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CLASH OF DETACHMENT AND ATTACHMENT IN ARUNJOSHI'S *THE FOREIGNER*

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ABSTRACT

ArunJoshi is one of the most significant Indian English novelists, who skilfully explored the subtleties and complexities of contemporary Indian life. His fictional world is a revelation of a world where man is confronted by himself and questions of his existence. All his novels reflect his experience-based vision of life. He notices the chaos and hollowness in the minds of contemporary younger generation which fills them with a sense of alienation and detachment. Joshi's novel 'The Foreigner' "deals with the protagonist Sindi Oberoi's journey from his misconstrued ideology of detachment from the world to involvement in it. It is a story of a young man's search for his roots and meaning of life. The protagonist's parentless childhood and early life experiences shaped him to be an ideal foreigner to the place, to the cultures above all to the soul. He is an uprooted young living in the latter half of 20th century who looks for moorings and meaning in his randomly drifting life. The spiritual agony of Sindi is the agony of every man of the contemporary society.

Key words: existence, rootlessness, detachment, involvement, alienation. Foreigner

"From detachment to Involvement " – these words summarize the life of Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist of Arun Joshi's first novel "The Foreigner". Sindi exhibits an indifferent attitude towards life. He was born in Kenya of an Indian father and an English mother; brought up by his Uncle due to death of his parents in an air crash. He refers to his parents as strangers whose reality was a couple of wrinkled and cracked photographs. His parentless, gloomy childhood turned him out to be cynical and detached towards life. He himself admitted that "I was cynical and exhausted, grown old before my times weary with my own loneliness". Thus, he is a foreigner who did not belong to any country, culture, and person. His foreignness lay within him. His words, behaviour create the identical impression on all those with whom he comes into contact-June, June's mother, Sheila. Sindi goes on hopping from one land to another as he finds life meaningless and rootless. He feels his life burdensome after the death of his parents and contemplates suicide. He, in his quest for identity moves to London where he is incredibly tired of classroom teachings; goes to Soho, joins as a dish washer; to Scotland where he discusses his problems with a Catholic Priest;. Everywhere he finds himself alienated and his life engulfed in darkness. Sindi's attitude of life and his philosophy of life are emerged out of his disillusionment in his affairs with Anna and Kathy. The first one with Anna, a minor artist separated from her husband and the second one with Kathy, a married woman, who thought marriage was sacred and has to be maintained at all cost. . He experiences the pain

because of the disproportion between his expectations and the reality he encountered in these love affairs. All that he had thought was pleasure ended in pain. He is puzzled and after wandering the maze of existence for a year Sindi finds an answer to the puzzle. "All love- whether of things, or persons or oneself –was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion. Love begot greed and attachment, and it led to possession. You can love without attachment to the objects of your love". (Joshi.145). Thus, Sindi develops the ideal of detachment and non-involvement to avoid pain and suffering in his life. "I had wanted detachment but I didn't quite know what kind of resolutions were necessary to achieve it.(Joshi.66).

Nothing seems to be important to him. Despite his firm determination of not to be involved, he falls in love with June. But he fails to accept the reality owing to his ideal. He sees June first time in Boston, at one of the balls organized by the International Students 'Association. He is attracted towards June at first sight. His past which Sindi thought he has left in London come into forefront and rubs its shoulders with the present when he compares June with Kathy" but what reminded me "What reminded me most of Kathy was June's hair... because of the resemblance I couldn't take eyes off her (Joshi.21). In spite of his principle of non-involvement, he begins to desire her "just to remain there dancing with her". But the conflict is evident within Sindi. He did not want to start another affair and yet did not want to lose her. On one hand he fails to control his love for June and on other, he thinks his love is of different kind. Though, he keeps himself prompting to be uninvolved he stares desiring her both mentally and physically. He broods confusedly "I don't want to get involved .Everywhere I turned I saw involvement. How long could I stay free? (Joshi.63) Sindi's relationship with June is a story of the gradual breaking down of barriers of detachment and non-involvement that he has built up all his life. He refuses to marry June when she proposes to marry her. He excuses himself putting forward another principle of his ideal" I was afraid of being possessing anybody and I was afraid of being possessed and marriage meant both. All marriages are painful....it is one big illusion that has been pounded into them by society for a while they go around bloated with their pride imagining things which just are not there. And then, gradually the whole thing crumbles and they begin to kill each other bit by bit"(Joshi.91)

