

CHAPTER 5

CONCEPT OF FAMILY

Except the novel "The City and the River", Arun Joshi's other novels 'The Foreigner', 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas', "The Apprentice", and 'The Last Labyrinth' excel the theme of family. Joshi has made a striking contrast between the Indian ethos and the Western concept towards the institution of family. One easily gauges Joshi's depth of conviction in the formulation of family. He brings out his prehensile apprehension about the inroads made by the Western liberal outlook in India and tries to safeguard the sanctity of familial honour.

Joshi is a serious artist who transposes aspects a reality into his canvas in the form in which they exist in real life. He uses a technique to unravel the mysteries of human emotions from his own observations of life around him. If he wishes to enrich the experience of the reader, he has to reproduce a picture of life creatively. Men will not turn to art which provides them with nothing but lifeless transcripts; while they prefer to preoccupy themselves with the facts of real life. They were at their best when they were least "clinical" "objective", and naturalistic", and when moved by intense personal involvement - grief, joy, bewilderment - they transmitted their emotions into a literature of passion.

Jawaharlal Nehru says, 'Indian culture is the supreme in the entire world because of the institution of the family'. It is very well substantiated by Joshi through his novels. "The Foreigner", Arun Joshi's first novel is written in the form of things past. Born of an English mother and a Kenyan - Indian father, Sindi Oberoi is a child of mixed parentage. Rootless as he is, Sindi's life takes him to London, Boston and New Delhi. He has his education in London where he meets Anna, a minor artist separated from her husband. He has an affair with her who yearns neither for him nor anybody, but for her lost youth. Later he is deeply involved with Kathy, an English house wife, who hungers for adulterous love. She leaves Sindi after carrying on with him for a few weeks and goes back to her husband because "She thought marriage was sacred and had to be maintained at all costs" (T.F. p.168).

As George Bernardshaw said, "Marriage is a strange circle, those who are inside try to come out and those outside try to go inside", the protagonists of Joshi develop a love-hate relationship towards their opposite partners. They are not totally committed to each other.

Sindi's life was not running course till he met June. June was a beautiful, sensual, affectionate, feminine American. He met her at a foreign student's party. Sindi and June develop an intimate relationship. Their relationship grows gradually. They start living intimately. He loves her intensely and has sex with her but avoids getting married to her.

The conjugal spirit which is held sacred and reciprocal is relegated to the back in the West. Sindi was tired by foreign student's office to look after new Indian students coming to Boston. This was how Sindi came to know Babu Khemka. Sindi had advised Babu not to fall in love in America for it would not do any good for any body. But Babu was very curious to play around with girls. That itself would have marked his doom.

Joshi's account of love and marriage as practised in the west is a pointer to those who explain the sanctity of family. June turns to Babu when Sindi does not respond to her insistent pleas to marry her. It is only when June leaves him for Babu that Sindi becomes aware of his strong love for June. He feels depressed and agonized when June refuses to meet him. Pressing his face against the cold, hard metal of the telephone, Sindi cries at June's refusal. He busies himself with his work at college but June remains in his thought. He visits various places where he had been with June earlier.

Sindi blurts out, "Occasionally I would run into an old landmark there she wanted me to kiss her, and my heart would sink with the burden of my memories and I couldn't help whispering to myself, "My darling! Oh, my darling!" (T.F. p.142). He pleads to leave him alone. She knew what soothed, solaced and pleased him. She therefore gave of herself abundantly to him for "She wanted to be of use to someone". But when Sindi refuses to marry her she turns to his friend Babu, who is a typical Indian fantasising with glamorized dreams of America.

Sindi started his voyage with the purpose of learning 'how to live'. But the knowledge always eludes him because of his escapism.

Babu sees America as a paradise for free-lovers and argues with Sindi, "What is good of coming to America if one is not to play with girls" (T.F. p.23). Babu involves himself willingly and in full knowledge of Sindi with June. But when the question of marriage comes he is unable to do so against the wishes of his parents. Instead he uses his conviction of June sharing bed with Sindi as a prop for his suicide. It embarrasses him to learn her pregnancy from him. It was the tragedy of June to have fallen in love, a prey to the irresponsible behaviour of such cowardly and foolish persons. Sindi now ponders, "Wasn't Babu's child my own, in a way? Hadn't I driven her into his arms. The thought of marrying her crossed my mind again" (T.F. p.198).

At the crucial moment of his life, he does not act according to the urge of his inner self and is guided by the logic of selfishness and greed. His affair with June provided Sindi with a hope of retrieving his will power and of overcoming his subjectivity of June's selfless and redeeming love. But that hope is snuffed out by his obstinate adherence to detachment.

And Sindi chocks her with his flashing realisation that "all love - whether of things or persons, or oneself-was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion. Love be got greed, attachment, and it led to possession" (T.F. p.180). Yet "There is another way of loving. You can love without attachment, without desire. You can love without attachment to the world.

Joshi's condemnation of the moral deterioration in America is serious blow to American culture. In one of his conversations with his beloved June Blyth, he says, "And then to be in love in your sense requires one to take things seriously, assume that there is a permanence about things" (T.F. p.113). For him 'love' doesn't have any importance. This reveals his jaundiced attitude towards life. First of all, Sindi doesn't love himself sufficiently well to love others. His defenses not only disallow him to love others but also be loved by others, as he himself confesses: "I was not the kind of man one could love; I had learnt that long ago" (T.F. p.40).

