

THE ISSUE OF ALIENATION IN ARUN JOSHI'S "THE FOREIGNER" & "THE STRANGE CASE OF BILLY BISWAS"

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ABSTRACT

Alienation is one of the most important themes in literature. This paper aims to explain the meaning of alienation as Arun Joshi describes in his novels, "The Foreigner" and "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas". It also explains that the alienation is as one of the greatest problems confronting the modern man. Moreover, the alienation is considered as one of the most important themes of both novels. It explains the effects of alienation in general, and the alienation of soul in particular. Within the roles of characters especially the hero of the novel, this paper describes the agony of alienation for both individual and society. This paper aims at studying the way to bring out the love of the beauty of nature that leads to a meaningful life. Through, The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, Arun Joshi skillfully highlights that modern man feels awfully dissatisfied with his modern life in this civilization and explains the discomfort prevalent in this complacent modern community, which makes the man feel isolated and self-alienated. Joshi's novels encourage us to view the whole world from a changed perspective. The author supports that primitivism will lead us to explain that the touch of nature will enhance our spiritual needs to gain basic and natural balance and peace. This paper aims at studying many complexities of the modern man. Joshi is considered as a post-colonial writer who portrayed the *problems of identity crisis and alienation. Such the kind of study will serve to understand the nuances of predicaments of identity and alienation in the larger cultural space of India or any country in the whole world.*

Keywords: Arun Joshi, The Foreigner & The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, The theme of alienation in the novel.

I. INTRODUCTION

Arun Joshi was born in 1939 in Varanasi where he lived until he was seven. He spent the rest of his childhood in Lahore, and then He moved back to the Indian Punjab during the traumatic period of the partition in 1947. He was excellent, so he was awarded a scholarship to the United State of America, where he obtained a degree in Engineering and Industrial Management from the University of Kansas. After completing his education, Joshi came back to India and got a job on the management staff of an Indian company, before establishing his small company. Arun Joshi became one of the greatest Indian writers. Arun Joshi is a great Indian writer. His powerful writing deals with the mystery and darkness of the human mind. His novels searching for self-identity and existentialism, along with the moral choices of a human being that has to make him won huge critical appreciation and respected in India. The most important interest of Arun Joshi was Psychiatry so his writings are full of his great personal experiences since his youth. He was known for his novels The foreigner, The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, The Last Labyrinth, The City of and the River and The Apprentice. Arun Joshi (1939-93) is one of most important Indian novelists of the post-independence India, he considered as the best Indian English fiction writer such as Nayantara Sahgal and Anita Desai. His significant novels describe the alienation as well as "the dilemma of human loneliness which has various manifestations in the form of powerlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation and self-estrangement" Vaishya.V p373. The author of five novels, written mainly during the 1970s,

who won the Sahitya Akademi award for his penultimate book, *The Last Labyrinth*, barely registers as a name today. Moreover, Arun Joshi is a writer in the pre-Rushdie era, who deals with mystery and darkness of the human mind. Arun Joshi powerfully developed the theme of alienation in some of his novels.

All heroes Joshi are engulfed to search for the meaning of life. They are lonely and feeling the alienation of the world around. His characters are mentally upset and filled with disappointment, self-alienation for they consider themselves as foreigners and strangers in this physical world. His novels portray the self and search for the central focus way in which the self-alienated from the family and society. Joshi deals with the predicaments of the modern man who has no feeling of belonging to the community in which he lives. He finds himself a heavy burden upon the whole society.

The first novel of Joshi is *The Foreigner* which is the story of a youth born of an English mother and Indian father who died when he was only four, his uncle in Kenya brought him up. In England, where Sindi had his early education. Sindi feels alienated and also feels that his life is meaningless, he made relationships with Anna and Kathy. Anna, a woman of about thirty-five, a minor artist and separated from her husband. She leaves him after discovering that he also has a relationship with another woman, Kathy also leaves him after a few weeks. Sindi falls in love with another American girl June and she is in love with him too. finally, she marries his friend Babu, who commits suicide when he knows that June in love with Sindi. June dies in a tragic way. Sindi was very sad and he realized that he was mistaken. Sindi travelled to India to meet the father of Babu, Mr Khemka and his sister Sheila and worked with them.

