

Study of Arun Joshi's Novels in a Psychoanalytical Approach

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Abstract

Identity crisis, alienated self, sociocultural pressures, the quest for identity, and the fight for equality are among the contemporary issues and subjects that Indian novelists writing in English are addressing. Unlike his predecessors, Arun Joshi does not write fiction for entertainment or to promote social or political causes. He explores the position of the modern man through book writing, particularly the reasons behind his actions and the psychological effects of those actions. By depicting diverse images of life from different places, current Indian fiction writers have been attempting to offer Indian English fiction a new form and color. One of the most talented authors of Indian fiction, Arun Joshi, portrays contemporary man as vacillating between hopelessness and illusion in his works. The many social contexts are used to illustrate and study various types of human relations. Arun Joshi's works help us understand the issues facing our society today, and they focus on the characters' psychological growth. All of his works now revolve around the Gandhian philosophy of self-sufficiency, which is regarded as the superstructure aspect of Indian society. In all of his books, Arun Joshi chronicles the protagonist's recurrent changes in emotions and mental states, each with a different level of focus. We will talk about it in this paper. analysis of Arun Joshi's books using a psychoanalytic lens.

Keywords: Novels, Psychoanalytical Approach, Self-Sufficient, Fiction, Literature, English Poetry, Indi-Anglican Writers, Protagonist, the Strange Case of Billy Biswas, the Apprentice, the Last Labyrinth

Introduction:

The most widely read genre in contemporary English literature is fiction. Despite being the youngest child of English literature, the English novel has conveniently eclipsed all other literary genres due to its daring and frequent innovation as well as its popularity among readers. From the 18th century to the present, English literature has seen the emergence of new techniques and the inclusion of contemporary subjects in each decade, with the twentieth century being no exception. There is a vast array of fiction writing from the twentieth century. Many of which are innovative attempts in design or technique.

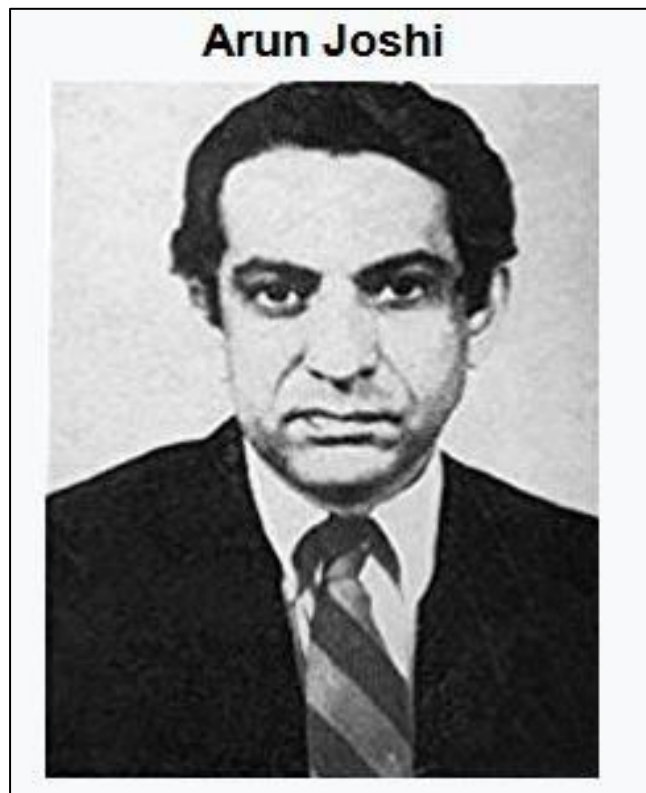
Although it is widely acknowledged that an artist's initial vision is inextricably linked to the genesis of the creative process, he must confine himself to his own imagination and does not abandon the reality of his shared experience. Actually, the first step for any novelist should be to construct a world, no matter how big or little, that he can genuinely believe in. Additionally, it is similar to something that his readers are already accustomed to in terms of experience, thought, and perception. By giving the shapeless truths of real human experience a consistent form, he might be able to envisage, capture, and construct this reality. [1]