All the same, he revelled and indulged in sex in England and America with Anna, Kathy, Judy, Christine and June. He was happy in it because it did not involve him into any commitment. He was afraid to love because, "To love ... is to invite others to break your heart" (T.F. p.82). He also believed that "marriage was more often a lust for possession than any thing else. People got married just as they bought new cars. And then they gobbled each other up" (T.F. p.71).

A sense of escapism from the gamut of family is prevailing among the American Youth. Indians who go to America easily pick up this strand. All this was a clever cover for Sindi to shy away from involvement, commitment and action. Against the background of his philosophy of detachment and the posture of "living without commitment, he makes love to a series of women but with June he is brought face to face with his hypocrisy, cowardice, vanity and stupidity. June loved Sindi not to object of your love. You can love without fooling yourself that the things you love

are indispensable either to you or to the world. Love is real only when you know that what you love must one day die" (T.F. p.180). As Sindi himself marks that his love for June was streaked with hatred and anger. Though Sindi was in love with June he gazed himself the air "to remain detached under the circumstances".

Sindi's self deception becomes apparent when he attempts to rationalize the whole thing, an attempt that betrays his own cowardice and hypocrisy. Joshi gives a realistic description of the self consciousness and excitement of newcomers to America. Babu comes to study in America, prattles enthusiastically about this country. Later he regains his spirits only when he talks of his home and girls in America. He turns a deaf ear to Sindi's advice, "While you are in America, Babu, don't fall in love. It does nobody any good".

But the American culture does not blind the Indians completely. The Indian ethos of chastity percolates the thinking of Indians in America. It is because of his moral inhibitions and orthodox background that Babu fails miserably in his relations with June and consequently drives her to her ruin and himself to his tragic death. He wishes to take June on his own terms, looking for virginal purity of an ideal Indian girl in her. He does not know "that codes of morality differ from country to country".

He avoids physical relations with June because as she says: "He said he didn't want to do it until after wedding". That is why when June who is accustomed to free sex life of America tells him of her earlier relation with Sindi, he grows pale and drives off blindly in his car to his

tragic end. Sindi's relationship with Anna, Kathy and June was only an illusion. The transitory pleasures of life fail to satisfy him for they do not help him "in finding the purpose" of his life. Talking to June he elaborates the findings of his enlightenment.

"Absence of love does not mean hatred. Hatred is just another form of love. There is another way of loving. You can love without attachment to the objects of your love" (T.F. p.170).

From London, Sindi comes to Boston for his studies. During this period of six years, his detachment fails by the charm of June. Soon after both fall passionately in love with each other.

The fact that marriage is quite accidental in the West is a 'retrograde more' according to Joshi's characters. Most of them pine for a settled life which could be found in 'family'. Sindi's views on love and marriage are also strange. They not only mar his own happiness but also run the lives of Babu and June. He does not believe in marriage because he is "afraid of possessing any body" or "of being possessed and marriage means both (T.F. p.106). He feels that "Love that wanted to possess was more painful than no love at all" (T.F. p.67) one should therefore "be able to detach one self from the object of one's love" (T.F. p.67). He says to June, "Whetters I had been so for in life seemed to indicate that marriage was more of ten a lust for possession than anything else".

Though the aspect of marriage seems to be, an illusion, Sindi and Ratan want it to be a reality. Sindi turns down June's passionate desire to get married to him. When she appealingly tells him, "Let's get married, Sindi. For God's sake, Let's get married. I am so scared we might break up and all that we have would be lost," (T.F. p.125). He replies "Marriage wouldn't help, June. We are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within. You can't send two persons through a ceremony and expect that their aloneness will disappear. I can't marry you because I am incapable of doing so. It would be like going deliberately mad" (T.F. p.126).

Sindi finds his world of reality not only different from Mr.Khemaka's but also from June's. It is strange that though he is not willing to marry June, he is deeply depressed and agonised when she is separated from him and betrothed to Babu. Later when Babu dies and he learns June bears his child, he wishes to marry her to save her honour. He makes his decision not by way of conviction but by way of romantic step to make sacrifice for the sake of June. By the time he goes to June to rescue her she dies while delivering a child. June was right when she once told him.

"But you are so tied up with your own detachment it makes little difference whether you love or you don't (T.F. p.158).

Joshi's portrayal of love, sex and marriage lends a serious study of the Western Culture.

Initially Sindi does not attach much significance for marriage. He has a feeling that "even if he loved her (June) and she loved him it would mean nothing, that one could depend on. His deep involvement in a married woman named Kathy, whom he loves with "the perching, all-caressing love I am adolescent" (T.F. p.122) and to realise that or oneself - was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion". His own experience is love.

Sindi's feeling of strangeness and his failure to relate himself meaningfully to the world himself result not only in anguish and loneliness but also in an intransigent quest for emotional wholeness and meaningful relatedness. In course of a candid conversation with Sheila in Delhi, Sindi points out the things which bothered him in his life: "There were things I wanted, only I didn't know how to get them. I wanted the courage to live...without desire and attachment. I wanted peace and perhaps a capacity to love. I wanted all these. But, above all, I wanted to conquer pain" (T.F. p.138).

