



Marginalization in Arun Joshi's 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas': Exploring Literature Review

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Abstract: Marginalization is regarded as social exclusion. It is a kind of disadvantage for any member of society, it is a kind of process in which groups or neglected to margin. In Indian English Writing this theme of Marginalization has been portrayed by many writers. The novelists who portray this theme are mainly Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and modern writers like Arun Joshi. In the stories often women and or people from lower class of the society are shown as marginal ones. This theme of marginalization appears to be very prominent in Arun Joshi's in 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas.' In 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' the main character Billy Biswas is shown as excluded from the mainstream social and cultural development of the society. Joshi offers a picture of anger, revolt, and protagonist against new regulations of the society. It is a very real picture of clashes between oppressors and oppressions. In this background, the present paper studies literature review on the marginalization in Arun Joshi's 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas'.

Keywords: Exploitation, Marginalization, Oppression, Resistance, Revolt, and Society.

Introduction

Arun Joshi was a great Indian writer. He was known for his novels 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' and 'The Apprentice'. He won the prestigious SahityaAkademi Award for his novel 'The Last Labyrinth' in 1982. His novels bear contemporary characters that are urban, English speaking and disturbed for some reason. His stories generally present the problems of those who are exploited and subjected to social injustice? Arun Joshi generally gives first person accounts in stories which describe the life of the wealthy person. His novels and stories are given messages to the world. Joshi

shows interest in the poverty-stricken, down-trodden persons, and wants to uphold moral values enunciated in the scriptures and propounded by saints. He has a vision of life which is reflected in all his novels. His characters are rootless, alienated, frustrated, and dissociated in their own way. His experiences and emotions are reflected in his works. The main characters of his novels are afflicted with alienation and frustration. Arun Joshi has a special place of distinction among contemporary Indo-Anglian writers. He is preoccupied with the themes of alienation, of rootlessness of individuals and purposelessness of existence. It is said that Arun Joshi's



novels reflect existential trends. Arun Joshi has been acclaimed as an exceptionally perceptive psychological and philosophical novelist. Arun Joshi wrote five novels – 'The Foreigner' (1968), 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' (1971), 'The Apprentice' (1974), 'The Last Labyrinth' (1981), 'The City & The River' (1990) and a collection of short stories titled 'The Survivor' (1975).

Research Methodology and Objective(s)

The study is based on secondary data, which has been collected from various sources. This methodology also helped in providing a direction to the research to an area which is apparently underexplored. Secondary data is collected from various websites, journals, news papers and reference books. Literature review has shown prior research work done in this area. The present paper discusses literature review on the marginalization in Arun Joshi's 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas'.

The Strange Case of Billy Biswas: A Background

In 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' (1971), Billy Biswas faces the problem of the barren, modern sophisticated society and hanker after the inner peace to be found in harmony with the Nature. Billy is totally fed up with the superficialities of a grossly materialistic and sterile Indian society. 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' is a study of the total alienation of its protagonist Billy Biswas from the modern society of India the protagonist, Billy Biswas is a rich and educated Indian who leaves the native place in search of happiness and moves to the urban part of the country. In this novel, Arun Joshi depicts how the process of

individualization destroys a man of extraordinary sensibilities. He terribly repents for his turning away from the traditional values, ethics and culture of India. Ultimately after his death his ashes are brought to his village and though in the form of his ashes he meets the traditional values left by him. The central character of the novel, Billy develops the symptoms of split personality as he is unable to relate himself to the world and fails to reconcile himself with his own self. As he has moved himself from country life to the urban but soon starts oscillating between primitive and the modern. There are various themes discussed in this novel such as the theme of anxiety, illusion and reality, quest for identity, rootlessness and marginalized.

