

ARUN JOSHI NOVELS: AN EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY CRISES THEMES

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ABSTRACT

Arun Joshi explores a variety of fictional topics, including existentialism, human misery and a lack of purpose, interactions between people of different cultures, and feelings of alienation. Each of the main characters in his stories, whether it be Som Bhaskar from *The Last Labyrinth*, Ratan Rathor from *Apprentice*, Billy from *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Sindi Oberoi from *The Foreigner*, or Grand Master from *The City and the River*, goes through the process of dealing with the repercussions of their own identities. Every single one of the characters in his works is lost in the desert of self-exploration, trying to find their way through it. Even if they have a significant amount of riches, they do not have a sense of inner connection. Battles and wars have been fought by individuals throughout the course of human history in order to ensure that they would continue to maintain their existence. Because of his preoccupation with amassing wealth, he fails to recognise the significance of his own existence. The pursuit of his own self-interest and personal gain causes him to give up harmony, tranquilly, and happiness in his life. In a way that was both beautiful and profound, the well-known poet Thomas Grey explained that every path ultimately leads to death. Even if the events that take place in Arun Joshi's work might not have a direct influence on the characters, it is a universal experience that inevitably has an effect on each and every one of us at some point in our lives. As a result, this is an important worry that is present in all of Arun Joshi's literary works.

KEY WORDS: Existence, Exploration, Repercussion, Identity, Themes.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the process of self-awareness, mankind has been engaged in a never-ending quest to discover its actual nature. The truth of who he really is entirely unknown to him. To completely investigate all of the options, to visualise and comprehend each and every quality, to fully grasp and realise all of the benefits that God Almighty has bestowed upon us as long-lasting advantages, and thus, to not fully fulfil one's full potential. There is a particular event that is mentioned in the Bible that provides evidence to support this assertion. Saul, a nasty character who had constituted a threat to the disciples, was unfamiliar of his underlying virtue prior to hearing divine revelation. Saul had been a menace to the disciples. The upshot of this was that Saul, who was a sinful man, was transformed into Paul, who is the Apostle of God. (Acts 9:3-5 is the scriptural passage). When it comes to the story of modern mankind, the morally reprehensible Saul brings the story to a sad and unhappy finish. We still struggle to have steadfast confidence in God, and we are unable to recognise His divine counsel, despite the fact that our civilization has grown to very sophisticated levels. As a consequence of this, we struggle with an identity crisis and may be entirely unaware of the innate goodness that lies dormant inside us.

One of the most well-known authors in the Indo-English language, Arun Joshi, has written on subjects that are not typically brought up in conversation. Every single person has an

ongoing struggle when it comes to determining who they are as an individual. This struggle never seems to end. When it came to making the best of his life, he used every ounce of effort that was within his power. Individuals are individually connected with a certain genetic heritage that has been developed throughout time and is distinctive to them. Every single one of us, for the entirety of our lives, endeavours to achieve some form of distinction, whether it is celebrity, infamy, or some other kind of distinction. Despite the fact that the protagonist in Arun Joshi's work makes an effort to investigate their situation, they find themselves ensnared in their routines to the point that they are unable to free themselves from their predicament. His efforts to grasp both himself and the world from a personal position are characterised by an increasing level of sincerity, which he demonstrates via the use of his words. At times, it seems as though the author has recorded his own personal experiences when he was living in a different nation. This is the case in several instances. One of the characteristics that are exclusive to the contemporary age is the predominance of issues of this sort in the society that is prevalent today. The difficulties and issues that society is confronted with are mirrored in literature in a manner that is both serious and introspective.