His quest brought him to London. He joined London University to study engineering. But he soon became tired of class - room lectures. The question that plagued him was different: 'I wanted to know the meaning of my life. And all my class-rooms didn't tell me a thing about it (T.F. p.165). In order to gather first-hand experience about life, he took up an evening job as a dish washer in a night-club. He did not work to earn money; he wanted a different kind of experience to sort out his ideas. It was in this bar that Sindi met Anna. A minor artist and a divorcee, Anna

was about thirty-five but looked much younger. Soon they grew intimate. The whole experience, novel and unexpected as it was, disturbed him terribly. Though they were emotionally attached with each other, there is a perceptible void in their relationship.

The theme of family and the sanctity of marriage never run deep into the major protagonists of Arun Joshi. In 'The Foreigner', Anna loved Sindi intensely and unselfishly and her sadness attracted him. But engrossed as he was with his own self, he "could not return her love". In fact, all along, with Anna, Kathy, Judy and Christine and, finally, with June, Sindi behaved selfishly. He could never come out of abject self-engrossment and love anybody unselfishly. And he tried to cover his selfishness with the blanket term 'detachment'. The result was that each affair ended in failure. Anna had given him a taste of conquest and inflated his ego. But 'foolish and petty' as he was, he left her the moment he met a married woman named Kathy. After a few weeks of intense sexual experience, Kathy too was disillusioned.

The creed of detachment, which Sindi follows with a perverse obstinacy, receives a terrible jolt in his encounter with June Blyth. The story of his intensely passionate affair with June is a story of the gradual breaking down of the barriers of detachment, of the little fortifications that he had so peeled off until his naked self stands out with all its selfishness, greed, hypocrisy and cowardice. Helplessly he watches the crumbling edifice of his detachment and he tries in vain to resist it.

In many ways June is a memorable creation of Arun Joshi. She is the first of a group of humane, sympathetic and sacrificial woman (the others being Bilasia in 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' and Anuradha in 'The Last Labyrinth' who play a key role in the lives of the respective heroes and catalyze the progress towards their self-realization. June is aware of the inanity, pretensions and play-acting of the people around her. But she poses a striking contrast to Sindi. Unlike Sindi, who is introvert, selfish and always bothered with his own problems of loneliness and detachment, June is an extrovert and she can selflessly think of others. Her very presence is enlivening and she exudes warmth by her disinterested concern for others. As against Sindi's sickness and morbidity, she gives the impression of youth and vitality.

Stoicism and morbidity account for purposelessness of individuals. Sindi himself admits "She revealed to me all that I was not and couldn't hope to be. May be that is why I later fell in love with her even as I wildly struggled to remain uninvolved" (T.F. p.62). Unlike Sindi, she suffers from no 'illusion' either about herself or about the world around her. Her entire life has been geared around this single purpose: to immerse herself selflessly in the distress of others, to make herself useful to them and share the burden of their sorrow.

As Sindi says, "June was one of those rare persons who have a capacity to forget themselves in somebody's trouble....whenever she saw somebody in pain she went straight out to pet him rather than analyzing it a million times like the rest of us" (T.F. p.112). This rare degree of

empathy and this capacity to forget herself in the misery of others differentiate June from Sindi, the self-styled prophet of detachment who is always contemplating, rationalizing and vacillating like the famous Hamlet.

Her very presence makes things crack up within Sindi and all his defenses against involvement fall apart. She appears like an angel in graveyard of his loneliness and tries to drag him out of his silent cocoon. He says, 'Nobody saw her as I did,' and feels irresistibly drawn towards her like an opium addict. But the sense of insecurity and the old fear of involvement as well as the lacerating memory of his abortive experiences with Anna and Kathy, which is still oozing blood 'somewhere in the labyrinth of [his] consciousness', stand in the way.

The novelist has accurately analysed Sindi's indecision, passion and his motives, conscious and unconscious, before and after his involvement with June.

He is terribly afraid of getting involved with June: 'It was almost a countdown of my courage'. He knows that love by nature is based upon the acceptance of another's existence independent of oneself. Sindi confesses "Love was like a debt that you have to return sooner or later. And if you didn't you felt very uncomfortable". Herein lies the problem. Self conscious Sindi would never allow anybody to encroach upon his fort of detachment. 'I never let them [women] love me,' he later says to Sheila. Moreover, he cannot make any commitment and accept the responsibility of his love: 'I couldn't pay the price of being loved'.

Sindi's attitude to life and love is based on experiences enjoyed in total disregard of the value of human relations. It, therefore, naturally leads to his obsession with non-involvement. It can be rightly put thus, "Pleasure without involvement and love without possession are the values that condition the attitudes and over-all vision of Sindi." In this respect, Sindi offers a striking contrast to Billy Biswas. He has little to offer to his fellow-men. Where love is concerned he is invariably at the receiving end. But it is different with Billy Biswas. He has little to offer to his fellow-men.

