



EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLIC PATTERNS IN ARUN JOSHI'S *THE FOREIGNER*

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Abstract

Many people consider Arun Joshi to be one of the most well-known contemporary novelists. Through his artistic use of constantly shifting symbolic patterns in his novels, he reveals the reality of the position that humans find themselves in. He gives the concepts and actions that are described in *The Foreigner* a sense of significance through the usage of recurring symbols that he applies throughout the narrative. The complicated dilemmatic condition of a guy stuck in the labyrinths of loneliness and dejection is shown by Arun Joshi through the usage of a multitude of symbols. Within the narrative of *The Foreigner*, Arun Joshi weaves the plot around the life of the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi, who is depicted as being entangled in the lonesome, depressing, and almost unimportant life that she leads in the beginning stages of the story. Symbolism is utilized by the novelist in order to create an aesthetic representation of his thoughts, feelings, and emotions during the process. Almost all of Sindi Oberoi's experiences have been presented in the novel in a manner that is connected to those of other characters.

In order to create a fabric of life that is full of charm, all of the symbols that are employed in *The Foreigner* are comprehensive and come in a variety of colors. According to Sindi Oberoi, his life has been "alone in the darkness" during his entire years. Joshi, from the very beginning of his life, Sindi Oberoi has been a symbol of the Existential Everyman of our day. This is due to the fact that he is perpetually troubled by a peculiar feeling of isolation and aloofness, and he believes that he is a perpetual outsider. Throughout *The Foreigner*, Arun Joshi portrays the scenes, episodes, and circumstances, among other things, in a manner that is extremely symbolic, and he also begins the novel on a note that is significantly symbolic.

Keywords: Contemporary, labyrinths, automations, enmeshed, rootlessness, belongingness.

Introduction:

Many people consider Arun Joshi to be one of the most well-known contemporary novelists. In the novels that he has written, he has shown his worry for the ethical and spiritual problems that the people of modern-day India are facing. The majority of his work focuses on addressing the issues that are faced by Indians who have left their nation to seek higher education in other countries after independence. In a new nation, they fall victim to feelings of isolation, and as a result, they create a society of people who are marginalized [1]. Through his artistic use of ever shifting symbolic patterns in his novels, Arun Joshi reveals the reality of the predicament that humans find themselves in. The importance of the concepts and occurrences that are depicted in his novels is heightened by the usage of symbols that appear repeatedly throughout his works.

In his work *The Foreigner*, which was published in 1968, Arun Joshi used a multitude of symbols to illustrate the complicated predicament of a man who is imprisoned in the labyrinths of loneliness and dejection. He expresses the inner importance and implications of human experience in a manner that is sufficient through the consistent use of symbols. The novelist addresses the existentialist predicament of the modern people in *The Foreigner*, which can be interpreted in a more general definition. He outlines the developments and changes that have occurred in the functioning and progression of the modern man's psyche.

Within the narrative of *The Foreigner*, Arun Joshi weaves the plot around the life of the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi, who is depicted as being entangled in the lonesome, depressing, and almost unimportant life that she leads in the beginning stages of the story. Symbolism is utilized by the novelist in order to create an aesthetic representation of his thoughts, feelings, and emotions during the process. Almost all of Sindi Oberoi's experiences have been presented in the novel in a manner that is connected to those of other characters. All of the scenes and events are constantly interacting with one another, and this interaction is represented by a wide variety of symbols. In order to create a fabric of life that is full of charm, the novel makes use of a wide variety of symbols that are both comprehensive and multi-colored [2].



In the very beginning of the discussion on the usage of symbols in *The Foreigner*, the very first symbol can be found in the very name of the protagonist, Sindi. Sindi is a name with a geek origin and means "from mount Kynthos." This name, when interpreted in a conceptual sense, means rootless, restless, and luckless in a world that is mad, evil, and silly. Sindi Oberoi makes the assertion that his life has been "alone in the darkness" in a term that is not only incredibly compelling but also loaded with symbolic overtones. Joshi, number 189 From the very beginning of his life, Sindi Oberoi has been a symbol of the Existential Everyman of our day. This is due to the fact that he is perpetually troubled by a peculiar feeling of isolation and aloofness, and he believes that he is a perpetual outsider. In his commentary on Arun Joshi's usage of symbols to portray the existential predicament of Sindi, Dr. Mohd. Shafi Dar says as follows:

In front of us, he presents himself as a perpetual outsider, a person who is unable to find any relief from their constant motion. This phenomena of Sindi's continuous journeying is represented by the unceasing movement of a leaf in the midst of the storm. After completing his higher education in the United States of America, he decided to return to India instead of pursuing his studies there. However, even in India, he is treated as if he were a stranger or a foreigner. Taking this into consideration, it is important to point out that the two nations are characterized as two living and pulsating organisms. When seen from a symbolic perspective, the two countries represent a trap that takes the form of distracting forces of evil and indifference that cause people to go through horrific experiences in their lives. The depiction of the United States of America as "a place for well-fed automations rushing about in automatic cars" is what gives Sindi Oberoi the impression that she is a complete foreigner and a stranger in the United States of America. The situation in India is also not positive, and Sindi Oberoi is dismayed by "the stagnant deadness"... of the country. In symbolic words, this makes the situation even worse. As a whole, Sindi's state of mind, which is characterized by feelings of despondency and isolation, is represented by the analogy of his being surrounded by ambiguity and doubt. India is defined by "darkness". (Dar 984)

When Arun Joshi makes a Sindi remark, "It was as I had always been that I viewed myself. As a young guy who had been uprooted and was living in the later part of the 20th century, Joshi (195), describes him as having been separated from everything except himself. Despite the fact that he is constantly confronted with the horrible situation, Sindi is torn by his worries about being alone and being cut off from his own culture. He is confronted with pain, and he has the impression that this anguish has penetrated more layers of his being [3]:

Life has become devoid of meaning and purpose. I find that the emptiness of the world are more bothersome to me than the objects that it contains. The voids and the empty spaces, both inside and outside of the caverns, as well as the voids of the sky above them... (Joshi 179–80)

At every point in his life, while he is wandering from one location to another, and of course from one woman to another, he displays his dissatisfaction by expressing his disappointment. The constant movement of his movements from place to place has been compared to the way a leaf moves in the wind during a storm. He travels to the United States in order to pursue higher education, but while he is there, he is plagued by a painful sense of rootlessness, which compels him to go back to India. But the problem is that now that he is in his own nation, he is now confronted with the same circumstance of being alone and without a place to call home. This peculiar circumstance about a person who is located in two different countries has been symbolically portrayed by the novelist as the image of two different locations that are infused with the same essential necessary notion. It has been said that these two nations are emblematic of the traps that are set by the distracting powers of evil and indifference, which are responsible for the occurrence of problematic events in the lives of the people [4]. Sindi's feelings, which cause him to believe that he is an outsider in the United States, have been exemplified by the description of the United States as "a place for well-fed automations rushing about in automatic cars." (Joshi 90). The fact that Sindi has become an alien person in his own country, symbolically like "the stagnant deadness" (Joshi 207) of the land, surprised him even more. Things in India are virtually exactly the same as they were in Sindi's original country. As a result, Sindi's feelings of dissatisfaction and resignation are represented by the analogy of his being surrounded by ambiguity and doubt regarding the provision of nutrition, similar to the situation that occurs when fish are surrounded by water.

It becomes clear as the narrative progresses that Sindi is constantly traveling around from one location to another. At the moment, he is in Delhi, where he gets the impression that he has finally found a place to call home. However, he discovers that he is moving back and going to Nairobi, the area where he first saw the light of day. Some of the places that he travels to are London, Soho, Scotland, and Boston. Delhi and Nairobi are not the only places that he goes; he also travels to other places. His life has been marked by a series of ups and downs, and each of these locations, towns, and nations all represent different periods of his journey through life [5]. During his time in these locations, he is required to work in a variety of capacities, including those of a dish washer, a barman, a



petty employee in a small village library, and a student who has been acquainted with a number of people, including Nune Blyth and Babu Rao Khemka, amongst others. Therefore, it is clear that Sindi is deeply involved in the tribulations of a person who is considered to be an outsider. His agitated movement is a representation of his status as an outsider in every situation:

You had roots in the soil that you lived upon, he says before continuing. Take a look at me. I do not have any roots. There is no moral code that I adhere to. (Joshi 143)

The statement made by Sindi, which was described before, demonstrates that "forgiveness lies within him" (The Foreigner 61). There is no denying that Sindi's inability to find a solution to the problem has been depicted by him in the words that he has uttered to June Blyth: "Our aloneness must be resolved from within" (126). This statement once again represents his dissatisfaction with the relationships that are fairly profound and are on a larger scale. In a similar fashion, the troubled sense of self that Sindi possesses has been portrayed using the metaphor of "a battle field where the child and adult warred unceasingly" (130). Once again, we notice that the novelist uses the metaphor of things deteriorating "like an ill-packed cracker" to illustrate the failure of Sindi's attempt to integrate himself with things and people. This is a way that the author shows the failure of Sindi's attempt from a symbolic standpoint. It is (139)

Sindi's sense of disorientation, bewilderment, and rootlessness have once again been metaphorically depicted through his encounter with Anna, a small artist who has also experienced the same sense of rootlessness in his life due to the fact that she has been separated from her spouse from the beginning of her existence. Sindi's interaction with the Soho artist is particularly significant from a symbolic standpoint because it underlines his sense of alienation and rootlessness. This is in contrast to the artist, who does not have any desire for great things and does not aspire to have positive relationships with other people; rather, she just yearns "for her lost youth." (267) Another use of the symbol appears in the description of Sindi's lack of roots, which is contrasted to the road that leads to New York, which is devoid of any major roads [6]. An additional point to consider is that Sindi's citation to particular lines from a well-known song carries a great deal of symbolic weight:

Who can say for sure where the road will take them? Whoever says that is an idiot. Following the recollection of this song, he begins to contemplate the meaninglessness of his existence, which is symbolically symbolized by the words "an idiot without a keeper." (163) In a similar manner, Sindi's comparison of himself to "a desert or like a vast field of naked oaks in winter time" serves as a representation of the wretched situation he finds himself in as a result of Babu Rao Khemka's passing. (176-75) Despite the fact that he is indirectly responsible for the tragic deaths of his beloved June and his friend Babu, he does, in reality, hold himself accountable for the deaths. He makes an attempt at his own realization and offers the following words, which are crucial from a symbolic standpoint:

It was as I had always been that I viewed myself. A young man who had been uprooted and was living in the latter half of the 20th century and who had been separated from everything but for himself... Is it possible that Babu would still be alive if I had not given June my body on the night that we went out for a trip through the neighborhood? I was under the impression that I was acting in a detached manner; nevertheless, was it not simply a wish to demonstrate that I was still the one who held the key to June's happiness? (195)

In another part of the story, Arun Joshi makes a comparison between Sindi's life to traveling "around the huge circle like a sleep-walker in an amphitheater." This comparison serves as a symbolic representation of Sindi's ongoing lack of significance [7].

Throughout *The Foreigner*, Arun Joshi portrays the scenes, episodes, and circumstances, among other things, in a manner that is extremely symbolic, and he also begins the novel on a note that is significantly symbolic. In the very first scene, we find ourselves in a morgue, where the main character, Sindi, is able to identify the deceased body of Babu Rao Khemka, who had been killed in an automobile accident. Immediately after Sindi visits the mortuary in order to identify the body of Babu Rao Khemka, the author of the story employs symbols that are immediately associated with grief and death. In the instant that he takes a glance at the lifeless body of Babu Rao, he has the sensation that he has discovered...a dark hole that is completely devoid of any bottom and is gaping in place of the right eye [8]. An awful grin that showed no signs of coming to an end was all that was left behind after the seductive upper lip had disappeared. (The author, Arun Joshi) It is immediately brought to our attention by the author that Sindi starts to experience weariness in his legs. According to Sindi, the fatigue that he is experiencing in his legs is "turning them to stone." All of a sudden, my eyes felt excessively dry, and my throat tightened. (2) In any case, he files the paperwork and begins to leave, but the clerk advises him to phone a taxi instead of exiting the building. In response to this, he says, "I did not know where I was



going, so there was no point in calling a cab." This comment made by Sindi is a symbolic representation of the fact that life is devoid of all significance; it is nothing more than a farce.

