

## The Role of Fictional Techniques of Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*

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### Abstract

Arun Joshi's fictional world is characterized by various exceptional techniques of writing fictions. He astonished the world with his unique sense of writing by publishing first novel *The Foreigner* in 1968. The paper investigates how Arun Joshi combines synthesis between the foreign narrative technique and the indigeneous content in the select novel. The story of *The Foreigner* revolves around the main protagonist of the novel i. e. Sindhi Oberoi who withdrew from his country of birth twice (Mohideen 2016). The paper will investigate how chronological order of the events, stream of consciousness, imagery, symbolism, point of view, chapter division of the novel, dialogue, language, characterization and plot are uniquely incorporated in Arun Joshi's writing. Role of technique in fiction is so important that nearly everything depends on it. Arun Joshi puts across his experience or he develops his subject matter and conveys its meaning and evaluates it clearly.

**Keywords:** Narrative Techniques of Arun Joshi, Writing Techniques of Arun Joshi, Use of symbols, imagery and dialogue in Arun Joshi's Writing

**Introduction-** The age after Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, the great trio of the Indian novel in English, saw the entry of a host of young and enthusiastic Indo-Anglian novelists. The younger generation of novelists who came onto the scene after the mid-twentieth century, as Manohar Malgonkar, Arun Joshi, G.V. Desani, Anita Desai, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Salman Rushdie and Khuswant Singh (Vandana 2018, p56). The second generation writers of Indian English writing were highly inclined towards western life style and ideology. Among the writers Arun Joshi Protest and resistance novelists preliminarily recognised as "the angry young men" in England and "Black Humour" and "Absurd" Movement in America underline the have to be secure the realness of the self against the pressing squeezing control of the State, the military, bureaucracy, and social educates. (Yadav & Bhatt, p 3633-3638). His fictional technique is guided by several factors. He acquired it from the study of his favourite authors. Arun Joshi was deeply influenced by Henry James. The reference to Henry James and his urbane, dispassionate tales points to Joshi's interest in his works.

The narrative techniques have a very important place in his fiction and his success consists in his remarkable originality. In his fiction we find a perfect synthesis between the foreign narrative technique and the indigenous content. The effect of the novel's texture and composition never becomes determinant to the detriment of the native feeling.. The important narrative techniques are in the nature of a medium and develop in his subject.

His world of fiction is distinguished by frustration, disintegration and sense of alienation (Vandana 2018, p 23). He makes a positive withdrawal from the general run Indian English novelist who writes in English in numerous ways. Joshi's writing concern more about difficulties related to common human being and their roots of religious loyalty. Joshi's criticism of the industry, the refined and the world of materialistic things is not directed by a sentimental extolling of outlook but by a sincere conviction in the the reliability of the primitive principles of sensuousness, desire and deed.

His technique of self- introspection combined with mockery on self creates a new dimension to the art of English literature in India. Joshi's first three novels *The Foreigner*, *The Apprentice* and *The Last Labyrinth* are written in first person narrative technique; however, he switches to the third person in *The City and the River*. .

There is a constant mingling of reality and fantasy in Joshi's works. Material selected from life is creatively reshaped by his imagination giving new association and implications. The implications of the artist transform material drawn from real life and fashion images from real facts and situations.

Narrative techniques, plot and character are the main aspects that are important to he gave extra importance and care. He believed tht the theme and the subject matter defines the work endeavored would be a novel or a short story. In a reply to Purabi Bannerji, he states:

“Each has its own place. In my case it is the theme which determines whether it would be a short story or a novel. For example, I wrote a Short story called “The Gherao” which was about students’ gheraoing a principal. Thematically I would not like to handle a novel about the academic world which I don’t know about; so a short story.” (Banerjee 27 Feb. 1983)

