

Haunting Vision in Arun Joshi's Novel The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

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Abstract

In this paper, an attempt has been made to reflect the vision of Arun Joshi's in his novel "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas." His work of art provides an imaginative explosion of reality and gives shape to its contours and forms. The hero escapes from superficial and polished life of modern civilization to mystic life of nature.

Vision means interpretation of experiences and images. In the novel "*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*" Arun Joshi interprets his imaginations and tries to justify them. The hero Billy runs away to the forest without any cogent rhyme and reason. My idea of haunting vision here is the idea which keeps Billy Biswas worrying for a long period of time. Though in "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" the vision of Billy did not fully depend on him but contrary to this it reflects the spirit of the age and shapes the artist's sensibility. The subject of our study here is to find out the haunting visions in "The Strange of Billy Biswas" which is beautifully delineated by Arun Joshi

Joshi attempts to delineate the understanding of the world and imagines to use other medium to carry on his exploration. This mystical urge is so powerful that his hero revolts against the phony culture around him and moves into the forest for the search of peace. He tries to explore dark mysteries of human soul which lies in glassy surfaces of our pretension

The three main characters in the "The Strange case of Billy Biswas" were living to gather in USA for educational purpose knowing each other from tail to toe. One of the characters Romi Sahai who later occupies the post of the Collector tells that Billy from very childhood possesses a dual quality. Billy belongs to elite class but moving in Harlems area in New York where no man of dignity would prefer living. He went to America for an Engineering degree but without intimating the parents he switches to Anthropology. It reveals duality of his character and a love for aboriginals. Once as a school boy he visits Bhubaneswar and the Oriya oboriginals which left deep obsessive impression upon his mind. Even the scriptures of Konark's Sun Temple appealed terribly in his mind visited by him in school days where tinges of adivasis culture, knowledge and spirit of the scriptures are noticed. This fact also has been supported by the Swedish researcher Tuula. Tuula has further confirmed that Billy has a great dormant force which he suppressed and it can explode at any moment. Tuulas assesment of Billy's character is that he has possessed German Urkraft which explodes his life. In the poem, *The Scholar Gipsy* composed by Arnold same vision has been presented in the lines

"Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims."¹

Billy even escapes into the tribal world deserting the world of civilization and the members of his family including wife and son. His life is similar to the

life of Buddha. Billy does not confined his studies to books but he explores the tribal life by mixing with them and during the course of expedition he disappears into the wilderness of Maikala hills

Billy's parents also faces a tough time in persuading him for marriage to Meena. But his adulterous affairs with Rima Kaul continues. After a year, the crisis develops between husband and wife. Their relationship gets hell and he escapes from the world of civilized world to the tribal centre.

O.P Bhatnagar rightly points that "Billy renounced this materialistic society and civilization not to be an ascetic but to fulfill all the demands of his self to the perfection of participated joy"²

After his escape Romi in one of his official visits of the district meets him by chance. Billy tells Romi about the concern of his family. It was clear from their discussions that he was preferring the primitive life as compared to the city society where no one has time to stand and stare. The tribal life is away from the mundane affairs and Bilasia becomes the beacon light of his tribal life In his contact with her he gets a tantric spirituality and it is the belief of the tribal people that the glow of Chandtola was revived by Billy thereby he is capable of creating miracles.

On one hand tribal hails the emergence of Billy and on the other hand the administrative machinery vigorously starts searches for him. The tribal leader Dhunia also pleads his ignorance about Billy's whereabouts but accidentally he meets Romi in loin cloth speaking English fluently. Billy leads nature's life and also knows the curative value of herbs which has cured Romi's wife suffering from migraine. Another incident is related to Dhunia's grandson who had been given new life after two hours of his death. Next incident is concerning to tiger who was constantly harassing the villagers by killing their cattle. The tiger escaped from the jungle and was never seen again. Sometimes improbable things also happen like when Billy predicted rain when there was no relief from the scorching sun.

Billy takes promise from Romi for not leaking information about his presence in the forest but out of curiosity and enthusiasm his wife Situ discloses the secret to the concerned family. Again the administration rolls into action to search out Billy. On the report of Superintendent of police that Billy was shoot out by a constable, (who was member of the search party) the drama of the life of Billy Biswas ends here which is a great catastrophe and tragedy. When Meena sees Billy ashes and believes that God has driven Billy out of her life. The haunting vision of Billy's alienation from civilized society and his escape into the tribal world has beautifully narrated by Romi that " He is interested not in the glossy surfaces of our pretensions but in those dark, mossy labyrinths of his soul that languish forever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun."³

Work Cited

1. Mathew Arnold's poem "*The Scholar Gipsy*"
2. Saxena O.P 1985 "Art and Vision of *The Fictional world of Arun Joshi*, New Delhi 1986. P.55.
3. Joshi Arun, 1993, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs. P.8