

CHAPTER: III



CHAPTER III

**AN ANALYSIS: *THE FOREIGNER* AND
*THE STRANGE CASE OF BILLY BISWAS***

THE FOREIGNER:

The Foreigner, Arun Joshi's first novel, which brings him into limelight, is published in 1968. In the novel, Arun Joshi explores the individual's anguished consciousness of being isolated from the whole apparatus of social conventions and rituals. He takes us to the lower depth of human sufferings and inferno of existential agony. The novel enacts what Spengler defines as "the crisis of present." (Prasad, 1985: 28) It deals with the life of Sindi Oberoi, a young man, who is in search of his roots and the meaning of life. The most striking feature of the protagonist Sindi is his alienation, his aloofness, his loneliness, his detachment, his inability to form meaningful relationship in life. O. P. Bhatnagar rightly points out that, "a strange feeling of aloneness and aloofness...permits the entire narrative and provides the necessary texture and structure to the novel." (Bhatnagar, 1973: 13-14) The novel depicts the feeling of alienation of its hero. He is in search of the meaning of life.

Sindi is always lonely and ill at ease in the world in which he has to live. He is humble in learning the lesson which life teaches to him. He is obsessed by his own loneliness in the society around him. He belongs to no country, no people and regards himself as an uprooted young man living aimlessly in the latter half of the twentieth century. The novel is not only the

study of its protagonist Sindi, but it is the study of whole mankind, suffering from the cultural estrangement, social-isolation and self estrangement.

The novel is written from the protagonist narrator's point of view. The narration keeps moving from the recent past in Boston to the present in Delhi. During the course of the narration, Arun Joshi takes us to Nairobi where Sindi is born. Then he takes us to London where Sindi has studied; to a night club in Soho where he has worked as a dishwasher and barman. Then the narration moves to Scotland where he worked at a small village library. Then narration moves to Boston where Sindi has studied for six years and met June and Babu. And finally he takes us to Delhi where Sindi has ultimately settled down. The formative part of the novel develops in the back-drop of the West and the second part in India. The novel, as Khushwant Singh puts, is "a compelling work of fiction, which moves through the maze of the past and the present and which penetratingly records the grim but productive encounter with life." (Jha (Ed.), 1986: 168) Thus, Arun Joshi takes us from place to place to depict the life of Sindi.

The narrative follows flash ahead and flashback technique to unfold the incidents of the story. The experiences of America are narrated in flashback. The novel opens like a thriller with the scene set in a room where dead bodies are kept. There, Sindi identifies the dead body of his friend Babu Rao Khemka. Babu has been killed in the car accident on Mass turnpike. Subsequently Sindi goes to June Blyth and tells her the news of Babu's death. The very next chapter takes us to the new setting in Babu's house at New Delhi.

Sindi is a perfect foreigner. He is not only foreigner to the two cultures between which he settled but also to his soul. He is the child of mixed parentage. He is born in Kenya. His father is an Indian and his mother is English. He is orphaned at the age of four when his parents die in an air crash near Cairo. He is orphan both in terms of relations and his emotional roots. He remembers his parents as strangers. He calls them as, “a couple of wrinkled and cracked photographs.” (Joshi, 1968: 11) He is not attached emotionally to his parents. They are strangers for him.

After the death of his parents, Sindi is brought up by his uncle in Kenya. He has felt some kind of security when his uncle was alive. But with the death of his uncle, he lost his anchor forever. He expresses his feelings as: “I hadn’t felt like that when my uncle was living. It wasn’t that I loved him very much or anything — as a matter of fact we rarely exchanged letters — but the thought he moved about in that small house on the outskirts of Nairobi gave me a feeling of having an anchor. After his death the security was destroyed.” (ibid: 61-62) Though he not loves him, he feels secure in his uncles company. There is a feeling of anchor in his mind.

From the childhood, Sindi is in search of love, familial nourishment and cultural roots. But he can not get that. So, he becomes a wandering alien, a rootless one. His entire view of life and response is coloured by his childhood deprivation of love from his parents. His life takes him to London, Boston and New Delhi. He goes on hoping from one land to another in search of roots but finds his life meaningless and rootless. Wherever he goes, he remains alone. He is facing the problem of the finding a meaning of his life in absurdity around him.

