GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

Exploring the Quest for Self-Identity in Selected Novels of Debashis Chatterjee

Anshu Rani
Research Scholar
Department of English and Foreign Languages
Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU), Rohtak, Haryana

Abstract

The search for self-identity is an important concern in human life and literature. It involves questions such as who we are, what gives meaning to our lives, how we understand our responsibilities, and how we develop a sense of inner direction. This paper explores the theme of self-identity in two works by Debashis Chatterjee: Krishna: The 7th Sense (2022) and Invincible Arjuna: Nine Milestones on the Hero Path (2016). The two books belong to different literary categories. Krishna: The 7th Sense is presented by its publisher as fiction and is described as an allegorical novel about a teacher and his former students. Invincible Arjuna is a creative and reflective retelling of the Arjuna story, organised around nine milestones of personal development. The paper therefore studies them as complementary narrative and philosophical texts rather than treating both as conventional novels. Using a qualitative and interpretive approach, it examines identity through self-reflection, relationships, love, faith, concentration, commitment, action and spiritual awareness. The discussion suggests that Chatterjee presents identity not as a fixed label but as a continuing process of self-understanding and responsible action. The study also recognises a limitation: its interpretation is based on the books' available descriptions, bibliographic information and published review material, and a full close reading of the complete texts would be required for page-specific textual claims.

Keywords: self-identity, self-discovery, Debashis Chatterjee, Krishna: The 7th Sense, Invincible Arjuna, Indian thought, personal growth, spirituality

1. Introduction

The question of identity is one of the most basic questions people ask during their lives. A person may be known through family, education, profession, religion, culture or social position. However, these external descriptions do not always explain the person's inner experience. People also want to understand their values, abilities, emotions, purpose and place in the world.

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

The search for self-identity begins when a person looks beyond external labels and tries to understand the self.

Literature provides a meaningful space for exploring this search. Through characters, stories, conflicts and reflective ideas, literary works show how people face uncertainty and develop a clearer understanding of themselves. In Indian writing, questions of identity are often connected with relationships, duty, spiritual knowledge, action and the search for a meaningful life. These concerns are visible in the works of Debashis Chatterjee, an Indian author and management scholar whose writing draws on Indian philosophical traditions and contemporary experiences.

This paper focuses on Krishna: The 7th Sense (2022) and Invincible Arjuna: Nine Milestones on the Hero Path (2016). The first is identified as Chatterjee's debut novel. Its central narrative follows Keshav, a teacher, and former students including Neel and Kaya. The publisher's description presents the book as an allegorical story concerned with love, acceptance, faith and fulfilment (Chatterjee, 2022). A published review also identifies identity and faith as central questions in the novel (Madhavan, 2022).

Invincible Arjuna is different in form. It is a creative re-imagining of the Mahabharata character Arjuna and presents nine milestones on the hero path. Its chapter structure includes the shaping of identity, clarity, concentration, love, commitment, action, devotion and awakening (Chatterjee, 2016). The book is catalogued as a work on self-culture rather than as a conventional novel. It is included here as a related philosophical narrative that offers a useful comparison with the fictional journey in Krishna: The 7th Sense.

The central argument of this paper is that self-identity in these works can be understood as a developing process. It grows through reflection, relationships, disciplined attention, meaningful action and awareness of something larger than the individual ego.

2. Conceptual Understanding of Self-Identity

Meaning of Self-Identity: Self-identity refers to a person's understanding of who they are. It includes personal values, memories, beliefs, goals, relationships and a sense of continuity over time. Identity is not formed in isolation. It develops through interaction with family, society, culture and personal experience. At the same time, individuals interpret these influences and make choices about the kind of person they wish to become.

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

Erikson (1968) explains identity development as an important part of human growth. His work highlights the effort to create a stable sense of self while facing social expectations and personal change. Giddens (1991) views the self as a continuing project that people build through reflection and choices. Taylor (1989) connects identity with moral values and the questions that give direction to human life. These ideas provide a useful framework for reading Chatterjee's emphasis on self-understanding and purposeful living.

Identity as a Continuing Process should not be understood as something that is completed once and for all. New relationships, responsibilities, failures and achievements may change the way people understand themselves. A person may begin life with one idea of success and later discover that happiness, meaningful relationships or service are more important. The search for identity therefore includes questioning, learning and revising earlier beliefs.

Social identity is shaped by the roles people perform, such as student, teacher, parent, professional or community member. Inner identity concerns personal values, emotional needs and a sense of purpose. These two dimensions may support one another, but they may also come into conflict. A person may fulfil social duties while feeling disconnected from personal values. Self-discovery involves understanding this difference and finding a more honest relationship between inner beliefs and outward conduct.

3. Debashis Chatterjee: Background

Debashis Chatterjee is an Indian management professor and author. The Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode lists his books and academic contributions, including Invincible Arjuna, The Other 99% and Timeless Leadership (Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, n.d.). His writing often brings together ideas from Indian philosophical traditions and questions of leadership, learning and human development.

