

Arun Joshi's "*The Foreigner*": A Record Of Emotional Turbulence And Angst Of The Modern Man

TANURI DURGABHAVANI

Research Scholar
Department of English
KL University
Vaddeswaram
Guntur District
bhavanithanuri16@rguktn.ac.in

DR. K. USHA RANI

Assistant Professor
Department of English
K.L. University
Vaddeswaram
Guntur District

Abstract:

*The study is to show how Arun Joshi characterized the inner crisis of the modern man in his novel *The Foreigner* published in 1971. This is his very first novel which highlights the human face of modern science and technology that has dislocated man from his environment and sowed seeds of traumas and agonies. Here Joshi illustrates the growing antagonism between man and technology. In this novel the writer wants to depict the emotional turbulence and angst of the protagonist which are heading him to a disaster. Arun Joshi being an industrialist aptly characterized the modern man in the contemporary society who finds himself dejected, detached and indifferent in this urbanized world. In the present materialistic world there is chaos and confusions in the life of humans filled with frustration, hate, hopelessness and sadness. This paper explores how the novel takes us to the depths of human agonies due to the traumatic influence of urbanization on man.*

Key Terms: Traumas, Agonies, Alienation, Angst, Industrialization, Modernization,

Introduction:

Arun Joshi, winner of Sahitya Academic Award in 1993 for his masterpiece *The Last Labyrinth* (1981) is one of the most prominent Post-colonial writers who have vouchsafed five novels embedded with thematic and realistic scopes. Joshi is an Indian born original writer of great merit and instinctive ability to communicate the feelings of the post-independence Indians. Many of his writings reveal the various perspectives of the inner lives of the surrounded protagonist. Sindi Oberio, the protagonist of the novel *The Foreigner* feels the sense of alienation and rootlessness. As the hero faces the problems of the society, he tries to succor the workers of the industry who lead a precarious life. The author's critical thinking was out in the form of an analytical story. He presented the story with his varied ideas. The story deals with some intricacies of life. For example the people leaving in the world amidst of thousands of men but as a whole they are alone. Arun Joshi's fictional world is a revelation of hostile world where man is confronted by the self and the question of his existence. Though Joshi has frankly acknowledged the influence of western existentialists in his works, he turns towards the Indian philosophy depicted in the Bhagwadgita and the Upanishads. According to Joshi Hinduism is highly oriented philosophy as it has so much value to the right way to live or to exist. The protagonists of all his novels are somehow related to India and its culture as well as philosophy. The author noticed the fall off old values resulting in the absurd world where man is searching for a way to lead a meaningful life. Joshi has recorded the modern man's traumas and agonies in his novels.

Traumas and Agonies in '*The Foreigner*':

Arun Joshi's first novel 'The Foreigner' (1968) is largely an autobiographical as his protagonist seems to be his mouthpieces advocating his creator's perception of reality. The author is a proponent of existentialism who strongly described man's trauma that springs from his psycho-emotional needs and estranged self in a meaningless world. In R.S Pathak words "Alienation is one of the greatest problems confronting modern man. Its corrosive impact can be seen in the form of generation gap, the anti-war movement, the hippie phenomenon, his credibility gap...and so on." Through his maiden novel Joshi furnished before us a dehumanized society where modern man felt isolated and plunged into detached view of life.

The story is a series of flashbacks told by the hero-narrator point of view. The novel begins with its hero Surrender (Sindi) Oberio who has no rest whether it is Kenya, Uganda, London or America. Sindi is a son of English mother and Kenyan-Indian father. The hero experiences that 'foreignness' is more a state of mind than aloofness caused by birth in any specific country. Being orphaned, he is brought up by his uncle who settled in Kenya. His isolation from his environment, tradition and his true self make him distress of loneliness. Sindi's psychic aberrations which emanate from his neglected childhood and untoward relations make him a foreigner unto the last.

The hero says: "I wondered in what way, if any, I belonged to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose, unless you could call the search for peace a purpose. Perhaps I felt like that because I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter! It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. My foreigners lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went". (TF 61)

The protagonist experiences detachment moving from place to place his childhood in Kenya, his studies in England and America in an engineering field and India where he finally decides to settle. The hero utters, "And yet all shores are alien when you do not belong everywhere" (TF 92). The story opens in Boston with Sindi's deep anguish when he finds Babu's dead body, an engineering student who has died in a car accident and June R. Biyth Babu's fiancée who also dies of abortion. Their loss makes him to taste the consequential pain and wanted to leave to India to find solace. The author gripped the reader's attention by his flash back narrative technique, throwing light on past and present, real and absurd, the world of imagination and of reality. Joshi's prominence lies in unraveling various aspects of crisis in modern man's life. Sindi recounts his past to Shiela, Babu's sister.