Sindi is unable to fix up his roots anywhere in the world. His problems multiply particularly when he feels insecure after his uncle's death. Since then all shores become alien for him. He knows he doesn't belong anywhere. In a telling phrase, he describes his whole life as being alone in the darkness. He, therefore, entertained a deep sense of insecurity, unreality and impermanence about things. He feels restless in Kenya and he even contemplated suicide.

Sindi goes to London to relive himself from this burden. But there also he gets fed up by the classroom lectures. He continued his search for meaning of his life. It is in this effort that he goes to Soho. He works as a dishwasher at a night club in Soho. Later he works as a barman at a same club, and it is there that he gets a direct encounter with and first-hand experience of life. He gets a first test of sex with Anna and Kathy. Anna is a minor artist. She is separated from her husband. She is not yearning for Sindi or anybody but for her lost youth. Kathy leaves Sindi after carrying on with him for a few weeks. She goes back to her husband because "she thought marriage was sacred and had to be maintained at all costs." (ibid: 168) She couldn't satisfy Sindi or help him in finding the meaning of life.

Sindi's escapades with these two women taught him to practice non-involvement in human emotions. The essence of his life in London, as Sindi openly acknowledges, lies in what he learns from them. The relationship with these two women fails to satisfy Sindi. They do not help him in finding the purpose of his life. He continues his search to find out a solution to the problems of life.

It is in his search for truth that he does also work at a small village library in Scotland for three months. There he holds a serious discussion on religion and God with the Catholic priest. The contact with the Catholic priest inspires him to read tirelessly about God and mysticism. And it is in that Scottish village that one morning a revelation dawns upon him. In the course of his walk, one day he climbs a hill and sits on a weathered stone. There in a flash suddenly everything seems to clear up and he realizes: "All love — whether of things, or persons, or oneself — was illusion and all pains sprang from this illusion. Love begot greed and attachment, and it led to possession." (ibid: 170) Sindi realizes that one can love without attachment, without desire. He realizes that love is an illusion. In reality there is no love or emotional involvement.

Thus, his broken relationships with Anna and Kathy, and his experiences with the Catholic priest in Scotland disturb Sindi intensely. He creates an illusion that he has learnt detachment. This prop of detachment bears out its reality in his relationship with June and Babu in Boston. From London, Sindi comes to America. There he studies in Boston for six years for his doctorate degree in Mechanical Engineering.

During this period he tries to practice detachment in life till he meets June Blyth, an attractive young woman. At a foreign student's party he meets June and fails to resist her charm. Soon after he falls in love with June and has a short-lived but a passionate love affair with her. Later he tells her how he has followed a detached way of life till he met her. Thus, in spite of his desire to be detached, he is not really so. He cannot attain the required

degree of noninvolvement. His dependence on June becomes a constant need for him and he feels lost without her.

However, his loneliness is apparent to anyone who meets and talks to him. In their very first encounter, June tells him: "There is something strange about you, you know. Something distant. I'd guess that when people are with you they don't feel like they're with a human being. Maybe it's an Indian characteristic, but I have a feeling you'd be a foreigner everywhere." (ibid: 33) June assess his situation rightly. Sindi is alien everywhere. He can not love or attaches to anyone. He knows the impermanence of things. He says to June that nothing is real and important to him. His entire life is generated around his quest for permanence in life.

Sindi loves June intensely and confesses it several times. But, he has no courage to make a meaningful relationship with her. He thinks that to love someone is to invite others to break the heart. He is afraid of involvement because it leads to suffering and pain. When they have been together for some time, June suggests that they get married. But he tells her: "Marriage wouldn't help, June. We are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within. You can't send two persons through a ceremony and expect that their aloneness will disappear," and further adds, "I can't marry you because I am incapable of doing so. It would be like going deliberately mad." (ibid: 126) He comes to the conclusion that marriage is only lust for possession. All acts like marriage have no significance for him. In fact, his refusal to marriage is his fear of being possessed. He is alienated and an insecure man who is always trying to preserve his identity. He denies to be united in the marriage

because he feels threatened that his existence, his identity will come to an end.

Thus, against the philosophy of detachment and the fake intension of living without desires, he makes love to the series of women. But with June he is brought face to face with his hypocrisy, cowardice, vanity and stupidity. His love for June is only a reflection of his self-importance. He is incapable to go beyond the mere act of possession.