IDENTITY SEARCH

One of the most fundamental challenges that people in today's world are confronted with is the search for their own particular identity. Because literature is a mirror of society, there is a vast amount of writing that delves into core human issues. This is because literature is a reflection of society. Throughout his books and short tales, Arun Joshi's heroes face great challenges on several fronts, including the psychological, social, and cultural fronts. His persons who are pragmatic are waiting for a complicated maze. They are driven by an unquenchable need for both physical and spiritual sustenance, which causes them to lose touch with reality and live in a permanent state of melancholy and anguish. This keeps them from reaching their full potential. As a result of fast industrialization, urbanisation, technical advancement, and an overriding concentration on materialism, the book exposes the ethical uncertainty and decrease in values that have arisen from these factors. The contemporary individual, according to Alvin Toffler, is a nomad who is reluctant to settle down in any one particular location (Toffler 1970: p. 74-94). The main characters find themselves caught in a complex condition of existence; they are plagued by feelings of isolation, disconnection, and unhappiness, and they have a great desire to find a purpose in their lives, but they are unable to accomplish this goal. Arun Joshi's literary works, which include his books and short stories, eloquently illustrate the ambitions, longings, and letdowns experienced by a modern individual who is imprisoned in what George Steiner refers to as a "permanent exile" (George: 1968: 26). Arun Joshi's works include. In spite of the fact that their experiences are frequently shown with a touch of humour, understanding, and sarcasm, the majority of the time, they are described with a profound comprehension of empathy. The intense suffering that people go through as they struggle to come to terms with the difficulties of surviving at a crucial crossroads in their life is a recurrent topic that can be found across these works.

The main characters in Arun Joshi's works face a wide range of challenges, including those that are cultural, sociological, and psychological in nature. Due to the fact that these circumstances could not be avoided, they came to the realisation that they had been ensnared in a trap. In addition to the fact that they are regularly hungry on both a physical and a spiritual level, their lives are characterised by a lack of self-assurance and a lack of clarity in their thoughts. This is combined with the fact that they are frequently hungry. A further problem is that they are tormented by emotions of uncertainty and hopelessness. The author depicted a society in which materialistic mindsets remained to persist, despite the immense achievements that have been made in technology and science. According to Alvin Toffler, the modern human is a nomad who is hesitant to maintain a permanent abode in any one region. This is the contemporary person. (Toffler, 1970: p. 73-94) Throughout the course of the story, each and every one of the main characters goes through a life that is characterised by alienation, loneliness, and need. Fighters were the only thing they were, and each of them was responsible for choosing own fate. Nothing else mattered to them. The fact that they are so fixated on a single overarching idea renders all of their other goals and ambitions useless. This is because they are obsessed with that one idea. We are empathetic to them and share their feelings; we sympathise with them and appreciate their feelings.

HUMAN PREDICAMENT

Every single one of Joshi's literary works captures the essence of human existence as well as the senselessness of the time period in which he lived. The literary works that he has produced dig into the inner turmoil and reflection of an individual. "To delve into the mysterious depths of the human psyche", "To explore the human unconscious" journalist Sujata Methai says. According to the author of the book *"Billy Biswas: A Strange Case"*, the author investigates the concept that the ultimate purpose of life is not the surface facades that we display to the public, but rather the complicated and introspective nature of our souls. There is a trip that the protagonist is about to embark on in order to find out what the meaning and value of existence are. Those individuals are referred to as "The lonely questioners". Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist of the book *The Foreigner*, is a single person who is of mixed Indian and English ancestry. She is the most important character in the book. Their partnership serves as a representation of the link that exists between Eastern and Western civilizations. Despite the fact that he travelled from one site to another, his efforts were ultimately fruitless. Sindi and June Blythe are both struggling with the same issue. In a manner that is comparable to the description that Joshi has supplied, it seems as though her existence is marked by a persistent feeling of lacking. In a manner that is analogous to June's persistent absence of tranquilly, Sindi displays instability in his love ties with a number of different women, whilst June yearns to cleanse her soul via the establishment of a loving and significant connection. She makes it her life's mission to achieve both financial and emotional contentment throughout her span of existence. In spite of the fact that Sindi has a deep passion for her partner, she decides against marrying her partner despite the fact that they have sexual encounters.

