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Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*: A Feministic Analysis

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Abstract:

Arun Joshi is Indo-English novelist presented cross-culture of Indian, American and Kenyan in his novel, 'The Foreigner' with existential approach. Joshi shows contradiction between Indian and western cultures. The Indian women are discriminated, exploited, treated as mad, weak, dependent, subjective, etc. The westerners are come out with liberal attitudes and approaches towards women. American girls (June) are behaves like boys - their hairs, laughing and bulled around boys. Indians are not ready to accept these relations even though they are educated, from upper class and caste and interacted with western culture.

Mr. Khemka is Indian businessman expected bride from his caste, class and religion with huge dowry for his son, Babu. The next generation differs from these approaches. The young men i.e. Sindi and Babu are interested in women for pleasure and gain experiences whereas women i.e. June (woman) viewed at marriage for love. Sheila is conscious about nobility and purity of girls. She is a self-confident woman studied with men at equal level, broke the all Indian record in history, speaks boldly and refused arranged marriage. However, women become weak at the crucial point of life. Thus, women virginity, marriage, marriage in caste and women submissiveness are essentials in Indian custom based traditional society.

Keywords: women, patriarchy, multiculturalism, women virginity, marriage, liberty, feministic analysis

1. Introduction:

Arun Joshi is Indo-English novelist presented hybrid culture of Indian, American and Kenyan in his novel, 'The Foreigner' (1968). He is existentialist depicts largely personal experiences at Kenya and India to portrait existential philosophy (Venugopal, 2012). The existentialism is insistence actual existence of the individual as the basic and important fact instead of a reliance on the theories of abstractions (Sharma and Raizada, 2013). He projects the hypocrisy and artificiality in American modern society (Dhawan, 1986). The novel shows relationships, growth, decay, defeat and destruction. The story deals with childhood, adulterous relationships and adventures (Gadhavi, 2012). This novel passes through the sensitivity,

assessment and declarations about life. It is negotiating masculinity alongside experiences of diaspora and exile (Helff, 2014).

Malshette and Shete (2012) have reported that the ruthless, compassionate, shocking and sometimes brutal are themes of the novel. The novel examines the effects of alienation on sensitive Indians of mixed heritage shares with three cultures. Joshi has used the man-woman relations and its various aspects in his writings. He tries to present the inner world of the protagonist as psychological analysis. It includes sincerity, fidelity, ruthless, loneliness, separation, feelings of anguish and anxiety, and absence of individuality (Venugopal, 2012, Joshi, 2014) in contemporary socio-political reality. Joshi focuses more on class based social structure including caste and religion or race. However, Tomar (2013) has reported that Joshi fully believed on passion and sexuality instead of God and religion.

In this story the young hero suffer from existential predicament for different reasons. He experienced the life and love in America and came back in Delhi. Men were deeply concerned with imagining and narrating the agony of loneliness and alienation in an increasingly globalised world (Helff, 2014). Joshi narrates masculinity, sexuality and trans-cultural existentialist identity formation in this novel.

The novel deals with love story, literary corruption of rootlessness, artistic triumphs, unifies feelings and ideas, characters and events, the prose and passions, painful experiences, impact of corruption on social framework, explosion of population turns into poverty, hunger and disease and denial of human rights (Zha, 1986). Sindi Oberoi, the male protagonist is always in search of self-identity and meaning of his life unto the last. There are other characters like June, Mr. Babu Khemka and Mr. Khemka also in search of self-identity. The novel is a bin of characters from cultural combos. Sindi is a son of English mother and a Kenyan-Indian father. Whereas, June Blyth is American girl, Mr. Khemka, his son Babu and daughter Sheila are Indians, Frank Sinatra is a Japanese girl, Anna is a minor artist and Kathy is English house wife. There are inter-continental migrations. The protagonist Sindi migrating from Kenya to London, Boston and New Delhi on the way he meet different female characters. They born and grown up in their own culture and fly to wide cultural space.

