desire and to lead his life the way he relishes most. He has immense disposition for sexuality and he prides in this capacity. So he goes around misusing the vulnerability in others in the matter. In other words, he lives his life with conviction and even those who find his ways morally outrageous has a word of appreciation for him. Parameshwaraiah observes the same and says “Even when surrendering to police, he looked all beaming the sort of smile that’s born of supreme confidence” (9). Manjaiah has in Savitri the very paradigm of virtuosity. Even Som has a very pious chaste wife in Geetha. But both are negligent of the it and keep looking elsewhere to have the experience of success and thereby feed their ego.

Som too had felt a strong desire for Anuradha. Her resistance to his desire for obsession had hurt his ego. He had made an intense rigorous pursuit of her to the level of psychological perversion. She symbolizes the virtues he is yearning for; the labyrinths of other meanings that evaded him. But to Manjaiah Sarojaksi is his alterego. Hence her refusal to reciprocate his sexual gestures had affected his sexual potency. After his humiliation at the hands of Sarojaksi he no longer felt turned on looking at other women. When Sarojaksi resisted his sexual advances Manjaiah had become unforgiving and had suffered acutely from lack of sex-drive there afterwards. He thought “no, all this lack of sex-drive had to be down to her. She was at the root of it all …. After all, sex or no sex, he still found himself having to go and see her” (178). With Sarojakshi for the first time he tastes failure and after this he starts doubting his sexual prowess; also the source of his egoism. So also Anuradha had given a taste of failure to Som by unheeding his needs. In thwarting
easy success, she had acted not like a submissive one but had confronted him on equal footing. Manjaiah too had seen a competitor in Sarojjakshi who gave him the taste of failure and had threatened his ego. Thus the inferior feeling invoked by Sarojaksi affects him immensely and he struggles to recuperate. His faith that all women could be made to surrender to his sexual prowess had faced the acid test at Sarojakshi’s hand. Her ingratitude and capacity to resist his attraction had proved her superior to him. Hence after this confrontation with Sarojakshi he suffers from acute impotency symbolic of his threatened psyche. He vacillates between thoughts of conquering her to boost his sagging ego and escaping from her fearing failure once again. For the first time we see Manjaiah being affected by an acute sense of void or nihilism; he had felt that his whole life lacked purpose and a sense of direction. The fact that Sarojakshi had managed to hold him in her thrall without giving him anything in return had turned topsy-turvy his abundance of confidence in himself and had hurt his self-esteem. His winning her would have been a big boost for his sense of self-worth, for “she was far superior to any women he’d slept with” (182). Thus Sarojjakshi becomes a means to understand the identity intricacies in Manjaiah. His relation with Sarojakshi awakens him to the hidden nuances of his personality. Just as Som was too proud of his successes in all walks of life; education, business, and even in debauchery, Manjaiah is proud of his capacities as a ‘Manmatha’- the Hindu mythological image personifying sex or libido. Manjaiah’s absolute identification with libido and his libidinal extravaganzas make him a metaphor, an objective correlative of libidinal urges than impressing us as a real being of flesh and blood. Som impresses as more human than Manjaiah mainly because of the dualities he is aware of. But the tragedy of Som is that though he feels the the other voice vociferously deep inside him yet he is unable to literally
live it which could have suppressed his identity conflict. The ever raging dualitites make him schizophrenic and and acute depression push him to the brink of committing suicide only to be saved from his good wife Gettha. Manjaiah to is attributed no saving grace and is castrated by one of lis lover Lakkoo and dies by over bleeding.

Som is more an intricate character when compared with Manjaiah. He is tormented by dualities which Manjaiah doesn’t experience. To strike a compromise between faith and reason, between the mystical and the concrete and to make both the twain meet is the crux of the problem for Som. As a modern man of science and technology where proof, evidence supported by reason alone matters, Som struggles to identify with mystical knowledge. Som is lured by worldly successess that modern material society provided. He is also conscious of mystical experiences like god, spirituality, selflessness which he has ingrained from the mystical traditions of the culture to which he belongs. The irony is that Som who so much believes in the voice of reason is unable to rationalise his irrational and limitless greed for wants; metaphorically symbolized in his desire for Anuradha. Anuradha attributes Som’s confusion to his lack of self-knowledge. She tells “You are wrong even of yourself. You think you know a lot, when, infact, you don’t”. He confides to Anuradha “There is something in front of me and I cannot see it”. The plight of Som symbolises the plight of men who are fated forever to live paradoxical values. But Som is denied of identity stability for he is a kind of egomaniac and his conscience though is alert enough to sensitisate him to the dual voice yet is not strong enough to supress his duality. His journey through the labyrinths takes him to the ‘last labyrinth’; death, and even here his confusion is not overcome and he fails to surrender his egoistic identity even in the face of death.
Even Manjaiah is aware of the other facets of life other than his own. The father–daughter duo Parameshwariah and Savitri epitomizes the other facets of life Manjaiah disregards. But his faith in the righteousness of his desires and way of living is so strong that he doesn’t suffer dualities like Som. Infact he rejects and even makes fun of Parameshwariah’s chaste life. Som’s sensitivity and torments make him far superior a being to Manjaiah. While by his capacity to suffer bouts of anguish Som is individualised and by complete insensitivity to other facets of experiences Manjaiah is reduced to a metaphor. The metaphorical implication of Manjaiah is best suggested when bizzare happenings are narrated about him even after his death.

when animals of either sex go into his plantation they go mad and start rutting straight way. Cows chase after bulls, and bulls, if they can’t find a cow, will mount female buffaloes or donkeys-anything. It’s not necessary to describe what dogs do. A man by the name of Satyappa even tried to open a rehabilitation center for destitute women there, but the women there seemed to become possessed by abnormal desires and have abnormal sex-drives. It was the same with the male labourers who worked there. It is said that men who are impotent secretly visit his plantation at dead of night in the hope that they will regain their sexual powers (345-346).

Even Honnatti share similarities with Som, both of them represent the contemporaneous being in whom mystical meaning of life passed on from tradition coexist simultaneously with the rational scientific temperament of the present. The faith in music as a spiritual experience, contests the commercial values music partakes in present scenario in Honnatti’s consciousness. He had tried to live the
dualities as an ardent lover of music and the effort had tormented him. Like Som, Honnatti too had become acutely sensitive to the ambiguities within him in the vicinity of Benares; the spiritual capital of India. Benares had helped Honnatti to clear his ambiguities and take a distinct stance about his immoral relationship with Kanti. Shrotri in *The Uprooted* journeys to Haridwara and Badri to become a sanyasi and describes his journey as that from darkness to light. He had been caught up in the imbroglio created by the co-existence of notions of tradition and modernity and the light he seeks is to understand the relative value of tradition with its corresponding notions of modernity. Mysticism, God and spirituality though does have nuances of cognitive differences are all transcendental meanings. Som is the modern ‘Everyman’ equipped with weapons of science and reason and so wants tangible experiences of the same to believe them. Honnatti an engineer from IIT and working in a multinational company with a lucrative salary had suffered between faith and unfaith like Som. As to his faith in God he tells - “I developed an intellectual and scientific framework, which was enough to shut out God” (195) and had sought god and the mystical experience of spirituality in music. Som too is confused and in moments of intense frenzy he calls out to the theist Anuradha to convince him the reality of God thus:

Anuradha, listen. Listen to me wherever you are. Is there a God where you are? Have you met Him? Does He have a face? Does He speak? Does He hear? Does He understand the language that we speak? (83).

