Introduction:

Arun Joshi, a writer in the pre-Rushdie era, deals with mystery and darkness of human mind. In today’s world of book-promos, Arun Joshi would be a misfit as he kept himself out of the limelight. His novels probing into existentialism, along with the ethical choices a man has to make, won him huge critical appreciation in India. Psychiatry was the basic interest of Arun Joshi. Most of the writings by Arun Joshi are filled with his personal experiences right from his youth.

Arun Joshi is a novelist who, more strongly than most, has brought to his work that detachment from the everyday, while still acknowledging its existence, which is perhaps India’s particular gift to the literature of the world. The Apprentice, Joshi’s third novel, takes his search for understanding man’s predicament one step further toward the transcendental. Its central figure is a man essentially docile and uncourageous whose life more or less parallels the coming into being of postcolonial India.

From the above short description of Arun Joshi’s work, one thing is clear that the all the works of the writer centre on the twin aspects of “conflict” and “self-identity,” which are interwoven and inseparable. In search of self-identity and to resolve the “conflict”, Arun Joshi through his characters resolves the problem by redemption in various ways.

In the 1994 text De-scribing Empire, Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson make the claim that:

The contestation of post-colonialism is a contest of representation (9).

Imperialism, colonisation, and resistance to the colonial-imperial process, be it ideological, discursive, military, economic, or hegemonic, remains a contemporary political fact. But the essential problem with the notion of de-scribing empire is that every act of description involves an acknowledgement of inscription, an acknowledgement and perpetuation of the re-writing of the binary of empire and (post) colonial, of coloniser and colonised that fuels the post-colonial concern with marginality and recognition of the other. When viewed this way, “de-scribing” Empire is a view of post-colonial study in which the coloniser or settler-invader is forever on the back foot.

One irony is that the particular concerns of post-colonialism, that is, the relationship between coloniser and colonised within political, economic, discursive, and geographical territories can be appropriated, manipulated and refined for expedient ends, even within the territory made claim to by post-colonial discourse itself. There is never a necessary politics to the
study of political actions and reactions; but at the level of the local, and at the level of material applications, post-colonialism must address the material exigencies of colonialism and neo-colonialism, including the neo-colonialism of Western academic institutions themselves.

In the context of New Zealand, in culture, as with Australian, the issues of post-colonialism and textuality are complicated, and perhaps livened, by the strong oral traditions of the colonised, coupled with increasingly multi-cultural populations. Institutions of power are institutions of inscription. Of course, colonialism and post-colonialism are directly concerned with this very process of interchange, assimilation, appropriation and re-appropriation, and the political and theoretical re-positions and re-positioning within this process. However, there is a danger of hypocrisy in post-colonial studies, given that those who theorise and are involved in claiming voice for the post-colonial subjects are themselves often settler subjects.

Like the settler subjects, a majority of post-colonial critics find themselves uncomfortably inside the residue of power structures they profess to oppose, and ambivalent beneficiaries of those structures. As Timothy Brennan has pointed out, if Britain is seen now as post-colonial too, the notions of centre and periphery on which post-colonial studies are (mistakenly) founded are now redundant. If all nations, which at some point have come under the sway of British imperialism, are seen as post-colonial, then this term no longer does much useful distinguishing work. Such cultures are more likely to be understood in terms of a combination of both post-colonialism and post-imperialism, although what distinguishes these two terms is complex and indeterminant.

Post-colonial studies attempted to consider and define relations between the settler or colonial-invader races and groups and the first-nation races and groups, which articulated the newly emergent voices of nationhood after colonialism.

Positioning discourse from colonised peoples into discrete and knowable categories such as non-European or Third-World acts so as to traduce the narratives of colonised peoples, which are in turn interpolated, by Western narratives of identity.

