

From the Object to the Embodiment of Alienation: The Predicament of the Protagonist in Arun Josh's Novel, *The Foreigner*

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Abstract

Arun Joshi is an outstanding Indian English Novelist who has dealt with the inner crises of the modern man living in the present day world. The Foreigner (1968) is his novel that concerns itself with the human relations and its various aspects. The present paper deals with the Protagonist of the novel, Sindi Oberai. The whole story revolves around his feelings and experiences. The novel's central thematic concerns are attachment, detachment, loss of faith, loneliness, identity crisis, and anxiety, all of which are artistically explored in the protagonist's life. Oberai, the central character, comes back to Delhi, after experiencing life and love in America, and at last persuaded by a humble office worker in India.

Although the effects of alienation in Oberai's life are analyzed by the earlier critics, the present paper attempts to trace the roots of that alienation. Most commonly children bloom in their childhood with tender care, support and guidance of their parents. The lack of parental love and the life of orphanage greatly affect one's personality, and the paper argues that here lies the source of Oberai's alienated life. As the title suggests explicitly, the paper claims that the protagonist starts his life as an object of alienation, but as he grows up, he himself becomes the embodiment of alienation, through the process of internalization, and some other characters in the novel have to face the bitter consequences of his alienated personality.

The protagonist Sindi Oberai is an orphan, who is deprived of the parental love. He is trapped in his own loneliness, and develops a kind of chronic detachment. The bitter experiences of his childhood and his environment in which he was brought up were internalized by him and eventually he becomes an unwitting embodiment of the alienation which devastated his childhood initially. Sindi is deprived of family nourishment and becomes a wandering alien. He is exposed to various cultures of people but he is not attached to any of these cultures. The paper analyses the loss of parents' true love and affection as the formative cause of Oberai's alienated personality.

Keywords: Loneliness, Protagonist, Anxiety, The Foreigner, Identity Crisis, Indian English Novel and Sindi Oberai

Arun Joshi is an Outstanding Indian English Novelist who has dealt with the inner crises of the modern man living in the present day world. *The Foreigner* (1968) is his novel that concerns itself with human relations and its various aspects. The present paper deals with the protagonist of the novel, Sindi Oberai. The whole story revolves around his feeling and experiences. The Novel's central thematic concerns are attachments, detachment, loss of faith, loneliness, identity crisis, and anxiety, all of which are artistically explored in the protagonist's life. Oberai, the central character, comes back to Delhi, after exploring life and love in America and at last persuaded by a humble office worker in India.

Love is a variety of different feelings, states and attitudes. It is the strong desire for emotional union with another person. Love has many faces. For example, parents pure unconditional love, our beloved daughter's intense love, our friend's abundant love and so on.

Most commonly, the children bloom in their childhood with tender care, support and the guidance of their parents. They imbibe their parent's attitudes unknowingly. We evidence many Orphans, those who lost their parents/relatives at the early age. Usually, they grow up in Orphanages. They suffer great harm and are deeply damaged and they suffer emotional attachment disorders. Hence, family life/parents love is essential to a child's healthy development. The children who grow up without parental care never get or experience true love in their whole life.

The protagonist of Arun Joshi's novel, *The Foreigner* is such an orphan, who is none other than Sindhi Oberai. *The Foreigner* is indeed a serious novel. It progresses through serious reflections on love, marriage, suicide, freedom, detachment, alienation, and dissatisfaction, which sets the reader to contemplate on those issues. Throughout the novel we realize the predicament of the protagonist struggle to arrive at reality in the midst of the utter chaos and meaninglessness of the mind. We see Sindhi Oberai's confusion, attachment detachment, rootlessness, madness, loneliness, love and hatred.

Sindhi is trapped in his own loneliness which is accentuated by his withdrawal from the society around him. His environment is mainly responsible for his deviant attitude. The prominent characters in the novel suffer from existential predicament for different reasons. This novel exposes the stretch of this sordid society by ripping of the masks and exposing the inner core of a human being.

Sindhi Oberai is a confused person who is always searching for meaning in life when the existing situation around him is quit meaningful to the other persons present around him. Sindhi's parentage and early life indicate that he is an ideal 'foreigner'. His mother was English, and father was an Indian, he was brought up in Kenya, studied in London and America. He was orphaned at the age of four and was brought up by his uncle whose death later snatched any kind of leverage for him to bank on life completely away from him. Sindhi expresses that his life was always 'alone in darkness'.

Sindhi goes to America for his doctorial degree in Mechanical Engineering. There he made friendship with Babu Kemka, whose father was an industrialist. Sindhi had an intimate relationship with a charming

girl, June in America. He had a passionate affair with her. During his days in England, he had enjoyed the company of Anna and Kathy and had affairs with them.