With the publishing of his first book, Joshi came into the limelight., *The Foreigner*, which appeared in 1968. In a very appreciated review, Kale Morsch refers to *The Foreigner* as “one of the finest novels of India” (Morsch53). Shyam M. Asnani quoted in *The Literary Half – Yearly* that yet he recognizes the competence of the novelist in realizing the theme of the novel is “ruthless, compassionate, shocking and sometimes downright brutal”(Asnani 19 July 1978). He admitted in an interview to Purabi Banerjee that writing for him is not a ongoing practice: “... some parts of *The Foreigner*, my first book, were written when I was a student in America. I gave it up and then completed it later in 1966” (Banerjee 27 Feb.1983). *The Foreigner* is extremely interesting, it has warmth and animates with life. It represents the protagonist’s desperate effort to adjust his own emotional difficulties. This is not only reflected in the vibrant representations of numerous places but is vividly displayed in the young protagonists' detached views of life. (Helff, S 2014). In his search for sense through a series of relationships, he shows in it the sufferings of seclusion in uncovering the psychological clash in the character of Sindi Oberoi. Meenakshi Mukherjee comments: “*The Foreigner* is the First Indo-Anglian novel to deal with a genuine human predicament without compromise and without clichés since Anita Desai’s *Voices in the city*” (Mukherjee 103).

*The Foreigner* contributes to establish Joshi as the front rank Indian fiction writer as *The Foreigner* received both critical condemnation and appreciation in India as well as all over the world. It has been hailed as “One of the most compelling existential works of Indian English fiction” (Prasad 51-52). It is inspired by Albert Camus’ well known novel *The Outsider*. It also reminds us Raja Rao’s *The Serpent and the Rope*, Anita Desai’s *Bye-Bye Blackbird* and Nergis Dalal’s *The Girls from overseas* as it discuss with the plot of cross cultures and East –West encounters.

Khushwant Singh is all praise for Joshi’s maiden attempt at fiction writing. *The Foreigner*, he says is “one of the most compelling works of fiction I have ever read for a long time” (Singh 59). Arun Joshi is a serious novelist. Dale Morsch comments in the united press international: “Ruthless, compassionate, shocking, and sometimes dawns right brutal”. This is the first novel of Arun Joshi which places him in the front rank in the world of fiction writers.

The novel narrates the story in a series of flashbacks, with a proper and complete collection of past events; making an appropriate context between past and current, the factual and recollected, the domain of fancy and the realism to make best use of the suspense. At a glance the novel appears dramatic both at the beginning and at the end. The cause of Babu’s death with which the novel begins remains unknown till the reader has finished one third of it. Elena j. Kalinnikova considers it “a detective story” (Kalinnikova 77). The novel seems as a crime story in the beginning and concludes as murder mystery. It is full of suspense like a thriller the car accident which kills Babu, the photograph of June found in his wallet, Sheila’s instant handling over a “frayed envelope” which contains Babu’s letters and the manner in which June’s death is revealed to Sindi. But the skilful handling of the narrative makes it all the more inevitable in order to create curiosity and sustain interest.

The subject of Joshi’s novels is so typical that an ordinary thriller writer cannot imagine handle them. Having gripped our attention at the very outset Joshi presents details of Sindi’s upbringing, experience and his relationship weaving together the previous and the present-day in the process. The chronology of events is sustained through the past and is initiated by Sheila’s quarry and eagerness to know the cause of her brother’s death.

Arun Joshi weaves his stories around the psychic imbalance and impulsive actions of his characters. He introduces uncommon occurrence into the customary recognizable world. His protagonists are individualistic and self centred. They are highly educated but their conduct is incompatible with the natural laws of everyday reality. They not only violate norms of social life but also indulge in actions which are instinctive and irrational. Alienated from the society, they try to work out for their own identity and work on their own choice. They are not free from the urges of their sub-conscious self. The psychic imbalance of Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* pushes him into unprecedented relationship and keeps him rootless as a foreigner till the last. Harish Raizada feels about Joshi that: “begins his novels like plausible pieces of reality but soon after exaggerates them to the point of fantasy or introduces a set of flamboyant irrational associations typical of a powerful fantasy” (Raizada 102). It is this combination of imaginary and realism in Arun Joshi’s writing that keeps the eagerness and interest of the readers undivided till the end of the novel.

Sindhi Oberoi, the central character of the novel, is depicted as an An existential character who, in a wild, bad, absurd universe, is rootless, restless and luckless. He does not escape from the problem of the society. He returns to the world and tries to support the workers of the industry. He was born in Kenya of Indian

parents but at the age of five, he lost both of them and raised up by one of his uncles. With their death, he lost his all support forever. Later, he travelled to London, Boston, and New Delhi but he was considered as foreigner anywhere he had been. In the novel, Sindhi explicitly described about his whole life as being “alone in the darkness” (TF 189).

