



FROM EXPERIENCE TO HIGHER INNOCENCE: FUGITIVE TO *STHIRPRAJNA* IN THE *FOREIGNER*

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Abstract:-In Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*, Sindi remains a foreigner and a fugitive in all the lands he lives as he thinks that by hopping from one landmass to another, he can escape the responsibility of his actions under the cover of his phoney philosophy of 'detachment'. His escapades land him in a chaos of spirit and mind, and a new movement from experience to higher innocence starts when the death of Babu and June make him aware of the chaos he has created within and outside himself. Sindi's descends into his own darkness lead to an emergence of his self from its narcissistic mode of being content in its Great Mother structure/Unconscious to a 'heroic' being, aware of its own depths and surroundings.

Keywords:*Great Mother Structure, Dark Side, Detachment, Narcissistic, Heroic, Fugitive, Experience, Higher Innocence, Sthirprajna.*

INTRODUCTION:

Sindi's movement to a higher state of self is through his experience. He remains a foreigner and a fugitive in all the lands he lives as he thinks that by hopping from one landmass to another, he can escape the responsibility of his actions under the cover of his phoney philosophy of 'detachment'. His escapades land him in a chaos of spirit and mind, and a new movement from experience to higher innocence starts when the death of Babu and June make him aware of the chaos he has created within and outside himself.

Sindi's awareness of his inner chaos lifts him to a state of higher innocence in Blakean terms. His turmoil and search for his self has been brought about by the dialectics of innocence and experience. In his vision he is linked up with that 'still point of humanity' which is 'in time' yet 'out of' it. Earlier death and loneliness dominated his mind, now it is his contact with life beyond him which makes him feel cosmic and free him from the fear of any threat to his self from non-permanence or illusory nature of phenomenal objects and relationships, "The sight of the sun trajecting into the pathless void, certain of its oblivion at the end of the journey filled me with a measure of peace" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 193). Because now it is lamp of his deeper self or higher consciousness which illuminates his existence in the cosmos, earlier it was the mirror of his consciousness which was just receiving and reflecting the having mode of consciousness from the external world. Now Sindi finds himself in the know of the cosmic mystery and in unison with it. In the movement of the sun, he does not find purposelessness or drift but a confidence and "assurance that the universe would click on, even though Babu, June and their child were gone. I was the only one left who had the complete record" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 193). He is also aware of his completeness. Like a poet in Lawrencian terms he has lit up his inner chaos with visions by opening it towards the "wild," chaos or 'cosmos' by making a "slit in the umbrella" (Inglis 430) or the deconstruction of his Great Mother matrix and the empirical structure of consciousness received from the world. "The glimpse of chaos is a vision, a window to the sun" (Inglis 430). In such a state of consciousness Sindi turns back to life itself. He learns to "stop being careless", and himself at a higher state of self, he perceives wisdom even in the caretaker's words who tells him "You've got to go on behavin' like folks never died" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 195). Sindi tells him, perhaps more to himself, "The dead teach you how to overcome their death, though" and that "you mustn't let them get you down" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 194). He decides, "to keep" the "multi-coloured pebble" he found "near June's grave" (Joshi,

The Foreigner 195). June can never die for him if in her life she brought love and warmth. Her death has smashed all the superstructures of his self and he is brought back to a stage where Lawrence would say individuals “Turn back to life that flows invisibly in the cosmos, and will flow for ever, sustaining and renewing all living things” (Inglis 380).

