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AN EXISTENTIAL FICTION WRITER: ARUN JOSHI

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ABSTRACT

Arun Joshi is one of the few contemporary authors who hold the belief that the only place where truth can be found is within the thoughts of humans. It is widely acknowledged that he is a significant character in contemporary Indian writing that is produced in English. In his capacity as a writer, Joshi does not discuss issues that are social or political in nature. In addition, he does not utilise the pursuit of creative happiness in a fantastical environment as a strategy of evading the challenges that are inherent in actual living. Joshi is an artist who possesses amazing insight into human psychology. He has utilised this expertise to uncover the concealed realities of life by digging into the complexity of the human mind. He is not making an effort to provide a complete depiction of society in the same way that Anand, Bhattacharya, or Nahal have done. It is possible that his works do not have the same weight and depth as Raja Rao's, nor do they have the same humour and severe gloom as R.K. Narayan's. His infrequent insights, on the other hand, seem to spread light in every direction of the darkness. A startling revelation is made on the enormous consequences, uncertainty, and inevitability that are associated with human life. With the use of this article, I hope to demonstrate that Arun Joshi is a unique existential writer in the realm of Indian English literature. Existentialism, Buddhism, and Hinduism were some of the world religions that had an impact on Arun Joshi. Over the course of his artistic career, Joshi has been able to successfully blend these seemingly unrelated ideas into his work. Reading the works written

by Joshi is comparable to setting out on a journey of self-discovery and acquiring a deeper comprehension of the mysteries of the universe.

KEY WORDS: Arun Joshi, Fantastical Environment, Complexity, Human Mind, Existential Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

An attempt is made in this article to portray Arun Joshi as an existentialist writer who, in his writings, integrates religious-spiritual investigation with existential philosophy. Existentialism from Europe, Hinduism, and Buddhism are all elements that are presented throughout Arun Joshi's body of work. In an interview, Joshi discusses existentialism and mentions that he reads books by Camus and Sartre. He also mentions himself as a reader. In addition to reading *The Outsider*, he mentions that he enjoyed reading *The Plague*. They had the potential to sway my opinion. I had a hazy understanding of what Sartre was saying. There are existentialists like Kierkegaard who have presented peculiar arguments, which I have only half comprehended or appreciated. The Bhagavad Gita and Mahatma Gandhi are two examples of sources of motivation for Joshi. Through the lens of the karma yoga philosophy, the Gita incorporates the principles of “Artha, Kama, dharma, and Moksha” at the same time. Because of its emphasis on morality, he considers existentialism to be a philosophy that is founded on existential and philosophical concepts. The Buddhist philosophy, particularly its focus on nonattachment and the search for purpose in life, has been a significant source of inspiration for Joshi. Through each and every one of his works, Joshi has successfully conveyed the existential predicaments and the desire for significance that the modern man faces. Almost completely cut off from the rest of civilization. All of his primary characters are alienated creatures who are looking for purpose in their lives. Joshi's second novel has a protagonist named Billy Biswas who is completely estranged from the contemporary bourgeois India of the time. This book showcases both the ordinary and extraordinary parts of life, as described by B.G.R. Krishnama. It does this by weaving together the natural and supernatural components. The sophisticated, materialistic, and hypocritical society that Billy lives in is something that he has a deep, intuitive desire to leave behind and live a primal existence similar to that of a caveman at the same time. As a result of Billy's response to the tribal girl Bilasia's request, he is able to find the missing piece of himself that he had been looking for throughout his whole existence. Billy's adventure comes to a sudden end when he is shot and murdered by a havildar, in contrast to Sindi of the same

journey. Joshi thinks that the pristine and uncomplicated nature of a real primitive society might be a potential solution to the problem of our culture's obsession with monetary gain. Providing remark on the novel's interpretation, Joshi says the following:

“It is very difficult to explain this novel. Tribals are very civilized according to mine and Billy Biswas’s understanding. It is the post-Independence pseudo-Western values that he rejects. The book is about a mystical urge, a compulsion which makes Billy go away. In a number of our legends and religious texts people go away to forests to heal themselves spiritually. Possibly that's what I am suggesting, though not consciously.... Billy’s death is metaphorical. The modern Indian city is disoriented and kills sincerity. A woman who enjoys dancing might be married off to a person who does not let her dance after marriage. This kind of killing goes on when the social organism does not know its values. (K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 1985)”