However, the real Sindi is not the cynical image, which he wishes to project. The real Sindi is a lonely individual who wants to love and be loved but afraid of committing himself. June loves Sindi not to leave him alone. She is free, frank, uninhibited, generous and human. She knows what soothed, solaced and pleased Sindi. She, therefore, give herself abundantly to him. June wants to be of use to someone. But in his bid to remain uninvolved, Sindi refrained from responding June's insistent please to marry her.

The talk of detachment alienates June from Sindi. She turns to Babu when he avoids getting married to her. It is only when June leaves him for Babu that Sindi become aware of his strong love for June. He feels depressed and agonized when June refuses to meet him. Pressing his face against the cold, hard metal of the telephone, Sindi cries at June's refusal. He busies himself with his work at college but June remains in his thoughts. He visits the various places where he has been with June earlier. On the other hand Babu involves himself willingly, and in full knowledge of Sindi, with June.

The author gives the realistic description of the self-consciousness and excitement of newcomers to America. As an employee of foreign students centre Sindi receives Babu in America on his arrival to join the college. Babu comes to study in America. He prattles enthusiastically about this country. He sees America as a paradise for free-sexes. But few days later, as his enthusiasm wanes, he feels depressed. He regains his spirit only when he talks of home and girls in America. Sindi gives advice to him to not fall in love. But he ignores Sindi's advice.

Thus, in America Babu turns into a split personality. He loves to enjoy the free life of America. He has a great fascination for this country. He thinks that America is a wonderful country. He, however, comes from an orthodox Hindu family. So he is unable to reject its traditional ethical values to make his adjustment with American life possible. The situation is made still worse for him by the fear of his domineering father. He has a deep respect for his father. He feels obliged to him for what he has done to him. Though he pretends to not afraid of him, he has not the heart to annoy him. In this divided state of mind he fails to devote himself to his studies. He become totally incapable in making his adjustment with the American system of education, and Sindi gets involved with him. Sindi, also, intervened with Dean to save him from being thrown out of college for flunking all his courses.

The triangle that is formed among Sindi, June and Babu, reveals the true self of all three characters. Babu has thrown himself so much on June that it becomes painful for June to deny warmth to him, even though she is already in love with Sindi. She knows that her denial would break Babu.

This intensifies her dilemma. She has a human sense of being use to others, and her love for Sindi is more than sexual fulfillment. However, her idea of being useful to Babu is actually her escape from her aloneness. She finds herself unable to face her aloneness. She feels entrapped by materialistic entropy. But in her despair, she finds it difficult to understand the nature of that aloneness.

On the other hand, Babu, though his loneliness is not acute as Sindi, suffers from the problem of alienation. Without family support and social prestige, he is helpless in America. His failure in studies and the threat of dismissal from the university weaken him mentally and morally. That is why he frantically clings to June like a child. On the other hand June finds in Babu the terror of aloneness caused by the modern Indian ideals. Babu fails to catch up with the value system in America.

Babu fails miserably in his relations with June. He wishes to take June on his own terms, looking for virginal purity of an ideal Indian girl in her. He does not understand that the codes of morality are different from country to country. He, even, avoids physical relations with June and tells her that he do not want to do sex until their wedding. On the other hand June is accustomed to free sex life of America. She tells him of her earlier relations with Sindi. Babu could not bear this reality. When the question of marriage comes he is unable to do so against the wishes of his parents. He uses the conviction of June's sharing bed with Sindi as prop of his suicide. He drives off blindly in his car to his tragic end.

Now, Sindi feels that he has driven Babu to the death. June accuses him and says that it is the outcome of his detachment. So he can not stay longer in America. He decides to leave the country. In trying to maintain his detachment, Sindi leave Boston and takes a new job in New York.

However, before the death of Babu, June got impregnated by him. June sends a letter to Sindi that she is carrying Babu's child in her womb. She is in the fourth month. She requests him to come to Boston as she wanted to see him. However, he can not leave New York for a few days. But Sindi now thinks of June. He thinks that the child of Babu, in one way, his own child. He ponders: "wasn't Babu's child my own in a way? Hadn't I drive her into his arms? The thought of marrying her crossed my mind again." (ibid: 198) He now thinks of June. The thought of marriage comes in his mind. He comes back with the intension of marriage, but he finds lock to June's house. He is told by the neighbor that June has died after an abortion. Her mother has gone away from the house.