Following this, he arrives at the residence of Babu Rao, where he observes that his relatives are crying profusely out of an overwhelming sense of loss. On the other hand, he finds it ironic that when Babu Rao's son passed away, Babu did not exhibit any feelings; rather, he accepted the death with a peaceful resignation. Now, Arun Joshi makes a pointed reference to the fact that Babu Rao and his sister Shiela insist that Sindi join them for a drink while they are together. The novelist now makes a symbolic comparison between the drawing room, which is lavishly and tastefully decorated, and "low streamlined diwans... and sculpture." (11) Once more, the author of the novel provides these differences of Mr. Khemka's wealth to be symbolically conveyed through the extreme poverty of the family of Mutu, who is a low-paid employee at Khemka's office. Both of these contrasts are shown in the novel. The author of the story draws parallels between the homes of two individuals by comparing them with symbols. Khemka is the owner of "three houses in New Delhi and a Villa in Mussoorie" (21), whereas Muthu resides in a single room that is shared with fifteen other tenants. After witnessing the deplorable circumstances that Muthu's family is living in, Sindi comes to the realization that he is also in a predicament, which he represents by the "accumulated despair of...weary lives" (Joshi 226) of the people who are in his immediate vicinity. The portrayal of the place's squalor is a representation of the poor man's hunger, anxiety, and powerlessness, among other things. Khemka is accused of being a con artist by Sindi, who refers to them as "those miserable wretches in rags who push carts on your streets and die at twenty-five." This further intensifies the symbolic significance of the situation. It is (215)

Through the use of scenes and episodes, Arun Joshi is able to build a symbolic design that is quite successful in *The Foreigner*. These scenes and episodes are able to establish a connection with the characters through the utilization of symbols that represent a fascinating spectacle, an occupation, and enjoyment for the eyes. Following this, the author proceeds to take and treat these spectacles and occupations in a manner that is simultaneously equal and piquant, to the point that it communicates the reality in an attractive manner [9]. In addition, the author is successful in interweaving the scenes and events with the history and the present of his characters, and he also succeeds in metaphorically exposing the depths and the elements that contribute to the anxiety, grief, and tiredness that his characters experience. It is for this reason that the reader discovers significant symbolism in the fact that Sindi has been relocated from Delhi to Boston and a number of other locations in the present as well as in the past in an unanticipated manner. The command and competence that Arun Joshi possesses in the use of symbols is lauded by Madhu Sudan Prasad. He also makes the observation that Arun Joshi possesses "a vast range of wide variety of scenes for symbolic presentation." (51).

In *The Foreigner*, Arun Joshi not only provides a comprehensive chart of Sindi Oberoi's relocation from one region to another in symbols, but he also provides a graph that illustrates the progression of Sindi from a state of simplicity to one of complexity through the use of a variety of symbols. Sometimes, a person who believes that they are a rootless person can become overly stubborn as a result of the agonies that they experience in their existence. On the other side, Sindi possesses the vital seeds of a compassionate heart and a strong desire to provide a helping hand to other people. In the event that Babu Rao arrives in Boston to enroll in college, he provides assistance to him at the Foreign Student Centre. It is when Sindi meets with the Dean and asks him to not expel Babu for not performing well and achieving success in his studies that this desire of Sindi's to assist other people becomes more symbolically apparent. The author, at another occasion, symbolically presents Sindi's desire of helping June when she visits comes to his place while he is absent, and she leaves a message for the meeting with him urgently, and he at once visits her with a resolution to marrying her but to his surprise she has already died when he reaches there.