The patriarchy is a solid foundation of culture in all these countries. It is most frequently associated with a material and ideological control of women's sexuality and labour at home and workplace. The Indian women are discriminated, exploited, treated as mad, weak, dependent, subjective, etc. at some extent. However, the western culture is come out with liberal attitude and approaches towards women. There are few feministic activities, arts and writings lead their education, legal rights, social services, etc. Protagonist in this novel, 'The Foreigner' is male i.e. Sindi Oberoi. Women characters are in association and interaction with male protagonist (Vashist 2011). The present study is focused on women characters in 'The Foreigner' by Arun Joshi with a feministic approach.

2. Views about women:

The views about women are different in western and Indian culture. Western people easily accept the racial and cultural mixed parentage, polygamy, remarriage, extra-marital

relations, pre-marital relations, etc. Whereas Indians are not ready to accept these relations even though they are educated, from upper class and caste and interacted with western culture. Sindi is a son of English mother and Kenyan-Indian father. June doesn't have any problem to propose him for marriage. However, Mr. Khemka is Indian businessman expected bride for his son of his caste, class and religion i.e. Marwari only. He instructed his son not to marry with girl from other caste and religion.

Babu is son of Mr. Khemka quite interested in women. He rounding a corner bumped into a young girl and apologized profusely (18). Some of the dialogues present the views of Babu regarding women i.e. 'The hostess was very nice' (18). Babu is interested in women for pleasure and gain experiences instead of marry.

‘.he had a number of clandestine meetings already lined up. “What is the good of coming to America if one is not play around with girls?” he asked. (20)

However, his father is strict about strange women. Sindi also speaks about physical beauty of June and Kathy (21, 22).

I was supposed to be one of the ex-officio hosts. Like all balls, the whole thing was quite a fraud. (21)

Sindi explained qualities and behaviours of American girls to June. They are behaves like a boys - their hairs like boys, laughing and bulled around boys (32). She replies angrily:

“What about Indian girls? Don't they have any faults?” June was beginning to get a little hot under the collar. (32)

Further, Sindi describes the physical appearance of June as: “Tall and slim, with blonde hair and large blue eyes” (49). However, he compared her with automobile: ‘light grey with a radio and heater, or red over black with white sidewalls’ (49). Sindi's feelings about her physical movements as: ‘Her step had the unusual grace that only Indian girls have (53). He argued about the women attitude and behaviours as:

“You.....that codes of morality differ from country to country. Girls do certain things in America that women would never do here. That doesn't mean they are wicked.” (51)

Sheila and her father's views about the women differ with caste and religion for marriage of son. They follow Hindu customs and traditions. Mr. Khemka wants marry Babu with (fat) Marwari girl for huge dowry (51, 52). Sheila is more conscious about nobility and purity of Indian girls. However, Sindi replied rudely:

“So you think one of these Marwari girls is really superior merely because of a silly membrane between her legs?” (52)

Sindi did not believe on marriage but women hunting. He thought that marriage is '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' (60). Sindi wants to hunt down his own women. Karl replied him that 'you still have other men's wives to hunt down' (54). However, June viewed about marriage that 'But marriage is also love' (60).

Sindi, a man found beauty even in woman's grief. Sindi says:

In her distress she looked even more beautiful. (9)

Sindi is hatred June when he notice about her involvement in Babu (110). It shows men dominance and control over women. Another character, Babu's relations with his sister are quite free than his father. He considers Sheila as a motherly figure. He shares everything whatever good or bad happenings with Sheila. He told about getting marriage with June to Sheila but not have enough courage to tell his father. He told her that she will speak to father about it (48-49).

Babu got more love from June within two months which he didn't get from his father in twenty years (49). Babu is freer with women i.e. Sheila and June than the men i.e. Sindi and his father-Mr. Khamka. However, Babu didn't give same treatment to wife, June. His love with June is only for his physical satisfaction instead of her satisfactions and gratitude (136). Babu is fall in deep tension when he came to know about relations between June and Sindi. He died in car accident.