Som and Honnatti are representatives of the modern men in whom mystical meaning of life passed on from tradition coexist simultaneously with the rational scientific temperament of modernity. The experiences that Honnatti and Som had
felt in Benares are almost similar. Som’s anguish had intensified in the intricate bylanes of Benares and the labyrinthine Lal Haveli (a traditional building) and the same had mocked him and his achievements. The burning Ghats of Benares had pointed to the existence of void in them (Som and Honnatti). But though Som is sensitive to feel the difference Benares and Lal Haveli conveyed yet is unwilling to change as he is unable to have tangible experience of the meanings they conveyed. He challenges Gargi while taking away Anuradha’s shares thus: “If God existed, if a miracle had taken place, and if I now walked off with the shares—and with Anuradha—I should perhaps die” (212). Som wants an immediate experience of Gargi’s claim that ‘God always punished sinners’, to become a believer. Gargi had sensed the doubt in Som and had tried to clarify him when she had said “God does not work in simple manner” (99). Gargi, Aftab and Anuradha who had all appealed to him as embodying different layers of meaning had belonged to Benares.

If Tantu is judgemental of certain developments post–independent India had witnessed, the novel *The Apprentice* also condemns the same. The novel *Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is judgmental of the very achievements of human civilization epitomized in the image of America. Civilization today has become synonymous with material progress and commercialization in all walks of life and the fundamental virtues; of harmony, tolerance, equality etc have been badly missing. Development in such parlance is what the novel aims to condemn through Billy Biswas. The socio-cultural ambience of USA and the metropolitan India epitomizes civilizational achievements and Billy lambasts them. Billy is sent to USA to pursue engineering education and in the course of his stay there he expresses his aversion for the values privileged in modern society. In this sense he is similar to Annaiah, Ravindra, Honnatti and Talwar for like them he values honesty, integrity and
harmonious living. He is antithetical to the values Som and Manjaiah uphold; excess sensualism and material wants. Some of the decisions and actions Billy enacts signify the identity he relishes most. He consciously suppresses the identity ascriptions imposed by society and evolves certain identities his conscience privileges. He opts to study Anthropology against his parent’s wish to study engineering; an act signifying rejection of technocracy. Anthropology is the study of humans, past and present and study of human culture the world over since the ancient times to the present. A study of the same reveals to Billy the journey of humans from antiquity to modernity and also provides a comparative perspective of man in the past and present. Interestingly Billy finds the primitive man with basic virtues still intact more alluring than men of the developed times. His study of anthropology has opened up to Billy the charm and virtues of the savage man.

The way the world is moving ahead with its false notion of progress and development intensifies Billy’s existential angst. The difference between the life he lived and the life he desired to live, precipitates inner crisis in Billy and hunts him at times with existential questions -Who was I? Where had I come from? Where was I going? Even Talwar, Annaiah and Ravindra had felt acute anguish in the face of the rampant corruption prevailing in the society they lived in. They had felt their souls stifled and their morale cowed down even as they had witnessed the failure of their ideals one by one. Like Billy they had acutely felt the existential angst. But they had not wallowed in the angst instead had the stamina and conviction to bounce back. Billy had retreated and disappeared into primitivity represented by the tribes of Mikhala hills and even had married a tribal girl. Talwar Annaiah and Ravindra had sought an alternative recourse where they could pursue their ideals. Union of Billy with the tribe and marrying a tribal girl, Bilasia is described as symbolic by R. S.
Pathak (106) of the union of “purusha” and “prakruti” as per the Sankhya school of Indian philosophy. This school interprets Matter (Prakriti) not as an illusionary appearance but as something real which need to work in close co-ordination with the Soul (Purusha) to the positive evolution of the universe. But the modern civilisation nourishes matter at the cost of the soul and this divorce between prakruti and purusha is disastrous. Billy had sensed the importance of such unity and hence says “I had greater responsibilities towards my soul in uniting it with nature” (189).

All major Characters of Tantu try to resolve their problem in the very society they live in. Against the intense selfish manipulations that had become the norm of the day, they portend the alternative virtue of selfless service for the community. Som and Manjaiah who fail to change their stance and continue to wallow in their self and its needs death is the only escape. If Som reaches the brink of death Manjaiah is murdered. Billy of all characters takes a very drastic step that made Srinivas Iyengar call him a “a victim of self-forged misery” (21). He retreats into the depths of nature of Mikhala forest of Orissa region and seeks union with the tribe. This union is symbolic of his merger with nature and primitivity. His act is rewarded and the same is suggested in certain significations. He literally is worshiped as a hero by the tribe. He imbibes the healing power of nature and learns skills of curing through the use of herbs. For instance, he cures Romy’s wife of migraine headache by a wild herb, for which there is said to be no definite cure in modern medicine. The novel’s celebration of past and primitivity had made critics like Professor O.P. Mathur and Professor G. Rai describe it as celebrating “the universal myth of the primitive in the heart of man ever alienating him from the superficial and polished banalities of modern civilization” (35). Billy himself had interpreted his act of retreat as an attempt to fulfil his “I had greater responsibilities towards my soul”
Further Billy’s description of his retreat into primitivity as the “first step, only a means to an end” (189) is expressive of the desire to rebuild the civilization anew. Thus Billy is an ambassador for the commingling of primeval spirit with the spirit of modernity; as the true essence of civilization. Billy had to disappear in recourse of his mission because the dream he had is incomprehensive to the majority and he knew he was all alone in his concern. His attitude is significant of ‘isolation’ one of the repurcussions of crisis. Sharma D. R. sees greater meaning to Billy’s retreat and it is expressed in “The Fictional World of Arun Joshi” thus: “when Billy discovers that prevailing order is difficult to redesign, he opts out for the tribal world which operates in a simpler and clearer manner. Hence, Billy can be called an Indian Huck Finn or a Henderson” (3). In Billy’s case, there is an unmistakable sense of affirmation in his painful journey from alienation to affirmation. Meenakshi Mukherjee admits that “The Strange Case is a compelling novel about a strange quest drawing upon myth and folk-lore to reiterate its elemental concerns”.(203).