June's tragedy has made him further rootless and lonely. He comes to the realization that the fallacy consisted in his wrong thinking about detachment. He does not understand the real meaning of detachment. However, June's death teaches him that detachments consisted of right action and not escape from it. He thinks that God have set a heavy price to teach him this lesson.

Sindi's various experiences in life lead him to leave America. Sindi wants to move either on Nigeria or to India. One is surprised by the device Sindi uses for choosing a country for further career. He tosses up of a coin to

take decision. A flip of coin decides that he migrate to India, the land of his ancestors.

He comes to India hoping that it will provide him a place of his dream. But his hopes are useless. In India, also, he remains foreigner. He finds India no better than America. In truth it has only a change of theatre from America; the show remains unchanged. He, only, has to face here different peoples with different vanities. He has to face here different ways of searching happiness in the absurd universe. On arriving at India he accepts Mr. Khemka's request and joins his firm at New Delhi. He has learnt enough from his experiences so as to be able to assess his position.

Mr. Khemka may look upon Sindi as a strange character, as bad as dead even though living. But Sindi's experiences have made him wiser, a more humane person. However, after some days the Income Tax people have raided Khemka's office and his house. They have taken away illegal documents of Mr. Khemka. Sindi confesses his guilt. He tells Mr. Khemka that he is a criminal who deserves the punishment, which he is sure to get. Sindi decides to leave Mr. Khemka's industries. He knows that his business is going to be ruined.

Sindi searches a new job and has secured one in Bombay. Before the departure, he goes to the house of Muthu, a low-paid employee in Khemka's office. Muthu lives in one room of an apartment with the dozen other members. Sindi's heart feels by the squalor of the place and the wretchedness of Muthu's lot. Muthu make an impassioned plea to Sindi to take charge of Khemka's business and save him and others like him from

starvation. Sindi does not want to get involved. But his talk with Muthu makes him realize that detachment means getting involved with the world. Muthu convinced him that sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involvement. Muthu's distress and sufferings drives Sindi from detachment to involvement, from neutrality to commitment.

Sindi takes upon himself the onerous responsibility of saving Mr. Khemka's disintegrating industrial empire. He concentrates on decisive action. And though Babu's sister Sheila has certain misgiving about Sindi, yet they make a beginning to try to understand each other better. His secret love for Sheila is another ray of hope that he will find a loving wife in her. Clear indications are given of a growing mutual tenderness and attraction between them. Sindi does feel amused by the random absurdity of his present involvement and not detachment that can and does redeem man. Thus, slowly but surely, Sindi comes to realize that detachment does not mean inaction but right action.

However, Sindi is not only one character who is lonely but other characters in the novel are also alone. In fact Sindi is surrounded by the peoples who are lonely and whose lives are empty: Mrs. Blyth and other peoples like her present's alienation in their own way. Mr. Khemka is alien in his meaningless materialistic preoccupations etc. All characters from the novel are suffering from the problem of alienation.

Thus, the novel holds a bitter commentary on the much-paraded mode of anxiety, rootlessness and isolation as a style of life. It condemns detachment, renunciation and inaction as panacea for the problems of

existence. Thakur's comments on the Sindi are apt in analyzing the modern man. He says, "Sindi is an existential Everyman of our time. He conforms to the copybook concept of Kirkegaardian existentialism that the purpose and direction of life are unknowable." (Thakur, 1986: 159) Sindi, thus, approximates to the Kirkegaardian vision:

"Lying there in the bed I wondered in what way, if any, did I belong to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without purpose and so far I had lived without 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. My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind whatever I went...so far as I knew everybody else did the same thing." (Joshi, 1968: 61-62)

Thus, in his eagerness to find the meaning of life, Sindi lives in a strange world of intense pleasure and pain. But he fails to make a satisfactory progress. He feels he has wasted his twenty-five years in search of wrong things in wrong places. His sufferings are a manifestation of a spiritual crisis which all sensitive people have to face today. He wants peace, a capacity to love and the courage to live without desire and attachment. Above all he wants to conquer the pain and death, which wipes out everything leaving only a big mocking zero. His various experiences in life, however, leave him with unanswered questions. He is keen on knowing his purpose in life. His entire attempt in this regard fails to bring him at the possible solution.