" Sindi of the foreigner is a product of multiple continents, born in Africa to an Indian father and an English mother brought up by his Indian uncle, educated in England and America feels always a nowhere man, who finally gets his anchorage in his ancestral home India after a long struggle with loneliness and misconstrued detachment " Bala . B.

" His second novel "*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*" was published in 1971 which shows the continuation of the theme, viz., search for individuality. As K.R.S. Iyengar observes: "In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Arun Joshi has carried his exploration of consciousness of hapless and rootless people a stage further, and has revealed to our gaze new gas-chambers of self-forges misery." The novel is a severe condemnation of the spiritual uprootedness of the Post-Independence Westernized Indian Society. Billy's search for meaning, however, is conducted in a very hostile atmosphere and he has to pay a heavy price with his life for not conforming to the norms of the urban civilization- for daring to step out of its stifling confines. The novel, thus, deals with the existential theme of estrangement from self and from society, which is a common experience in the modern world of urbanization, changing values, and rootlessness." pp. 514.

Through, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Arun Joshi depicts the modern man's soul of being alienated from the whole social and cultural aspects of his life. Full details in this novel given skillfully about the hero of the novel by the first-person narrator who gets our admiration, Arun Joshi tries to discover the protagonist's inner crisis and psychological predicaments. *The Foreigner* is the first novel written by Joshi in which he portrays the loss of identity and the self-alienation of human, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is the second novel of Joshi in which he portrays a conflict between civilization and primitive life or between nature and art. Billy in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, lonely is searching for his identity whereas Sindi in *The Foreigner*, is helped by others in his search.

Billy Biswas in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* and Sindi in *The Foreigner* try to liberate the self from normative demands of the money-worshipping social context and diagnose the malady – the crookedness of the world. Both protagonists exercise their choice of freedom and dedicate themselves to the fulfillment of inner needs.

II. THE THEME OF ALIENATION IN THE NOVEL

The alienation is one of the greatest problems confronting modern man as well as it is a very common theme in Indo English novel. "The Indian writers in English lose their sense of identity – both personal and national and feel alienated in their own home making frantic efforts to seek to organize and affirm that identity " Pathak. R. In many cases, not only the novelists but also the characters of their novels face the identity crisis. This novel, *The Foreigner* seems to be the story of its narrator. Who describes helplessly on the meaningless part of his life and equally meaningless future. He feels uprooted and lost as a foreigner anywhere. He feels alienated in every place he goes, in Kenya where he is born, in the UK and USA where he is the student, and in India where he is he finally settles.

"Sindi is threatened with the fear of the loss of his identity, by his contact with others D.H.Lawrence's Paul Moral is also the same case. In his *Sons and Lovers*, Paul seeks to confirm his identity through his relationship with Miriam. He tries to maintain a safe distance between them. When Miriam turns out to be possessive, Paul feels his self is threatened" Vatsa.S and Gaur.R .P.32,33.

"Alienation is the basic form of rootlessness, which forms the subject of many psychological, sociological, literary and philosophical studies. Alienation is a major theme of the human condition in the contemporary epoch. It is only natural that a pervasive phenomenon like alienation should leave such an indelible impact upon the contemporary literature ." Bani-ana p 1.

In some of the Indian novels in general and the novels of Arun Joshi in particular, there is a large group of characters whose attempt to define their relationship with the society leads them to alienation from their true identity. Alienation is one of the most important themes in literature. It is as the result of estrangement from their true selves, or from their cultural heritage, or from society, the alienation as powerful theme has been used successfully by many American as well as Indian writers to study the relationship between an individual's true and false identities, between assimilation and cultural heritage, and between the individual and society. The protagonist of the novel, Sindi Oberoi goes on hopping from one country to another because he finds his life meaningless and rootless thus valueless and purposeless. In London, he searches for the meaning of life and he describes the world as an absurd and meaningless world. Sindi hates himself and even talking about his parents because of his feeling of alienation "I hate talking about my parents. I hated the pity I got from people. I lost them when I was four " *The Foreigner* 2010 P 12 . Moreover he feels that the past was against him. " My foreign background stood against me " *The Foreigner* 2010 P. 15 . Sindi feels that he is a man totally alienated from everything in his surroundings and society even from his love.