Billy finds no solution in the world he lives so he retreats in to the primitive world. The primitive world symbolic of the good old days of human history when capacity for virtues remained intact is tapped even by S. L. Bhyrappa like Joshi. In the novel The Crossing Over Venkataramaniah’s conscience under the influence of his daughter Satyabama had realized the falsity of caste faith. But the hitherto interiorized beliefs during the course of socialization disagree with the murmerings of his conscience. He vacillates between faith and unfaith, for his faith in caste had been ingrained in him as a part of the god he believed and the religion he followed. All of the sudden the same had been denied in post Independent India and by the logic of his intelligent educated daughter. So in the confusion he goes mad but even his insanity has meaning sufficient enough. He starts living in the fantasy world of
remote and distant past when the term ‘Brahmin’ had meant ‘Brahman’ without any caste or class meaning attached to it. In this state of consciousness, he dares to break many a social taboo fearlessly. He goes to the Dalit colony, thinks of marrying Matangi and even imparts Brahminhood to his daughter Satya and presumes himself to be sage Vashista and Dalit woman Matangi as Arundathi. Satya too seeks solace in the distant past realizing the difficulty of changing the present. Though she did not believe in ritualism of any kind yet accepts Brahminhood and performs the fire ritual mainly because it “was antecedent to other forms of worship” and belonged to the time of truth; that time when the word “Brahman” had not the connotation of caste and the related hierarchy. Fire to Satya symbolized truth in a world that wallowed in falsehood. Billy too had tried to sensitise the world of its false values and had protested the failure of democratic values. He had tried to propagate the universal virtues of honesty, love, integrity and spontainety; virtues which nature had imbued the humanity with, which the mankind had lost contact as the journey had advanced from savagery to civilization. Modern man had reveled in material love and Mammonworship. Unable to live in this kind of soul suffocating ambience Billy had retreated into the forest and had joined the tribe. But he had been shot dead by the search party accidentely. His death had signified the intolerance of the modern society to anything past and primitive. Similarly, all the sacrifices of Satya to sensitise the people towards the evils of caste practices had been wasted due to lack of communication between people of different reactionary stances. On applying Bhikhu parekh as sourced in Dallmayr’s book (21) distinctions of attitudes in post–independent society towards the social element of caste; traditionalists, modernists, critical modernists and critical traditionalists had all clashed with each other and had defeated the ideal of seeing a united India. The elders had failed to join hands with
the younger generation for they could only live by social ascription and failed to understand the capacity for independent identity formation guided by voice of reason and conscience.

Both Bhyrappa and Joshi respond to the injustices prevalent in the society and express a standpoint through their characters about it. The inequalities of class and caste, rural and urban are responded with a desire to uphold democratic principles of equality and individual rights. In *Tantu* in the endeavours Annaiah and and his Vidyashala the need to lessen the chasm between the rich and the poor and the rural and the urban in the field of education is strived at. When the Harijan youth protest the illtreatment suffered in the name of caste in Hindu society and suggest the need to sell all the artifacts of the country to museums holders elsewhere and to deposit that money for Harijan welfare as an atonement for the sin, Ravindra sees logic in their point and even regrets the failure of India to evolve as a unified society. So he assures the Harijan youths to express their view in an article which would be published in The Tribune. Billy Biswas condemns racism which was still a part of USA in spite of its high claims of individual freedom and human rights. In protest against the racist practices prevailing in America he takes certain extreme decisions. Billy changes his residence from the posh residential extension where white people lived to New York’s Harlem area, a black ghetto of America; a paradigm of violation of human dignity and rights. His choice to live in Harlem is suggestive of his desire to be away from the proximity of the whites; the cultured citizens of the main stream society given to apartheid practices! Thus he registers his protest against the prevalence of discrimination against the blacks and also recognises the failure of the ideology of equality in America. Billy protests the counterfeit world of his class and attacks their capacity for a life of sham, hypocrisy
and smugness. Like all other Joshi’s heroes Billy too perceives modern society to nothing more than “the making and spending of the money” and completely lacking in vibrancy or spontaneity. He speaks of the Delhi society getting on his nerves, and all other societies are a prototype of it. Hence Billy never contemplates escape from Delhi to elsewhere, for everywhere it is the same. His disparagement of Delhi upper class society runs thus:

What got me was the superficiality, the sense of values. I don’t think all city societies are as as shallow as ours. I am, of course, talking mainly of the so called classes. I didn’t really get to know the others. I don’t think I have ever met a more pompous, a more mixed up lot of people. Artistically, they were dry as dust. Intellectually, they could do no better than mechanically mouth ideas that the West abandoned a generation ago. Their idea of romance was to go and see an American movie or to go to one of those wretched restaurants and dance with their wives to a thirty-year tune. Nobody remembered the old songs, or the meaning of the festivals. All the sensuality was gone. So was the poetry. All that was left was loud mouthed women and men in three-piece suits dreaming their little adulteries (178-179).

Sindi attributes Babu’s tragedy to the values of the class to which he belonged. He says “His death could have been heroic. But the pity of it was that even the dreams were not his own. They were the products of the turbid flotsam of a rotten class (a world with sculpture in the drawing room) he was supposed to perpetuate” (69). In the above remark Sindhi is attributing Babu’s failure to the smugness of the upperclass society (represented by Kemka), always status conscious and imposing the same complacency on to their younger generation.
He protests the apartheid prevailing in America inspite of the country’s high claims of equality ideals and human rights by choosing to live amongst blacks of New York’s Harlem abandoning his residence in white peoples’ colony. In a music party he is mainly attracted to a pair of Banjo drums rather than to any of the modern musical instrument. Banjo with its classic twang is associated with country, folk and traditional music in the African American music culture and Billy’s instant liking for it is symbolic of his love for primitive. He disparages the value debasement, superficial and imitative life of the upper classes in metropolitan cities and their dislike for traditional. The class which Billy represented; the upper crust of the society has power, status, pleasure and money but Billy hates them as they signify pseudo powers for him. Hence while living amidst his class he is surrounded by estrangement and emptiness. It leaves him a total stranger. Billy’s sense of meaninglessness thus has its source in his social identity; his class and the related elitism. Interestingly there are two worlds’, poles apart, between which Billy vacillates; the one which he inhabits by birth and upbringing and the other, he opts by choice. Bhatnagar describes Sindi’s plight better in “Arun Joshi’s The Foreigner: A Critique of West and East” that as the modern society is “eating away humanity from Indians” (12), Sindi feels driven “like torn bits of paper on a windy day” (12). Billy’s love of past again is authenticated in his attraction for the sculptures of Konark into which he sees deeper meaning than any connoisseur of art can grasp. He is immensely impressed by the sculpture of Konark neither for their beauty nor for their exoticness but for the idea of primitivity it conveyed. But Siddhartha Sharma has a different opinion of Sindhi and calls him a ‘typical Eliotean character’ due to his experiencing of “a solitude in a crowded desert” (251).
Billy protests both civilization and its achievement and also disapproves the counterfeit world of his class, society with all their life of sham, hypocrisy and smugness. Like all other Joshi’s heroes Billy too perceives modern society to nothing more than “the making and spending of the money” and completely lacking in vibrancy or spontaneity. A life of the kind inspires boredom in Billy and causes existential angst as proved in his confession to Romy thus:

I sometimes wonder whether civilization is anything more than the making and spending of money. What else does the civilized man do? And if there are those who are not busy earning and spending—the so called thinkers and philosophers and men like that—they are merely hired to find solution, throw light, as they say on complications caused by this making and spending of money. What need would be there of psychiatrists, research foundations, learned societies, great scholars, scientists, ministerial advisors, generals, had the world not initially been hung on this peg of money (96-97).