Due to rapidly shifting human ideals, the twentieth century has been a difficult era marked by ups and

downs. A new search for values and identity emerged from the socio-economic and theological changes that caused the entire European society to undergo major upheaval in this earlier era. These changes were exacerbated by the two world wars. While English prose, poetry, and theater found it difficult to adjust to the new structures, English novelists were able to do so with ease and suitability, expressing the evolving values of life. As a result, we have seen the rise of some great novelists, such as George Orwell, Graham Greene, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, E.M. Forster, and William Golding, who used appropriate topics to represent the prevailing tendencies of their own eras. In an effort to convey their thoughts in a pertinent manner, they have also experimented with more recent methods. Each of these novels can be considered a trendsetter in this regard. [2]

The impact of British fiction is equally evident in India. Stray novels continued to be published till the end of the 19th century, primarily by authors from the Madras and Bengali presidencies. Most of these books are social, and others are historical. They drew most of their inspiration from British fiction from the 18th and 19th centuries, especially from authors like Defoe, Fielding, and Scott. *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864), written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, marks the start of the Indo-English fiction. The setting, tone, and background of the book are all typical of Indian culture. In the years 1864 to 1900, Bengali writers dominated the mainstream. Prior to independence, Gandhian, historical, social, and political themes—such as quitting India, nonviolence, the vices of untouchability, etc.—dominated Indo-English novels. Indian English writers began to shift their focus from the past to the present in their novels, giving prominence to social and political themes that emerged from the altered historical context. The Indian literary imagination was spurred by the changing historical viewpoint, and as a result, they started to view the current reality quite differently. The Indian English novelists found material and inspiration in the national fight for independence, which had gained impetus under Mahatma Gandhi's vibrant leadership. *Murugan*, *The Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan*, *The Patriot* (1932) by K. S. Venkatramani serves as illustrations of the social and political fervor sparked by the Gandhian Movement.

The different influences on Arun Joshi's art and thoughts resulted in his fictional works. These have to do with language, philosophy, and literature. Both Eastern and Western writers and thinkers have impacted Joshi's creative subjects and approaches, as well as his outlook on life and language. There are other aspects of his biography that have also influenced his writing. Arun Joshi has a strong academic background. One of the nation's leading botanists was his father, A. C. Joshi. He worked for numerous esteemed national institutions and was a member of numerous learned committees at the national level. In August 1961, he was named to the U.G.C. committee that was established "to undertake a systematic and objective investigation of problems relating to the standards of higher education in Indian universities." At the time, Professor A.C. Joshi served as the Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University. He then became the Vice-Chancellor of Benaras Hindu University, where he was also a faculty member in the Department of Botany. On July 7, 1939, Arun Joshi was born in Benaras as the youngest of his parents' children. Joshi's fourth novel, *The Last Labyrinth*, is set against the backdrop of Bombay, a corporate hub, and takes place in the city of Benaras and its winding alleyways. [3- 5]



Arun Joshi: Novels, Themes, and Characters

Arun Joshi deviates from the early Indi-Anglican writers' social realism. Instead of portraying the outward world, he focuses more on the interiority of experience. Joshi, like Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Ellison, and Malamud, is interested in the search for purpose in life. The issue of loneliness, alienation, and the ambiguity of human love are explored in "The Foreigner" (1968). Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist, is constantly lonely because she doesn't belong to any nation or people. The profound relevance of primal life as a superior and alternative way of living to the flawed, civilized, and cultured society is explored in "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" (1971). As Billy's life takes several turns, the civilized world is left with nothing but ashes. The 1974 film "The Apprentice" primarily addresses the "New Slavery" that emerged in post-independence India with new masters: the wealthy, politicians, and officials. Ratan Rathor, the main character, is caught up in the moral chaos and conflation of ideals. The 1981 prize-winning book "The Last Labyrinth" examines the meaning of life and death, illusion and reality, and desire and resignation. The narrator-hero Som Bhaskar's yearning for the necessities of existence is the subject of the book. The author of "The City and the River" (1990) emphasizes the sorrow brought on by the conflation of values created by a corrupt and materialistic culture. The Grand Master and other well-known characters in this book are accompanied by feelings of loneliness, despair, and alienation. [6]