If authenticity is relational, then identities can no longer be stable, and self-other relationships are a matter of power, rhetoric, and discourse, rather than cultural essence. For Clifford, traditional cultures are without regret (or the nostalgia-mode of post-modernism). Generally speaking, Indian writings in English are a product of the historical encounter between the two cultures—Indian and western—for about one hundred and ninety years. It is not that
Indian people did not experience the impact of a foreign culture. British rule in India, first of all, resulted in breaking the barrier of that closed society. The English language provided the natives with a way to the western literature and to the western culture, of course. Indian novels in English had begun to be written from various parts of India, crowded with the varied and variegated pictures of life from various lands. India got Independence through bloodshed and migration. Post-colonialism began as recognition of the dominant post-War economic and political conditions prevalent all over the world.

This multi-faceted character of Indian writing in English has embraced sometime “conflict of identity”, “conflict of cultural crisis” and mostly the “nostalgia of Indian belongingness”. Indo-Nostalgic writing is a somewhat loosely defined term encompassing writings, in the English language, wherein nostalgia regarding the Indian subcontinent, typically regarding India, represent a dominant theme or strong undercurrent. Certainly, Indo-Nostalgic writings have much overlapping with post-colonial literature but are generally not about heavy topics, such as cultural identity, conflicted identities, multilingualism or rootlessness. Writers like Krishna Srinivas, M. K. Gopinathan have contributed enormous poetry collections to the growth of Indian English Literature.

Post-colonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonised countries, or literature written in colonising countries, which deals with colonisation or colonized peoples. It focuses particularly on the way in which literature by the colonising culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, on the colonised people and on literature by colonised peoples which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past’s inevitable “otherness”. It can also deal with the way in which literature in colonising countries appropriates the language, images, scenes, and traditions and so forth of colonised countries.

Post-colonial theory is built in large part around the concept of “otherness”. The concept of producing a national or cultural literature is in most cases a concept foreign to the traditions of the colonised peoples, who had no literature as it is conceived in the western traditions or in fact no literature or writing at all. They did not see art as having the same function as constructing and defining cultural identity or were, like the peoples of the West Indies, transported into a wholly different geographical/political/economic/cultural world.
It is always a changed, a reclaimed but hybrid identity, which is created or called forth by the colonised attempts to constitute and represent identity. The very concepts of nationality and identity may be difficult to conceive or convey in the cultural traditions of colonised peoples. There are times when the violation of the aesthetic norms of western literature is inevitable, as colonised writers search to encounter their culture’s ancient yet transformed heritage, and as they attempt to deal with problems of social order and meaning so pressing that the normal aesthetic transformations of western high literature are not relevant, make no sense.

The development (development itself may be an entirely western concept) of hybrid and reclaimed cultures in colonised countries is uneven, disparate, and might defy those notions of order and common sense which may be central not only to western thinking but also to literary forms and traditions produced through western thought.

“Hybridity” is also a useful concept for helping to break down the false sense that colonised cultures—or colonising cultures for that matter—are monolithic, or have essential, unchanging features. Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement—now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of global media technologies—make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue.

The transnational dimension of cultural transformation—migration, diasporas, displacement, and relocation—makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural unifying discourse of nation, peoples, or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. In addition to the post-colonial literature of the colonised, there exists as well the post-colonial literature of the colonisers.

Every colony had an emerging literature which was an imitation of but differed from the central British tradition, which articulated in local terms the myths and experience of a new culture, and which expressed that new culture was, to an extent, divergent from and even opposed to the culture of the “home”, or colonising, nation. It is curiously the case that colonial/post-colonial writers writing in Britain out of colonial experiences and a colonial past have colonised British literature itself.

In this regard, a salient difference between colonialist literature (literature written by colonisers, in the colonised country, on the model of the “home” country and often for the home country as an audience) and post-colonial literature is that colonialist literature is an attempt to
replicate, continue, equal, the original tradition, to write in accord with British standards; post-colonial literature is often (but not inevitably) self-consciously a literature of “otherness” and resistance, and is written out of the specific local experience.

The conflict in Arun Joshi’s novels plays a decisive role. Conflict is the struggle between the opposing forces on which the action in a work of literature depends. There are five basic forms of conflict: person versus person, person versus self, person versus nature, person versus society, and person versus God.