The experience of Joshi is shown through his novel, *The Foreigner* he describes his understanding of a deeper reality of our times. The novel portrays the protagonist's agony of alienation at the meaninglessness of human condition. The central theme of Joshi is the alienation as well as the darkness of the soul, which happens as result of the agony of alienation.

The novel, *The Foreigner*, is a presentation of the uprooted hero Sindi Oberoi, who is an orphan, he lost his parents at the age of four as well as he lost the love and care in his childhood. Away from his home grounds, he regards his past as absolutely meaningless. There is no hope in his life as well as in his future ." I want to do something meaningful " *The foreigner* 2010 P 14 " that should be something that could make me forget myself, but I changed my mind" *The foreigner* 2010 P 14. Sindi attempts to discover himself and his mind. furthermore, he tries to make a search for his identity, hopping to arrive at the meaning of his life.

Through the long stay in America, Sindi got only one thing which is the love and friendship of June Blyth. She is American, modern girl, but full of love, tenderness and peace. She marries his friend Babu who committed suicide after his knowing about her love towards Sindi. June meets a tragic death, so he considers himself as a responsible about the death of both June and Babu. Yet love and life seem to have no significance for him. The only real things for him are birth and death.

Sindi leaves for India after completion of his education. He joins Mr Khemk's firm. The saving grace in India is the kindheartedness of the entire people of India in general and the kindness of traditional girl, Sheila in particular. She is like June full of love and tenderness "It was Sheila that girl had a passion not for me, but her dead brother. Whenever I want to their house she cornered me on the edge of a sofa and asked me things about Babu" *The Foreigner* 2010. P. 17.

Arun Joshi's novel "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" is one of the most important novels written in Indian literature. The theme of alienation in general and the self- alienation, frustration, anxiety that appeared in the "The Foreigner" is further developed here in "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" with different ideas. The two novels are different in their major themes and technique. Both novels are single – character based, searching, faith, and self- alienation. Sindi Oberoi feels alienated from his environment so he seems to be as foreigner and alien till the end of novel whereas Billy feels alienated from the environment but at least he is able to find an amount of achievement in entire life.

Billy suffers from two kinds of alienation, first is the alienation within himself and second the alienation from his society. The hero strongly starts searching to find the meaning of his life and his self among the tribes Satpura Hills. At the beginning of the novel, the alienation and restlessness of the soul of hero Billy among the people of his society become evident right.

Billy is from the rich and respectable Indian family and he is studying at New York University. In order to search for his identity, he chooses to live in Harlem, the Black ghetto of America. Billy's parents want him to be an engineer but because his searching of identity he goes against the desire of his parents, he studies anthropology. " travel, travel, travel" these words express his desire to travel because of his restlessness and self- alienation.

" I could not figure out what excited or troubled me unless it was a sudden interest in my identity who was I? Where I come from? Where was I going? " The hero cannot control his feeling well because of the problem of identity and search for self.

III. THE ALIENATION OF THE SOUL AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE CHARACTERS

"The fictional world of Arun Joshi postulates the class between alienated self and the socio-cultural forces. The protagonist of his novels is subjected extreme social, cultural and psychological pressures ." Swain.S and Samartray .S p. 131.

In the novel the foreigner, the novelist presents the hero of the novel, Sindi as the confused man, a product of several cultures. His mixed parental blood and staying in the foreign country finds in him a sense of rootlessness and alienation. Sindi realizes that the American culture and Indian culture can never be alike and come together. He discovers that the civilizations are as destructive and tyrannical. Sindi even avoids the idea of marriage because of his self-alienated, he is afraid of forming a family . "sometimes the ladies would ask me why I was not married and who my parents were, but by and large they ignored me. Later I was told that had I been richer and from a respectable family or had I belonged to the family at all, I would have had a much more difficult time avoiding offers of marriage" The Foreigner p. 16. Then he adds that "Marriage would not help We are alone." The Foreigner p. 107.