3. Woman Liberty:

Women in western culture are more liberal and free. They can be a fancy, chewing gum and talking about and laughing towards unknown men (8). Anna, Kathy and June are major female characters more liberal than Sheila. There are sexual relationships without marriage involved in pleasure at equal level. Women in this novel interact with men liberally without any burden. Their communications and personal relations are temporary and maintained only for pleasure. Anna is a woman of thirty-five years old a minor artist separated from her husband. She is yearning for her lost of youth and wants to fulfil her longing from anybody. She tries to satisfy herself by seducing Sindi at the studio. She has no any awkward feeling of seducing to Sindi who is only twenty years old. Sindi also gives response to Anna. It shows the liberal relationship between Anna and Sindi (143). Kathy is English housewife affair with Sindi for time being (144).

American girl can express her deep feelings with man liberally. June's boyfriend (Babu) died in car accident, informed by his friend Sindi. She lurched forward and clutched sindi's shoulders. She pressed her face against to his chest and cried. He felt her warm tears soak through his shirt. He told her –

My poor, poor girl, I thought. I rubbed her back to ease her crying, I said, "There is nothing you can do, my poor love. It is all over. I should have known better." (10)

Karl's stepmother has extra-marital (illicit) relationships with other men. After his father's death, she tries to seduce Karl. Therefore, he left the house:

Then I hated the way my stepmother brought lovers home after my father died. And one day when she got drunk and tried to seduce me, I left. (25)

Arun Joshi has presented the women in his novel, 'The Foreigner' quite different as compared to Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan'. Singh has presented the women are more sufferer and exploited by the men. However, Joshi has presented sexual exploitation of men by the women i.e. Karl's stepmother brought lovers at home and tries to seduce Karl. June has an affair with Sindi and Babu at a time.

Here, it is presented that women lead sexual relations with men. They are satisfied and happy in their relations. In this case Karl is sufferer by women but gives pleasure to them with pity (55). Woman takes him home and pulls on top of her. He felt lusty naked body and his vows are forgotten for her pleasure, one by one. He said 'I just don't have the guts' (55).

Khushwant Singh's Juggut Singh loves with Nooran casually where she fall in love with him seriously. He also loosely talks with Bhola as he can take a wife from abducted women. Same type of approach was portrays by Vijay Tendulkar in his drama 'Sakharam Binder.' Binder take abducted widow from nearby village for him as own. However, in this foreign society Arun Joshi's Babu feel about June Blyth as:

I thought of June, of her warm body beside me in the growing dark and a good hot meal afterwards. She would be waiting for me. (19)

The crowd And then I began to want her- not sexually, but just to remain there dancing with her after everybody went home. (23)

Here, men in this culture are more conscious about women for their kids. For instance, Sindi is talking with Karl as:

"Out of this bunch you will get your future atomic wizards, your missile boys, and yet there they sit, pretending to be innocent of their menace, caressing women whose kids they will blow up some day." (26)

Further, Sindi is taking care more about June and her pregnancy and predicament. She is pregnant from Babu and he died in car accident (156). He became sad when he knows about her death in abortion. Same way, he takes care of Sheila in her suffering when income tax officer sealing their office (171). Thus, there are many free man-woman relations i.e. June and Sindi, June and Babu, Sindi and Anna, Sindi and Kathy, Karl and girl friends and other women, etc. Man and women are enjoying their relations liberally.

The foreign culture established in India has influenced the work environment and man-woman relations at workplace. Mr. Khemka constructed three cabins for himself, his daughter

Sheila and son Babu. Sheila shares their cabin equally as father and brother and actively participates in business (15).

4. **Bold and active women:**

Women in western culture are quite free, bold and active than the Indian. Joshi presents some of women characters through dresses, behaviour, works, incidences, dialogues, way of life, etc. He portrays waitress in Boston works like men (9). In contemporary Indian society, it was very different picture. Whereas June Blyth, a simple and passionate American girl work as a statistician in an insurance company in Boston (30) and Anna works as a minor artist in studio. Sheila is Indian girl also actively participate in her father's business in Delhi.