In the aftermath of Sindi's rejection of his marriage proposal, Babu finds himself overcome with sorrow and breaks into tears. June make a concerted effort to avoid meeting with him. At a later point in time, he became aware of the secret affair that between Sindi and June. Extreme terror was the cause of the individual's death, which occurred as a result of psychological stress brought on by the tragedy. In the same way as Sindi is, Karl is in a difficult situation. In addition to this, it seems that he has experienced a form of grieving that is associated with childhood. Isolation has had a negative impact on him in negative ways. Because his surroundings are devoid of any meaning, he has become completely fatigued. The emptiness that his circumstances create is one that Arun Joshi is not free from experiencing. He is of the opinion that people are like helpless marionettes that are owned and directed by fate. He, too, is struggling with the process of self-discovery, much like Sindi Oberoi. The objective of Billy Biswas's *Strange Case* is to investigate the hidden realms that lie within the human self. Due to the fact that he has a great affinity for the mystical, he is significantly pulled to the realm of religion. The desire to achieve enlightenment and cleansing of the spirit was the impetus behind his decision to go on a trip that would take him deep into the heart of India's thick jungle. A similar methodology to that of an anthropologist is utilised by Billy in his investigation of their culture and ancestry. His interest was particularly piqued by the way of life and culture of the primitive people. The purpose of his trip back to Delhi is to discover the truth about his identity. Now, he is looking forward to the peace and relaxation that he believes marriage will provide him, but his hopes will be in vain because his future wife, Meena, is merely focused on gaining financial success.

All along the course of their union, they were confronted with a variety of obstacles. In the end, it was the most significant and conclusive event that led to a significant change or action for Billy, and it was the consequence of that occurrence. In an effort to steer clear of this situation, he resorts to more fundamental modes of behaviour. Bilasia is the one with whom Billy Biswas comes into contact and whom he feels will serve as his future and his cause for existence. In his heart, he wishes that his life had come to a conclusion with a more profound feeling of significance. He paid an inordinate amount of attention to his natural disposition, which was the subject of his attention. As a result of a law enforcement officer shooting and killing Billy while he was on his way to the destination, it is unfortunate that Billy is unable to arrive at that specified location. The life of Billy, on the other hand, was distinguished by a consistent amount of turbulence. Throughout the course of the *Apprentice*, Ratan Rathor is deeply agitated with the vast corruption that occurs in society. Now that he has arrived in Delhi in search of employment, the father, who is a fighter fighting for freedom, will be working. He is experiencing a mental condition that is deteriorating into complete and total anarchy. Following the successful acquisition of a post as an apprentice clerk at a government institution, Ratan embarks on his professional career. His friend, who is also a stenographer, had been instrumental in assisting him in obtaining the post. As a result of his significant involvement in corrupt activities, he has entirely lost all feeling of care for the situation. He rejected each and every concept that had been the basis for his existence up until that point. On the contrary, he is experiencing nothing but

profound melancholy, despite the fact that he is in possession of all that one could possibly want in this world. As a direct result of the widespread corruption that has taken place, he is entirely detached from the world around him. An important buddy of his passed away, which served as a catalyst for his change into a different person. Despite the fact that he makes an attempt to purify himself, his efforts are ultimately worthless since he has already reached the limit of his skills with regard to cleansing himself. The result of this is that he has made it his top priority throughout his whole life to discover the true nature of his identity. Within the pages of his book titled "*The Last Labyrinth*", Joshi examines the complexity of the human condition and the ways in which they present themselves. The spiritual autobiography that is commonly referred to as "Lost Soul" delves into the profound investigation of love while concurrently searching for the meaning of life and death (Ghosh (1996: 123). The main character of the novel, Som Bhaskar, is a person who is continually unhappy with his sexual relationships. He is a person who wants to be happy. In an effort to ease the troubles he is facing, he continues to participate in extramarital relationships with other women, despite the fact that he has made multiple unsuccessful attempts to do so. He never finds peace or tranquilly in the interactions he has with other people, regardless of whether it is Geeta or Anuradha. He never finds refuge or tranquilly in such partnerships.

