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Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor

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[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)  
[criterionejournal@gmail.com](mailto:criterionejournal@gmail.com)

## Mythology in Arun Joshi's Novel

**Dr. Mangala Tomar**  
G.S College of Commerce  
Wardha

Mythology refers to the beliefs or opinions that people have about something when one thing that they are false and untrue. So we can say that mythology caters the material, spiritual and cultural aspirations of the people. Some of the traits of mythology are also referred in the religion and culture. Religion reflects both God and man. It is a life to be lived which allows scope and validity to varied approaches to the Divine. All great religions preach respect for other ways of life whatever their practices may be.

Religion is the binding force which deepens the solidarity of human society. Religion is fulfillment of man's life, an experience in which every aspect of his being is raised to its highest extent. The followers of any religion, residing anywhere in the world are influenced by religion and its culture. The novels of Arun Joshi are not the exception to it. The traits of mythology are perpetually found in the main characters of Joshi's novel which is the subject matter of this study.

Sindi's quest for identity, meaning and purpose of life does not end in despair. He did not find any absurdity and estrangement and noticed a great change in the condition of life. Due to intense suffering and chaos in the life of Sindi and Sheila it was presumed that their relationship will develop in marriage.

In *The Foreigner* there appears a deep influence of the Bhagavad Gita wherein Sindi quotes certain verses from it, in which principles of detachment has been preached. But in the novel itself he did not believe in God or religion. He is full of passion and having sexual relations with Anna, Kathy, Christine and June. He keeps relations with one after another in the garb of theory of detachment. While talking to Sheila it reveals that he did not believe in social norms. Even morality is of no importance for him. When Sheila talks to Billy about the virtuous character of June, he feels hurt and says-----, "So you think one of these Marwari girls is really superior merely because of a silly membrane between her legs" 1

The same fact is enunciated while preaching to Arjuna in the Bhagavat Gita by Lord Krishna

izo`fra p fuo`frap] tuk u fonqjklqjk%A  
u&'kkSpa ukfi pkpkjks] u IR;a rs"kq fo|rsA  
pravttim ca nivrttim ca jana na vidur asurah na saucam napi cacaro na satyam tesu vidyate 2

The meaning thereof is that "Those who are demoniac do not know what is to be done and what is not to be done. Neither cleanliness nor proper behavior nor truth is found in them.

vIR; aizfr"Bars txnjkgqjuh'oj A  
vijLijlEHkqra fdeU; RdkegSr qdeAA  
asatyam apratistham te jagad ahur anisvaram aparaspara-sambhutam kim anyat kama-  
haitukam 3

“They say that the world is unreal with no foundation, no God in control. This shows sex desire and has no cause other than lust.

It is the belief of Sindi that,

”There is no end to suffering, no end  
To struggle between good and evil” 4

Sindi seeks refuge in non-involvement and inaction after the death of Babu when he finds that June is pregnant by Babu. Sindi turns down the proposal to marry her under the garb of detachment. Due to the advice of Sindi she undergoes an abortion and dies. Later Sindi repents for her. Same thoughts have been propagated by Lord Krishna to Arjuna.

nq[kfeR; so ; RdeZ dk; Dys'k Hk; kRitsrA  
l d' R; k jktla R; kxa USko R; kx Qya yHksrAA  
duhkham ity eva yat karma kaya-klesa-bhayait tyajet sa krtva rajasam tyagam naiva  
tyaga-phalam labhet 5

The meaning thereof is “one who gives up a duty as it is painful or from the fear of physical suffering, is said to have renounced in the mode of passion. As such he never gets the result of renunciation”

Sindi was a hypocrite. He indulges his passion but fears from involvement.. In the novel Sindi tells----“Love was like a debt that you had to return sooner or later. And if you didn't you felt very uncomfortable” 6

When Khemka's business was dwindling and he was arrested by Income Tax authorities, he believes that anybody should accept the responsibility of his action. Here lies the karmic principle of Bhagavad-Gita that-----“no action of ours goes unrewarded or unpunished.”We reap what we sow” 7

While writing “The Foreigner” it seems Arun Joshi has copied some of the ideas of T.S Eliot enumerated in The Waste Land- Portrait of a Lady, (an affair with Anna), (at dawn it starts raining ), The Dry salvages (the right action, is freedom/From past and future also) and in ‘East Coker’-(for us, there is only the trying, rest is not our business). The novel ends on an affirmative note. The Indian spiritual sensibility radiates everywhere in the novel.

