



## **Identity Crisis in the novels of Arun Joshi**

**Dr. Mohan Sudhakar Mendhe**

Assistant Professor,

NKS Model College, Karanja (Gh) Dist. Wardha

[mohansmendhe@gmail.com](mailto:mohansmendhe@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Arun Joshi deals with various fictional themes such as alienation, east-west encounter, human predicament and meaninglessness, existentialism. In his novels, the protagonist are always victims of their own identity though it may be Sindi Oberoi in 'The Foreigner', Billy in the strange case of Billy Biswas, Ratan Rathor in Apprentice, Som Bhaskar in The Last Lybrinth and Grand Master in The City and the River. All the protagonist of his novels wanders in the realm of their own Identity. They are alienated from themselves, though they possess material wealth. Man struggled for his own existence throughout his life. He loses his self-importance as he always busy in gaining material accumulation. He loses harmony, peace of mind and satisfaction following the footsteps of personal benefits and own selfishness. It is rightly said by the famous poet Thomas Gray the paths of glory but leads to the grave. This is not a problem relating to the life of protagonists of Arun Joshi but it becomes a common phenomenon of our everybody's life. So, Arun Joshi focus light on this theme through his novels.

Key words: alienation, isolation, detachment, predicament, existence .

Arun Joshi is one of the Indo-English authors who gave new direction to his writing by travelling on the untrodden path. Man struggles throughout his life for identity. He strived his best to have a remarkable place in his life. Everyone has specific hereditary roots so firm from beginning. We pine for achieving special status, name and fame throughout our life. Arun Joshi's protagonist searches their status, but they are entangled in such an intricate web of their habits as it became impossible for them to get out from it. His novels are better attempt to understand the world and himself. Sometimes, it seems that his own experience of living abroad has been described by the writer.

It is day today's phenomenon that society is full of such issues. Literature is a mirror of society reflecting such issues. All the protagonist of Arun Joshi's novels are victims of such psychological,

social and cultural problems. They found themselves in the clutches of such unavoidable circumstances. Their life is full of misery and restlessness, doubts and hopeless longings, changing and divided thoughts as well as hunger of the body and a hunger of the soul. Though there was technical progress, rapid growth in technology and science, but materialistic views are still existing in the society and it was depicted by the writer. Alvin Toffler has spoken of the modern man "as the new nomad uninterested in putting down roots nowhere." (Toffler: 1970: 74-94). All the protagonist living life in isolation, alienation and deprived life. They were only fighters with their own destiny. All their dreams and visions are futile as they are infatuated by single dominating idea hovering in their mind. We feel sympathy and pity on their plight.

Joshi in all his novels portrays human predicament and meaninglessness of his generations. His novels delineate the individual's inner crisis and consciousness. He tells his interviewer Sujata Methai "To explore that mysterious underworld which is the human soul." In his novel *The Strange case of Billy Biswas* "Life's meaning lies not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions, but in those dark nosy labyrinths of the soul that languish forever" His protagonist searches meaning in their life They are "The lonely questioners"

Sindi Oberio, the protagonist of novel, *The Foreigner* born to English mother and an Indian father, a connection of east west encounter, finds himself lonely. He travelled from one place to another but totally a meaninglessness. It is not the problem alone with Sindi but also with June Blythe also. She is such a character describe by Joshi always feels emptiness in her life. She wants to sanctified her soul in love relationship as Sindi is not stable in his relations with various women, in the same manner, June never find solace in her life. Throughout her life, she lingers for physical satisfaction and mental peace. Sindi loves her intensely and has a sex with her, but, avoids to getting married with her. Then she turns to Babu when Sindi refuses to marry with her, he cries at her refusal. June even avoid to meet him. Later on, he came to know about the illegal relationship of Sindi and June. It shocked him and in psychological tension, he died in a car accident. Karl has the same problem like Sindi. He also seems to be a case of lost childhood. He is the victim of loneliness. He is fed up with the hollowness of life around him. Even Arun Joshi finds himself on the void of circumstances. According to him, human beings are helpless victims in the hands of destiny. He too, like Sindi Oberoi is in search of his identity.

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* attempts to explore "that mysterious underworld which is the human soul." It is his mystical urge that clings him to religious world. He went in the forest of central India for self-realization and spiritual purification. Billy is basically an Anthropologist and studies their culture and tradition. He was interested in primitive culture and their life style. He returns to Delhi in search for his own identity. Now he thinks to got married that

brings some relief and peace in his life but, it was totally useless as Meena, his wife's thinks only about wealth and prosperity. There were so many problems in their relationship. It shattered Billy's soul. To escape from this, he returns to primitive life. Billy Biswas meets Bilasia whom he considers to be his future and the purpose of his life. He feels to be had some meaning in his life. His cult on primitive side was too much. But before reaching that potential divinity, Billy die as he is shot dead by a police man. Though restlessness was always there in the life of Billy.

In *Apprentice*, Ratan Rathor is troubled by social corruptness. His father was a freedom fighter, goes to Delhi in search of livelihood. He gets totally confused. His friend, a stenographer manages a job for him in a government office and thus begins Ratan's life as an apprentice clerk. He is totally detached as he was so deeply rooted in the mire of corruption. He lost all his rules and regulations in life. Though he has all the comforts and luxuries of life he receives only miseries of life. He finds himself deeply lost in the corrupt atmosphere. Death of his dear friend, that brought change in him. He tries for purification but it is useless as he was on extreme stage. So, he searches for identity throughout his life.

*The Last Labyrinth* marks the point in Joshi's exploration of human reality. "It is a story of deeper seeking through love, a spiritual autobiography of Lost Soul groping for the meaning of life and death." (Ghosh: 1996:123). The novel deals with Som Bhaskar's unsatisfied soul in love relationship. He flirts with number of women but finds no relief from such relations. Though it may be Geeta or Anuradha he finds no comfort in relationships.

All the novels of Arun Joshi, depict issues of identity crisis. His presentation of tormented and conflicting soul added new psychological dimension to the novels of Indi-Anglian fiction. The self-centered heroes of Arun Joshi unaware about society and environment, but also of their selves. They suffered from rootlessness and loneliness and searches their own identity in this world.

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