Existential philosophy is a defining characteristic of Joshi's writings, which strongly reflect the Hindu tradition of living. Moksha, which may be translated as "liberation of the soul", is something that the characters in Joshi yearn for. There are three courses of action that can lead to salvation: the path of duty, also known as Karma Marga, the road of knowledge, also known as the “Jnana Marga, and the path of devotion, also known as Bhakti Marga”. In the religion of Hinduism, the pursuit of enlightenment, the journey within self, and the trend towards celibacy are all aspects of the same spiritual path. “Buddhism, namely its teachings on renunciation and the path to enlightenment”, serves as a source of motivation for Joshi throughout his life. Individual existence is marked by restrictions and unpleasantness, and life is viewed as an illusion filled with pain and suffering, according to Buddhist philosophy. This is the case because life is perceived as an illusion. The result of this is that Buddha gives up his life as a prince and becomes a wandering monk, therefore enunciating the terrible pain that is inherent in existence. There is a recurring motif of alienation throughout Joshi's work, and the main characters in his stories are continually looking for a sense of purpose and coming to terms with who they are. He makes an effort to investigate the concept of alienation from three different points of view: the individual, society, and mankind as a whole. Each of the four works examines the concept of isolation from a unique point of view, and all of them feature characters who ultimately give in to it.

It is widely acknowledged that "*The Foreigner*" by Arun Joshi is among the most important pieces of Indian English literature that was written in the 1960s. His significant emotional investment in the protagonist of the story is a character in which he has a deep emotional interest. There are a number of existentialist themes that are embodied in the primary character of the book, Sindi Oberoi. These include rootlessness, loneliness, absurdity, and a search for meaning and purpose. The difficulties of engagement, alienation, and the melancholy that emerges when one's life purpose stays unfulfilled are all topics that are discussed with regard to this work. Within the essay, his move from nihilism to Karma Yoga, his responsibilities towards persons who are oppressed, and the characteristics of alienation are discussed in depth. Throughout the course of the work, Joshi has divided the action between India and the United States.

The novel "*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*" explores the emptiness and isolation that are currently widespread in today's society. Joshi depicts the struggles and triumphs of an existential main character that chooses to abandon modern civilization in favour of a more traditional aboriginal way of life in order to find meaning in his existence. Existentialism is explored in depth throughout the book, with topics such as the tension between modernity and traditional ways of living, as well as the contrast between art and the natural world, being among the topics covered. In order to pursue a career in engineering, the man's father, who is a judge on the Supreme Court, sends his only son to school in England and then to the United States of America. When he arrives in New York, he makes the decision to reside in the famed slums of Harlem because he believes that white America is becoming too cultured for him to be comfortable with. Despite the fact that he had returned to his native country of India, he continued to feel unhappy. The personal goods, financial resources, social standing, and political power that he possesses all contribute to his affluence. As an ambassador, his father was able to take use of all the advantages that civilization had to offer. Meena, who is not only beautiful but also very highly educated, is Billy's wife. On the other hand, none of this would satisfy his inner yearnings or fill the void that existed within his spirit. As a result of Billy's disenchantment with modern civilization, which he views as meaningless and unsatisfactory, he decides to make his escape to the primitive tribe.

Our only options are to acquire wealth and power! "*The Apprentice*", Joshi's third novel, is a scathing indictment of a society that is both disorderly and aimless, and that is devoid of any sense of direction or purpose. In comparison to his past works, the tone of this book is distinctively different. Through an internal monologue, Rathan Rathore, the