Sheila studied with men at equal level and broke the all Indian record in history (79). Sheila is a self-confident woman. She speaks boldly about wrong things against her father when company was sealed by income tax officer, Mr. Ghosh. She said "A dirty thing is dirty whether somebody knows about it or not". Khemka looked at her in surprise and said "So, you too are turning against me?"(178). She refused to accept arranged marriage (83). Sindi try to hold her hand when she speaks about her brother, Babu's death:

..... tried to take her hand, but she removed it away. She didn't want sympathy. (46)

Sheila is not frightened to point her breasts in front of the Sindi (49). However, Muthu's daughter stood aside very shyly and goes quickly inside the hut. Here, Sheila came out from Indian contradictions with the influence of western culture whereas Muthu's daughter is under the burden of custom and poverty.

Though June marries Babu, she is not satisfied with him. She keeps a unique corner in her heart. She feels loneliness with him like any other person. Very open- mindedly she reveals to Babu an excuse of her marriage with him. She speaks boldly with her husband and marriage as,

"I thought he needed me. I had wanted to belong to you, but you didn't want it. You are so self-sufficient there is hardly any place for me in your life-except perhaps as a mistress." (136)

5. **Women as weak:**

Women of western as well as Indian are weak, dependant and living unexpected life with loneliness. Even though, foreign men also underestimate the women at their routine. Sindi ordered coffee for himself and June. He isn't taken into account any her feeling. He said 'There was no point in asking what she wanted. It hardly mattered now (9). Women are considered as more sensitive, emotional and weak. Sindi talk about Babu's death with June Blyth. He felt pity for her as a woman.

I was right; she didn't realize we had killed a man. I hated myself, but for her I felt only pity. (9)

June insists Sindi to get married and would like to become a mother of his child. However, she get abort her embryo from Babu after his death. It presents subconscious mind of Joshi shows husband essentiality for women. June is bold and active American girl become weak at the crucial point of life which inculcated by culture.

Sindi made general statement about the women from elite class. According to him, women from elite class are afraid of being alone, always lived in a crowd and have little or nothing to do (42). Though, Sheila is educated, from upper class and actively participates in business, worried about feeling of loneliness when her father Mr. Khemka will be arrested (173). She requested to Sindi to see that he is responsible for that all instead of Mr. Khemka. It shows typical daughter dependence on father rather than self reliance. Muthu's daughter gives Shindi a cup of tea. She is shy and her dress is long and dirty. It shows affluence of poverty and customs more on women than the men (187). They show typical Indian femininity and women dependency. It is notable that Joshi's rootless Sindi attracts towards typical Indian womanness i.e. Sheila who carries Indian feminine symbols in an influence of western culture (16). Sindi attracts towards ease flashing laughter, small hands caring tiny bagels and gauzy sari, etc. He has sympathy about Indian women for their back arched, stooping to someone's service, etc. (183).

6. Virgin bride:

Virgin bride is a source of protection of racial, caste and religious purity. Joshi presents the essentiality of women virginity at marriage in his novel, 'The Foreigner'. Specially, women are more conscious about the virgin bride. Sheila speaks about June's virginity and affaire with Sindi. However, June is acceptable in this family as she said:

"June wouldn't have been acceptable to us, that is all I know," Sheila said. And then she added with an air of stubborn finality that left little to be said: "She wasn't virtuous."

"How do you know she was not virtuous?"

"All I know is that she was not a virgin. Babu told me himself."(52)

Here, Sheila's brother Babu has an affair with many girls only for pleasure. He has been in America for playing around the girls. Following expressions typically presents his views:

"Of course, I don't want to marry anyone. I just want to gain experience, you know." He smiled. (21)

The views of Sheila and his family have dual nature regarding virginity of son and daughter-in-law.

7. Marriage essence:

Sindi is rootless man not believe in marriage. He thought that marriage is just as buy new cars. Whereas, June Blyth insists to Sindi marry with her instead of only affair. She wanted to be a mother of Sindi's child. However, Sindi rejects her marriage proposal. Further, she married with Babu Khemka who died in car accident. She gets abort after death of her husband, Babu and died in abortion.