Actually the alienation of the hero, Sindi is the alienation of soul, its effects are more than the alienation of geography. He comes to India in order to search for his original roots, but he finds himself as good as the foreigner in India as in America. He realizes that his foreignness lays with him as he declares that his foreignness lays within him and he would not leave himself behind wherever he went. Really he is completely alienated from his self because of his search for identity. Sindi has a strange feeling of isolation, aloneness, alienation and aloofness ." In the Foreigner, Arun Joshi goes deep into the untraveled, mysterious and dark recesses of the human psyche to reveal the psychological problems of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi. The novelist presents the solitary state of mind and man's dilemma due to his alienation from his environment, tradition and his own self. " Justin.J p. 1.

There are some characters, who are foreigners and they feel alienated like Sindi such as Babu, Karl, and a host of young men and women who have come to America from other countries. Karl is an Austrian and Babu is Indian, who feels alone when June asked him " She asked Babu how long he had been in America I like the place. But I feel cold and lonely " The Foreigner 2010 P. 79. His father, Mr Kemka sends him to study and in order to help his family after coming back to his country as his father, Mr Kemka says " I decided to send Babu to America. I had thought it would make a man of him. And, of course, his training would have been of great help to us when he came back " The Foreigner 2010 P. 13. Babu marries June but he commits suicide after he knows that June is

in love with his friend, Sindi who also loves her. June dies after the death of Babu. Some character feels isolation and they are influenced by the alienation indirectly such as Anne, Kathy, Sheila and June. Sindi describes Anna " Anna was a woman She was about thirty –five with dark hair and finally chiselled features" *The Foreigner* 2010 P. 143. He adds that " Anna was not yearning for me or anybody, but for her lost youth " *The Foreigner* 2010 P. 143. Anna feels the alienation of soul and loneliness. Kathy leaves her husband and makes sexual relationship with Sindi because she is alone . Then both Kathy and Anna leave Sindi alone. June and Sheila feel lonely after the death of Babu. In brief, The alienation directly and indirectly affects the whole characters of the novel.

In the novel " *The Strange Case of Billy Bawas*" Tulla Lindgren is thirty years old Swedish lady has come to America in order to get advanced training in psychiatric social work, she skillfully understands the predicament of Billy`s life completely. She understands his deep feeling, his dark and she tells Romi that Billy is an exceptional person feels inside him a great force, searching force. Then Romi is the second person understands Billy after Tulla Lindgren, both understand the internal feeling of Billy. Billy feels loneliness so in order to cure himself he marries Meena Chatterjee, beautiful lady of his own Bengali society. Unfortunately, this marriage is falling apart to be the miserable failure, because of the lack of understanding and communication between them. Billy feels disappointed because of the absence of any meaningful communication in his marriage.

Through " *The Foreigner*" Joshi skillfully creates an American atmosphere in all its richness but through "*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*" the events of the novel shift from New York to New Delhi and later on to Shimla.

In fact "The writer seems to be duly conscious of the importance of the point of view technique used in the novel. It is Romesh Sahai, the narrator, who acquaints the reads with *The Strange Case of Billy Biwas*, instead of Billy, the protagonist. The need for using Romesh Sahai as the narrator lies in the complex character of Billy" Kumar p.1

IV. CONCLUSION

Arun Joshi depicts protagonists who are singularly individualistic but symbolize the features of the modern age. The two heroes portray the inner world of modern man and the way in which the self-tries to carve out a pattern to save itself from disintegration. Amid modern society, they are aware of the dehumanizing effect of mechanization and what they have lost. Most of them are highly educated abroad, their behaviour is incompatible with the laws of materialistic life around them. Through the events of the novels, powerfully, this paper explores the effectiveness of the alienation of both individual and society. Alienation is the basic form of rootlessness, which forms the subject of many psychological and sociological problems. The alienation of soul causes some problems in the life of the person as it is explained through the life of the heroes, Sindi and Billy. The alienation makes the life of the person meaningless, purposeless and aimless. The alienation of the soul is the source of meaninglessness, hopelessness, aimlessness, directresses and purposelessness. That is shown clearly through the confusion of the protagonists of the two novels.

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