protagonist and narrator of the story, reveals his own nefarious nature to the reader. The narrator regularly communicates with a fictional listener, who Joshi has included in the story in order to break up the monotony of the narrative. The highest level of critical appreciation has been bestowed upon this book that is written in a confessional way. It examines the structure and operations of the nation's extensive corruption in a hypothetical fashion, and it represents the pain of contemporary man. It also sharply criticises the widespread corruption that exists in the nation. The personal stories as well as the straightforward message are conveyed, respectively. On the other hand, a number of critics are in agreement that the narrator-protagonist does not adequately engage the reader's sympathies. He uses language that is unremarkable and uninteresting, and it is full of clichés that are not creative. His humorous sense is absolutely missing. The use of stream-of-consciousness and deep reveries on a continuous basis gives the impression that the narrator is mentally unstable by creating the impression that they are. In comparison to other works of Indo-English literature, "*The Apprentice*" by Joshi is often regarded as being of greater quality. The majority of the essay, which was released in 1974, is centred on modern human challenges that are associated with Indian culture. Existentialism is strongly ingrained in the novel's fundamental concepts, despite the fact that Joshi's past works appear to be quite different from this one. A number of existential concerns, including corruption, absurdity, choice, and loneliness, are explored in this work as well as in other relevant works. As he makes his way through life, the main character of the novel becomes estranged from both himself and society. The hypocrisy, incompetence, and corruption that Joshi has discovered in Indian society are all brought to light in this excellent book.

The protagonist of "*The Last Labyrinth*" is a young, ambitious, and successful business executive who lives in a metropolitan region that is not specified specifically. Throughout the course of the book, the main character, Som Bhasker, has attended some of the most prominent colleges in the world. His father has put a substantial amount of money into his education. He develops a plastics plant upon his return from the United States, which ultimately leads to his being a multimillionaire. At the age of thirty, he weds Geeta, the woman he has chosen to be his partner, and the couple goes on to have two children together. In spite of this, his goals have not yet been accomplished. He leaves his family, which includes his wife and children, in order to find solace in engaging in promiscuity and drinking to an excessive degree. Because of his many trips between Bombay and Banaras, he never manages to find a solution to any problem in his life and, as a result, he becomes further

estranged from himself. During the time when he is looking for meaning in other women, such as Anuradha and Lal Haveli, his wife Geeta is the one who keeps him from committing suicide. This article investigates the author's personal thoughts on existence, love, God, and mortality as they are depicted in "*Last Labyrinth*". Additionally, it investigates the link between Hinduism and existentialist philosophy. The fact that the protagonist's feelings of alienation in this essay are not fully resolved distinguishes it from the other writings that Arun Joshi has produced.

Joshi's fifth and final novel, "*The City and the River*" (1990), is a political fable of the times. It was published around the same time. The events of the narrative take place in a city that is ruled by a dictatorial patriarch known as the Grand Master and his council of counsellors. This piece is a satire on the present day. It is possible to characterise the novel as a political thriller due to the fact that the protagonist employed unethical techniques in order to obtain power and silence his critics. The oppressed people exhibit an extraordinary level of spiritual fortitude by defying the authoritarian whims of an ambitious tyrant who is vying for the position of king, even if it means sacrificing their lives. The narrative also conveys a substantial amount of suffering and a great deal of difficulty. The ruling class of the nation, which includes political leaders, corporate executives, law enforcement officers, and military personnel, is subject to a great deal of criticism for their reported instances of corruption and inappropriate conduct. The film is a reflection of contemporary Indian society and incorporates aspects of the Indian upheaval that occurred in the 1970s. By investigating the human condition in the midst of a calamity, Joshi presents a challenge to the usual literary style of fiction. Through the act of reading, he investigates the human condition as well as his own personality. In his response to M.R. Dua, he says that the purpose of his works is nothing more than an attempt to acquire a more profound understanding of both the universe and self. If it weren't for writing, I would most likely do my study through other forms of communication.

CONCLUSION

Despite having a very small body of work, Joshi has proved that he is skilled in the art of writing fiction. According to Professor Srinivasa Iyengar, a prominent figure in the field of English literature in India, Arun Joshi possesses a singular aptitude for writing fiction. He demonstrates a seamless combination of knowledge, honesty, and forceful emotion in his work. Joshi illustrates the dehumanizing problem that is prevalent in the culture of current

urban areas via the works of his books and short tales. The works of this artist are renowned not only for the issues that he explores, the detailed characters that he creates, and the lifelike settings that he depicts, but also for the elegance and refinement of his style and tastes. The works of Joshi provide a powerful and strong representation, demonstrating his great insight of human nature, which contributes to the trustworthiness of his works. When compared to the works of other Indian authors who write in English, Arun Joshi's writings are superior in all of these areas. It is indisputable that his writings have a constructive impact on Indian English literature, and at his core, he is a writer who dives deeply into his own identity.

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