Person verses self is the conflict in literature that places a character against his/ her own will, confusion, or fears. In it, though the struggle is internal, the character can be influenced by external forces as well.

Person is when, in a novel, there is a conflict of two forms of like beings. The conflict is external. Person versus Society is a conflict in fiction in which a main character’s, or group of main characters’, main source of conflict is social traditions or concepts.

Person versus Supernatural is a theme in literature that places a character against supernatural forces. Conflict was first described in ancient Greek literature as the agon, or central contest in tragedy. While writing in conflictual mode and about conflict, one should understand the various facets of conflict. The analysis of conflict requires identification of the conflict as it appears in literature, and distinguishing between internal and external conflict, followed by placing the conflict in one of the three subcategories.

It is often referred to as the conflict with the self because the base of the conflict is in one’s own head and mind. Since conflict defines the postcolonial, resolutions and reformulated conflicts dictate its future definition. Therefore, conflicts and their resolutions enable the author to create, and the reader to discover, the nature of the evolving post-colonial theory and literature.

Similarly, characters in A Forest of Flowers and Anthills of the Savannah must deal with conflicting realities. Upon deep introspection, they discover spiritual visions that resolve this conflict. In both works, the indigenous people reformulate their conceptions of post-colonial community.

Authors writing post-colonial literature define the term post-colonial by their writing. To understand the message of these authors, the reader must identify the particular definition of the term.
The analysis of the entire corpus of Arun Joshi’s novels demonstrates that there is a pattern in his works. The innate urge to determine life’s meaning in positive terms leads Joshi’s protagonists to wage an incessant war against challenging situations. The author’s capacity of critical judgment is reflected in his novels. It also presents the socio-economic and cultural background leading to the literary milieu of the period to which Joshi belongs.

The socio-historical realities from two divergent cultures, (West and East), got embedded in the psychology of Arun Joshi, which has resulted in the issues of identity and conflict creeping into the novels of Arun Joshi.

The issue of conflict is very important to understand and analyse any of the works of Arun Joshi. As pointed out in the beginning, the characters of Arun Joshi’s novels reflect the in-person character of Arun Joshi himself. The life sketch of Arun Joshi is itself complex and complicated on various grounds. All or most of these are embedded in the work of Arun Joshi.

Arun Joshi’s The Strange Case of Billy Biswas shows the process of conflict and alienation and rehabilitation via a 3-tier operation, namely, construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. Arun Joshi represents a consciousness that has emerged from the confrontation between tradition and modernity.

In analysing Arun Joshi’s ideas, one finds that his experience is based on vision of life. He minutely observes the conflict between the traditional values and the modern materialistic approach to life. With his deep knowledge of Indian philosophy, he suggests in his novels an entirely Indian solution to the spiritual crises of the youth.

Arun Joshi’s fictional world is most strange. One of the most significant contemporary Indian novelists writing in English, Arun Joshi has focussed not on social or political problems but on the deeper layers of man’s being. The very core of the thesis Conflict in Arun Joshi’s Novel is not one-sided; rather it is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted, encompassing philosophy, psychology and sociology.

It seems to distil the essence of the dilemmas and quests of Arun Joshi’s protagonists’ conflict. The conflict that erupts in the protagonists of Arun Joshi’s novel has the form of craziness, pain, agony, the selfishness of love, the mystic realities of life in a gentle tale, centring on the various aspects of life, bringing out the vitality of life, normal and the abnormal, the ordinary and the extraordinary, illusion and reality, resignation and desire, etc.
The conflicts between alienated self and the socio-cultural forces are the postulates of Arun Joshi’s fictional creations. In all the novels, the protagonists of his novels are subjected to extreme social, cultural and psychological pressures. This search of the identity is the central pillar of Arun Joshi’s novels.

The alienations that emerge in the novels of Arun Joshi are because of the clash between the socio-cultural and psychological pressures. The alienation arises because of the social maladjustment and emotional insecurity; this alienated self leads to a psychological revolt within the self that every moment of life is in search of identity.