Even the concept of love is not seriously pursued. Most of Joshi's characters are frivolous in their perception of love and marriage. Where love is concerned Sindi is invariably at the receiving end. But it is different with Billy. Though he leaves his family in order to respond to the inscrutable primitive urge in him, Billy pays with his own life when he renews his lost link with civilization being urged by an impulse to save his friend Romesh Sahai from moral corruption and a violent death. Billy's predicament is no less terrible. But he has the courage to face the overwhelming questions posed by his existence and make a decisive choice whatever the cost.

Sindi is afraid of making resolutions 'because the pain of breaking them was too unbearable. He is incapable of making any decision because of his failure to understand either himself or his fellows or the real nature of the world in which he is placed. Like Arjuna, he loses his heart in the face of the battle of life and his worldly considerations persuade him to withdraw from the battle. It may be due to the lack of foresight on the part of the characters. They fail to perceive the sanctity of family.

For days together Sindi is tossed between detachment and involvement, renunciation and passion until, in the face of June's maddening love that seems to sweep him away like an avalanche, he can no longer remain unmoved. His inner struggle is nicely dramatized and the fragility of his detachment is exposed. Sindi reveals,

"June was leaning over me. I stroked her hair and her cheeks. She smiled with half-closed eyes. When she kissed me her mouth was warm, almost hot. It was different from the kisses she had given to the sick man; this time I was her lover. "Get up," a voice cried within me. I knew that was the last chance. Five more minutes and I would be involved up to my neck, bound hand and foot. But desire glued me to that bed. The contract had already been made. Desire rose within me like water behind a broken dam. I nearly cried with the burden of my lust" (T.F. p.81).

Sindi realizes that 'it is difficult to be a saint' and that one does not always choose one's involvement. Brought face to face with his cowardice and lack of fortitude, he counts the broken pieces of his detachment: 'I counted the gains and the losses and the losses mocked me like an abominable joker (T.F. p.81).

The rest of the episode is a story of intense passion. Sindi lives in "a strange world of intense pleasure and almost equally intense pain" and becomes fond of June with every passing day. But June's self-less love only feeds his vanity and makes him jealous: "I even began to grow a little jealous when she talked admiringly of some other man. And at times I made love to her not because I desired her but because I wanted to make sure that she still loved me" (T.F. p.85).

June sincerely loves Sindi and wants to be of use to him. With her empathy she knows that Sindi is not at peace with himself and is extremely lonely. She feels that he may need her. She even wants to get married and have children by him. But the perpetual prevaricator dodges the proposal in the name of detachment and in the process reveals his own cowardice. "I had already given her whatever I had and there was nothing more to give. I felt like a bankrupt manufacturer who suddenly discovers that he has something to sell". Sindi wants June but refuses to accept the responsibility of this without mastering the prerequisites of becoming one. Still, he loves June as he has never loved any woman before. Autumn turns to winter and the winds of existence bring Babu to their lives which take a different turn.

One notable aspect of the American part of the novel (which deals mainly with Sindi's encounter with June and Babu) is the recurrence of Autumn and Winter as eye-openers. He remembers, "After years of struggle, I had almost achieved what I had always wanted to be, without desire. But I had bartered away the gains in an attempt to possess a woman. I had exchanged the steady tranquility moments of ecstasy in a woman's body" (T.F. p.117). He has to face a prolonged conflict between the "saint" and "the lusty beast" in him. He also believes that detachment becomes a misty notion with him and is used to mean so many things including love in a detached manner "Love without fooling yourself that the things you love are in dispensable either to you or to the world" (T.F. p.170).

A sense of scepticism envelops the principal characters. No where is his cynicism more in evidence than in his attitude towards love and marriage. He said to June that he didn't believe in marriage. He says "One should be able to love without wanting to possess... other wise you end up by doing a lot more harm than good" (P.F. p.66.).

In most marriages, he believed, love soon ended and hatred took its place. He adds "The hand that so lovingly held mine would perhaps some day ache to hit me" He didn't want to get involved. "Every where I turned I saw involvement". He wanted to remain free, detached. In his cynical way he tells June "Love is real only when you know that what you love must one day die" (T.F. p.170).

Sindi's relationship with Anna, Kathy and others was "fancy free". They were not affairs of the heart and he came out unscathed. He cherished the false notion that he could ever continue to remain free and uninvolved. But he soon realised that his relationship with June was quite a different affair and he became nervous.

"How long could I stay free!.... The commitment had already been made the moment I had seen June at the dance. Now it was only a matter of time. Our hands would soon give place to our bodies and then the worst will come, our souls will get involved. It was only a matter of time". (T.F. p.60).

The more Sindi wriggles out of any critical situation, the more, he gets entangled into it. After Sindi and June had their first sexual union, he says. "I stayed awake, counting the broken pieces of my detachment" (T.F. p.81). They spent several evenings together; "We lived like animals when we went out on these holidays." The story of Sindi's relationship with her is a story of the gradual breaking down of the barriers of detachment and non-involvement that he had built up all his life. When Babu appeared on the scene, there grew up a friendship between him and June. But June was still very much in love with Sindi and she suddenly asked him one night after they had made love to get married. But Sindi refused.