Psychoanalytical Theory- An Overview:

Understanding psychoanalysis is essential since psychology is the foundation of human thoughts, actions, and behavior. There has always been a connection between the theory of human behavior and its real-world implementation in psychology. Human conduct is not limited to physical actions; it also results from invisible mental processes. After all, characters are human beings, and their thoughts determine their behavior, feelings, and situations. In this context, all literary endeavors are psychological works. A writer's examination of the human mind happens naturally during the writing process rather than being purposeful or planned.

The psychoanalytic method, which looks at the universal motivations that lead people to act in particular ways, is credited to Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). He shows the rest of the world that there are three dimensions to human individuality. He compares the mind to an iceberg, where the much larger bulk below the water's surface represents unconsciousness and the smaller fraction visible above the water's surface represents awareness. People's conscious thoughts and actions are tyrannically influenced by the subconscious, a vast underworld of important, invisible forces. It stands for passions, wants, repressed thoughts and feelings, and a huge underworld of vital, invisible energies. According to this viewpoint, a psychology that solely concentrates on consciousness analysis is dreadfully inadequate for understanding the underlying causes of human behavior. According to Duane Schultz, psychoanalysis developed within the traditions of medicine and psychiatry as a means of treating people who society had classified as mentally ill. It was neither a university invention nor a pure science. From its inception, psychoanalysis differed from conventional psychology in its objectives, topics, and approaches. Psychopathology, or aberrant behavior, is its focus, which other schools of thought have mostly ignored. Clinical observation, as opposed to carefully monitored laboratory testing, is its main methodology. Psychoanalysis also addresses the unconscious, which other schools of thinking mostly overlook. (392). [7]

Working virtually alone, Freud developed the theory that would eventually form the basis of psychoanalysis, which culminated in the publication of his debut book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) develops his psychoanalytic theory in Vienna in the 1890s. He worked as a neurologist and was trying to figure out how to aid people who had hysterical or neurotic symptoms. When Sigmund Freud received a stipend in 1885 to study under famous neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot in Paris, he witnessed Charcot's clinical presentations, particularly in the areas of anesthesia, paralysis, and hysteria. Charcot established hypnosis as an experimental research technique and was the first to depict clinical symptoms in photographs.

The goal of Freud's psychoanalytic method is to awaken suppressed memories or thoughts that are thought to be the cause of the patient's abnormal behavior. Psychoanalysis has changed and evolved in a number of ways since then. The following are the main principles of psychoanalysis:

- In addition to inherited traits, early life experiences that are typically forgotten also impact a person's development.
- Unconscious irrational urges have a significant influence on human behavior, attitude, experience, and thought.
- Mental or emotional problems like neurosis, neurotic traits, anxiety, depression, and so forth might be the result of conflicts between the conscious and unconscious minds as well as repressed material.
- The unconscious parts can be freed by bringing this information into the conscious mind. [8]

Psychoanalytic Approach in the Selected Novels of Arun Joshi:

Joshi's paintings reveal the protagonists' hidden facets of their physical and mental constitution, delving into the darkest and most profound corners of the human brain. Joshi illustrates the inner turmoil of modern man, concluding that self-related problems including alienation, identity crisis, emptiness, and existential dilemma are the most significant challenges facing man today. His protagonist experiences the evils of commercialization, which results in uprooting, cynicism, faith loss, and an identity crisis. He is torn between his Indian roots and Western influences. Modern men who are lost in a culture of contradictory ideals are Joshi's heroes. In an antagonistic world, they are struggling to maintain their faith. They can't stay true to themselves in such a morally ambiguous setting. People are forced to either fight against society or

completely succumb to it as a result. Estrangement is the outcome in both cases.