Arun Joshi has, in *The Foreigner*, very dexterously handled some-thought provoking, grave issues like, rootlessness, detachment, frustration, quest for better alternative, identity-crisis and self-realisation, highlighting India’s glorious cultural heritage and imperishable moral values. The novels of Arun Joshi emphasis the urgent need of the “Humane Technology” to cure this sordid civilisation.

Arun Joshi’s first novel *The Foreigner* was first published in the year 1968. Arun Joshi has candidly accepted, with reference to *The Foreigner* that his recurrent theme is alienation which is closely related to the identity issues in many forms, sometime in the form of identity conflict, sometime in the form of self-quest, many times leading to estrangement from the self. At the same time, his heroes are intensely self-centred persons, prone to self-pity and escapism. In all his novels, Arun Joshi attempts to deal with different facets of alienation, in relation to the self, the society around and humanity at large. Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* (1968) is a born Foreigner--a man alienated from all humanity like Mahatma Buddha, he spent his life in search of the self and the identity of himself, leading to “Enlightenment” at Nirvana (Death of the life).

The process of developing self-identity has three stages. The issue of identity-crisis and self in the novels of Arun Joshi is the result of philosophical (Buddhist school of thought), psychological output of personality traits and sociological Cultural shock.

*The Foreigner* relates how Sindi Oberoi, an immigrant Indian, suffers in the course of his search for meaning and purpose of his life. Sindi’s alienation from the world is similar to the one that many existentialist heroes in the west suffer from. The novel is an enactment of the crisis of the present in the story of Sindi Oberoi. The question is of the identity as self-identity of a person who does not know his birth, parents, relatives and friends. This very understanding of Sindi brings Joshi closer to Camus and Sindi to Camus’ outsider.
Sindi was himself an emotionally sterile person devoid of the self and the identity. It seems that Sindi was selfish and his philosophy of detachment was merely a false construction to run away from the worldly responsibility towards June. It is not that Sindi could not start a fresh life with a meaning and self identity but the precedent experiences were obstacles to do so. The climax of the novel comes at a juncture where June, deprived of love and marriage by Sindi, falls in love with Babu Rao Khemka and it is aptly reciprocated by Khemka. Sindi was in past deep love with June and he could have saved the life of both Khemka and June but now he is guilty of killing the duo. Sindi has committed a crime because of his false detachment. A man without identity, roots, values, ethics, emotions and love cannot be expected to be redeemed.

Arun Joshi by his own inventions and discoveries makes Sindi to realise. After coming to India, Sindi got a God-sent opportunity to redeem himself. Muthu and his problems bring about a major change in Sindi’s attitude towards life. The Indian soil gives him a meaning to life, attachment from self to the world. In *The Foreigner*, Arun Joshi depicts a keen awareness and deeper understanding of our times. Sindi represents the solutions to the meaningless of life. The establishment of the identity of Sindi at the closing of the novel presents the only way of saving man from the purposelessness and degradation of the contemporary meaningless world. At times, the identity of Sindi could be compared to that of Karna of *Mahabharata* because both the characters suffer from the identity conflict and crisis, but at many times the resemblance is quite contradictory as well.

The identity-conflict in the protagonist of *The Foreigner* is many-folded. Though Sindi involves himself in an earnest quest for life-sustaining values, he is not able to overcome the miseries of past completely. The character of Sindi portrays the sense of metaphysical anguish at the meaningless of life. Lastly, what comes out from the conflicting nature of the protagonist of *The Foreigner* Sindi Oberoi, is that life rotates in a flashback style. If life is full of suffering the human nature is to overcome that. Struggle, confusion, frustration and confession are the realities of human life. The self on the earth is meant to acquire an identity, without identity there is no human being. The identity conflict in *The Foreigner* in the light of the character of Sindi reveals that man’s false beliefs and self-created agenda of life evaporate with the passage of time.