Due to the fact that Sindi has been working under a misnomer for a considerable amount of time, he is misled throughout his life. However, as he gradually accumulates experience through the course of his life, he encounters challenges and adventures, and as a result, he develops a feeling of self-realization. Comments made by Mohd. Shafi Dar:

Misnomers had been used to refer to Sindi Oberoi for a considerable amount of time. Having been through a great deal of strife and adventure, he is now able to accumulate experience [10]. Additionally, these confrontations are represented in a symbolic manner. Sindi claims that his difficulties have been internal rather than external, and that the conflict that he has been experiencing has been between "the saint and the lusty beast." This instills in him a sense of disconnection from everything that takes place in his immediate environment. (The Symbolic Meanings Employed by Arun Joshi in *The Foreigner* 985–966)

Sindi has reached a point in her mental development where she is able to differentiate between reality and illusion. She is also aware of the fact that "The wheel of Karma, like the wheel of industrialization, never stops." He now begins to feel a form of progress in his own personality as he signifies his knowledge that "detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it." (The Foreigner 170) He represents his realization that he became detached



from the situation. On page 93 of *The Foreigner*, it is stated that Sindi ought to engage with the world, which implies that he ought not to run away from the world and that he ought to maintain his connection with the realities of the world.

The final phase of Sindi Oberoi's life and character is depicted metaphorically by Arun Joshi in the novel *The Foreigner*, which is nearing its conclusion. It is now possible to observe a very major shift in Sindi's mentality as a result of his encounter with Muthu, which has the symbolic meaning of teaching him how to comprehend human life and how to attempt to live it. In point of fact, the author of the work wishes to drive home the idea that Sindi's resolve to make attempts to comprehend, solve, and pursue life by following humanitarianism and daring is a symbol of a significant change in his attitude and maturity. At this moment, he makes the decision to assist those who are disadvantaged and helpless, such as members of Khemka's family who have experienced bad times. This is the reason that he decides to cancel his trip to Bombay when the workers at Mr. Khemka's factory, who are in a helpless position, ask him to stay with them [11]. His decision to forego the lucrative job that was given to him in Bombay is a direct result of the significant shift that has taken place in his life and mentality. This is a representation of his ability to exercise self-control and free himself of excessive libido. When Sindi has finished unpacking his luggage and putting the items back where they belong, even his servant is taken aback by the action. A remark from Sindi:

After dinner, much to the surprise of my servant, I unpacked my things and put them back as nearly as possible in their old places. ((*The Foreigner* 226)

This choice is a representation of the significant transformation that has taken place in his life, and it means that he is getting back to his typical routine.

In point of fact, Sindi has discovered a feeling of belongingness that is symbolic in nature. The fact that he has been successful in his quest to discover the true meaning of life is another sign that it represents. At this point, he dives headfirst into the struggle for existence, which is being waged by the laborers, who ultimately prevail as a result of Sindi's support and cooperation. Eventually Sindi's transcending self-interest is symbolized by his resolution to imbibe new vigour and life into the derelict business of Khemka and to extend his helping hand to all other employees working there in the factory [12]. It is possible to finish by quoting J. Venkateswar Rao, who makes the following observation:

In order to meaningfully involve himself in the community, Sindi Oberoi has made a commitment to work that is both detached and compassionate. This commitment demonstrates the transcendence that he contains. After the intense search for purpose that has molded his life and devastated his brain, he has finally arrived at a place that is heaven [13]. (*An Existential Conundrum Faced by the Foreigner, The Foreigner: An Existential Conundrum*) It is wisdomlib.org.

Consequently, in conclusion, it is possible to assert that Arun Joshi, via his works, depicts the challenges faced by Indians who have immigrated to other nations after the country's independence in order to pursue better educational opportunities. Delineating the complex dilemmatic predicament of persons who are ensnared in the labyrinths of alienation and disappointments, Arun Joshi, in his work *The Foreigner*, makes use of a number of symbols to illustrate the situation. Through his consistent use of changing symbols, he reveals the truth about the position that humans find themselves in and gives the concepts and events that are described in his novels a sense of relevance. By means of this novel, the author brilliantly lays bare the present man's psyche, which is torn and forlorn, and exposes the existential issue that the modern people are facing. In *The Foreigner*, Arun Joshi weaves the story of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi's life, which is entangled, alone, unhappy, and inconsequential [14]. He does this with the assistance of symbols. Through the use of symbols, he presents a very detailed and elegant explanation of his feelings, passions, and thought process. The author has used a wide variety of symbols to describe almost all of the scenes and events that have taken place in the story. The character Sindi Oberoi has been presented through highly persuasive phrases of symbolic connotations as an Existential Everyman of our time because his psyche is torn a queer feeling of loneliness and aloofness as if he is a perennial outsider [15]

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