English housewife, Kathy deeply involved in adulterous love with Sindi and goes back to her husband. She thought about marriage that the 'marriage was sacred and had to be maintained at all costs' (144). Thus, Female characters of Joshi came back to their patriarchy based customs.

Sheila is highly educated, bold and self-confident girl actively participated in business. She shares their property equally with her father and brother. She opposed to her father in some circumstances. However, she sticks with their Indian traditions and customs. She suggests her brother to marry with Marwari girl. Marwari bride will give the huge dowry that might bring him half a dozen new factories (51). She said

"It is just not done. You ... you marry in your own caste. A foreigner just doesn't fit in our homes." (51)

They are differs for language, the customs, religion. Sindi tries to explain the realities about language, caste and religion. However, she is not ready to accept June as a foreigner. Here, Sindi's clear views of Indians about western culture are as:

"Foreigners don't fit in our homes because we don't want them to fit in, isn't that the reason?"(51-52)

8. Conclusions:

Arun Joshi is Indo-English novelist presented hybrid culture of Indian, American and Kenyan in his novel, 'The Foreigner' with existential approach. The reported themes of the novel are ruthless, rootlessness, compassionate, shocking, brutal alienation, sensitive Indians mixed heritage, man-woman relations, sincerity, fidelity, loneliness, separation, feelings of anguish and anxiety, and absence of individuality in contemporary socio-political reality. Joshi focuses more on class based social structure including caste and religion or race. Joshi narrates masculinity, sexuality and trans-cultural existentialist identity formations.

Joshi portrays the characters with multicultural background i.e. Sindi is a son of English mother and a Kenyan-Indian father, June Blyth is American girl, Mr. Khemka, his son Babu and daughter Sheila are Indians, Frank Sinatra is a Japanese girl, Anna is a minor artist and Kathy is English house wife. The protagonist Sindi migrating from Kenya to London, Boston and New Delhi on the way he meet different female characters. The Indian women are discriminated, exploited, treated as mad, weak, dependent, subjective, etc. at some extent. However, the western culture is come out with liberal attitude and approaches towards women. American girl (June)

are behaves like a boys - their hairs like boys, laughing and bulled around boys. Indians are not ready to accept these relations even though they are educated, from upper class and caste and interacted with western culture. June doesn't have any problem to propose Sindi for marriage. However, Mr. Khemka is Indian businessman expected bride for his son, Babu of his caste, class and religion i.e. Marwari only. But, Babu is interested in women for pleasure and gain experiences but not to marry. Sheila and her father follow Hindu customs and traditions. However, Mr. Khemka wants marry Babu with (fat) Marwari girl for huge dowry whereas Sheila conscious about nobility and purity of Indian girls.

Sindi does not believe on marriage i.e. people got married just as they bought new cars. However, June (woman) viewed at marriage for love. Sindi is hatred June when he notice about her involvement in Babu. It shows men dominance and control over women. Babu's love with June is only for his physical satisfaction instead of her satisfactions and gratitude. However, Joshi's foreign men are more conscious about women for their kids.

Sheila is a self-confident woman studied with men at equal level, broke the all Indian record in history, speaks boldly and refused arranged marriage. She came out from Indian contradictions with the influence of western culture whereas Muthu's daughter is under the burden of custom and poverty.

Women are considered as more sensitive, emotional and weak. June insists Sindi to get married and would like to become a mother of his child. However, June is bold and active American girl become weak at the crucial point of life. She get abort her embryo from Babu after his death. Sheila is educated, from upper class and actively participates in business, worried about feeling of loneliness when she felt about her father, Mr. Khemka will be arrested. Muthu's daughter is shy and her dress is long and dirty in affluence of poverty and customs. Joshi's rootless Sindi attracts towards typical Indian womanness i.e. flashing laughter, small hands caring tiny bagels and gauzy sari, back arched, stooping to someone's service, etc. Specially, women are more conscious about the virgin bride. Thus, women virginity, marriage, marriage in caste and women submissiveness are essentials in Indian custom based traditional society.

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