Subconsciousness, oblivion, and awareness are the three levels of mental states that alternate among the characters created by Arun Joshi. They are in a confusing state of mind. Over time, Joshi's protagonist undergoes a significant change in their conscious state of mind. It frequently shifts from a materialistic worldview to the complete opposite in different stories. As an orphan in *The Foreigner*, Sindi is not given the love and attention of her parents. He is hence perpetually gloomy and aloof. His denial of parental love and care is the root cause of his confused mental state. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* distinguishes between materialism and primitivism as the two drives that drive Billy's mental state. He is distinct from the rest of the world due to the struggle between two forces, such as an imaginary world of materialism or a civilized set of norms and anthropological instinct. [9]

The main character of Joshi's *The Foreigner*, Sindi Oberoi, is isolated from the outside world at all times. He exhibits his spiritual bankruptcy, moral emptiness, anomie or alienation, and indifference; he is isolated from the entire social apparatus. One could sense a sense of alienation in his behavior. He started acting in this way because he was not supported by his parents. He becomes an orphan at the young age of four. Sindi's suffering, upsetting thoughts, and feelings are displayed in his conscious mind. This causes his life to become rootless. The main drivers of his adult behavior are the death memories of his mother, father, and uncle, which are deeply embedded in his subconscious. His unconscious mind reveals feelings of fear, insecurity, loneliness, and foreignness:

I questioned whether I had any connection to the world that erupted outside my apartment window. I was born without a purpose, and I have lived purposelessly up to this point—unless you consider the pursuit of serenity to be a purpose. Maybe it was because I was a foreigner in America that I felt that way. However, what would have changed if I had resided in Kenya, India, or any other location for that matter? I thought I would still be considered a foreigner. I couldn't leave myself behind no matter where I went since I was inherently foreign. I hadn't experienced that when my uncle was still alive. The security was destroyed after his passing. Although it was sad, I now realize that my main purpose in life was to die. (*The Foreigner* 55-56)

Due to her parents' lack of affection, Sindi's self-esteem worsens. He is making an effort to find himself. He feels as though he is not at home and is out of place. He has been nurturing his romantic universe in a confused state of mind since he was a little lad. Sindi grows further estranged. "I'd rather not get involved." I said it again to myself. Everywhere I looked, there was activity. How much longer might I be free? I had learned wisdom from the suffering of my past years, but I wasn't sure if I could rely on it. (*The Foreigner* 62-63)

Sindi's unsuccessful attempts are reflected in his physical attraction to June. His early emotional shock from his parents' deaths and the absence of affectionate care makes him a psychic case, and his sub-conscious and unconscious demands lead to queer, instinctive, irrational, and neurotic behaviors. Sindi's conflicted mental state indicates his moral apprehension and suggests that his attraction to June's alluring body is illogical. Sindi's interactions with Anna demonstrate his conscious thinking:

She declared that she had fallen in love with me and that she loved me. However, the entire situation really bothered me. I believe she had a deep and selfless love for me.

I loved making love to her, and I was drawn to her melancholy, but I was too preoccupied with myself to be able to return her love. At the time, I believed that Anna was longing for her lost youth rather than for me or anybody else. (*The Foreigner* 143).

Anna, a tiny artist and divorcee in her fifties, invites Sindi to her studio for a portrait. Sindi frequently talks to her about the meaning of life and death since she is so amazed by her intelligence. Sindi, who is searching for her lost youth, gets seduced by Anna at one of these encounters. Although Sindi loves making love to her, he is unable to return the favor since he is too busy dealing with his own issues. She makes a vow to never leave him. They both know it is inconsequential. He wants to love her on a conscious level, but he fears losing her because his loved one passed very suddenly.