Though he enjoyed these relationship, they all "fizzled out like an ill packed cracker", because he couldn't pay the price of being loved. He get attached with June but refused to marry her. He says, "one should be able to love without wanting to possess.... One should be able to detach oneself from the agent of one's love". He tries to impress her importance of detachment in love:

"Absence of love doesn't mean hatred. Hatred is just another form of love. There is another way of loving; you can love without attachment, without desire. You can love without attachment to the objects of you love. You can love without fooling yourself that the things you love are indispensable either to you or to the world. Love is real only when you know that what you love must one day die".

Sindhi had an opportunity to convey his feelings of love to June, he gets into a discussion on love, attachment, and detachment which leads to possession and marriage ultimately. He did not want to get involved. He says, "Everywhere I turned to, I saw enrollment". It reveals meaninglessness of Sindhi. June feels strange about Sindhi and Sindhi justifies that "my foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind where I went".

June plays a very important role in Sindhi's life and personality who had been attached with him. Because of the lack of parental love and reality, Sindhi suffers from a deep sense of insecurity. So he refuses to be involved in any relationship, which leads to detachment in his life always. Even though he is a well educated person, he behaves in a stupid way sometimes.

Sindhi associates himself with Babu Rao Khemaka, while working for his doctoral degree in America. Babu is an over protected son of a Delhi business tycoon. Babu thought that America is the paradise for free sex. He argues with Sindhi, "what is the good of coming to America, if one does not play around with girls?" These lines exhibit the image of Babu Khemka's free enjoyment abroad.

Babu's association with Sindhi, gives a clear picture of an educated and rich Indian family. Babu's father tells Sindhi, "I had brought him up

with all care that a father can give to a child... even as a child, I had myself taught him what was right and what was wrong". But Babu Rao doesn't understand his father's intense love and care. He is an over protected son of his father. On the one side he doesn't concentrate on his studies, another side, he turns to adultery and to umpteen vices during his foreign education.

Babu is attracted to June Blynth, an American girl and decides to get marry. He ended his life abroad. Babu's parents deprive him of taking up decision and hamper his free will and capacity to make resolutions. He is apprehensive of his father's admonitions. When June comes to know about Babu's fear of his father, she comments that he seems to be an awful bully. This novel is a witness to unveil, how parentless youths or over-protected children are incapable of making decisions. In contrast Sindhi Oberai is a confused individual. He has messed up his entire life by having no control over his actions. In the name of attachment, he shrinks from his responsibility and indeed it turns into a sort of escapism.

When Babu is attracted towards June, Sindhi grows jealous and suspicious and tries to separate them. Here Babu is also helpless as he had promised his father that he'll never marry in America. June frowns at Babu's behavior and she wants to return to Sindhi. Sindhi tries to comfort her by making love to her without any serious interests. This stupid behavior of Sindhi again leads to Babu's death indirectly. Babu could not bear that his beloved June being involved with his friend. So he met with an accident by drinking and driving intentionally. At last, June accuses Sindhi of Babu's death and she also dies during her abortion.

After these shocking events Sindhi leaves America and moves to New Delhi. He gets involved in the business of Mr. Khemka. He also strengthens his relationship with Babu's sister Shiela. Again he is attracted towards Shiela who shows his liberation and leads him to self awareness and self knowledge .

At the end of the novel the author highlighted the theme of Karmayoga. Babu underwent complete change. He realizes the law of Karma. Sindhi realizes the meaninglessness and follows the principle of action without attachment.

Thus the novel highlights symbolically the protagonist's experiences as a 'foreigner' in his life. The Novel is existential as it is about an individual's loneliness and feelings of anguish emanating from his estrangement from the environment, tradition and the search for the inner self. Joshi has carefully handled the existential themes of rootlessness, detachment and the quest for life .We realize how the deprived children, one who lost his parental love, care and guidance, lead meaningless life, because of the influence of environmental factors in the surroundings.

Psychology proved clearly that, we are influenced by our surrounding environment. The child who was brought up by wild animals in the forest exhibits animal behavior. In contrast the child who was brought up in a homely atmosphere exhibits human behavior. Likewise Sindhi Oberai, has been always lonely and deprived of family nourishment, grows with a built-in fissure in his personality and becomes a wandering alien.

He was like a drop of water on the lotus. He was not attached to anyone. He loses his identity. His PhD research, his education in Kenya, America and England did not teach attachment to him. He is a man without roots and remains a foreigner, whether he is in London, in Boston and in New Delhi. He is a book worm. He just comprehends the knowledge of books but did not have the sense of life. He is exposed to various cultures of various people but no where he experiences a feeling of attachment. Thus his alienated identity makes him a foreigner forever.

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