Joshi in the novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* protests class structure of the metropolitan society of Delhi and racist practices of USA through Billy’s character. The prevalence both class and racist practices had signified the failure of the civilized society to execute the civilized ideal of equality and harmonious living. Sindi while in America had understood detachment in a very wrong sense as Siddhartha Sharma describes “for him detachment becomes euphemism…. which sparks off many tragedies - especially in the lives of Babu and June” (250). It is only in India inspired by Muthu he understands the real meaning of detachment and on executing the same is of great help to the workers of Kemka family. Sindi in following detachment as impersonal service is able to overcome meaninglessness
and find purpose in life. The same in turn helps him to overcome identity conflict and attain stability of identity.

The Crossing Over is a novel that treats the caste related evils of Indian society. In the actions of the revolutionary Satyabama the modus operandi to suppress caste faith is discussed. S. L. Bhyrappa explores the intricacies of a caste ridden society and its ill effects. Prevalence of caste practices in India signified the failure of equality and derecognition of human dignity. Bhyrappa more than portending his personal ideology in the matter he is interested in exploring the intricacies of caste practices and the impediments that thwart success to decastise the Indian society. Modernist perceptions of caste and the imminence of changes within affects individuals variably based on their capacity for liberal thinking and rationalizing ability. Indepth and deep rooted faith in traditional practices of caste and justification of the same complicates progressive reactionary practices to be triumphant. All these aspects are artistically represented in the novel and interestingly the novel doesn’t take a definite stance instead is more interested in documenting the different reactionary stances and the complications it induces in human relationships. Satyabama, after all the painstaking effort stands disappointed unable to bring about the desired transformation in the peoples’ mindset regarding caste. If Satyabama symbolizes identity stability in the matter of caste her father Venkataramanayya is a victim of identity conflict. He is a traditionalist, a conservative with immense faith in the caste practice because it has been the tradition of the society and religious justifications are there. He believes in the sacredness and superiority of Brahmin community, finds it very difficult to digest the transformation evinced around in the matter for it undermined the very utterings of God, almighty himself. His daughter Sathyabhama’s decision to marry a Shudra
sends shockwave through him and his daughter’s words “All the scriptures deny caste-distinction. Even the Haridasas says so. And in any case what’s important isn’t what someone said: it’s our own conscience which tells us the truth.” (113) haunts him. Her words “These ancient traditions obscure what our conscience tells us and hide the validity of our own experience.” affects him a lot and he is confused. Caught in the turmoil of confusion he gives up priesthood and performs the rituals in a perverted manner thus:

As an afterthought he walks barefoot to the temple. He made two circuits of it, but not in the usual auspicious direction, then made his way down to the nearby canal and washed himself as if, once again, he was ridding himself of defilement contracted during a funeral (262).

He is disillusioned with his faith and before he is disillusioned indeed he is subjected to tremendous amount of conflict. Satya’s reference to conscience mainly affects him most and her viewpoint “These ancient traditions obscure what our conscience tells us and hides the validity of our experience.” influences him a lot. He becomes sensitive to the secret murmerings of his conscience and starts perceiving his experiences of the past in new light. Especially he becomes highly sensitive to his relationship with the untouchable woman Matangi and starts looking at his affair of past in a new light. When his faith in tradition had been strong he had not tried to decipher the source of his uneasiness. But in the light of what Satya said he realizes that his uneasy feeling in the past inspite of following the purity rituals in his relation with Matangi was the voice of his conscience. Caught in the turmoil of doubts he denounces God. Looking at the face of God he said “this thing is stone nothing but stone. Why worship it?” (155). Though he went up to the temple he
didn’t greet or honour the God he had worshipped for the last thirty years. Instead like a researcher in archeology he examined the images of the temple and immediately would have a bath in the canal as if wanting to be rid of the defilement. He goes to Harijan colony in search of Matangi and suffers illtreatment by the inmates of the colony. He vacillates between customary practices and thoughts of denial of the same. He declared “All these rituals of sanctity and purity are nonsense”, and immediately a few moments later insist of taking purifying bath. In his illusion he believes in ‘brahminhood’ before it became a matter of caste and identifies himself as a sanyasi of seven births ago. In this state he even discards wearing the sacred thread. Even Satya’s idea of anybody becoming a Brahmin is based on the ancient logic of Vedas, much before it became a caste structure and took on the elitist identity in relation to other castes. His act of initiating his daughter into Brahminhood indicates that he has become sensitized not only to the reality of caste justice but also to the reality of gender justice on heeding the voice of his conscience. But the transformation in him is little understood by others as he is dismissed as mad. When he is publicly humiliated by Bettaiah’s son Mohandasa of his affair with Matangi he commits suicide by drowning in the river.

Satyabhama is the most important character in the novel who interprets the social identity of caste in a highly personal way. In the rigours she follows to protest the caste inequity in the society she is as ardent and keen as Billy who had protested the achievements of civilization. In her modus operandi she stands alone like Billy and as per her faith in the matter she is alone like Billy. Like Billy she too applies her reason and conscience to the whole affair to realize the injustice underlying the matter. She is resolute to initiate changes and she imposes her faith with conviction against all odds. Within and outside she is the same and is devoid of any smugness
in the affair. She is capable of unselfishness; she thinks radically but also executes her mind obstinately. She proposes marriage to Srinivasa a shudra boy and explains him caste is more a custom and nothing to do with Dharma and religion. Satya is self-made as she says “I haven’t been influenced by anyone else’s views. I read for myself and think. I act according to my convictions” (40). Her disapproval of caste faith is based on her conscience and she advises the need for people to hear the voice of their conscience thus:

All the scriptures say these distinctions are false. Even the Haridasas said so. But what is important now is not what anyone said in the past: it’s our conscience which clarifies things and it’s our experiences which show us the way forward. The problem is that these customs, these ancient traditions, simply obscure our conscience and dull the significance of our experiences. People who have the courage of their convictions aren’t shackled by ancient ways of doing things: they know how to live. Cowards, on the other hand, bury their minds in mud and live like worms (43).

Even when her marriage with Srinivasa doesn’t materialise she carries on her anti-caste activities. She accepts initiation into Brahmindood as it signified resistance to gender politics. Wearing the sacred thread, she had uttered the Gayathri mantra and had performed the fire-ritual. The fire becomes the symbol of “the truths manifest” and the truth she is struggling to convince the world is that originally the identity of ‘Brahman’ or ‘Brahmin’ meant attaining highest spirituality and its caste connotation was a dimension added on later. It is in this sense she declares in the public gathering that anybody can become a Brahmin. She tells Mohandasa the same “If their actions are righteous they will all be Brahmins by virtue of that…” (421).
When she fails to convince the world of her viewpoint, she performs the fire ritual; symbolic of her conviction and faith. Satya is attracted to fire-ritual mainly because it “was antecedent to other forms of worship” and belonged to the time of ‘Truth’, when sage Vasistha lived and discrimination had not yet become the way of the life.

Fire to Satya symbolized truth in a world that wallowed in falsehood. She tries to convince the people who had gathered for the census the meaning of Brahmin as it was maintained in the Upanishad thus:

They proclaim that all the movable and immovable things are Brahman, that every living being is a Brahman, that every soul is part and parcel of the Brahman, that there should be no discrimination, no duality. “He is you, and you are He, all these distinctions of time and space are false. Brahman alone is true. It has neither a caste nor a class nor a gender” (465).