The identity of Sindi is not only the identity of a character of Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner*, it is also an identity of the millions of the young generation of the world, who have a lot of
questions but no answer. The identity of Sindi is a warning to evolve a system to meet the needs and challenges of the time. What Sindi did was the outcome of the social conditions. That Sindi loves but cannot marry reflects the identity-conflict and he is torn apart between West and East.

Arun Joshi’s *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* shows the process of alienation and rehabilitation via a 3-tier operation, namely, construction, deconstruction and reconstruction.

Arun Joshi’s fictional world is most strange. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is seemingly a sequel developed from the first novel *The Foreigner*. Sindi and Billy Biswas, the protagonists of *The Foreigner* and *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* respectively, seem to explore the hidden treasures of life; they search for their own bearings of life and death, sorrow and joy. Their major concern is their real and the inner world --the world of soul. This very communication is also the beginning of the establishment of self-identity, if not the assertion of the identity. Here was the entering into a new world –the world of the supernatural.

In the novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Arun Joshi portrays how the process of individualisation destroys a man of extraordinary sensibilities. The novel seems to advocate that life’s meaning does not lie in the world outside but within. The quest for identity of Billy Biswas is deeper than that of Sindi Oberoi of *The Foreigner*. Arun Joshi in this novel has tried to combine the Lawrentian quest for the essence of life with Upanishadic search for soul’s spiritual reality. In reality, Billy learns from the seers, mystics and visionaries of all ages and it brings him closer to Mathew Arnold’s Scholar Gipsy, as a result of which Billy takes the hard decision to live in the jungles of Central India deliberately renouncing the luxurious life that he could have afforded very well.

Billy is completely faded up with the grossly materialistic Indian society, in defiance of its traditional values, ethics, culture and mores. It also endorses that Billy supports the anti-materialistic way of Hindu life.

Romi, his room partner at the Harlem in America, opines that Billy was the man of extraordinary intellect, ‘a man of extra obsession’. But what even he fails to understand was his real identity and thus the question still persists with Billy--Who am I? Billy once says: ‘I want to do in the life is to visit places, meet the people who live there, find out the...aboriginalness of the world.’

Billy’s case is a strange case because of the fact that his personality was split between modernity and primitivism. This opinion of Billy makes him understand that he was not meant
and made for this world and that is why this society was misfit for him. In reality, the first section of the novel is a background to understand the psychologically tortured Billy Biswas that how he was in constant conflict and in his quest of identity. The life he was supposed to live was miles away from the life of tribal in reality. The elite culture-laden society did fit to the quest of identity for Billy and he returns to India. But, to his utter surprise, he finds Delhi not different from the American society and feels Delhi’s high hybrid society to be spiritually deserted and emotionally alienated. Billy hates the worldly pleasures but Meena is fond of the money, market and the materialism, supposedly the identity of the elite society. Arun Joshi successfully represents here that his protagonist was not an abnormal person. Rather he was very much a part of the human society and had the wish and desire to give a new identity and meaning to life by establishing a family. But, at the same time he portrays that Billy is destined by his very nature for some other person and places. It brings the character of Billy closer to the character of destiny.

The marriage fiasco has a negative impact upon the physic and personality of Billy. “The Billy Biswas I had known was finished, snuffed out like a candle left in the rain” (Joshi, The Strange Case 70) rightly remarks Romi. Now Billy is so much mentally tortured that he dislikes even the terminology of the “civilized”. He wants to get away from the greedy, avaricious and hypocritical world of the “civilized”. One such instance could be noted from picnic scenario where Billy has gone with Meena and the friends. These points towards his lineage towards the primitive world. In this context: R. K. Dhawan aptly observes: “In a bid to seek communion with the primitive world, Billy opts out of the modern world” (20).

It seemed for the first time in the life of Billy that the objective of his life was about to be achieved are that the search for identity was going to be completed. The cosmetic city of India, Delhi, could have made him settle with beautiful women and elite society. Billy goes through his “final Metamorphosis” (Joshi, The Strange Case 14).