He, in his efforts to be detached rather uninvolved, refrains from responding to June's pleas to marry her and finally drives her into the arms of Babu Rao Khemka.the son of Mr.Khemka , a wealthy industrialist industrialist. Babu has much fascination for America, he finds it just more splendid than what he has ever imagined. He becomes a victim of his conflict arising out of clash of tradition (his culture) and modernity (American). When Babu comes to know about June's sleeping with Sindi, in a fit of anger he drives himself to death. Sindi is left in a confused state pondering over inherent contradictions of life. The whole episode leaves him baffled. He realized the meaning of words June spoke to him after death of Babu about his detachment. Furthermore June's death due to miscarriage also makes Sindi to peep into reality. The two deaths drain something out of him and see the fallacy of his misconstrued ideal of detachment. He broods "Where Kathy and Anny had taught me to be detached from others,June's death finally broke my attachment to myself. It was here my hope lay"(Joshi.164) He suffers intensely and holds himself responsible for the death of Babu and June.

Sindi witnesses' serious consequences while practicing detachment in America as such he decides to leave it and journeys to India. On reaching New Delhi, he visits to Khemka's house on courtesy but accepts a job in his firm. Even here he does not find peace and belongingness. The mode of life and the set of values which Khemka and his followers offer a more sickening version of what Sindi had already experienced in America. In fact, he only finds it to be a change of theatre; the show remains the same. Here, he finds different people with different vanities and different ways of exploitation. In the unjust and fully corrupted world of Mr. Khemka enterprise, he wanted to be uninvolved during an income tax raid. When Mr.Khemka is under trial, Muthu requests Sindi to take over the office to succor the poor employers. The struggle of Muthu to provide food to his family and to his unemployed brother's family evinces to Sindi the real meaning of life. Sindi's understanding of life deepens as he peeps into the world of miserable (Mr.Kemka "s employers) Human suffering arouses his consciousness. His visit to Muthu, made him realize the real meaning of detachment. It brings a change in the perspective of Sindi, dispensing his ideals and contemplations. He now understands that detachment does not mean escape or alienation, it means involvement without desire. After his meeting with Muthu a major change is discernible in Sindi's attitude towards the real pursuit of human life. He rejects the job offer in Bombay and

decides to take up the responsibility of the factory. It is Muthu who enlightened Sindi the actual meaning of detachment and enabled him to see the reality. "Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it".(Joshi.162)

Arun Joshi, thus, in the "The Foreigner" novel speaking about modern man's plight brings a new perspective of modern man's quest for his identity; for the meaning of his existence.. The most common problem that modern man faces these days is the problem of the inner feeling of seclusion as he is nowhere in the world;- no identity of his own, and is very much detached from the surroundings , society , be in any part of the world. The protagonist in the novel, Sindi cultivates detachment to win over his painful memories and meaninglessness of life but it becomes a source of deeper agony. It is also the cause for the tragedy of Babu and June. Sindi is the kind of foreigner who feels the pangs of his foreignness in any circumstance and in any country. He has merely learnt to be detached and turns from the responsibility; turns from the world. His misconception about the notion of living with our desire and commitment moves him crisis to crisis. He ponders several times over his notions-detachment and objectivity has been any value in his life and finally realizes that it is involvement not detachment that could redeem man. The writer perceives chaos and hollowness in the minds of contemporary younger generation which infuses in them a sense of alienation and detachment. Thus Joshi, with his deep knowledge of Indian philosophy suggests in his novels an Indian solution to the spiritual crisis of the young.

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