She tries to tell the people that the true principle of Brahminhood is that “Anyone with the desire to become a Brahmin… is in fact a Brahmin” in relation to one’s desire and effort to acquire Knowledge or Veda and stressed that “Every soul has a right to Knowledge, the right to acquire knowledge.” (467) and condemns the caste Brahmins reducing “all other sections of the society to the status of Sudras, denying them the right to study the Vedas including their women folk” (467). After explaining thus, she invites people of all caste to undergo initiation into Brahminhood and assert her right to perform the ritual and shows the sacred thread she was wearing as a proof of her authority to initiate. People in the assembly fail to grasp the meaning of her words instead are shocked at the idea of a woman wearing the sacred thread and performing initiation ceremony. They declare her as being influenced by her father’s ghost and call her mad. The new twist her ardent effort had taken shocks Satya and completely demoralizes her. Irrespective of her failures
Satya is rigid in her faith and commitment to the cause of destroying caste discrimination and expose the falsehood related to caste faith. However resolute Satya is, she has her own weak moments, when she expresses signs of identity conflict. When depressed Meera, the dalit girl, asks Satya to initiate her into Brahminhood she agrees but not without subtle hesitation. She had invited all sundry in the village census assembly to attain Brahminhood and when Meera had voluntarily asked for it, instead of immediately accepting the opportunity she is hesitant. She involves in elaborate explanation. Describes Meera how men of upper castes had badly discriminated their women folk and had treated them as ‘Shudras’. Then she adds “Now if I-a ‘Sudra’ (due to woman identity) do wear the Sacred thread, why shouldn’t you?” This hesitation and comparison of herself as a touchstone to initiate Meera to Brahminhood is contrary to Satya’s declaration in the village assembly, “anyone can become a Brahmin” and is suggestive of identity conflict in Satya. Satya successfully suppresses the conflict within her and prepares herself to perform extremes of self sacrifice, self-mortification to realize her ideal. But when Mohandasa precipitates disaster by blasting the village reservoir she accepts her failure. Violence and revenge had always been Mohandasa’s way of attaining equality and in blasting the reservoir he had only followed his faith. Satya as a sign of desperation throws away the sacred thread into the flood and invokes god with the words - “Dhiyo ya nah Prachodayat” (god help us to improve our intellect and guide it towards what is right). She accepts the failure of human agency to suppress caste faith and hopes only god should guide the misguided people towards right action. Satya like all Joshi’s men shows the conviction to understand an unjust practice with the help of her conscience and reasoning skills. Like them she expresses the capacity to individualise the social identity of caste and interpret it
in a very radical way. Sindi in opposing the racist practices of American society, Billy in opposing the achievements of civilization and Ratan in ridiculing the corrupt ways of post independent Indian society had shown resilience parallel to Satya, Ravindra, Annaiah and Talwar; all idealists in their respective fields.

In the novel *The Uprooted* the real problem is cultural uprootedness which the characters mainly suffer from for they are living in a transitional society of post-independent India. The spirit of modernity induced through British colonization and its liberal humanist culture and western education is in conflict with the traditional lore of the country. It has generated an ambience of duality and characters caught up in this ambience suffer identity conflict. With Shrotri the problem is his deep anchorage in socio-cultural matrix and the value system of the country. He verbatim tries to live as per the traditional dictates (sanatana dharm) of the country and becomes the source of identity conflict in his young widowed daughter-in-law Katyayini. As a young educated woman of modern India Katyayini disagrees with certain of the values of the traditional society. She vacillates between tradition and modernity and suffers from acute identity problems. The problem with Sindi Oberoi of *The Foreigner* is again his mixed cultural identity. He is a child born of mixed parentage; to an English woman and a Kenyan Indian father. He therefore is not confined to the cultural imperatives of any one country like Shrotri. He had his education in Kenya, London, Boston and New York and so one expects him to have inculcated the cosmopolitan identity. It means an opportunity for dwelling in multicultural ambience and we expect him to feel at home in his hybrid identity. It also means awareness of the universal principles of morality. But Sindi is not at all composed and is restless and unhappy all the time tormented by feelings of absurdity and meaninglessness. His relates his unhappy feeling to his hybrid social
identity and also to his personal liability for existential angst. He often regrets his uprooted state and his alienated feeling. His hybrid identity generates acute feelings of displacement and the related agony in him. Educated in varied countries, being cut off from his racial roots; neither a complete Indian or Kenyan nor a British, he is haunted by a gnawing sense of alienation. Caught up in such turmoil of feeling he thinks of the world as a “lonely planet”. In not feeding the exact needs of his self and in his inability to anchorage in any one culture makes him feel a stranger or a foreigner everywhere and all the time. He feels that “people are happy for the wrong reasons like egotism, evil or even absolute ignorance on this lonely planet (64)”. He feels an outsider both in his society and with his own self. Sindi’s anguish has many more dimensions other than his lost childhood and hybrid identity. He is tormented by obligations of contraries; spiritual/physical, personal/social and divergent emotions of pride/disgust and sincerity/hypocrisy and so on. He as much suffers from existential feeling of meaningless and purposelessness and hence finds experiences of life too mundane and unexciting. He is a great flirt, a feature which he consciously nurtures to make his life meaningful. But he has no desire to evolve an enduring relation and never contemplates marriage with any of his girl friends. All his relation with women is just a distraction from pangs of absurdity and alienation he felt of his own life. Sindi lives none of the social experiences as essential and authentic and has the daringness to reject them all. But at the same time he is unable to evolve alternating experiences that can save him from his agony of existential angst. But irrespective of his alienated feeling the happenings of the real world around him aggravate his anguish. His sense of inner turmoil is heightened on witnessing rampant exploitation, corruption and denial of rights in the independent India (which he visits later). He feels humiliated by the racist practices
of the American society even as he experiences humiliation and ill treatment due to his social identity as a Kenyan Indian. He responds for the same thus:

Born an Indian, I had been spat upon; had I been a European, I would have done the spitting. What difference does it make? I would still die and be forgotten by the world. And spitting had not made the world’s big shots any happier than we were (30).

Sindi’s angst thus has both personal and socio-cultural reasons. His disclaiming of his social identities is little recognized by the social world. His cosmopolitan claim doesn’t give relief from ‘social ascription’ of specific identities. All his intense existential feelings don’t detach him from social tenets, that is, he cannot present himself as free from social identity of an ‘Indian Nigerian’; a racially inferior category. His hybrid identity doesn’t save him from getting identified as one belonging to an inferior race, and he cannot escape shame born of that identity. His British lineage is overlooked and his Kenyan and Indian self are foregrounded while in America. Interestingly Sindi feels a foreigner even when in India because of his hybrid identity. The British identity he partakes from his mother and the Kenyan-ness in him impedes his complete identification with India and therefore he continues to feel a foreigner even in India. Hence Sheila says “You are still a foreigner. You don’t belong here” (26). His estrangement from Hindu social structure with its components of religion and caste specificities very soon makes him feel again like a stranger even in India as well. Sindi Oberoi’s words to Khemka (his employer in India) reveal the dilemmas he suffered from thus:

You had a clear-cut system of morality, a caste system that laid down all you had to do. You had a God-you had roots in the soil you lived upon. Look at
me. I have no roots. I have no system of morality. What does it mean to me if you call me an immoral man…? I don’t even have a reason to live (69).