After Sindi's refusal to marry June it was perhaps natural that June and Babu should meet more often and avoid Sindi. Sindi begged to see her once, but she said she was sorry. Sindi did not know that "Babu had been sleeping with her" for June had lied to Sindi about this. She told Sindi that she did not really love Babu. So when June made advances to Sindi one night in his apartment Sindi yielded to her. He behaved like the typical lover, not the man immune to all emotions as he thought he was. Babu committed suicide because of June's affair with Sindi. Sindi felt that he had driven a man to death.

As the adage goes, "Misfortune never comes alone, Sindi faces one problem after another. It is really unfortunate that at this critical moment in his life Sindi receives yet another shock from an otherwise serious minded and well - meaning June who, being incensed by his petty

suspicious, makes candid confessions with regard to her emotional and physical involvement with Sindi. And it is in this state of desperation that Babu dies in a car accident.

Joshi castigates the people who take marriage as a reciprocal commercial venture. The more Babu speaks to June about his wealth and grandeur at home, the more does she consider him to be "a sweet little boy" (T.F. p.96). It is true that she decides to marry Babu because Sindi rejects her proposal of marriage, but she accepts Babu's offer of marriage chiefly because she feels that she has to help him and to be "useful" to him.

Though the characters are aware that the strand of discard can easily be thwarted, they knowingly or unknowingly allow themselves to be influenced by the vagaries of life. This shows the vulnerability of the characters.

The liberal life of the West is juxtaposed with the commercialization of marriages of the East. Sindi was supported by Sheila when he was with Mr.Khemka. Joshi also gives us ground to hope that it will not be long before Sindi will find a boring and loved wife in Babu's sister Sheila. Clear indications are given of a growing mutual tenderness and attraction that promises a closer relationship.

Sindi wanted to inform June about the death of Babu. When he saw her she carried destain with her. She had been an accomplice in a murder and she didn't even know it. But "ignorance of sin like ignorance of the

law is no excuse". She didn't realise that they (Sindi and June) had killed a man by their lustful life. He hated himself for such an act. Sindi described June as beautiful and humane.

The relevance of life is attained only when Sindi feels confident. He could remember how his illness was. Asthma had left him pale and exhausted. June took pity on all sick people. But Karl, his friend said that love was like a debt that it had to be returned sooner or later or it would make the love struck miserable and people would feel very uncomfortable.

Sindi strongly believed that his love towards June had killed Babu. He felt guilty. His uncle had once said, "Love is to invite others to break your heart". To create pain is a crime. So love is a crime according to Sindi. But unfortunately he loved June and his love killed Babu.

June is a loveable person. She is so beautiful that everyone admires her. She thinks high of America and Americans but still loves Sindi very deeply and passionately. She is so uncomplicated "a person that whenever she sees somebody in pain she goes straight out to pet him". She even tells him how to make a person happy but those his are harmless. She is very broad minded. When a difference of opinion creeps between Sindi and June, it is Sindi who loses more than June. Sindi had once warned Babu that women are desirable creatures but they can also hurt. This warning came true when June wanted to marry Babu leaving Sindi aside. June felt the fear of loneliness. For Sindi the future seemed to him as dark as night. Even thousand neons cannot neutralise its blackness. Sindi seemed depressed and his love for June was streaked with hatred and anger. He

suspected that he was going mad. He had heard that June was going to marry Babu. A set of experiences has taught him a reality that was different from other hypocrites.

Joshi does not mince words when he portrays life with intrigues. He creates a situation, where one succeeds when he manoeuvres the situation. Babu did because he was given a wrong set of memories. These wrong memories cannot be destroyed unless one destroys himself in the process. Babu died because he loved June and June loved Sindi, Mr.Khemka was against this fanatic love. He said, "When we were young we fell in love with girls next door but we didn't abe and ass of ourselves". Joshi highlights how adjustment problems lead havoc in the life of the characters.

Universal peace can be achieved through marriages which are made across the globe. The Japanese Biochemist, friend of Sindi, believes in international marriages which can make the world integrated. But Sindi does not believe in love and marriage. For him birth and death are real. All other things in the world varies and not constant. He says "All the people are kings, shuffled and reshuffled meeting fifty - one similar kings but never saying anything sensible, never exchanging names" (T.F. p.158).

Joshi's characters aim at something other than gratification of carnal pleasures. Ratan Rathor, the protagonist in "The Apprentice" is the narrator who must tell all or nothing. What use is a confession if not total (T.A. p.118). Ratan also tells his life to a silent listener - a young student who has come from Punjab to Delhi to rehearse for the N.C.C. Parade on

the Republic Day. Replying to a probable quarry about the direction to reach the grounds, Ratan finds the young student to be a fit listener to his tack" "Or, if you could wait a little I shall drop you. I go the same way. Can you wait? Good" Like Cobridge's Ancient Mariner, Ratan insists that the listener hears him out. Ratan also reminds us of Marlow the first person narrator in Conrad's tale of his youth to a group of listeners. "The Apprentice" like "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" is rendered in chronological fashion, with sporadic flash backs interspersing it.