The pathlessness of the road to the New York reminds Sindi of his own pathlessness. He remembers the lines of the song he heard in the restaurant. The lines directly touch his heart. Those lines have a peculiarly existential appeal, and most apply to his experience of life. He is conscious of the fact that he has moved himself whichever way the life has led to him. He compares his meaningless existence to that of an idiot without the keeper. He does not fit in the world and the way of life become intolerable for him. He thinks in a way it is a small death. He becomes consequently cynical and exhausted, grown old before his time, weary with his won loneliness.

Sindi is highly critical of the ultra-modern, mechanized society in which he is quite misfit. The strain of adjustment on him proves intolerable. The emptiness that surrounds him, leaves him completely dazed or in just one long coma. The feeling of his nakedness in the hands of existence grew with every passing day. The more his experiences prompt him against involvement, the more he gets involved through love and goodness.

The novel, also, reveals Sindi's humanitarian attitude. He is a kind-hearted person who sympathies with Babu, June and Sheila in their trouble. As an employee of the foreign students centre, Sindi takes the charge of Babu when he arrives in Boston to join the college. When Babu fails in exams, Sindi meets to the Dean in order to save him from being thrown out of the college. Later when June informs him that she is carrying Babu's child and seeks his help and advice, Sindi decides to marry June. Sindi's involvement with Sheila and her father's business further reveals his humanness. Sheila often asks Sindi the causes of her brother's death. For

her, Sindi recapitulates the events in Boston in which he, June and Babu were intricately involved. Though he assures her that Babu died in a car accident, he owns up that he is responsible for Babu's death. His painful realization reveals his humanitarian attitude. When the dishonest business ethics of Mr. Khemka lands him in the jail Sindi saves the livelihood of factory workers. Sindi feels pained at man's exploitation of a man.

The novel also exposes hypocrisy, artificiality and social controversy of the modern society. Sindi is struck by hypocrisy and artificiality of the modern American society. Participants at the ball arranged by the International Students Association bobbed up and down pretending to be courteous. Strangers parted after the ball, promising to meet again, knowing fully well that it would not be possible. In that merry making people, Sindi feels like an outsider. The affluence of India has a similar effect on Sindi. The social parties, arranged frequently at Mr. Khemka's house, make Sindi a critical man and left him in the same predicament. He finds these parties to be a small piece of trick with people drinking, eating and talking of money.

Arun Joshi also presents the social controversy in the novel. Mr. Khemka has number of air-conditioned houses in polish localities of the city. On the contrary people like Muthu lives in one room of apartment. While Mr. Khemka hosts parties, Muthu struggles to get his livelihood. Sindi is even more deeply disturbed by the glaring contrast between the rich and the poor, when he personally experiences the opulence of the business tycoons and the abject poverty of their low paid employees.

THE STRANGE CASE OF BILLY BISWAS:

Arun Joshi's second novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, is published in 1971. The novel fulfills what has been initiated at the end of *The Foreigner*. In this novel also Arun Joshi develops the theme of man's feeling of anxiety and alienation. According to B. D. Sharma and S. K. Sharma, "Arun Joshi treats the theme of alienation at a full length in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* which is an attempt to find out viable alternatives for 'the most futile cry of men ... in ... smart society'— the predicament of an alienated personality of the modern world." (Sharma, 2001: 100) Arun Joshi portrays how a man of extraordinary obsession is destroyed by his absurd meanderings away from civilization.

Billy is aware of the deeper layers of his personality and feels totally alienated from the superficial reality of the life. His predicament becomes a special case when the readers come to know that his is a split personality — split between primitive and civilized. We are told that no other man than him in so desperately pursued the tenuous thread of existence to its bitter end. Mr. K. R. S. Iyengar rightly points out that, "In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Arun Joshi has carried his exploration of the consciousness of helpless, rootless people a stage further, and has revealed out our gaze new gas-chambers of self-forged misery." (Iyengar, 1983: 514) Arun Joshi elaborates the theme of alienation in this novel. He successfully portrays the predicament of modern man. Billy renounces his past, his family and the everyday world. He goes in search of the meaning of life. The novel explores the dark mossy labyrinths of the soul that languish forever, hidden from the dazzling light of the sun.