The two selected works have different forms and purposes. Krishna: The 7th Sense is a work of fiction published by Rupa Publications in 2022. Its narrative follows Keshav and his former students and explores love, acceptance, faith and fulfilment through an allegorical structure (Chatterjee, 2022). Invincible Arjuna, published by Westland in 2016, revisits the Mahabharata figure through nine milestones on the hero path. Its chapter headings include 'The Shaping of Identity' and 'Arjuna's Awakening: A Vision of the Whole' (Chatterjee, 2016).

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

This distinction matters for the present study. The first book offers characters and a contemporary narrative setting, while the second offers a mythological figure and a structured set of reflective lessons. Both can be studied in relation to identity, but they should not be described as two novels of the same genre.

4. The Quest for Self-Identity in Krishna: The 7th Sense

The Search for Wholeness: The publisher's description of Krishna: The 7th Sense presents the idea that a human being's deeper aim is to become complete by connecting life with its source. It associates this completeness with love as an original nature of the self (Chatterjee, 2022). This idea provides the central direction for an identity-based reading of the novel. The self is not treated simply as a collection of achievements or social roles. It is connected with the search for wholeness and a meaningful way of living.

The idea of wholeness is important because people often experience themselves as divided. Their thoughts may move in one direction while their actions move in another. They may seek professional success but lack emotional satisfaction, or maintain relationships without understanding their own needs. The quest for identity involves bringing these different parts of life into a more meaningful relationship.

Keshav as a Guide and Reflective Figure: The novel's central teacher figure, Keshav, is connected with the lives of former students such as Neel and Kaya. The narrative description suggests that the relationship between teacher and students creates a setting for reflection on love and life choices (Chatterjee, 2022). A teacher in such a narrative can be understood as more than a source of information. The teacher becomes a guide who encourages learners to examine their assumptions and understand their experiences.

The role of guidance is significant in identity formation. People often need another person to ask questions that they have avoided asking themselves. Guidance does not necessarily mean giving ready-made answers. It can mean helping individuals recognise their own values and responsibilities. In this sense, Keshav's role provides a narrative framework for exploring the relationship between learning and self-discovery.

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

Neel, Kaya and the Experience of Relationships: The publisher's account identifies Neel, Kaya and other former students as important figures in the novel's story of passion, pain, acceptance and affection. These experiences are closely connected with identity because people often discover themselves through relationships. Love can reveal emotional needs, fears, expectations and the ability to care for another person.

Relationships may also challenge a person's earlier understanding of the self. A person who has defined success only through achievement may begin to value emotional connection. Someone who has avoided vulnerability may learn the importance of trust. The novel's emphasis on love and acceptance therefore offers a useful way to examine identity as something shaped through human connection. A detailed character-by-character interpretation, however, should be developed after consulting the complete novel.

Faith, Meaning and Self-Discovery: The novel places the contemporary lives of its characters alongside stories and reflections associated with Krishna. This structure connects personal questions with a larger spiritual tradition. Madhavan's (2022) review notes that the book raises fundamental questions of identity and faith and encourages readers to pause and reflect.

Faith in this context can be understood as a search for meaning and direction. It may help individuals look beyond immediate desires and consider the wider consequences of their choices. The novel's spiritual dimension thus expands the meaning of identity: knowing oneself is not only knowing personal preferences but also examining values, relationships and responsibilities.

5. Self-Identity and the Hero's Journey in Invincible Arjuna

Arjuna and the Shaping of Identity: Invincible Arjuna presents the story of Arjuna as a source of lessons for personal development. The first chapter is titled 'The Birth of a Hero: The Shaping of Identity' (Chatterjee, 2016). This title makes identity an explicit starting point for the book's hero-path structure. Arjuna's identity is not presented only as a birthright or a social title. It is shaped through learning, discipline, choices and the development of personal abilities. The idea is relevant to ordinary life. People may inherit social positions, family expectations or cultural identities, but they also develop their character through decisions and actions. Identity is therefore both received and formed. The Arjuna narrative allows the author to explore how potential becomes meaningful through practice and responsibility.

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

Clarity and Concentration: The book's chapter structure moves from identity to mastery, clarity and concentration. The story of Arjuna's focused attention is used to explain the value of one-pointed concentration. The author's presentation suggests that inner strength depends not only on talent but also on the ability to direct attention towards a meaningful goal (Chatterjee, 2016).

Clarity contributes to identity because people need to understand what matters to them. Without clarity, they may follow every external demand or become distracted by comparison with others. Concentration helps translate values into practice. It allows a person to invest time and effort in goals that are consistent with their understanding of themselves.

Love, Desire and Detachment: The chapter sequence includes a discussion of love, desire and detachment. These ideas are relevant to identity because human beings are shaped by what they desire and how they relate to others. Desire can provide motivation, but uncontrolled attachment may limit freedom and judgement. A balanced understanding of love requires care and commitment without losing one's sense of responsibility.

This theme connects with the emphasis on love in Krishna: The 7th Sense. Both works invite reflection on the place of relationships in a meaningful life. The difference lies in their presentation: the novel explores these questions through a contemporary story, while Invincible Arjuna approaches them through the symbolic and philosophical journey of an epic hero.