Billy could see only and only Bilasia and nothing else. On having the eye contact with Bilasia, Billy was automatically called by Bilasia and the simple, sobre and god-made lover of Bilasia, Billy, went straight to her. He forgets that he was the son of the Supreme Court justice. Bilasia is Prakriti and Billy was the Purush. Prakriti is the Shakti of Purush. This is what Bilasia was to Billy. Bilasia plays the pivotal role in defining the identity of Billy.
Here, in the hills of Maikal, the free and fresh air has brought a meaning to the life of Billy. The identity, that was so far even from her dreams, has gradually started taking shape in the union with the missing other half of the protagonist Billy Biswas. In terms of psychoanalysis: “Billy and Bilasia are two selves of the same personality” (Prasad 47). If that does not justify the stand of Billy, one has to accept that Lord Buddha was himself an escapist; Billy could not be called one.

The civilised world is unaware of the life of Billy and his whereabouts. Billy has settled in the hills of Maikal with Bilasia as his future and Dhunia, the village headman-- as his master. Billy has found the identity of the king and priest in the tribal village, far from the urbanised but dehumanised world.

Billy has completely changed. He was found by Romi in the lion cloth typical of the way primitives live in the jungle. On having a meeting with Romi, Billy narrates his vision of the primitive world and the urge of life for the tribal people and how he has added a new meaning to his life. Billy takes a promise from Romi that he will not disclose the whereabouts of Billy to anyone else. But Romi was not a man to keep his commitments and discloses the whereabouts of Billy to Situ, when forced by Situ to disclose the same.

The disclosure of the whereabouts of Billy to Situ by Romi brings tragedy to the life of Billy. Protagonist Billy has nothing to come back to the city. When Meena and Billy’s father come to know about the reappearances of Billy they start a hunt for him. They do not realise the case of Billy and insist on meeting him without his consent. In the village, none tells the whereabouts of Billy. It shows the respect and love the village people have for to Billy. Meanwhile a rumour spreads that Billy has killed a constable and then the atrocious torture of the state machinery operates in the jungle and ultimately Billy is killed. On his tragic death, Billy, Billy remarks: “You Bastard”. The “bastard” symbolises the hatred of Billy for the civilised people of the urbanised society.

The quest for identity was the prime motive of Mr. Billy Biswas. The whole novel is devoted to the search of identity. Billy from his childhood was filled with inquisitiveness.

In The Apprentice, Arun Joshi closely examines the changes in the Indian socio-political system in the post-independence India. The issue raised by Ratan Rathor is not only political. In reality, the story is more related to values and ethics that the young generation is adopting today.
It is to be kept in mind that Ratan Rathor is not an individual person, rather he represents the whole young generation of the post-Independence India.

Ratan Rathor—the protagonist of The Apprentice, is an inheritor of the two philosophies. Ratan’s father left behind the legacy of simplicity and sacrifice. The mother of Ratan Rathor was a down-to-earth lady and had a practical approach to life. That is why she asked Ratan to earn money. She argues that in front of wealth, everything is pigmy. This fact could also be inferred from her statement: ‘Man without the money was man without the worth. Many things were great in life but the greatest of them was the money’.

Besides mother and father, a brigadier was also in the mind of Ratan Rathor. The Brigadier’s episode is there in the mind of the protagonist because of the own importance Ratan gives to him. The episode was of his childhood when some miscreants had tried to manhandle Ratan. It was the Brigadier’s selfless love that had rescued Rathor and hence the selfishness of the love of the brigadiers also haunts Ratan Rathor.

The protagonist Ratan Rathor like other young man of contemporary society period is torn apart by the conflicting ideologies of idealism and utilitarianism and hence the-identity in them. The nation for which his father has laid down his life was a nation of frustrated men sailing about in a confused society, a society without norms, direction, without even, perhaps a purpose. With his confession of the degeneration, a new dimension has been added to the life of Ratan.

The Apprentice, Joshi’s third novel, takes his search for understanding man’s predicament one step further toward the transcendental.