In *The Foreigner*, Joshi describes the protagonists’ physical connection with the society and with society and his emotional development that enables him to deal with the complexities. Hence the technique of first person narration is justified for the purpose and effect of narration. Furthermore Sindi remains “detached” throughout the narrative and not interested in the events of his life as events but in terms of the meaning hidden in them as he finds himself involved towards the end.

The “I” in the novel is well fitted with the purpose. The novel bring out the psychical connection with society and out world that encourages him to solve his turmoil. The letter “I” is simultaneously studying the notion of foreignness and witnessing the foreignness of others, and so the outcomes are a native distance. The novel opens in a crime thriller style that the end moment being first added. Sindi identifies Babu Khemka's dead body in a morgue, who dies in a car-wreck and thereby rips the veils of a feigned detachment. Thereafter, , between Boston and New Delhi, the story bounces back and forth.

The action in the novel has a definite movement despite the fact Joshi has used the techniques of flashback and perceiving the things through the eye of the protagonist. After coming back to India Sindi looks back to his life and events in Boston and London in juxtaposition. Thus the present grows out from the past and the past directs the present. Further, the qualities of the novelist attributes to his character regulates the action, and the action in turn gradually changes the character and thus the story is carried forward to the end. The plot of the novel wants to move us along and the design makes us pause and see the “counter reaction of these two forces as one of the things which enriches our experience of fiction. Thus, *The Foreigner* has a beginning, middle, and the end.

“Joshi’s own self-appointed legacy of anonymity and obscurity, and given the fact that much of the literary criticism in the pre-Rushdie era had been groomed under the theoretical influences of social realism and literary nationalism, it is entirely conceivable that Joshi’s works did not receive the same sustained attention as the post-Rushdie Indian English novel” (Malreddy, 2014, PP04). The *Foreigner* portrays the protagonist Sindi Oberoi’s psychograph and discusses the anguished knowledge of the individual of being alienated from the current convention. Joshi returns to the flashback tactic in it to limn out the protagonist's inner weather. If he is in London, Boston or Delhi, Sindi remains a foreigner.. He did not conceive of himself belonging, in fact, to any nation and to wonders, “did I belong to the world?” he says:

“Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose, unless you could call the search for pace a purpose. Perhaps I felt like that, because 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.” (55)

*The Foreigner*, in its fictional technique has certain influences of Eliot’s poetical technique used in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* which he also quotes in the novel. One can easily catch when Sindi uses phrases from Eliot such as the “irredeemable time”<sup>14</sup> “the eternal joker snickered within me” (Abraham 159) shows the sense of futility that is also patterned with muddled images. Sindi “stood in the graveyard of cars” (Abraham 159). For him the only reality of his parents is “a couple of wrinkled and cracked photographs”. The character of Sindi was shown by the plot, dialogue and the use of imagination and style. Mostly his all the novels are created with the images of death and with technology, as he himself admits, “The world which I knew well is the industrial world which has not so far been handled in a novel”(Banerjee 27 Feb.1983). Sindi describes June to Shiela as he describes Like an automobile Sindi talks about June to Shiela, “Tall and Slim, with blond hair and large blue eyes. I described her like an automobile light grey with a radio and heater of red over black with white side walls” (TF 57). The images become confused as symbols of mood and emotional strength change. Sindi compares to a rootless tree Like Prufrock’s measuring of his life with “coffee spoon” (Eliot 1961: 13) Sindi, also considers:

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

Arun Joshi uses metaphors and symbols for variation of mood and intensity of emotion. Arun Joshi uses symbolism as a technique in his novels to great advantage. In all his novels his characters are trapped in the maze of loneliness and desperation in his novels. This could not be done so well and so effectively only through direct narration without taking recourse to a pattern of symbols in the novels. He found that symbolism is one of the important techniques that he could effectively use to provide an effective medium for his presentation of dilemma and despair. Arun Joshi has used symbolism to express the existential dilemma. The novel's title and the protagonist's name (‘surrender’ ‘suriender’ shortened to Sindi) suggests this existential dilemma. A foreigner is one who is outside of a particular social group or community; an outsider. This is