On the book "*The Survivor*", written by Arun Joshi, there are ten short stories. Additional tales that have been published independently include *The Other American* and *Our Village and Kanyakumari*. Both of these works are examples of novels. An additional component of his imaginary world is the collection of short stories that he has compiled. His shorter works as well as his novels explore the issue of humanity's frantic and excruciating quest to live inside the complex maze of contemporary society. His books are particularly well-known for their exploration of this theme. The most important theme of the narrative is that the younger generation's moral compass is deteriorating, which has led to a hostile relationship between the younger and older generations. It presents a keen and critical analysis of the subject matter, which is particularly relevant in light of the growing politicisation of the country's academic institutions. The main character of "*The Frontier Mail is Gone*" is a little girl who has the goal of meeting famous and wealthy people. Her aim is to meet them. Her goal is ultimately accomplished, but it comes at the expense of her physical health. In the end, she is successful in achieving her purpose. The piece titled "*The Eve-Teasers*" investigates the mental state of male adolescents and the pleasure they derive from pestering younger ladies. His basic confidence in the power of prayer has been replaced by his conviction in the impact of riches, as Mr. Sethi, the protagonist of "*The Boy with the Flute*" has said. He has become a worldlier individual as a result of falling into the trap of materialism and thereby becoming a worldly individual. It is demonstrated in the movie "*A Trip for Mr. Lele*" that humans may experience a decline in their quality of life as a result of widespread automation. Within the framework of contemporary Indian culture, which is heavily rooted in materialism and dependent on financial prosperity, the piece titled "*Survival*" illustrates the hopeless effort of an individual to sustain their existence. The fiction "*The Home-Coming*" depicts the great suffering that a war survivor goes through as a

result of their inability to form substantial connections with other people, which ultimately lead to a condition of loneliness. The story "*The Intruder in the Discotheque*" explores the futile and unfulfilling aspirations of an elderly man to reclaim his youth and win back the affection of the woman he once loved. Despite the fact that he comes close to achieving perfection, he eventually falls short of doing so. The immigrant labourers in 'Harmik' find themselves confronted with a number of obstacles as they attempt to live in an environment that is hostile. "*The Servant*" introduces us to a servant who is accused of scheming to conduct acts of sexual assault and murder against his master's wife. The perpetrators of these crimes are never revealed. In addition to this, the work sheds light on the hidden facet of Indian society, which is characterised by empty interiors and misleading appeal characteristics. The story "*The Old American from Our Village*" focuses on a father figure and his children as the primary protagonists. As the son continues to pursue brilliance with unwavering determination, he fails to recognise the people who have made significant contributions to his present accomplishments.

CONCLUSION

It may be said that the issue of identity crises is investigated in a manner that is consistent throughout the body of work that Arun Joshi has produced. Through the depiction of a soul that is both shattered and confused, novels produced in the Indo-Anglian literary tradition gave a new depth of psychological complexity to the reader. Characters in Arun Joshi's works not only exhibit a severe lack of awareness of their external surroundings, but they also have a dreadful lack of understanding of their own inner selves. This is a problem because Arun Joshi's works were written by Joshi. Despite the fact that they were experiencing emotions of alienation and loneliness, they endeavoured to find the location in the globe that was truly considered to be their land. Even if it is true that Arun Joshi has made significant contributions to shedding light on the current issue of identity crisis that is affecting people all over the world, it is equally true that these contributions have been accurate up until this point. Throughout his whole body of work, which consists of both novels and short stories, he delves into a variety of subjects, including spirituality, psychology, culture, society, and the sensation of being disconnected from one's own home. Through the raising of major questions concerning our position in the cosmos and the importance of our existence, they are making an effort to unravel the riddle of life.

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