The novel is written from the witness-narrator's point of view. Romi (Romesh Sahai), a Collector in Indian Administrative Service, relates the story of the life of his friend Billy (Bimal) Biswas. Romi performs the task of an involved friend and of detached narrator. Both become more and more involved as the novel progresses; both follow the tale to the end.

According to Raizada, the novel can be divided into three parts. The first part consists about hundred pages, second part also consists about hundred pages and the third part consists the remaining fifty pages. These three parts can be designated as "the Civilized World, the Primitive World, and the Impingement of the Civilized on the Primitive World." (Raizada, 1986: 83) The first part describes Billy's early life in the civilized world. The second part describes Billy life among primitives of the central India. And in the third part, Arun Joshi narrates the tragic death of Billy.

In the novel Arun Joshi seems to be mediating between New Delhi and the Satpura Hills, between the two distinct cultures. These two geographic locations make the situation plain and reveal the tribal and civilized world. The novel, so to say, lives through a tension between the two ends of the given civilization. By no means, it is an idyllic encounter between the primitive and the sophisticated in some sort of wilderness setting.

The novel portrays the life of totally alienated protagonist Billy from the modern society. In the first part of the novel Romi narrates the story of Billy's life in New York and Delhi from his own observations. Romi has met Billy while haunting for accommodation in New York. They are both

around twenty two when they met. Billy offers him to share his apartment in Harlem. Billy has chosen to live there because, as he tells Romi, he finds it more human place. Romi is soon impressed by Billy's poise without pretense and almost inhumanly sharp eyes. He accepts Billy's offer and the sharing of the flat develops into an unusual friendship which lasts till the end.

Billy is a man of brilliant intellect, profound sensibility and extraordinary obsession. He belongs to the upper-upper crust of Indian society. His grandfather was the Prime Minister of a famous Princely State in Orissa. His father, who is the judge of Indian Supreme Court, has earlier been the ambassador to a European country. Billy is at that time of fifteen years old only. He has studied for some years at an English public school. His father expects him to take up engineering as a career. He sends Billy to America for a degree in engineering. However, Billy earns his Ph. D. in Anthropology because that is his first love.

Billy is basically an anthropologist and studies deeply the tribal attitudes and customs. He feels deeply interested in the places described in the books. He tells Romi that he wants to visit the places described in the books, meet the people who live there and find out the aboriginalness of the world. In fact his whole life is organized around his interest in the primitive man. Thus, Billy is born and brought up in the comfort and affluence. He is aware of the deeper layers of his personality. This awareness makes him something like an existential being, alienated from the superficial reality of life. He develops the bitter hatred for the civilized world and a strong passion for the tribal world.

. On Romi's first day in his room, Billy talks of Avocambo, a play running off Broadway. Romi tells us his glimpse about Billy's fondness of the game. He says, "It is quite an odd play, really. This chap from New York, quite educated and all that goes down to the Congo and is so incensed by the heat and the light and the primitive music that he just goes out with his shot-gun and starts killing everybody. What are fascinating, of course, are the workings of his deranged mind, what he says between each shot." (Joshi, 1971: 10-11) It is surprising that the sophisticated Billy knows this primitive people's play. Billy has liked the play because one can quite imagine something like that happening to oneself. The statement gives Romi a glimpse of the restlessness of Billy's soul. It is primitive world around which Billy's whole life has been organized.

Romi gets another glimpse of Billy's primitive urge at a music party in George's apartment. There Billy sits silently without moving and drinking. But he suddenly starts beating the bongo drums. He plays a pair of bongo drums at a feverish pitch for nearly quarter of an hour. By his music Romi and others feel the fascinating pull which holds everyone by its absolute vitality. It awakens latent primitive urges in the audience and draws towards him a Negro girl. She sits very close to him so that their knees nearly touch. Romi's description of party reveals that though Billy succeeds in his attempt to attract the attention of persons at party, he is alienated there.

Even during long walks with Billy, Romi finds his talks revealing the dark, unknowable layers of the mysterious world that surrounded us. Later he learns from Billy how he often has hallucinations. He is totally unaware of his hallucinations. He does not analyze them.