Literature review

Shanmuga Devi P. Bala (2011) explained that All along the second part of The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, we find numerous reports of Biswas to his Collector friend about the tribals who cherish many secrets of Nature, their ethno-science, ethno-medicine, strange folklores, astrological acumen, and above all the inexplicable supernatural healing techniques. The words, "I came a thousand miles to see your face, O mountain. A thousand miles did I come to see your face"(Biswas79), declare a strong note in the very beginning of The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, signifying nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization where, "In a balanced, harmonious, steady-state nature, indigenous people reproduced balance and harmony."

Sharma Anita (2013) unfolded that Arun Joshi's novel almost all his novels deal



with the issues of existential anguish, alienation and dispossession. He is mainly concerned with the dimensions of individual & social existence.

Soule Arun (2015) explored Arun Joshi's, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) and Sarah Joseph's, *Gift in Green* (2011). Both the novels talk of two cultures: One is the simple life in close contact with nature, where the forest and the water provides adequate resources to sustain the inhabitants there. This is the indigenous life-style, where the tribals of the forest, or the inhabitants of the idyllic island of Aathi take care never to exploit nature excessively but to take only what is necessary for their sustenance. They remain content, happy and healthy.

Handrao Omprakash P and Kumar Sandeep (2016) remarked that Joshi skillfully illumined the major concern of existentialism, frustration, disintegration, rootlessness, a sense of alienation, existential predicament and absurdity through this novel.

Anupama Bikki and Venkata Raghu Ram Mantri (2017) explained that Arun Joshi's novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, also largely falls within the framework of modernity and tradition along with the conflict(s) associated with such themes. The author, Arun Joshi is significantly successful in presenting the dilemmas of modern day human beings. This is more relevant particularly in the context of Indian society and polity.

K.N. Indiramma (2017) explored that an outstanding novelist of human predicament, Joshi has chartered in all his novels the inner crisis of the modern man. His protagonists are intensely self-centered persons prone to self-pity and

escapism in spite of their weaknesses they are, however genuine seekers who strive to grope towards a purpose of life and self-fulfillment. The protagonists suffer from loneliness and crave for a meaning and purpose in life. In their loneliness they quest for peace and harmony.

Sujatha (2018) expressed that Arun Joshi in *The City and The River* interwoven with the conflict of the identity and the identity quest. Joshi is obsessively occupied with the individuals' quest for meaning and value, freedom and truth that provide spiritual nourishment to the estranged self in a seemingly chaotic and meaningless world.

Sankar (2018) highlighted that the focus in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is not on the tribals but only part of Billy Biswas's abnormal quest for a men's primitive self which leads him to give up the civilized life and return to primitive society.

Dhone Vilas (2019) focused on Arun Joshi's novel '*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*' depicts the cultural alienation of an anthropologist Billy Biswas who goes back to the old value – system. When Billy realizes the shallowness of civilization and the superficiality of its sense of values both in the U.S. and India, he feels himself alienated from society, friends, parents, wife and his own true nature.

Concluding Remarks

It can be summed up that marginalization has become one of the prominent literary themes that explored the marginalized groups that were exploited on the cultural, social, political,



religious and ecological grounds. It is one of the subdivisions of post colonialism and imperialism. Marginalized people have been ignored socially, politically, economically, religiously or legal point of view by the mainstream stratum of the society. Marginalization is the product of colonial exploitations and dominance by the stronger part of the society and their misuse of the power, politics and money over the weaker part of the society. Through these novel, Joshi craftily portrays marginalization that emerged from the colonized and post-colonized government structure and talked about social and economic discrimination and social, political and cultural, and exploitations. Arun Joshi, a modern novelist, is very concerned about Nature and Man. He likes to strike a balance between Nature and Man so that a harmonious relationship can be developed. In 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas', He seems to be concerned about the native people, their land and natural habitats. He through the character of Billy Biswas raised the voice of native people against the encroachment of outsiders. Natives are simple, easy going, worshippers of nature and have noble spirits. But corrupt and immoral practices of outsiders made their life pitiable and miserable. The modern society should take a serious note of environmental issues and conservation of nature and natural resources so they should be utilized for the common benefit of mankind.

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