certainly the case with Sindi Oberoi. He describes his whole existence as being “alone in the darkness” (TF 189). He is continually torn by “a strange feeling of aloneness and aloofness” (Bhatnagar 13). He appears before us as a constant outsider, a person who can have no relief from society. This phenomenon of Sindi’s relentless journeying is symbolized by the incessant movement of a leaf in the storm. He went to America for higher education, but instead of continuing there he drifted back to India, but here too he is no better than a stranger, a foreigner. In terms of meaning the two countries symbolize a trap in the form of distracting forces of evil and indifference causing traumatic experiences in people’s lives. Sindi Oberoi’s sense of being a complete alien and a stranger in the U. S. A. is characterized by the description of America as “a place for well-fed automations rushing about in automatic cars” (TF 9). Conditions in India are not favourable to him. In symbolic terms Sindi Oberoi is shocked by “the stagnant deadness” (TF 9) of the country. All in all, Sindi’s mood of despair and alienation is symbolized by the analogy of his being surrounded by vagueness and uncertainty. While America is characterized by ‘automations’ India is signaled by ‘darkness.’ The foreignness of Sindi is not outward but something he experiences inwardly. Mostly he realizes his rootlessness. He would love to June but is scared of envelopment and marriage. “I was afraid of possessing anybody and I was afraid of being possessed, and marriage meant both” (TF 91). He thinks that getting married is not the solution of his problems. He says: “I am happy you look at the world that way, June. America has given that to you. The statue of liberty promises you this optimism. But in my world there are no statues of liberty. In my world many things are inevitable and what most of them are sad and painful. I can’t come to your world. I have no escapes, June. I just have no escape.”(107-108)

Joshi takes time and seasons to represent the emotions of people. Often such things are forecast in the seasons. It’s an exceptionally cold September night when the first time Sindi meets Babu, and how Babu’s life ends, in a freezing way. In this novel you can find a constant reference to masks. Sindi’s detachment idea is a mask itself. Sindi admits that “we all have our masks” (TF 30). While Mr. Ghose argues regarding shifting the charges of the office to the proletariat, Sindi speaks, “The charlatans you wish to destroy will just turn around and put on another mask” (TF 38). Spring, youth, and love are some of the important rhythms that set into the emotional patterns of the novel. One can feel the rise and fall of these rhythms in the movement of Joshi’s prose. The style is brilliant.

Free flowing language is the most important feature of Joshi’s writing style. The novel is full with similes, satire, metaphors, parallelism and oxymoron indicating mood fluctuations and emotional explosion strength. Joshi says that Sindi is free like a river that hopes to leave its dead wood behind taking an unexpected plunge over a steep precipice (TF 176), since he felt like “sitting in your own tomb” (TF 22). Also “Strangers parted on the doorstep promising to meet again, knowing full well they didn’t mean it. It was the American way” (Foreigner 23). While Sindi’s professor proclaims that they are representative of his country, every foreign student wonders “what country had I represented” (Foreigner 43). To sum up, *The Foreigner* is a novel which one reads in a single sitting.

Since the East West encounter is very much there in the novels of Arun Joshi, we find him dealing with multi-cultural situation with great deftness. He does not hesitate from using British and American colloquialisms, if they serve his purpose. In his novels we encounter such slang and colloquial phrases as ‘*mumbo-jumbo*’, ‘*half-assed rigmarole*’, ‘*pissed off*’, and ‘*flunked*’. Arun Joshi makes the use Sanskrit, Hindi and Urdu words are very appropriate and satisfying. Here is a sample of few such words and phrases: ‘*haqiqat*’, ‘*inquilab*’, ‘*shamiana*’, ‘*sarangi*’, ‘*pajeb*’, ‘*ghunghru*’, ‘*sona ki dal*’, ‘*maati ke putle*’ etc. Arun Joshi uses many Sanskrit slokas in his novels. Vedic hymns lie scattered with the Ghazals of Begum Akhtar. American Jazz and tribal songs stand side by side. But such multiculturalism is not for the sake of decoration only. In the Arun Joshi’s novel they become functional.

Arun Joshi is fond of similes which generally juxtapose the abstract and the concrete. Some of the select examples of his similes are, as in “I grant you that you are not stuffed shirt, but then you are stubborn as a mule” (TF 141). “In her own house she (Sheila) was like a pet animal which went about where it willed, confident of not being noticed” (TF 141). “Babu looked up at me (Sindi) with hurt dog-like eyes and I suddenly felt ashamed of myself” (TF 153). “On the left side of his (Mr. Khemka’s) face the little finger switched spasmodically like a lizard’s torn tail” (TF 213). In these similes the abstract and the concrete have been contrasted. Sometimes its reverse is also true as in “darkness lay upon the city like a burden of cosmic guilt” (TF 219). He translated Indian idioms into English sometimes with their Hindi equivalents. The uses of such expressions are hardly justified because the writing of a novel in English located in a tribal belt is itself an act of translation.