Sindi Oberio, a rootless young man main character in the novel pursued his education in England and America. There he comes into contact with Babu Khemka and they become good friends. The hero experiences hypocrisy and artificiality of life and love in American women like Anna and Kathy. Sindi had a short passionate affair with June who later engaged with Babu. The doomed triangle love story depicts that relations are temporary and maintained only for pleasure. He comments "more often a lust for possession than anything else. People got married just as they bought new cars. And then they gobbled each other up"

(TF60). The demise of Babu and June takes Oberio to an advance state of dissolution. Due to his mental agitations; he loses his spirit of life and feels a sense of ignorance that makes the world a waste and a vain and drifts into “the abominable absurdity of the world” (TF202). Joshi discussed the human relations and its various aspects in this novel at length.

In the later part of the novel Sindi moves to India to escape from the uncomfortable situations and giving the same old reasons. In Delhi he meets Mr. Khemka, Babu’s father and Babu’s sister Sheila. Mr. Khemka offers him a job in his firm as a personal assistant. Sindi comes to know that Mr. Khemka is indulged in doing fraud activities; he becomes indifferent and decides to leave the firm. He finds a new job in Bombay. Mr. Khemka with his meaningless materialistic preoccupation commits mistakes resulting in imprisonment leaving the firm in dissolution. Joshi’s concept of despair and detachment is expounded through Sindi Oberio who has learnt to be detached from the world. All most all characters in Arun Joshi’s novels experience loneliness, isolation and lack of individuality.

Muthu, a clerk in Mr. Khemka’s office becomes a prominent character in changing Sindi’s vision of life as he has lost confidence and scared of attachments and doesn’t wish to be involved in. Muthu convinces Oberio to stay back and asks him to take over the management of the firm. Muthu asks Sindi, “But it is not involvement, Sir, he said. “Sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved.” (TF 188)

Arun Joshi reflects Indian philosophy of Karma yoga through Sindi’s Attitude of detachment and attachment. The writer explained Karma Yoga as actions that are performed without expecting anything in return. “Nothing seems real to me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important” (TF 113). Joshi believes man has only one duty that is the duty of happiness and good work but he also regrets the malevolent tendency of Indians in mimicking materialism. “The death teaches you how to overcome your death” (TF 164). Arun Joshi proved himself as a novelist of inner reality with the depiction of psychological reality. Joshi enriched Indian English fiction by revealing unexplored mysteries and the human predicaments for attaining inner peace.

The chief concern of the writer is with the gradual evolution of Sindi Oberio from a negative philosophy of detachment to its positive aspect. In the opening of the novel Sindi, the protagonist depends on his own philosophy of non-involvement for happiness, which results in the death of Babu and June. But he gradually learns that real detachment from men and matters comes when one performs one’s duty sincerely without any desire for the result, as laid down in The Gita.

Conclusion:

Arun Joshi’s novels often depict philosophical dimensions through his contemporary characters that are urban. The writer has used different ways to attain the state of liberation described in the Hindu scriptures in his novels. These are Jnanayoga (knowledge of the reality), Bhakthiyoga (adoration and love of the Supreme Person) and Karma yoga

(subjection to the will of the Divine purpose). All these three ways of life are used in three novels: *The strange case of Billy Biswas*, *The Apprentice* and *The foreigner* respectively. Arun Joshi's novels express the absurdity of modern man's existence in the modern world. Through his novel *The Foreigner* the writer tried to show the protagonist experiences, the crisis of the modernized and highly industrialized civilization and its impact on the individual in dehumanizing him along with individual's eager to find out and reaffirm the value of meaningful life.

Joshi with his deep knowledge of Indian philosophy gives entirely an Indian solution in his novel. The division of the novel orders the events, as the first part lights up the beginning of relationships, the second growth and decay, and the last, defeat and destruction.

Thus the novel *The Foreigner* echoes the pain of detachment and all the mystic realities of modern men's life. Kale Morch refers to *The Foreigner* as "one of the finest novels to come out of India". Arun Joshi is successful in dealing with some intricacies of life like all humans are alone in this world.

Works Cited:

1. Bhatnagar, M.K. *The Novels of Arun Joshi: Critical Study*. New Delhi: Atlantic Books, 2001.
2. Arun Joshi. *The Foreigner*. London: Asian Publishing House, 1968.
3. Radhakrishnan, S. (tr.) *the Bhagavad-Gita*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993.
4. *The Foreigner A Study in Technique, the Novels of Arun Joshi*. Ed. R.K. Dawan. New Delhi: 1992.
5. Bhatnagar, O.P. "Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*: A Critique of East and West".
6. *A Critical Study of Arun Joshi's The Foreigner: The Criterion: An International Journal in English*
7. M.K. Naik. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Delhi. Sahitya Academic. 2002
8. Research Articles