

Searching for Self-identity in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*

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Arun Joshi, out of the eminent novelists, is the portrayer of human predicament. The dilemma of a young is depicted in his novel "The Foreigner". The young has lost himself in a world which is meaningless to him. A measuring is tried to be found by the young man to his life in the present moment. The leading role, which is caught, talks places in between his past life and future life. He cannot understand a balance which is to be brought in between the past life and future life. A measuring is be secured in a young man's life. Despite the situations of Sindi Oberai trying to isolate, he, prudent environments, alienates himself. 'Foreignness' in his life is experienced in this novel. He experiences this as a protagonist and this becomes symbolic of the title of the novel. The physical agony of the protagonist is expresses in this paper. The meaning of his life is also depicted by the pain of suffering. It is the truth that detachment is moderately with the existential hero in involvement, but it does not remain in withdrawal.

Essentially, literature mirrors as well as interprets our life. The theme of alienation in the modern Indo-English literature opens a new realm of understanding of human nature and behavior. It helps us to focus on an individual in terms of his responses and reaction to other human beings, the environment and with his own self. Environment, the society and its tradition and the expectation of civilised beahviour and attitudes in the society in which man is born and brought up are mainly responsible for his strange behaviour in and attitude to life. Nowadays Alienation is f the greatest problems confronting modern man.

Arun Joshi gained name and fame with the publication of his novel *The Foreigner*. Sindi Oberoi is the protagonist of this novel. It speaks about the whole journey of the protagonist and shows his detachment to the world. Joshi depicts Sindi's wince succeeding his loneliness and his vagabond. However, this novel depicts the wince of Sindi who finds himself lost in the maze of worldly existence. Joshi draws the inner mind of the protagonist and he gives an account of the

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skirmish between involvement in and detachment from the world going on in the mind of Sindi. Hence, Sindi tries to disunite from the world to find out the solution to the self problem of his loneliness as well as foreignness.

Initially, it represents the story of an individual who is alienated from his identity, society and environment but it delves deep into dark recess of mind and gives an autobiographical touch also. Joshi feels himself as a foreigner wherever he goes in his early days for instances, Kenya, Uganda, London, America and at last with India. He twists in loneliness, possession, detachment, and involvement also. Finally, he lives in India when he bonds to live not for himself, but for those who really need him. And thus he gets affirmation through isolated action. This novel, *The Foreigner*, is an attempt to highlight the sufferings of the protagonist, Sindi who is destitute of love and cultural identity in the hurly-burly of worldly survival.

Moreover, Sindi is a self-seeker and absurd man as well as an existential character. None the less his experiences tell him not to be involved but he gets involved through love and goodness. Modestly, it is the chance that Sindi gets involved this way or that way but he wants to live the life like an Indian saint. Additionally, the terrible practices of detachment in America force him to leave the country and to go to India as well he decides within himself. Later he hopes to live in India and he considers that life is entirely different from New York and Boston. Sindi's life account is mainly of his search for his roots in a parentless world and realising his commitment to life and action. Though he is born in Kenya of an Indian father and an English mother, he is indeed a born foreigner belonging to no nation.

Pathetically, after the death of his parents, he becomes all alone in this wide world of never ending dilemmas. However the tragic Sindi was protected by his uncle and a short span of time he also dies and once again he finds himself alone, rootless and unprotected in this world. This parentless childhood of Sindi makes in him a deep sense of emotional timidity and develops his vision of life. Sindi finds himself a foreigner in all the places and in solitude. Moreover, the feeling of having no family ties and being loneliness everywhere shakes his soul. Sindi's soul cries abundantly, "I had never had a home." (20) and he remembers:

I hadn't felt like that when my uncle was living. It wasn't that I loved him very much or anything as a matter of fact we rarely exchanged letters but the thought that he moved about in the small house on the outskirts of Nairobi, gave me a feeling of having an anchor. After his death the security was destroyed. Now I suppose I existed only for dying.
(55)

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Consequently, Sindi's fascination with his solitariness, foreignness and rootlessness, he becomes indifferent to the worldly activities around him as well he seems not to be moved by anything. Subsequently the lack of home, country and social identity has resulted in an emotional insecurity giving birth to foreignness in him. Though his deprivation of parental love bursts his heart, his realisation of 'loneliness' in the entire social set up causes his failure to find any purpose behind his existence. Everybody has pity on him by looking his loneliness but it multiplies his irritation because he hates the pity that he gets from the neighbors. However, his wandering from Kenya to America is a vain attempt to deal with the devastating archetypes of survival. In addition to this, his alienation should be resolved from his inner self. He says:

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 foreignness lay within me and I could not leave myself behind wherever I went. (55)

In addition, Sindi knows that mere crossing of international margin is no solution. Sindi expresses to June: "We are alone, both you and I. This is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within." (107) Therefore, this loneliness he becomes indifferent to this world and says "nothing is bothering me." (117) He has no feelings for his parents and finds no purpose in human existence and he considers that this whole world is purposeless for him. Moreover, he does not find the meaning of his existence as well as he has no aim in his life and is suffering from existential agony. Unquestionably, he does not find reality except birth and death. He tells June, "Nothing ever seems real to me, leave alone permanent. Nothing seems to be very important." (92)

Remarkably, all these observations bring an inferiority complex in Sindi and he developed a feeling of reinforcement, also he has no interest in ordinary relationships because "death wipes out everything for most of us anyway. All this is left is a big mocking zero." (92) Sometimes, his Catholic friend's preaching in London has made him to believe this cosmos as an illusion and later he understands that getting involved with this illusion is painful. So that he is still in search of right things at right places, weary with his futility of existence he thinks:

Twenty-fifth Christmas on this planet, twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places. Twenty-five years gone in search of peace, and what did I have to show for achievement; a tinstone body that had to be fed four times a day, twenty-eight times a week. This was the sum of a life-time striving. (80)

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On the other hand, he thinks to find his way from a rational interpretation and passive reinforcement. As his failure in relationships is due to his self interest, he remains unable to satisfy his soul to have inner peace. His sad lonely experience has lasting effect on his dream of life. He says: "it marked a new beginning in my thinking" (145). He further argues:

That was the first time I came face to face with my pain... All that I had thought pleasurable had ended in pain, and after all this I was as far from finding the purpose of my life as I had been to start with. It all puzzled me. And I spent a whole year wandering through the maze of my existence looking for an answer. (144)

In this fashion, Arun Joshi has created Sindi's character, a typically confused state of a postmodern youth who is always alone and a foreigner everywhere. He has embraced a unique method of storytelling from aesthetic point of view. This novel presumes the readers in a detective manner and certain points evoke the mystery of a suspense story. The novelist mixes together the present and past, the world of reality and imagination, and virtually, the East and the West. He has espoused autobiographical method to share the life experience of the protagonist Sindi Oberai. Sindi was used to reveal the psyche with the society and to peel the layers of his mental conditions.

For his interpretation, he makes use of the concept of involvement and detachment. Thus, the novelist succeeds to convince the readers that individuals suffer in this world because of their wrong interpretation of certain philosophy and also because of their ego of what they know is the authentic way of living. Hopefully, this paper will provide true position of an individual striving hard to establish his identity in the twentieth century materialistic Indian society. Additionally, it will also support us to establish an individual's strength on discovering his roots and identity.

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