



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-
Journal

www.j.vidhyayanaejournal.org

Indexed in: ROAD & Google Scholar

**Psychoanalysis in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* and *The Strange Case of Billy
Biswas: A Critical Study***

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ABSTRACT

The current challenges and topics addressed by Indian novelists working in English in the include identity crisis, alienated self, socio-cultural forces, desire for identity, and battle for equality. Arun Joshi, unlike his forefathers, does not create fiction for the sake of amusement or social or political advocacy. He uses novel writing as a vehicle for exploring the contemporary man's position, notably the motivations behind his acts and the psychological impact of those actions. He discusses the challenges of westernised Indians who have lost their spiritual root and are plagued by cynicism, alienation from society, intellectual questions, and religious crises. He notices the disintegration of ancient values, which results in an insane world. The researcher, in this paper, attempts to apply psychoanalytical techniques to Arun Joshi's two novels- *The Foreigner* and *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* by using the frameworks of most appropriate psychological theories to analyse eastern yet primarily westernised characters. His characters stress the unconscious' effect on the aware. The author delves into his subjects' conscious, subconscious, and unconscious mental processes.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Conscious, Subconscious, Unconscious, Identity Crisis



Introduction:

The emphasis of the Indian English novels in the 1970s switched from sociological topics to the investigation of contemporary concerns such as existentialism, rootlessness, the disordered state of mind of the protagonists, and cross-cultural conflict. Anita Desai and Arun Joshi's essays reflect this change in emphasis. In their works, these writers focused on man's existential sorrow and misery. Arun Joshi, Nayantara Sehgal, Salman Rushdie, and their contemporaries carried on Anita Desai's heritage. Arun Joshi, a contemporary Indian English author is interested in modern man's existential journey.

Arun Joshi has written extensively on modern man's pain and suffering, existential torment, alienation, and loneliness. His major concentration is on the psychological analysis of men through the characters of his works. In his sympathetic portrayal of man's rootlessness, restlessness, and existential search, Arun Joshi demonstrates his exceptional insight and comprehensive understanding of human psychology.

Psychoanalytical Theory- An Overview:

Psychology is at the base of human ideas, acts, and behaviour; and it is for this reason that understanding of psychoanalysis becomes vital. Throughout the evolution of psychology, there has been a historical relationship between the theory of human behaviour and its practical application. Human behaviour is not just a physical behaviour, but also the outcome of the mind's workings which are unseen. Characters are, after all, human people, and the workings of their minds control their actions, emotions, and circumstances. Every literary effort is a psychological work in this setting. The exploration of the human mind by a writer



is neither deliberate or planned, but rather occurs spontaneously throughout the writing process.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is credited with founding the psychoanalytic approach which examines the universal motivations that drive individuals to behave in specific ways. He demonstrates to the rest of the world that human personality has three dimensions. He compares the mind to an iceberg, with the smaller portion visible above the water's surface representing awareness and the much larger bulk below the water's surface representing unconsciousness. The subconscious is a large underworld of vital, unseen forces that exert tyrannical influence over people's conscious thoughts and actions. It represents desires, passions, suppressed ideas and sentiments, a vast underworld of vital, unseen forces. From this perspective, a psychology that focuses only on consciousness analysis is woefully insufficient for comprehending the fundamental motivations of human behaviour. According to Duane Schultz,

Psychoanalysis was neither a product of the universities nor a pure science but arose within the traditions of medicine and psychiatry, from attempts to treat persons labelled by society as mentally ill. From its beginnings, psychoanalysis was distinct from mainstream psychological thought in goals, subject matter, and methods. Its subject matter is psychopathology, or abnormal behaviour, relatively neglected by other schools of thought. Its primary method is clinical observation rather than controlled laboratory experimentation. And psychoanalysis deals with the unconscious, a topic virtually ignored by other system of thought. (392)



Freud works almost entirely by himself, creating the notion that would later become the core of psychoanalysis, culminating in the publishing of his first book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). In the 1890s, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) develops his psychoanalysis hypothesis in Vienna. He was a neurologist who was looking for a way to help patients with neurotic or hysterical symptoms. In 1885, Sigmund Freud was awarded a stipend to study in Paris with Jean-Martin Charcot, a renowned neurologist, where he saw Charcot's clinical presentations, notably in the fields of hysteria, paralysis, and anaesthesia. Charcot pioneered the photographic portrayal of clinical symptoms and introduced hypnosis as an experimental research method.