Sindi is ready to act and move towards his state of self or higher innocence. A flip of coin takes him to India. If he acquired an awareness of the higher innocence in the West through his experience and the vague consciousness of his racial consciousness and its philosophies, it is in India that he consummates his higher state of self with the external reality and also moves a step further in the search for his self by learning great philosophical truths for being, and that too from the commonplace wisdom. Earlier after Babu’s death he had hoped to escape his own decayed self “like a river that hopes to leave its dead word behind by taking an unexpected plunge over a steep precipice” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 176). But June’s death makes him leave America because “America did strange things to me . . .” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 134). He thought he should reject this civilization which created having mode of existence in human being and where its materialism and all that progress brought only pain and suffering. He lands in India leaving behind a life of “The holidays and the travels, tender love-making before going to sleep, it all ended in emptiness” where affairs “fizzled out like an ill-packed cracker” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 139) as Sindi “never let them love me “ and has decided, “And I will never love like that again” as in fact he had “hurt” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 139) himself. He has treated his love affairs like business transactions in which he “counted the gains and the losses” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 81) but now he has achieved an insight into his own being as he tells Shiela, “life is not a business account, losses of which can be written off against the gains. Once your soul goes bankrupt, no amount of plundering can enrich it again” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 140). He has no “ambition” which he “used to have” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 133) because “come to think of it I don’t even have a reason to live” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 136). He has come out of the attachment to his self but he is in the danger of getting detached from the act of living itself. The tremendous shock of June’s death has created a temporary state of crematory-renunciation in him. On the other hand in India also he encounters the same ‘having mode’ of existence and decadence of material prosperity which he thinks he has left behind in America, “in truth it had only been a change of theatre from America; the show had remained unchanged. I had met new people with new vanities. They merely had different ways of squeezing happiness out of the mad world. And they suffered differently” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 208). His heightened consciousness or heroic self, which is liberated from the narcissistic or ‘having mode’ of his Great Mother Structure, takes no time in deconstructing the Westernized, materialistic, ‘having mode’ of living. In India also Sindi’s search is a diachronic one, with ups and downs, and backward and forward movements of his ego in finding his self, yet in the structure of the Great Mother, the search is synchronized where various stages are overlapping each other, the rhythms of emergence and psychic gravitation showing the non-linear pattern of the search. These rhythms also bring out Lacanian ‘repression’ or journey into the depth of the protagonist’s unconscious as well as the expression of ‘the unmanifest’ juxtaposing, qualifying ‘the manifest’ in the ‘semiotic triangle’ of soul making.

His higher state of self starts deconstructing the phoney life in India also. Mr Khemkas’ parties were “all a bit of a hoax” where “old men grown fat with success came with their plump wives. They drank and then they had gorgeous dinners. They talked of money and how to make more of it. They left the impression that they could buy up anybody they wanted” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 16). This all appeared “meaningless” to Sindi because “we were looking for two different worlds” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 16). Sindi’s discovery of his true self places him, not in an alienated but at a distinct position of human awareness much above this “crowd of obesity” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 16). His self immediately develops an intense disliking for “India’s affluent society,” where “The rich Persian carpets, those sculpture-ridden walls must have concocted the innocence that destroyed him (Babu) and very nearly buried me” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 11). He comes to understand “Indian business” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 205) and how the “empire” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 208) was made to grow. He deconstructs this upper-class affluence in this having structure of existence which crushes the happiness out of the lot of others either by depriving them or by creating same structures in themselves. His self goes out to the workers whose “clothes were falling off in rags and sweat poured off their backs as if they had just had a shower” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 197). He sees no “point” in talking to a “big man like Mr. Khemka” about “God and pain so long as half-naked men had to wrestle with a beastly mass of concrete” under a “scorching sun” and “all for three rupees a day” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 198). He identifies with these people in their closeness to life, “these are my people” and yet he moved as a “stranger” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 198) among them. He realizes the parade of modern civilization and finds “I wasn’t alone” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 198) to do so. He perceives bustling humanity in the slums in “Full-breasted women,” “Naked children” all moving with life yet reduced to “bundles of soggy humanity by “the abominable wheel of Industrialization” which “grinds inevitably” and either reduces life to rags or brings about material prosperity with a “chaos” of “being,” “And we who pretended to be the masters were driven before it like torn bits of paper on a windy day” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 43). Sindi’s state of higher self, makes him see his distinction from the poor people who are “born with simplicity of mind” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 43). He walks through this world like a man who has come to darkness after having illuminated his being. His condition is “like a sleep-walker in an amphitheatre” (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 208). He cannot be taken in by the fragmentation of his being which this world seems to offer. He spurns