The strangeness in Sindi’s character is accounted by June Blythe as “foreign Complex”. She traces the roots of his anguish thus:

There is something strange about you, you know something distant. I’d guess that when people are with you, they don’t feel like they’re human beings. May be it’s an Indian characteristic, but I have a feeling you’d be foreigner anywhere (69).

The two novels *The Uprooted* and *The Foreigner* represent two extreme paradigmms of conflicts arising for the reasons of ‘cultural rootedness’ and ‘cultural uprootedness’ respectively. Srinivasa Shrotri is a traditionalist with abundance of faith in the traditional wisdom. Shrotri is an avid follower of ‘Dharma’ and he lived life according to *Sanatana Dharma* (the Ancient Moral Law of Hindu tradition). His faith in traditional notions of lineage, marriage, motherhood along with the householder’s duties become the causatives of identity conflict in Katyayini. As per his faith in the Hindu tradition he is a man of conviction. Shrotri has enormous pride in his family lineage with its untraceable antiquity. His stubbornness in his faith is in no way less to the compulsive possessiveness which Som, Sindi or Manjaiah express for their respective faith. Their obsession might be for different aspects but their conviction and lack of resilience is very much like that of Shrotri. He is as much an egotist with tendencies for self-aggrandizement which he imposes on his daughter-in-law Katyayini and thus becomes responsible to some extent for the tragedy that affects her life. When Katyayini proposes to remarry and resume householder’s life he disapproves to it mainly because it is against the traditional
meaning of marriage and its purpose. Her plea to him to adjudge her desire from the humanitarian point of view and as per the rationale of natural dharma, is all out rightly rejected and his viewpoints are imposed on her in such a way that she fails to retain clarity of thinking. He calls her decision to remarry as ‘adharma’ for it disregarded the traditional ideals of marriage and house holder’s duties and invokes the feeling of sin in her. He argues that it is her self-interest and desire for carnal pleasure that failed her to discern “what dharma is and what is not”. Later when childless Katyayini comes begging for her son Cheeni, Shrotri uses the subtleties of dharma\karma to disprove her rights over her son. Her expressions of the impulses of motherhood thus: “how hard it is for a mother to be separated from her child, born to her flesh” (179) is disregarded in defense of dharma thus: “No sprout can talk of motherhood once it leaves the family tree. The sense of motherhood, fatherhood, brotherhood, all these have meaning only in the context of the lineage, the family tree” (180). Arguments of contradicting kind he uses as weapon to discourage Katyayini and to subjugate her to his will. He mixes up natural law\natural dharma with culture ordained Sanatana dharma to impress his view points. Even religious notion of sin or papa–punya is as well roped in to substantiate his view. His faith in traditional notions is so strong and consistent that Shrotri indeed expresses capacity for identity stability but is the cause of acute identity instability in Katyayini. At the end of the arguments and counterarguments he successfully gives her the impression that she was a sinner with no absolution at hand at all and this impression we can see does play a spoilsport in weakest moment of her life. A striking contrast does exist between Katyayini and Sindi. If she is throttled by the very roots of the culture to which she belongs and it suppresses her sense of individualism, Sindi’s cultural unrootedness and high sense of
individualism that doesn’t allow him to anchorage to any social system become the source of his problem. He is as much tormented by the material and commercial impulses of all modern societies; India or America makes little difference. Inspite of his unrootedness he suffers from alienation and Leila attributes it to his Indian roots. He suffers, Leila declares from alienation from his Brahmin roots, the social setup and mystical nuances particular to India. Imbued with capacities for doubt and cynicism, he no longer can carry the baggage of his Indian culture (or any culture of any country) with a sense of faith as Shrotri does. While Shrotri and Katyayini are socially anchored in the cultural identities of caste, religion, morality, family ties, lineage, profession and personal relationships of their native land, Sindi is too sarcastic to be affixed to all of these. Sindi’s reply to June Blythe’s question whether as a Hindu (Indian-Kenyan roots) he believes in God, “Anyway I can’t be really called a Hindu. My mother was English and my father, I am told, a sceptic. That does not seem like a good beginning for a Hindu. Does it?” (242) proves the dilemmas of someone with a hybrid identity. If Sindi’s angst is that of a modern man living in modern cosmopolitan society, Katyayini’s angst has its source in the confusion she felt to live in a society where traditional norms coexist with the parallel modern normative. Sindi’s extremity of unrootedness in social conventions is such that he can’t bind himself even to the norm of marriage with the most endearing of the girl. If traditional meanings of marriage is itself the causative of problem for Katayayini, disbelief in the social convention of marriage denies Sindi the solace of relationship and make him suffer isolation. If social conventions become the saving grace from existential angst for Shrotri, absence of rootedness to any kind of social conventions precipitates in Sindi the existential feelings of meaninglessness and purposelessness. He contemplates thus: “death wipes out
everything for most of us anyway. All that is left is ‘a big mocking zero’” (140). He feels thus: “My foreignness lay within me and I could not leave myself behind wherever I went” (128). If cosmopolitan identity causes existential angst in Sindi, provincial identity of Katyayini plays havoc in her life. Choice for Katyayini is too limited; she has to choose either between the traditions of her native land or the modernist notions not yet indispensible. The limited experience she had of life or her provinciality made her succumb to the domineering Shrotri and obliterates opportunities for life. Sindi’s cosmopolitan experience had made him deanchorage himself from all social conventions and had convinced him of the fact that all social conventions are mere constructs and are nation specific and are in no way eternal truths of universal value. Even Shrotri’s experience of the world is limited compared to that of Sindi but his faith is the result of extensive reading. Shrotri and Sindi’s behavior signify two distinct attitudes towards life. Shrotri derives meaning of his life in cultural rootedness, Sindi strive for meaning amidst his sense of unrootedness. Shrotri’s sense of purpose in life is the outcome of his belief that he has been conducting his life based on the principle; that if we surrender ourselves totally to Dharma, then Dharma itself would guide us and sustain us in life. Sindi strives for a principle beyond all social conventions that can give him a sense of purpose in life. He comes to Delhi accepts a job in Mr. Khemka’s factory but the ambience in Khemka’s factory is highly demoralising kind and this intensifies his existential angst. He observes lot exploitation of the workers and the relation between Khemka and his workers is nothing better to that of a master–slave relationship. While Khemka earned thirty thousand per day the workers are paid only three rupees per day and the employees looked upon Khemka with “the mortal dread”. But when the factory suffers lockout and Khemka is arrested for flouting income tax and there is
the real threat to the life of the workers Sindi finds a purpose to channelize his energy. He learns the joy underlying impersonal acts or the virtue of selfless service. It is the pleading of a worker by name Muthu that awakens Sindi to a meaningful existence. His words “detachment lies in actually getting involved” (70) clicks and he decides to revive the factory under lockup to help the workers. He feels motivated in life and the life of unselfish service proves an endearing experience to him. He derives the message of unselfish service from the philosophy of the *Bhagawad Gita*. The idea of ‘renunciation’ or ‘detachment’ is understood in its real essence and he outgrows existential angst born of compulsive obsessiveness with the ‘self’. Sense of purposelessness never affects Shrotri nor does he search for purpose or meaning in life because to live as per the dictates of his tradition amidst the onslaughts of modernity gives him a deep sense of purpose and meaning to life. To live the the different stages of Varnashramadharma as laid down by sanatana dharma is the end in all for him. When an unexpected disaster befalls his life in the form of a revealed secret that questions the authenticity of his Shrotri lineage (akin to a condition of cultural uprootedness) Shrotri momentarily suffers intense anguish but once he seeks solution to his imbroglio in the tradition of his faith he verbatim follows it irrespective of the repercussions. He renounces all his claims on Shrotri lineage and as per the traditional notion of varnashrama dharma proceeds to become a sanyasi; a life of worldly-renunciation. The novel ends in his journey towards the holy centers of Haridwara seeking a guru to initiate him into Sanyasa. Katyani suffers from lack of conviction and vacillates between notions of modernity and tradition and is victimized by the duality. Shrotri’s belief that dharma alone mattered above everything becomes the saving grace of his life. Personal disasters muddle up the clarity of thinking in Katyayini and she becomes a victim of multiple options;
claims of natural dharma, native cultural dharma and modernist options and lack of strong rootedness in any one of these precipitates disaster for her. She neither can assert with conviction her womanly rights for a conjugal life nor can proclaim her motherhood rights. She is haunted by her own fears and doubts which she is unable to rationalize well in time to save herself. Caught in-between the notions of tradition and their counterparts in modern parlance she suffers from acute identity confusions. Personal disasters deter her further from holding on to any particular faith and she falls prey to her own doubts. Katyayini is in utter confusion and both traditional notions and their modern counterparts jostle in her and she expresses her confusion thus: “Oh, God, why have you tied up my life with such hopeless knots that defy my understanding? What is the point of all this anyway?” (212). She who wanted to disargue Shrotri and his dharmic subtleties by the superiority of motherly claims gradually gives in to his viewpoints and blames herself as immoral. She is so bulldozed by his viewpoints that she feels that lineage claims are more essential than the rights of the “blood, flesh and milk…her energies…ambitions, love, affection for the child…meant nothing” (183) and she had walked out of his house without her child.