The ultimate realization in one's life ends in marriage. Ratan Rathor was humble and submissive to his boss. In turn the superintendent proposes his cousin's daughter for a marriage with Rathor. Ratan Rathor was a self-esteemed man and said that he didn't want to marry when he was jobless. Actually he was bribed or rather black mailed that if he could marry that girl, he could achieve higher post with higher salary. His friends insulted him that he was a whore. He indirectly accepts that comment because he has accepted to marry the girl who is the relative of superintendent. He has not even seen the girl. He has accepted this marriage against his wish for the sake of his career.

The author makes it clear that wealth alone does not give a man happiness. Before Ratan became old, he had to settle in life with more money. But the more he accumulated money, the more he was dissatisfied and the more he wanted to "enjoy" life. So he went to brothel house and saw the vulgar side of life. Then again he thought of death. His wife is not happy with the life she is living. She is filled with disappointments and

frustrations. Frustration comes because of disappointments. He has not learnt all these years what his wife is frustrated about! She cries without reason bitter hapless, tears and spends sleepless nights. "It is not easy to cure the sadness of men", though many doctors are consulted.

Like any other average man, Ratan too is attracted to the sensuous life. The most striking change in Ratan is his sudden interest in wine and women. So for he had lacked the courage to give vent to his desires. But now he ogles at the women around: "I felt bold, unfettered. I stared at them, the women openly. Wilfully" Not only this, he visits prostitutes. In short, Ratan is "at the peak of the dung heap that I had been climbing all my life" (T.A. p.85). For the sake of confirmation and promotion, Ratan is forced to marry a girl related to the superintendent, though he is not particularly interested. It does not take much time for him to realize that the world runs on deals. In fact his, own marriage is a deal for his career: "It is not the atom or the sun or God or sex that lies at the heart of the universe: it is deals, deals... They are simply there, like air. He leads a frustrated and exhausted family life.

"The Strange Case of Billy Biswas", has attracted much critical attention. A rare spiritual regeneration is what the novel structurally lives through, each device enlivens the drama through the central contradiction between spiritual regeneration and spiritual decay.

There is a contrast between the polished elite and crude tribals in "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas". Billy liked the tribal uninhibited drinking and dancing and the open orgiastic love-making. He was madly in love with a tribal girl Bilasia, an "untamed beauty that comes to flower only in our primitive people" (T.S.C.B.B. p.143). It is on meeting her that "he has suddenly discovered that bit of himself that he has searched for all his life... Bilasia, at the moment, was the essence of that primitive force that had called me night after night, year after year" (T.S.C.B.B. p.142).

Marital discord has its roots in the maladjustment of the mental attitude of the couple. Billy's marriage with Meena turns into a miserable failure. He vehemently denounces the culture of which he has sprung. The rejection was total. He argues, "Their idea of romance was to go and see an American movie or go to one of those wretched restaurants and dance with their wires to a thirty year old tune" (T.S.C.B.B. p.178).

An out right rejection of this sort hardly comes from a negative attitude. Billy thought he would forever hold himself in contempt for what he did to Rima Kaul. He seduced her. He realised he started to behave in a manner that in other men it would have excited his great contempt. What made the situation much worse was that she remained as yet fond of him. It was his degeneration. He began to realise.

"It was as though my soul were taking revenge on me. "Here, you swine, if you haven't the guts to break away from this filth, well, then, I am going to wallow in it until it makes you Sick" (T.S.C.B.B. p.189).

A perfect understanding cements the conjugal relationship. Sindi, Ratan and Biswas are very well aware that marriage is nothing but mutual convenience. The sharp contrast between the sophisticated Meena and the primitive Bilasia reinforces the central vision of the strange case, Bilasia, a little Negro girl moved sexually to him and played a pair of bongo drums. Bilasia offers her womanhood embodying the oral ethos of her culture, the whole class of the tribe.

In ironical situation which Joshi has made in "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" is the total transformation in Billy. A foreign educated with polished behaviour in Billy Biswas have not made him lead a contended life. But it is only when he enters the forest that he is mollified. Unable to resist this call of the primitive force, he went next night to the forest where the tribals drank and danced almost entirely by the light of the moon. Billy drank with them and watched their dance till it turned into a sort of "orgy" with the feverish beats of drums. Lured by the exciting dance he suddenly found himself before Bilasia who looked up into his eyes with smile on her lips. "Her enormous eyes, only a little foggier with drink, poured out a sexuality that was nearly as primeval as the forest that surrounded them". As he approached her "the top of her lungra came down. Her breasts, when he touched them, were full" (T.S.C.B.B. p.142). It was with maddening desire such as he had never felt before that he mated with Bilasia that night. Thus, this son of a supreme court justice became one of the tribals, married Bilasia and had a son from her. He liked this new tribal life.

Any one who is the strange case of Billy Biswas is likely to sound strange only to such pedestrians as are terribly scared of making choices. He is aflame with reason and vitality and was not the person to rest and rust.

It may not be an exaggeration that proximity of individuals leads to cohesion. Billy's union with Bilasia marked the destruction of Billy and his family by the violent turn of events. Billys infatuating with forests, in the sound of the drums and the dance of the love making with bilasia taps his anima. There is a turmoil in him which is caused by the technological advancement from outside and ethnic pressure from inside.