Khemka's advice on mechanical mobility in material life based on "good contacts" and "proper social life" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 45). He tells him, "I had only one life and it could be called by whatever name one wished" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 45). He finds Shiela to be "an exception" to this kind of life where people "threw" and "attended" so many "gigantic parties" not because they made "more money" but "that they were also afraid of being alone" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 45-46). Sindi discovers Shiela "belonged to many worlds at the same time and I admired her for that" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 46). But even to Shiela he says "no" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 209) to her request to him for owning the responsibility of the frauds of Mr. Khemka who "had to steal money in spite of the millions he had" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 205). This "was Indian business" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 205) which grew into an "empire" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 208) out of dishonesty. "Now I knew what people like Jain and me and Muthu had been slogging for: just so that Mr. Khemka could sit back and write his two books of accounts" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 208). He develops an awareness that "all along I had been a part of it" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 205). His saying no to Shiela, his deconstruction of Indian business and identification with the poor in their suffering and working for them show that he has actively entered into what Eric Fromm would call 'syndrome of growth' from the 'syndrome of decay.' He has come out of the having or narcissistic mode of his Great Mother Structure into love for others, from incestuous empirical consciousness into "independence and freedom" from passively "necrophilic" to actively "biophilic" (Fromm, *Heart of Man* 113) orientation and execution of self. Now he is bothered by the existence and 'God' for the sake of others. He is baffled by the snares of existence and asks a policeman in the garden "Have you seen God?" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 208). He has come to understand who is responsible for the misery of others, a life style where other people are merely dead objects and who are either to be deprived or exploited by the selfish or self-centred philosophy of Indian business. His self is moved when he perceives the contrast, "There are no lovers in Indian gardens. Only little heaps of humanity lay here and there, trying to snatch a few hours' sleep before sunrise" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 209). He decides "Mr. Khemka had to suffer for his own actions" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 209) and that Shiela "had offered me a bad choice" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 207). He is at the higher level of his being and does not want to repeat the mistakes of his past, "In the past I had tried to put the consequences of my actions on others, or presumed to take over their actions as my own. Both had boomeranged" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 209). Now Sindi has unified his self with his deeper self and he can "claim the uniqueness of having just one book" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 209). He has the guts to tell the reality of Mr. Khemka to him, "you can't label every dirty thing you do as part of a game" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 212). Actions taken for one's self interest at the cost of others, whether in personal life or in business, appear dirty to his higher innocence, and he realises that "A dirty thing is a dirty thing whether somebody knows about it or not" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 213). This is the reciprocation of his enlightened being to Shiela who "said mildly" in front of her father "as if she were making a general point" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 213). Sindi can tell Mr. Khemka on his face, "It is you who have swindled those miserable wretches in rags who push carts on your streets and die at twenty five. It is you who have been telling lies and fabricating documents just so that you could air-condition this ostentatious house and throw gigantic parties for the horde of jackals who masquerade as your friends" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 215). All this deconstruction requires a higher state of being and a great inner strength to articulate it. Sindi now at that level of being can reveal to Mr. Khemka what he has destroyed in his having mode of existence, "Your heartlessness drove the only person I ever loved to death. You have prostituted my ability for a whole year for your diabolical aims" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 215).