She starts assessing things in terms of traditional thought pattern of ‘papa-punya’ (sin and spiritual merit) and her personal predicaments had only strengthened such thoughts. She interprets her infertility thus: “Did her womb lose the moral and spiritual power to become a mother to perpetuate a new lineage?” Cheeni’s refusal to recognize her as a mother forms the climax and the resultant turmoil affects her physical health and she takes to bed and and dies. She becomes an exemplar of the ill-effects of acute identity conflicts on an individual’s psyche. Thus in the novel The Uprooted too we see the how the conflicts and its resolution are individual centered
and the individuals themselves are accountable to the decisions they make. While Sindi had taken clue from the words of a fellow worker Muthu to resolve his identity conflict and feel a sense of purpose in life, Katyayni’s inability to resolve the conflict precipitates disaster.

The concept of identity and the related conflicts and crisis have many common points of comparison and differences in Joshi and Bhyrappa’s select fiction and the same has been analysed in this chapter. At times the social identities precipitate conflict and at times the needs of the individual and the impediments to achieve the same induce feelings of conflict and crisis. In the face of conflict men of both Joshi and Bhyrappa’s novels suffer from existential angst. In Joshi’s men existential meaning of life exist as an ever alert parallel voice along with the other routine meanings of life. Joshi’s men have all accomplished a lot in social parlance but are not happy because feelings of meaninglessness haunt them. But Byrappa’s men are in the stages of struggle to realise their ideals and only in the face of failure to attain the same they suffer existential anguish. With Som faith in reason and science or empirical knowledge vies with traditional mystical thoughts of god and spirituality that evade tangible experience and his inability to transcend between the two worlds precipitate existential angst. Billy’s impatience with the achievements of civilisation intensifies the ever present existential voice in him until he abandons all his achievements and the civilized society to retreat into primitivity. His feeling of existential angst intensifies in the face of the false values of modern society. Sindhi Oberoi suffers both from repercussions related to cultural uprootedness and existential feelings and finally is able to resolve the conflict in realizing the worth of self-less service. Rathan Rathor too is haunted by the greed for material success and desire for ideal life of self-less service and by dawning on humility and
unselfishness suppresses the feeling of crisis within. When Talwar in Tantu is gripped by moral dilemma weather to heed his inner voice or follow the social pressure he is pushed to the verge of existential angst and he thinks thus: “over the years he had devoted himself to his family, wife and children, but now that he was older, he felt he had to act according to his conscience, otherwise life would have no meaning” (1112). The ambiguities of his life had made him contemplate on metaphysical questions- “What is life? What is family? What does the relationship between a husband and wife mean? He knew the answers Indian metaphysics offered- that relationship is related to Maya or illusion and are temporary and transient. He is as well aware “It could be Maya, but you still have to live through these things” (1113). All the teachers had joined Annaiah’s school brimming with enthusiasm and idealism to extend self-less service but unable to change with the changing goals of education in modernity had suffered from the “nagging feeling of emptiness” (750). The developments affected the teachers immensely as it had undermined their entire belief system and they had all lost sense of purpose and direction in life. Annaiah too had been severely demoralised when the founding principles of the school had been trampled upon and had “felt a painful lonliness inside”. The corrupt disposition of modern society had pushed him to the brink of passivity and inaction and he had been racked by self -doubt. But gradually he recuperates and joins Honnatti’s school for disabled to carry on his motive of rendering self-less service. Ravindra is devastated both in his professional and personal life. While Talwar had become his saving grace as to the imdroglio created in his journalists’ profession and had convinced him of the need to stick to one’s ideals at all cost, the disasters of his personal life had generated acute sense of existential angst. Honnatti’s affair with his wife Kanti gives a serious jolt to
Ravindra’s moral conviction and pushes him to the verge of becoming a misanthropist. The event had proved a serious demoralizing event that shook his very faith in virtuous life. The effect of this event on Ravindra’s morale is described thus: “It had completely shattered his ethical and moral beliefs. His very faith in the goodness of human nature had collapsed, completely undermining his interest in life. There didn’t seem to be any point in starting a new school to shape the characters of future citizens.” He had felt,

Life was just about getting and spending money and developing one’s animal instincts - power and wealth, name and fame, sexual indulgence - that was all there. Any struggles were fought with purely with these aims in mind. Ravindra didn’t see any point in trusting or respecting anyone. This feeling seemed to provide the answer to the questions that had been hounding him. If he could accept that this was the way things were, there wouldn’t be a problem (1000).