At the crucial moment of his life, he does not act according to the urge of his inner self and is guided by the logic of selfishness and greed. His affair with June provided Sindi with a hope of retrieving his will power and of the overcoming his subjectivity by the rejection of his narrow, self centered world and the acceptance of June's selfless and redeeming love. But that hope is snuffed out by his obstinate adherence to detachment. Sindi's self deception becomes apparent when he attempts to rationalize the whole thing, an attempt that betrays his own cowardice and hypocrisy.

Sindi is not at all surprised by June's plight. He reflects, "In many ways, all that had happened was the logical termination of all that had gone before. My falling in love with June because she was what I was not; her leaving me for Babu for a dream; because I had lost the capacity to dream' and now finally, the end of her dream (T.F. p.161). Still, he sees no

harm in at least perfunctorily consoling June in her distress. At a time when he requires detachment most, Sindi behaves like a lascivious fool, thus causing irreparable damage to the two persons he loves most. His latent desire to retrieve June from Babu, to possess her and to prove that he still holds the key to her happiness, is stirred. But he tries to make it appear a benevolent gesture: "Months of struggle to satisfy Babu's whims and innocence had left her depleted, and now she wanted a gesture of love from somebody she trusted. Was I to say no? I had come all the way to help her. That was perhaps all could do for her ... and when I made love to her it was not in lust or passion but in a belief that I was helping her find herself. It didn't strike me that she belonged to Babu and there were three-and not two-persons involved" (T.F. p.172).

The instincts and passions rule most in the characters of Arun Joshi. The positive attitudes in Babu completely fall apart and the lustful beast in him jubilates its victory over Babu. June leaves his room with greater confidence and with 'a benign expression on her face,' and drives to Babu's flat. She has a quarrel with the sullen Babu and admits, in reply to his accusation, that she has been sleeping with Sindi for a year. Fed on the diet of orthodox Hindu morality, Babu feels aghast at this revelation. He calls June a whore, slaps her and drives off madly in his car. He is killed in a car-wreck.

Moreover, in Raja Rao's novel the identify of the lovers, Ramaswami and Madeleine, is inextricably related to their respective socio-cultural milieus so much so that their most intimate relationship turns out to be

an encounter of cultures and religions. But no such wider significance is intended by Joshi in his novel. In Joshi's novel, characterization is worked out in human terms. Even the differences between June and Sindi in their attitudes to love, marriage and detachment are not due to their racial or cultural differences but due to 'their individual temperaments and backgrounds. Sindi is as much critical of the emotional sterility, spiritual vacuity and gross materialism of America which appears 'much too sterilized... Much too clean and optimistic and empty, a place for well-fed automations rushing about in automatic cars, of the corruption, poverty and exploitation prevalent in Indian society and of Hindu 'nonsense' about idols, morality and religious mumbo-jumbo. It goes to the credit of Arun Joshi that he can create characters who are reliable as individuals and who do not suffer from the burden of cultural or geographical labels.

Karl, Sindi's room-mate, poses both similarity and contrast with him. Like Sindi, he is a victim of loneliness. He, too, is a cynic, a disillusioned individual fed up with the pettiness of life around him. Like Sindi, Karl has no guts, no strong will-power. Every time he has an 'affair,' he promises that this will be the last one. Yet, in the presence of a 'lusty naked body' his vows are broken. The feeling that he is giving the lonely woman moments of pleasure leads to another affair. But, unlike Sindi, he loves his women unselfishly. His austere promises and resolutions are only directed at an emotional release for the moment. What for Sindi is a matter of life and death, is only an expression of a vague disgust for Karl. Events of life 'hit him and they are bounced back. They never seem to get lodged in him.'

The tribal dance in the moonlit night in 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas' marked the transformation of Billy and he rediscovered his primitive self through the merging of his consciousness with that of the tribal folk. Like them, he began to wait 'in a trance - like immobility' for the rising of the moon. As if that was the very reason of his being alive on that night. Sitting there, amidst the 'ebullient chatter of half-drunk tribals', he clearly felt the change that was occurring in him. He had a terrible premonition that it might not be possible for him to go back. The dance and the liquor brought about the explosion of his senses and Billy Biswas, 'a refugee from civilization,' underwent, as he watched the orgiastic dance, his ultimate transformation, getting down to his unadulterated primitive self.

He confronted a reality that almost 'blinded him with its elemental ferocity'. The 'tumultuous drums chiselled away the edifice of his past' while he sat in a trance - like mood and listened to the seductive and over-mastering call of the elemental forest and the primitive dancers. He lamented the belated discovery of his identity. For long, he had wandered away from the depth of the mysterious and forbidden region, because he 'had been afraid, afraid and foolish, squandering the priceless treasure of his life on that heap of tinsel that passed for civilization.'

The pristine nature with all its mystery, grandeur and ferocity was lying before him, and Bilasia, who 'at that moment, was the essence of that primitive force that had called (him) night after night, year after year', led him by hand to that enigmatic world. It was through her that he received 'the truest perceptions of life' which were elusive and communicable only in the language of vision and dream.

It was not merely the satisfaction of sexual desire which he sought in Bilasia whose 'enormous eyes... poured out a sexuality. The fact that Biswas who was an elite and had a westernised education became infatuated with a tribal girl proves his existential spirit. It was something deeper than that, something 'closer to madness, the terrible madness of a man who after great sin and much suffering finally finds himself in the presence of his god'. He discovered in her 'that bit of himself that he (had).