Sindi's self at a higher level of being keeps itself above the corruption of selfhood or selfish pleasure yet it has to consummate its higher innocence with the external world to create meaning for himself and for others. To quote Lawrence, "it is not a question of knowing something, but of doing something. It is a question of getting into contact again with the living center of the cosmos" (Inglis 380). One can truly live in the full sense of the term when the higher innocence manifests itself in the act of living. Having touched the living center of life beyond oneself, one would express it in one's surrounding just as God manifests himself through his creation and Sindi would act when he would be moved by the ordinary yet sacrifice full lives of Muthu and others. Muthu has a tubercular wife and lives amidst "a soggy trash" in one room "tenements" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 221) with "a dozen other people" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 223) where "Hordes of naked or semi-naked children squatted on the trash heaps and around them, emptying their bowels to the call of nature" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 221-22). Muthu tells him "The problem is that we are all going to pieces" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 224), he cannot go anywhere or to his village at this age when he has "sold" his "land" to "pay my father's debts" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 225) and that "I wouldn't worry so much if I could at least be sure of food for these people, but right now even that does not seem possible" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 225). While Sindi's servant also cannot accompany him to Bombay for his own personal comfort as "In a year or two I have to start thinking of getting my daughters married" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 220). These people are already living an existence which is beyond their own selves. The "filial relationships" (Mohanty 115) bring out the reality of his own existence to Sindi. He realizes the importance of the action in the act of living. Now he is not bothered by the "purpose of action" which bothered him even after his coming to India because then, though being at a higher stage of being, he saw "no purposes in life" and "perhaps a little purpose in right action, in action without desire" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 138). But now he comes face to face with life itself as it is neither the purpose nor the reason, nor the

outcome of an action that matters at all. What matters is the act of doing. What matters is the action for humanity beyond oneself which is one's Dharma. He has realized his "detachment" as a "fatal presumption" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 196) in his narcissistic attachment to himself. Now he is not going to allow a repetition of earlier "destruction" by "simply standing still" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 196). In such a moment of heightened consciousness, the words of Muthu relieve him from any dilemma of ethics or morality, "but it is not involvement, sir . . . Sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 225). Sindi experiences "a strange sensation" which was "something I had never before felt in my life" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 226). He reaches out to the "massive suffering" behind those "vacant eyes of Muthu" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 226). He gets ready to act and the warmth and expectation of others overwhelm him. He stays in the office till late at night, "But the whole staff stayed with me" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 228). He recalls his coolness, as he "had always been" to concentrate on "decisive action", but this time "The fruit of it was really not my concern" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 228). He has already redeemed himself by being "overwhelmed" by realizing others' "suffering" as "massive" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 226), and liberating his self by acting in the transformed and glorified 'heroic' mode for others. His reward is the 'soul' or the meaning or the 'maiden' or the 'treasure' which the dragon or his own terrible side guards from him. He wins the dragon fight and achieves meaning and growth of his self through the tremendous silent love he gets from his colleagues and also from Sheila who comes to meet him in the office and he finds "The wheels of industrialization had certainly moved substantially since Sheila and I had last met" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 229). He has a feeling "We were just beginning to understand each other" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 230). Sheila has already started caring for him. Without showing it to Sindi she had "put a pillow under my head and removed my shoes" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 210) and she had expressed her fear to him that in his absence "I will be left all alone" (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 205). Sindi's movement to a higher state of being has made him attain that blossoming of his self as he grasps the fragrance of his own self from its depths in its communion with the being of others without destroying the source of fragrance by seeking it in his own terms. Now he does not exhibit any fear of breaking of relationships or the non-permanence of things. His higher state of self stands consummated with his existence in the act of living. He is going to stay with Sheila and others "As long as I'm needed . . ." (Joshi, *The Foreigner* 230). It's a true state of being of his self which, having found itself, exists in a living relationship to itself and his surroundings. Here one would not agree with K. Radha that Sindi belongs to that "genre," of both in "life and literature . . . 'Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell'" where "Among the tragic legacies of the British Raj is the class of Indian intellectuals – anglicized greatly in their outlook and way of life and, at the same time without their roots fully cut off from the soil of their motherland" (Radha 183). Instead as Mohan Jha points out Sindi moves from degage to "engage" (Jha 173). He flies from the hell of the western civilization in him only to find it reborn in upper-class Indian society and then he creates meaning in life by acting, participating and turning to the syndrome of growth from the syndrome of decay through the dialectics of innocence and experience to the stage of higher innocence to its consummation in the act of living. It encompasses western existentialism and goes beyond to the discovery of the true meaning of racial consciousness through the wisdom and experience of the ordinary yet silently heroic people of India. Sindi's search is in fact an emergence of his self out of its narcissistic mode of being content in its Great Mother structure to a heroic being aware of its own depths and surroundings.

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