In his hellish state of despondency, he feels no place to go and no human to correspond with “I must go home. Home? But where is my home?” For the first time he suffers from acute existential angst expressed thus:

He experienced the same old feelings of emptiness. He went to the lodge and lay down for a while and came to the realization that it was his conscience that was making him feel so completely purposeless, a state that was mirrored by the whole of the society, indeed by the whole nation. Anyone who believed that they had managed to fill this nihilistic emptiness was living in a fool’s paradise - it was nothing but an illusion. Ravindra concluded that all he could do was to live with this existential reality (1000).
Undermining of one’s faith is the source of apathy in almost all characters. Manjaiah for instance has no virtues as per the traditional moral notions but has tremendous faith in living the epicurean’s life and has no scruples at all about it. In fact, he had developed into an egotist by undeterred pursuit of his desires. Savitri through her capacity for self-control, Sarojjakshi by contesting his pride and distinctness, lakkoo by chastising his pride in sexuality become his nemesis. Even Manjaiah in such moments suffer from feeling of emptiness and void.

Both Bhyrappa and Joshi’s novels have the common purpose of criticizing the corruption rampant in all walks of life in modern societies whether of India or elsewhere. Both the writers are concerned with the plight and struggles of individuals caught up in contradictories both of the fundamental and social kinds. At a time when materialism, commercialism, and high sense of individualism is eating into the innards of moral fabric of the society, sensitive individuals do suffer from what James Robinson calls the “crisis of the consciousness”; to have a nagging feeling that something is wrong and that it is causing all of the suffering and misery. The capacity to outgrow the crisis of consciousness happen at different stages as explained by James Robinson thus - At the lowest form of consciousness, we are in the survival mode, living from crisis to crisis. At the highest form of consciousness, also known as enlightenment, we realize that what we perceive is only an illusion and nothing is real. When we are enlightened, we know that we create our own reality. Both Joshi and Bhyrappa’s men suffer crisis in consciousness at different stages and outgrow the same and with them with exceptions it’s a journey from crisis to enlightened stance.
Arun Joshi and Bhyrappa’s men always strive to evolve from lower states of consciousness to the higher states that is when they start perceiving the reality around in their own way and are either happy or unhappy about them and create their own reality. This sorting out of identity conflicts towards some kind of resolution is the greatest achievement of Joshi’s characters and a fine paradigm of what is called as “Identity formation” not as per social ascription but as per individual’s enlightened stance and conscience. The same holds true with Bhyrappa’s characters as well. Identity formation also known as individuation is the development of the distinct personality of an individual based on set of accepted identities. In such a condition all confusions as to the right choice from the plethora of different contradictory identities are resolved. Identity formation moments are also moments signifying the resolving of identity conflicts and attaining of what psychologists regarded as “stable identity” where inner personality traits and outer personality traits are one and the same. Identity thus formed at times may be against the expectations of the societal norms yet are worth heeding if it’s guided by one’s voice of reason or enlightened consciousness. The same is expressed by G. A. Ghanshyam and Usha Iyengar in “Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner: A Siritual Odyssey*” thus:

By delineating the turbulent inner world of his protagonists, he highlights the fact that the need for a profound change in our living merges not only as a psychological demand arising from the pathogenic nature of our present social character, but also as a condition for the sheer survival of human race. His explorations into the complexities of life impinging on the individual often lead a groping for strategies of survival harking back to affirmation deeply embedded in the faith of his ancestors (142).
Arun Joshi and Bhyrappa’s men always strive to evolve from lower states of consciousness to the higher states, that is when they start perceiving the reality around in their own way and are either happy or unhappy about them and create their own reality. This sorting out of identity conflicts towards some kind of resolution is the greatest achievement of Joshi’s characters and a fine paradigm of what is called as “Identity formation” not as per social ascription but as per individual’s enlightened stance and conscience. The same holds true with Bhyrappa’s characters as well. Identity formation also known as individuation is the development of the distinct personality of an individual based on set of accepted identities. In such a condition all confusions as to the right choice from the plethora of different contradictory identities are resolved. Identity formation moments are also moments signifying the resolving of identity conflicts and attaining of what psychologists regarded as “stable identity” where inner personality traits and outer personality traits are one and the same. Identity thus formed at times may be against the expectations of the societal norms yet are worth heeding if its guided by one’s voice of reason or enlightened consciousness. O. P. Mathur words in “Survival and Affirmation in Joshi’s Novels” signify the same - “Strong affirmations: right detachment and meaningful action, confrontation with evil and corruption, humanitarianism and love of the people, faith in the operation of destiny and of quest for peace, fulfillment and salvation within one’s own cultural pavement” (91).

Whereas the social identity of the people is rooted in their culture, the individual identity is determined by personal achievements. However, it is imperative that in order to experience wholeness one has to fuse the individual and the social identities. It is due to the modern predicament that had broken these two identities as a result of fragmentation of societies instances of identity conflicts in the present
galore. The multicultural setting or the ambience of cultural diversity affects Joshi’s men and the characters of S. L. Bhyrappa’s novels are as much affected by the pluri-cultural ambience of the immediate post Independent India where binaries of opposing nature; east-west, oriental-occidental, tradition-modernity, regional-national, marga-desi, multi-linguistic and north-south discrepancies etc galore taxing the identity claims of individuals. The constraints Joshi’s men suffer is as much the destiny of Bhyrappa’s men. Hence Sanjay Narasimhaiah’s words uttered in relation to the struggles of Joshi’s men can be extended to understand the struggles of Bhyrappa’s men as well.

Joshi has created in each of his novels an Indian anti-hero who, like his western counterpart, stands overlooking the abyss of his name and place: angry, dispossessed, yet often times amused at his own plight. But Joshi’s protagonists, by their very nationality, have the right to be angrier and more derisive than Albert Camus’ Frenchmen or Saul Bellow’s Americans. Joshi’s Indians, after all, face more than the conditions peculiar to a specific culture, such as that of France or America. They confront, instead, not only their native heritage, itself so full of tradition, complexity, and irony, but also a heritage overrun by the traditions, complexities, and ironies of a score of western nations (86).

The Indianness (Hindu cultural lore) becomes both the source of comfort and disturbance for both Joshi and Bhyrappa’s men. The Indian identity within the expanse of cosmopolitan identity is both the causative of comfort and discomfort for Joshi’s personas. For Bhyrappa’s men traditional India co-existing with modernity norms in a transitional society problematizes life. Mani Meiti’s words trying to
anchor Som’s struggle in Indian ethos holds good to understand the problems of all characters hitherto studied under this chapter. Meiti says,

_The Last labyrinth_ is unparalleled in the treatment of a subtle Indian theme based on the import of Hindu religious philosophy as advocated in the holy scripture like the _Gita_ and the _Upanishads_. The book is about man confronted by the four paths of life: _dharma_ (duty), _artha_ (wealth), _kama_ (desire) and _moksha_ (liberation). It is based on the _karma yoga_, the attainment of liberty by the soul by abandoning _kama_ (desire), _krodh_ (anger), _lobha_ (greed), _moha_ (allurement), _mada_ (lust) and _macharya_ (pride), the six enemies of man. The book is so deeply influenced by the Hindu religious scriptures that all that happens in the book are guided by the principles of Hindu Sastras and thoughts (90).
Works Cited