It is specifically these things which Meena lacks and, thus, she can never understand her husband. As Billy tells Romi, "It (their marriage) might have been saved if Meena had possessed a rare degree of empathy or even a sufficient idea of human suffering" (T.S.C.B.B. p.185). But Tuula possesses these qualities, as do Bilasia, and Anuradha in "The Last Labyrinth". They can animate and buoy up the tormented souls of Billy and Som Bhaskar in a way that women like Meena and Leela Sabnis with all their sophistication and rationality never hope to do. Billy could never communicate his problems to Meena. To Romi's question. "But, don't you think is, "I had greater responsibilities towards my soul." And he discarded familial obligations and filial expectations to answer the call of his soul.

It was a moral conviction that had led Billy to ignore the commonly accepted standards of right and wrong in response to a more deeply founded moral imperative. It was the call of his conscience addressed to his authentic self that was dominated by the accepted standards of his society and entangled in concerns that had come to determine it instead

of being determined by it. It reflected Billy's own deepest self-awareness. Though Joshi's protagonists pass through all kinds of pleasure activities, they always find an emptiness which neither worries them nor allows them to be conditioned.

Geeta is all that a wife could be - intelligent, sophisticated, 'aware of the pitfalls of the world.' She is sensible, loving and trusting. Som says, 'If discontent is my trademark, trust is Geeta's ... Geeta trusts like birds fly, like fish swim. Unlike him, but like his mother and Anuradha, Geeta is a great believer, a great enthusiast for temples, shrines, saints and astrologers. After ten years of married for temples, she was 'developed her own guide-book of grief.' But grief does not take a lead in her. Grief or happiness does not work on the attitude of the characters. But the characters are made as stooges in the face of their instincts and emotions.

Som does not know whether it is his betrayal, or an urge of her own that has driven her to the world of the spirit: 'Where she had every right to the adulteries of the body she had only taken to the cleansing of the soul. She has no complaint, no reproach, not even nonchalance for Som's adulteries, his 'little fornications,' but only an enduring trust in him that always sends out its 'unfailing lasers.' Geeta is, like his mother, a child of another world, traversing, like a plane at a higher altitude, a corridor separate from the dark vestibule' that Som has crossed. Theirs is a happy marriage and he cannot imagine life without Geeta. And yet he suffers from discontent, from strange obsession with women. It is an obsession that nobody can satisfactorily explain to him and which takes a new, dramatic turn after his meeting with Anuradha.

Som's obsession with Anuradha is one of love, a love that does not liberate him and sublimate his desires, as the love of Bilasia did Billy in "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas". It freezes him as he is ego-centric and possessive. Som's hysterical and relentless pursuit of Anuradha is a tortuous affair that brings him face to face with the mysteries of life, death and God, and constitutes what may be called the nucleus of the story.

With a view to overcoming this 'one-shot obsession' with Anuradha and with Aftab's depraved heavily that sickens his imagination, Som decides to go abroad with his wife Geeta. They tour extensively in Europe and America. The 'sleepless, burning universe of airports' that girdles the world, the monuments of concrete, the dazzling life of cities like New York with a face that has no pat, are the havens that he recognizes and needs most. Geeta reels under the fury of the travels and of his lust. But despite the unframed question in her eyes, she follows him with unflagging trust. Towards the end of their travels something strange happens. In a hotel room in Tokyo, Som receives, while sleeping with his wife, a trance-like flash of Anuradha in her erotic pose: 'I could see it all: the room with ventilators of stained glass, the peacock on the carpet, the dark red floor. And Anuradha on the bed naked, gasping, her dark triangle almost touching my cheek'.

It is not a coincidence that words like 'illusion,' 'dream,' 'nightmare', recur in all the novels of Joshi, confirming his metaphysical awareness, his sense of unseen worlds. His protagonists are aware of a reality apart from

the one they live in. Billy Biswas asserts that "there are worlds at the periphery of this one, above it and below it, and around it, of which we know nothing until we are in them"

The intimations of this other world make them look upon their worldly achievement and prosperity as illusions. To Sindi, love, marriage and friendship are all illusions fabricated by men to forget the loneliness of existence. He is convinced of the impermanence of things: 'Nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone permanent'. Ratan Rathor in 'The Apprentice' realizes the futility of his single - minded pursuit of career which turns out to be an illusions to him. Som Bhaskar in 'The Last Labyrinth' looks upon his life as a dream, a phantasmagoria, 'vanity of vanities.

It is quite palpable from the novels of Arun Joshi, that the emphasis made by Carl Jung regarding a healthy family has not been observed by any of the protagonists. Carly Jung delineates very clearly that 'a family is like a triangle made of three sides namely father, mother and the child. The absence of any side would lead to the disintegration of the family'. Hence Sindi Oberoi in 'The Foreigner', Billy Biswas in 'The Strange Case of Billy Biswas', Ratan Rathor in 'The Apprentice' are instrumental in one way or other for the incompleteness of this triangle which results in the loss of the family bliss.

Conclusion