From the childhood he has such hallucinations. At the age of fourteen, he gets experience of it. While staying in Bhubaneswar, he received the intimations of his primitive self from the moment he emerged from the railway station. But at that time he can not analyze his feelings properly. It has seemed to him that the sculptures at Konark can give him the solutions to the problem of his identity. Only tribal peoples have the answer to his questions. He watches the tribal dance and feels that something has gone wrong with his life. He feels it is what he always dreamed of.

Billy's Swedish friend, Tuula Lindgren, a thirty years old lady, is the second person who knows Billy's predicament. She comes to the United States for advance training in psychiatric social work. She knows what went on in his dark, inscrutable, and unsmiling eyes. She understands Billy's interest in the primitive. She tells Romi that, "Billy feels something inside him, but he is not yet sure...A great force, *unkraft*, a...a primitive force. He is afraid of it and tries to suppress it... But it is very strong in him, much stronger than in you or me. It can explore any time." (ibid: 23) She finds him obsessed with a latent quest. Billy discusses his hallucinations with her. She tells her that in everyone such hallucinations occurred in a very mild form. She also advises him not encourage them too much.

After his father's death Romi returns to India and enters in the Indian Administrative Service after passing the competitive examination. Billy also returns to India. In India he joins Delhi University as a Professor in Anthropology. However, after returning to India, he feels like a fish out of water. He sees no other way out to fly from the civilized, sophisticated modern society. His interest in Anthropology continues. He undertakes

numerous expeditions for investigations among primitive communities in hills and forests. In order to cure his obsession for the primitive and to settle down in life, Billy decides to get married. He married to Meena Chatterjee, a sophisticated and most beautiful girl of his own Bengali community. She is a daughter of a retired civil servant.

Billy's marriage with Meena turns into a miserable failure. Meena is worldly wise. She is a product of money machine culture. She wants nothing but money and glamour which Billy hates. Billy has soft, delicate and tender heart. He has a mind of a mystic and naturalist. But Meena is just opposite of Billy's temperament. However, she tried her best to understand Billy. But his interest in the wild life exasperates her. When nearly three years later Romi meets Billy and finds him in a mental condition which is closer to the madness. He finds in Billy the terrible madness. Billy's behavior makes him think as though some part of Billy have gone on strike. He thinks that the Billy, whom he knows, is finished. He finds total change in Billy.

Billy often shares his thoughts with Tuula Lindgren. His antipathy to the people and their civilization is reflected in his letters written to Linda at different times. In that he writes, "I see a roomful of finely dressed men and women seated on downy sofas and while I am looking at them under my every nose, they turn into a kennel of dogs yawning and yawning (their large teeth showing) or...the so-called thinkers and philosophers and men like that...are hired to find solutions, throw light...on complications caused by this making and spending of money...we are swiftly losing what is known as one's grip of life. Why else this constant blurring of reality? Who am I? Who are my parents? My wife? My child?" (ibid: 92-93) These letters show

his concern for civilization, society, individuals and also himself. His pinpointing several weaknesses, hypocrisy and leading his life on the superficial plane shows his alienation from all that is around him.

Billy never feels at home in the sophisticated world. He finds something basically wrong with it because its only purpose is to make money. He has got boundless appreciation for Tuula for treating money as merely a lot of papers. In a place like Delhi, he feels as if he is pinned down like a dead butterfly. He often wonders whether civilization is anything more than making and spending of money. He finds himself spending wastefully the priceless treasure of his life in the civilized society.

The ambition and superficiality of the modern society is represented by the Meena. Meena and Billy are not made for each other. In spite of Meena, Billy is haunted by the vision of a woman. He does not understand it. He simply feels that there is a gap of communication between them. Sex is not an end in itself. It does not release his tension. Hence, he does not touch Meena for many months. Just then Billy and Meena can not communicate to each other. Meena fully knows that things are falling apart and that Billy has gone through the change. With every passing day Billy is getting stranger and stranger. Billy's departure might have been avoided if only she has possessed sufficient idea of human suffering.

But Meena is an associate of this phony society, a product of the sensate civilization. So Billy does not expect any response from her. He feels lonely and needs someone who can share his thought, who can respond to him. He is drawn towards Rima Kaul who has been in love with him. She

loves him intensely and passionately. His trips to Bombay bring him close to her. They develop a rapport. But for Billy Rima is not a sex-symbol. She is embodiment of that empathy which Meena lacks. He finds Rima different from Meena, and feels she is the girl he wants. He plays acts to draw sympathy from her. He likes to see her in a melting mood.