The purpose of Freud's psychoanalytic approach is to bring repressed memories or ideas to conscious consciousness, which are supposed to be the root of the patient's aberrant behaviour. Since then, psychoanalysis has undergone several revisions and developments. Psychoanalysis' key tenets are as follows:

- A person's development is influenced by experiences from early infancy that are generally forgotten, in addition to hereditary characteristics.
- Irrational desires anchored in the unconscious heavily impact human attitude, mannerism, experience, and thinking.
- Conflicts between the conscious and unconscious minds, as well as repressed material, might manifest as mental or emotional disorders, such as neurosis, neurotic characteristics, anxiety, sadness, and so on.
- Bringing this stuff into the conscious mind allows the unconscious aspects to be liberated.



Normally, the personality is seen as a whole rather than in portions. The id may be thought of as the biological component of personality, the ego as the psychological component, and the superego as the social component in a broad sense. Another alteration brought about by neo-Freudians is a reduction in the importance of biological processes as effects on personality. Instead, the effect of social and psychological factors is given greater weight. From the 1940s until the early 1970s, ego psychology, as developed by Anna Freud and others, became the dominant American version of psychoanalysis. One of the neo-Freudians' goals is to get psychoanalysis recognised as a legitimate branch of psychology.

Psychoanalytic Approach in the Selected Novels of Arun Joshi

Joshi's works delve into the deepest and darkest recesses of the human psyche, illuminating the protagonists' secret corners of physical and mental makeup. Joshi visualises the inner crises of contemporary man, discovering and being persuaded that the most troubling difficulties that man suffers today are self-related issues such as alienation, identity crisis, feeling of vacuum, and existential dilemma. His protagonist, caught between his Indian heritage and Western influences, suffers from the horrors of consumerism, which leads to uprootedness, cynicism, faith loss, and an identity crisis. Joshi's heroes are contemporary guys who are adrift in a culture of conflicting values. They are fighting to keep their religion in a world that is hostile to them. In such a morally ambiguous environment, they are unable to maintain their identities. As a result, people must either struggle against society or entirely submit to it. In both circumstances, estrangement is the result.



Arun Joshi's characters' mental states oscillate between the three levels of awareness, subconscious, and oblivion. They have a state of mind that is perplexing. Joshi's protagonist's conscious state of mind experiences a dramatic transformation throughout time. Many times, in various stories, it swings from a materialistic mindset to the polar opposite. Sindi, as an orphan in *The Foreigner*, is denied parental affection and care. As a result, he is always melancholy and distant. His muddled state of mind stems from his denial of parental love and care. Billy's state of mind is divided into two impulses in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, materialism and primitivism. The conflict between two drives, such as a fictitious world of materialism or a civilised set of standards and anthropological instinct, separates him from the rest of the world.

Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist of Joshi's *The Foreigner*, is perpetually cut off from the rest of the world. He displays his anomie or alienation, his moral emptiness, spiritual bankruptcy, and indifference; he is cut off from society's whole machinery. In his actions, one might detect a feeling of foreignness. Because he did not get parental sustenance, he developed this sort of behaviour. At the early age of four, he becomes an orphan. Sindi's conscious mind shows his agony, distressing ideas, and sensations. His life becomes rootless as a result of this. The death memories of his father, mother, and uncle are ingrained in his subconscious thinking, and they are the primary motivators for his adult behaviour. Foreignness, isolation, insecurity, and anxiety are revealed in his unconscious mind:

I wondered in what way, if any, I belong to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far, I had lived without a purpose, unless you could call the search for peace a purpose.



Perhaps I felt like that because I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter! It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went. I hadn't felt like that when my uncle was living ...After his death the security was destroyed. Now I suppose I existed only for dying; it was sad, nonetheless. (*The Foreigner* 55-56)

Sindi's self-esteem suffers as a result of her lack of parental affection. He is attempting to look for himself. He has a sense of being out of place and without a place to call home. Since his boyhood, he has nourished his world of love in a muddled state of mind. Sindi's alienation becomes stronger. "I don't want to get involved." I repeated to myself. Everywhere I turned I saw involvement. How long could I stay free! The pain of earlier years had taught me wisdom but I didn't know if I could depend upon it" (*The Foreigner* 62-63)

Sindi's physical attraction to June is a reflection of his ineffective attempts. He becomes a psychic case as a consequence of the early emotional shock caused by his parents' deaths and the lack of loving care, and he engages in queer, instinctual, illogical, and neurotic activities as a result of his sub-conscious and unconscious needs. Sindi's split state of mind reveals his moral uneasiness, implying that his desire to June's attractive physique is irrational. Sindi's conscious thinking is shown in his interactions with Anna:

She said she loved me and that she had fallen in love with me.... But the whole thing disturbed me considerably....I think she loved me intensely and unselfishly.