In The Strange Case of Billy Biswas the theme relates to the problem of identity and the quest for fulfillment, in this novel Arun Joshi is influenced by the existentialists like Camus, Sartre and Kierkegaard. Here Joshi continued his efforts for exploring of consciousness of rootless people. The novel is condemning the westernized Indian higher class society and representing the male and female as expounded in the Sankhya system of the Bhagavad-Gita... Billy in this novel is trying to withdraw from the world then a

return to nature... Billy, for this mystical urge leaves his family and relations and goes to forest in Central India for achieving self-realization like ancient sages and seers. Like Matthew Arnold's Scholar Gipsy he has been frustrated with the superficial civilized society having innumerable ills and took shelter in the company of primitive community. The hero Billy is fed up with the false values of civilized contemporary society and took refuge in simple life without ambition, few needs and total disregard of money. The theme of this novel has also been derived from the Bhagavad-Gita where in the Sankhya system elaborates that evolution takes place when 'Purush' and 'Prakriti' come into contact. In this novel Bilasis is Prakriti and Billy is 'Purush', 'Prakriti' is called Shakti and here Bilasia is Billy's Shakti. Bilasia is life spirit in woman representing the feminine principle of Sankhya system. Bilasia is like TuulaLindergren and an important woman character in "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas. She has" total disregard of money" and treats money for "a whole lot of paper" 9

Bilasis inspires Billy's soul that has been smothered by Meena Biswas and Rima Kaul. As per our Hindu mythology it is the union of "Jeevatma" and "Parmatma" which is symbolized as Bilasia and Billy respectively. The tribal legend is also there that the mythical king was poisoned by his brother out of jealousy and king's wife (queen) also immolated herself on her husband pyre with the belief that she would come back after reborn of her husband. The white-cliff of Chandtola will glow again but that did not take place. With the arrival of Billy again white-cliff begins to glow and Billy was considered legendry king and Bilasia as Devi-Mata. Apart from our Indian mythology Arun Joshi kept in mind themes of other authors like Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' Matthew Arnold's 'The Schokar Gipsy', The Lawrence's- 'The Plumed Serpent'. Despite, the Indian and Western influences this novel is a unique projection of Joshi's original genius, and Hindu view of life.

In The Apprentice Joshi explores the "mysterious underworld which is the human soul." 10 The novelist depicts the agonizing predicament of Ratan Rathod who has been confused and lost in the world of confusion, chaos, corruption, hypocrisy and absurdity. The novel is a crisis of an individual who is entangled in the labyrinth of contemporary society which has degrading values. The materialistic society is full of corruption, hypocrisy, degeneration and betrayal as detailed in the above novel.

The novel is divided into three parts:- the first part deals with the pre-Independence period, second part the period of idealism, phase of innocence, post-Independence period of experience, the inferno of corruption and the last part deals with expiation and door to the purgatory. The purpose of this article is to delineate the mythological aspect in the Apprentice. Earlier Ratan Rathod believes on the importance of Karma and leads his life on the principles of Mahatma Gandhi and the Bhagavad-Gita.

Swami Vivekananda described Karma Yoga as a mental discipline that allows a person to carry out his/ her duties as a service to the entire world as a path to enlightenment. He further explains that the action one has done cannot be destroyed until it has borne its fruits, no power in nature can stop it.

Mukteshwar Pandey observes “the Karmic principles of ‘detachment’ and ‘action’” 11 on the pattern of Bhagavad-Gita has been depicted in *The Apprentice*.

Thus by polishing the shoes of people on the door steps of temple is nothing but to expiate the sin of corruption, fraud, hypocrisy and deceiving the people during the period of his service. Arun Joshi interpreted the Karmic principle of the Bhagavad-Gita in different way that there is no intervening agent between you and God. What you sow, you reap. There appears an influence of many writers like Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene and William Golding in the sense that the act of treachery inflicts an injury upon the moral nature of man. In modern era everyone is anxious to earn money by any means and ultimately betrays his conscience.

T.S. Eliot and Fyodor Dostoevsky has made remarkable influence on Joshi in respect of use of imagery, symbols and theme. Joshi seems close to Gilbert, Osmond, Arthur Miller’s- *All my sons*’ where father passes consignment of faculty cylinders for bribe like. Ratan managed to supply defective material in defense deals wherein many soldiers had to sacrifice their life. Thus the influence of Bhagavad-Gita and other Western authors is remarkable and cannot be forgotten.

*The Last Labyrinth* is the story of Bombay traders Som Bhaskar trying to buy most of the shares of plastic manufacturing company, of Altaf Rai who lives in Lal Haveli, at Benaras along with his so called pretended wife Anuradha. Som Bhaskar is attracted towards Anuradha in Delhi conference business meet where she went along with Altaf Rai...Som wanted to possess her by all means. Som’s infatuation for Anuradha endangered his business and life. He finally searches for spiritual meaning life, love, God and death.