In perhaps all the novels of Arun Joshi, Indian words in italics have been used in the texts. Some of the examples taken from *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* are those like “*Dharma*” (42) “*Aarati*”(97) “*Dhoop*”(97) “*Vilayati*”(114) etc. In *The Last Labyrinth* several Indian words printed in italics are such as, “*Mantrajaap*” (104) “*Namaskar*” (201) “*Salaam*” (52) the last example “*Salaam*” has also been used as a verb with the addition of –Ed-inflexional suffix “*salaamed*”, “*Cow-dust hour*” (SCBB 99) is literal translation of Indian expression “*Godhuli Bela*”.

“The Characters in Joshi’s three earlier novels are highly educated in British or American Universities. As such, in their use of English there is no unreality. He seems to convince us that some of his characters talk in English. When Sheila clarifies why her family did not want Babu to marry an American because of the language problem, Sindi retorts: “We all know English; don’t we? I asked. “Even now we are speaking English; aren’t we?” (TF 60)

The characters of Arun Joshi concern with the crisis of identity arising out of the use of different languages. Sheila in *The Foreigner* did not want her brother, Babu, marry an American because of the language problem. Sindi Oberoi brushed this away telling her that this was a mere pretext as even they also used English in their conversation. Even Gargi in *The Last Labyrinth* consults a Hindi-English dictionary to dissuade Som Bhaskar from taking any revenge as “man’s vanity (ahankar) brings with a marked British accent, but his creator Arun Joshi establishes the British model of the English language with American and Indian variations in usage and idioms.

The novels of Arun Joshi are an attempt to discuss what life entails. His work aims to create ways and means to remove the gap between each initiative and its achievement. In the world they must live in and face the meaninglessness of life, the protagonists of Joshi are lonely disfigures. They are humble enough to benefit from the problems of life, even though they're not sacred or religious.

The image of a foreigner is used as a myth by Arun Joshi. Apart from *The City and the River* his characters behave as strangers to the world or to themselves in all his novels. They are foreigner when they are revealed either by the absence of familiarity with the culture beyond their sensibility or an awareness of themselves. Joshi uses this motif so extensively that the character of a myth is taken on. In the fullest sense of the word and the world, Sindi is a foreigner. Billy is an outsider because he is unable to associate himself with the culture he is a part of. Without prejudice and resolution, Ratan has awareness of itself. Sindi is against both Eastern and Western materialism. Billy likes the tribals because they are unmaterialistic and nature. The whole career of Ratan is a severe indictment world. Joshi suggests a different solution in each of his novels. He does not care to work out fully the philosophical possibilities of his themes. Nor does he try to probe deeply into his character’s psychology. The ways he proposes to counteract the meaninglessness of life are not very original; they have been elaborately described in Indian philosophy and scriptures, but it is really remarkable how he integrates them into his novels. Joshi’s works are not a simply a psychological study of his characters, unlike the other writers.

Joshi never follows age old patterns as an author he did experiment with the English language. He has used various devices and implemented numerous writing styles which he has adopted from the authors of American and Western authors. His all the novels exhibits the blend of various techniques of fiction used by the author of his genre or the earlier age. His view point for writing is always from the eyes of an upper class inhabitant even when the theme is taken from the life of poor people; it has been narrated from the viewpoint of the upper class narrator. Except the mud-people in *The City and the River* all his characters belong to the upper-class society.

*The Foreigner* is a marvel of technical skill. Everything irrelevant or superfluous is pruned out. So carefully is this pruning done that his novels are little masterpiece with beautiful format perfection and poetic richness. The novels are happy example of fusion of form with content and of texture with structure. Joshi never follows age old patterns as an author he did experiment with the English language. He has used various devices and implemented numerous writing styles which he has adopted from the authors of American and Western authors. His all the novels exhibits the blend of various techniques of fiction used by the author of his genre or the earlier age. His view point for writing is always from the eyes of an upper class inhabitant even when the theme is taken from the life of poor people; it has been narrated from the viewpoint of the upper class narrator.

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