Commitment and Action: Invincible Arjuna includes milestones on commitment and yoga in action. These ideas suggest that identity becomes visible through conduct. It is not enough for a person to claim certain values; those values must be reflected in decisions and actions. Commitment gives continuity to effort, while purposeful action connects inner understanding with the external world.

This perspective is especially relevant in contemporary life, where individuals may face uncertainty about career, relationships and social responsibilities. A strong sense of identity can help people make choices that are consistent with their principles, even when those choices are difficult.

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

Devotion and the Vision of the Whole: The final stages of the book's structure include discovering devotion and Arjuna's awakening to a vision of the whole (Chatterjee, 2016). These ideas move the discussion beyond individual achievement. They suggest that self-understanding can deepen when a person recognises connections with other people and a larger moral or spiritual order.

The vision of the whole offers an important contrast to a narrow, ego-centred identity. A person is not separate from relationships, society or the wider world. A mature sense of self includes awareness of duties and consequences. In this way, the hero's journey becomes a movement from individual potential towards responsible participation in life.

6. Comparative Analysis of the Two Works

The two selected works approach self-identity through different literary forms, but they share several concerns. Krishna: The 7th Sense uses an allegorical contemporary narrative involving a teacher and former students. Invincible Arjuna uses a mythological figure and a sequence of reflective milestones. The first is more directly concerned with relationships, love and fulfilment, while the second places greater emphasis on discipline, clarity, commitment and action.

Aspect	Krishna: The 7th Sense	Invincible Arjuna
Form	Contemporary allegorical novel	Creative philosophical retelling of an epic figure
Central focus	Love, acceptance, faith and fulfilment	Identity, clarity, concentration and the hero path
Route to self-understanding	Relationships, reflection and spiritual guidance	Learning, discipline, commitment and purposeful action
Key figure(s)	Keshav, Neel, Kaya and other characters	Arjuna as a model for personal development
View of identity	Search for wholeness through love and meaning	Development of character through practice and action

The comparison shows that identity is presented as both inward and outward. Inwardly, individuals need reflection, love, faith and clarity. Outwardly, they need commitment, discipline and responsible action. A person cannot develop a complete identity through thought alone, nor through achievement alone. The two works together suggest that meaningful selfhood requires a balance between inner understanding and practical conduct.

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

7. Relevance to Contemporary Society

The search for identity is especially relevant in a world shaped by rapid social and technological change. Young people may face pressure to select careers, meet family expectations, maintain social relationships and present an ideal image of themselves. These pressures can create confusion about personal values and long-term purpose.

The selected works offer several points for reflection. First, they encourage individuals to look beyond external measures of success. Second, they highlight the importance of relationships and emotional understanding. Third, they suggest that clarity and concentration are necessary for meaningful achievement. Finally, they connect personal growth with responsibility towards others. These ideas can be useful in education, leadership development and personal reflection.

The works should not be treated as ready-made solutions to every modern problem. Their value lies in the questions they raise and the opportunity they provide readers to examine their own assumptions. Their use of Indian philosophical and epic traditions also shows how inherited cultural resources can be interpreted in relation to contemporary experiences.

8. Conclusion

The quest for self-identity is a journey through which individuals try to understand their values, relationships, abilities and purpose. Debashis Chatterjee's Krishna: The 7th Sense and Invincible Arjuna offer two different but related approaches to this subject. The novel explores love, acceptance, faith and fulfilment through a contemporary allegorical narrative. Invincible Arjuna uses the figure of Arjuna to discuss the shaping of identity, clarity, concentration, commitment, action, devotion and awakening.

The study finds that identity in these works is not simply inherited or determined by social position. It develops through reflection, learning, relationships and choices. The individual becomes more complete by connecting inner values with outward conduct. The works also suggest that personal growth should not remain limited to individual success; it should include care, responsibility and awareness of a larger whole.

The two books therefore provide useful material for discussing self-identity in contemporary Indian writing and thought. Their different forms should be respected: one is a novel, while the other is a philosophical retelling. Read together, they show how narrative and reflection can encourage readers to examine who they are and what kind of life they wish to lead.

GYANBODH
An International Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal
ISSN:3048-9792
Volume: 3
Issue: 5
September-October: 2026

References

1. Chatterjee, D. (2016). Invincible Arjuna: Nine milestones on the hero path. Westland.
2. Chatterjee, D. (2022). Krishna: The 7th sense. Rupa Publications.
3. Erikson, E. H. (1968). Identity: Youth and crisis. W. W. Norton.
4. Giddens, A. (1991). Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age. Stanford University Press.
5. Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode. (2026). Prof. Debashis Chatterjee. https://iimk.ac.in/faculty-profiles/DEBASHIS-CHATTERJEE
6. Madhavan, A. (2022, September 4). Krishna—The 7th Sense review: Forces the reader to pause and think. The Week. https://www.theweek.in/theweek/leisure/2022/09/03/krishna-the-7th-sense-review-forces-the-reader-to-pause-and-think.html
7. Taylor, C. (1989). Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity. Harvard University Press.