Millionaire Som Bhaskar possessed Western outlook of life and Indian faith in reason, singing the song of discontent—  
“I want, I want, I want” 12

Leaving aside beautiful wife and two children he runs after several women, librarians, nurses, whores, aunts, wives and others for developing sexual relations with them and pretending for spiritual bliss. He is voids within and voids without and tries to fill this void with sex wealth and fame knowing that it is dirt, a whore, and houses, cars carpets all are useless. Anuradha was a riddle, a puzzle, a mystery to Som and he thinks, that she was like an ocean, one could never reach a bottom of her thus she is a key to his malaise. The same type of thoughts have been elucidated in the Bhagavadgita

;/k;rks fo" k; kUiqal% laxLrs" wkitk; rsA  
Laxkrl+ «tk; rs dke% dkekRdks/kks fHtk; rsAA  
dhyayato visaryan pumsah sangas tesupajayate sangat sanjayate kamah kamat krodho  
bhijayate 13

When a man contemplates the objects of senses in his mind a person develops attachment for them, and from that attachment lust develops and from that lust anger arises Further Krishna says to Arjuna

Dzks/kk)ofr lEeksg% lEeksglLe`fr foHkze%A  
Le`frHkz`kkn cqf) uk'kks] cqf)uk'kkRiz.k';frAA

krodhad bhavati sammohah sammohait smrti-vibhramah smrti-bhramsad buddhi-naso  
buddhi-nasat prnasyati 14

From anger, complete delusion arises and from delusion bewilderment of memory takes place. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down into the material pool. These lines of Bhagavadgita are totally applicable to Som Bhaskar in the Last Labyrinth. Till the end, Som was unable to find out the solution of his problem as he was completely bewildered and delusional... In the above two purposeful verses explained the correct picture and purpose of his outlook and conduct.

In this novel it appears, Joshi is influenced by Sankhya system of Indian philosophy wherein evolution takes place when Purush and Prakriti (Shakti) come into contact. The possessiveness of Anuradha (Shakti) by SomBhaskar (Purush) serving the purpose of evolution as described in Sankhya system enjoyment liberation/ Sansar as well as “Kaivalvya”

In the course of his last journey when he was facing death, Som encounters a little boy carrying his grandfather. Together with a group of men in a palanquin from Jaipur to a strange lake in the mountains where he is to die by seeing a rare pebble if he could find it. Here also the Karmic principle of the Bhagavad-Gita is noticed.

The Last Labyrinth delineates Hindu vision of life—particularly Bhakti yoga in women characters like Som’s mother, wife Geeta, ascetic Gargi, Anuradha’s mother, and Anuradha herself wherein they have unconditional faith and sacrifice for leading spiritual life. As lord Krishna enjoins Arjuna in the Bhagavad-Gita that-----

eUeuk Hko en~ HkDrks] e|kth eka ueLdqj%A  
ekesoS";fl ;qDrSoekRekua eRijk;u%AA

man-mana bhava mad-bhakto mad-yaji mam namskuru mam evaisyasi stayam te  
pratijane priyo si me 15

The purport of this verse is that engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee offer obeisance to Me and worship Me being completely absorbed in Me surely you will find me.

Most of the women characters are devoted and fully engrossed in God. Joshi, in this novel, is influenced and inherited by Camus, Mahatma Gandhi, Bunyan’s The Pilgrim Progress, Graham Greene’s novel- The end of the Affairs, Tolstoy’s-War and Peace and other Existential writers. In this way, Joshi suggests that there are three-fold paths- Humility, Sacrifice and suffering for exploring Divine truth. Joshi, due to his artistic



sensibility has assimilated these influences and rendered the novel masterpiece revealing his vision of life.

In *The City and the River* the anguished man struggles for survival and searches for viable alternative amidst materialism, corruption, cynicism, alienation and dwindling spiritual faith. Man dwindles from place to place and finds himself lost in the mess of materialistic industrial society of life and death. The novelist has set out a quest of spiritual commitment and amidst the turmoil and uncertainty of contemporary life. The novel is commentary on the times and portrays the Indian emergency in the 1970. On the name beautifying the city and widening the roads the huts of poor people were eradicated / destroyed and unlimited powers were acquired by the Grand Master. Similar situation was being faced in Emergency. The novel moves on two levels. On one hand, it is political parable having unlimited power. On the other hand, common people are struggling and suffering immensely for maintaining freedom and liberty of spirit. Arun Joshi used prophesy, fantasy and politics and presented the story in wider backdrop. The Karmic principle of Bhagavad-Gita has come out from the mouth of grandmaster. There is an influence of Mahatma Gandhi where to undertake fast and to start the movement of non-violence exists/persists.

People also find the influence of T.S. Eliot's line "In my beginning is my end" There are many passages in the novels of Arun Joshi where in the influence of the Bhagavad-Gita is indicated and Indian mythology is shaping the thematic structure of the novels. Thus, Joshi's novels have universal imperishable importance for their affirmative eloquent message for the humanity.

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