Joshi's heroes stand out from other characters and regular people. Because of their actions and demeanor, they are frequently seen as strangers in their communities. The joys of life also fall short of their expectations, much like a lonely and alienated atmosphere. They appear worn out, worthless, tasteless, and pointless at parties, events, clubs, and among family members; as a result, their thoughts make life seem empty and hollow. They see the world as a fantasy, nightmare, illusion, and dream, as though they are living on the metaphysical plane. He depicts the female figure in a more robust manner than the male. They are independent and not reliant on others. As June, Bilasia, Anuradha, Gargi, and Head Man, they appear self-assured, brave, active, and resolute to face life's realities. The main characters in the stories learn the meaning of life from them.

Joshi discusses irrational belief and doubt in the existence of God, philosophy, the mystery of life, rivers, and nature in all of his writings. The majority of his characters, including the mothers of Ratan and Anuradha, tribes, and boatmen, have an irrational and naive faith in God and their own existence. While Sindi, Billy, Som, Ratan, and Astrologer do not believe in God, their ludicrous notion also takes them to a tragic place. Joshi demonstrates three strategies for navigating life's tangle: sacrifice, atonement, and realization. The meaning of life is reflected in Boatmen's sacrifice for their identity, Ratan's atonement, and Sindi's completeness.

In his hallucination, Lord Krishna himself tells Arjun that the path to human salvation and redemption is via sacrifice. Since man can obtain eternity through it, his protagonists feel a feeling of life's realization. As a result, Arun Joshi's books seem to combine Eastern and Western culture, philosophy, and spiritual outlooks on life. His characters travel from place to place and person to person in pursuit of identity, personal existence, and the meaning of life. Regarding subjectivity, pain, sacrifice, identity, anxiety, dread, suicide, freedom, belief, disbelief, selfishness, primitivism, pragmatism, courage, power, and a sense of realization, Joshi draws on both Eastern and Western philosophy. In order to discover who they are, each of the main characters looks for their existence and the voice of their soul. [10]

In an interview, Joshi acknowledges that the fundamental goal of his fiction writing is to lead a greater understanding of life. His portrayal of nature in his writings inspires men to rediscover nature, which they have lost sight of in the rush of life and hoarding. In addition to existential misery, Joshi's works deal with the glorification of primitivism, the pointlessness and hollowness of human values and civilized materialistic society on a deeper level. In order to explore man's inner voice rather than ideas, Joshi's novels thus depict several facets of existence. The Apprentice alludes to Ratan's sin and atonement; The Strange Case of Billy Biswas conveys the message of a primitive appearance for everyone; The Foreigner alludes to Lord Krishna's message of action (Karma); The Last Labyrinth reveals the mystery of life to adhere to religious garb; and his final book, The City and the River, satirizes man's inhuman condition.

According to Joshi, men are driven to destruction by ego, desire, and overambition. As a result, the thesis investigates Joshi's novel outlook on life with reference to men's understanding and individual goals. He uses his own life experiences with the heroes of his novels to illustrate the necessity to escape the chaos of the materialistic world in order to live a better life. During an interview, Arun Joshi said the following: I have deliberately attempted to communicate two points. Individual behavior affects both oneself and other people. Because of this, one cannot afford to live a reckless life indefinitely and must eventually commit. According to such perspective, Hinduism is a very existentialist ideology since it values living (existing) in the proper manner. Second, figuring out what is good or wrong in life is really challenging. (Jain 97–98). [11]

Conclusion:

Joshi's works chosen for study examine themes of quest, and all of his characters are seekers and questers, in contrast to Western Existentialists. They blend Kafka's quest for God with Malamud's Yakov Bok's quest for humanity. Because he sets forth the existential situation's astounding importance and offers practical remedies, his novels have global significance. In all of his books, Arun Joshi offers the true path to healing and rebirth. Psychology and literature have long been associated. Studying human behavior has been easier because to various guidelines provided by renowned psychologists. A psychologist may be inspired to offer certain psychoanalytical hypotheses on human behavior by certain human behaviors. To put it succinctly, both are interconnected and separate. Because Arun Joshi's characters have distinct ways of acting and interacting with other characters, the current analysis of his work has been approached from a psychoanalytic standpoint. In my thesis, I aim to provide a psychoanalysis of those characters.

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