I enjoyed making love to her and her sadness attracted me, but engrossed as I was with my own self, I couldn't return her love...as I had it then, that Anna was not yearning for me or anybody, but for her lost youth. (*The Foreigner* 143).

Sindi is invited to Anna's studio for a portrait by Anna, a small artist and divorcee in her fifties. Sindi is awestruck by her knowledge and often converses with her on the meaning of life and death. During one of these meetings, Anna seduces Sindi, who is looking for her lost youth. Sindi adores making love to her, but since he is preoccupied with his own problems, he is unable to reciprocate her feelings. She swears she will never abandon him. Both are aware of its insignificance. On a conscious level, he wants to love her, but he is afraid of losing her since his beloved person dies abruptly.

Billy, the protagonist of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, is an anthropology student who is completely pushed from a materialistic to a primal condition of existence. The study of anthropology, which is based on Billy's unconscious state of mind, has a significant impact on his life. Billy's interest in anthropology probes his mental health. His unconscious state of mind reacts afterwards in his complex behaviour.

I don't really know, I am afraid. What I do know is that this is what I have always wanted to read (he waved towards the stacks of books. All I want to do in life is to visit the places they describe, meet the people who live there, find out about the aboriginals of the world. (*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* 12)

Billy returns to India and accepts a position as a professor at the University of Delhi. Despite his privileged upbringing, he feels out of place in so-called civilised society, and he



becomes interested in examining life's inwardness. Romi attempts to explain how his biological forces allow him to explore his inner inclinations by taking things seriously but not too seriously.

Billy's actions are influenced not just by his personal and ethnic background, but also by his goals and ambitions. His current behaviour is influenced by both the past as actuality and the future as potentiality. As he progresses through his life, his behaviour shifts from aristocratic to tribal. As a result, Jung's teleology may be applied to Billy's shifting behaviour. He is fascinated with various beliefs that impact his behaviour, such as the power of inferiority or supremacy. He considers civilised people to be inferior, aesthetically shallow, dry, and dusty. They are intelligent enough to do better, but Billy sees them as powerless. The following is a clear indication of his conscious impression:

I don't think all city societies are as shallow as ours. I am, of course, talking mainly of the so-called upper classes. I didn't really get to know the others. I don't think I have ever met a more pompous, a more mixed-up lot of people. Artistically, they were dry as dust. Intellectually, they could do no better than mechanically mouth ideas that the West abandoned a generation ago. (*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* 128)

Billy's search operation begins. Another rumour circulates that Billy has assassinated a constable. The police conduct the search, and Billy is eventually slain by a constable's quick gunshot. Billy despises the ideals of the civilised society, which is not afraid to kill him, as it



is his own unconsciousness. All of these individuals think logically, however Billy's issue is emotional and is unique to him.

Billy strives to find his identity within the primitive civilization and society, but the materialistic civilization and society do not let him, and he loses his life in the process. His odd condition in the cosmos is due to his inner unconsciousness. Billy, Dhunia believes, is the manifestation of that monarch. After the death of the tribal's final monarch, Chandtola is silent and dead. He is a monarch who is unrivalled in his ability to create love magic and saintliness. He's a fantastic artisan who can carve a god-like stone idol. Devi Ma, his wife, is the source of all supernatural and magical abilities. Dhuni's thoughts and actions are guided by Jung's collective unconscious. It is the culmination of preceding generations' experiences. It is the repository for inherited latent memory traces from one's ancestors. Billy and Bilasia are implied by the king and Devi Ma, who are primal figures. As a result, when Billy and Bilasia visit Chandtola, the area starts to light. Billy and Bilasia have been given godhood by the primitive people's state of mind.

Conclusion:

Arun Joshi's characters are torn between inner and outside conflict as a consequence of societal pressures, the collapse of old ideas and dogmas, and life's unpredictability. The characters of Arun Joshi's work are mostly plagued by their own and communal subconscious. It prevents children from developing a healthy mentality. They are still perplexed and have an identity problem. Sindi Oberoi's path is traced from a sense of disconnection to an identity problem. Billy's love of primitivism and hatred of consumerism



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leads to an identity dilemma, which ultimately leads to his death. Sindi's insecurity throughout his life has caused him to become estranged from society. Billy Biswas' anthropological studies made him despised the current luxurious way of life and draws him back to his primal impulses. Extreme social, cultural, and psychological demands are placed on the protagonists. Inter-generational conflicts produced by shifting ethos place greater expectations on individuals, contributing to the creation of a vacuum that is nothing more than a chaotic sense of rootlessness in life. Almost all of the characters in Arun Joshi's storey have their ids operated, causing them to follow the pleasure principle, which serves as a momentary consolation in their lives, while living under the burden of circumstances and previous memories.



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