But when he possesses Rima, he realizes that his calculation is failed. Mere sympathy can not satisfy his soul. Rima's body and sentiments can not reveal his identity. He comes to the realization that his relationship with Rima can not fulfill his desire. It is a corruption of his being. He deems his affair with Rima as filth that wallows his being.

Billy now intensely feels that no woman's body of this phony society can satisfy him. It is not a hunger for sensual satisfaction. At this time, he merely feels that the material society corrupts him. He feels that it will degrade and estranges him from his own soul. Hence he is in quest of a surrounding that is in harmony with his soul. While sitting outside his tent, he is haunted by sense of corruption. He feels that his soul responds to the voices of the hills, forests, untamed Nature and the tribal people. They seem to be calling him. Billy has now two clear choices — either to follow this call of primitive life or to live the life of this sophisticated, meaningless modern world. He decides to go in for the first option.

Meena gets upset by his frequent hallucinations and terrible moods. She feels he does not love her anymore. She seeks Romi's help in sorting out their indifferences. Before Romi is able to intervene, Billy all of sudden disappears from the face of the earth. R. S. Pathak rightly analyses Billy's

condition. He says that, "Billy's experience just before he takes the momentous decision to make the final departure into the jungle on the second day of his expedition has mystic undertones and reminds us of Siddhartha's renunciation of his wife and child." (Pathak, 1986: 116) Billy feels that the inheritors of the cosmic night are waiting for him. He leaves the world of the civilized men and reaches to the world where he is not culturally uprooted and socially self-estranged. His departure is his quest for something beyond himself. It is not an escape from the realities of the life but it is an escape into the real life which is far from meaningless existence. It is in the primitive tribal life that he finds his own fulfillment and the essence of his existence.

Soon after the disappearance of Billy an enormous search is launched by the police. But they can not discover Billy and in the end declares that he is killed by a tiger. But Romi, who is posted as a Collector in a district of the Central India, has not given up hopes of tracing him back.

Ten years after Billy's disappearance Romi goes on a tour of interior villages destroyed by a terrible drought. As he passes in his jeep through the crowd of suffering villagers, he is taken aback by a man coming closer to him. To his great surprise Romi sees Billy standing near him in a lion-cloth. Billy takes him to his bungalow and spends the whole day and night in his company. Billy tells him about his life after disappearance. He is, now, living by the side of a white cliff called Chandtola which is according to him the place of some supernatural forces. He seemed to be in secret communication with the forces of nature and knew the course of events to come.

Billy liked to live with the foresters because there, nobody is interested in the ways of materialistic world. They talk about the supernatural elements, violent death, trees, rain, dust, storms, rivers, moods of the nature, animals, dance, singing and a lot about women and sex. Billy has gone there in search of his identity. He has liked the tribal way of drinking, dancing and the open orgiastic love-making. He is madly in love with a tribal girl Bilasia. It is on meeting her that he has suddenly discovered that bit of himself that he has searched for all his life. At that time he feels that his life without her nothing more than a poor reflection of a million others. Bilasia, at that moment, is the essence of that primitive force that has called him night after night, years after years.

Romi learns from Dhunia that the tribal peoples believe Billy as their sculptor-king. They believe that he has built the temple in ruins near the village, thousands of years ago when he ruled over the region with his queen Devi. With his return, Chandtola has come to life again. It begins to glow because his wife Devi has also returned and taken abode in it. Billy drives his supernatural magical power from Devi Mata. Dhunia has seen him sending away a tiger that has been roaming in the jungle. He also tells Romi how Billy brings back his grand-son to life, who has been dead for two hours. The tribals ascribed to him some supernatural powers. Billy, too, is happy living with these peoples

Romi visits Billy again after a few days. Romi does not believe in Billy's supernatural power. He is, however, surprised when a few days later Billy cures his wife Situ's agonizing chronic migraine. In spite of the treatment given to her by the doctors of the civilized world for almost ten

years, she is not recovered. But Billy cured her by giving her something to smell and touching her with a metallic rod. The incident, however, costs Billy his life. Though Romi promises not to disclose his whereabouts to anybody his irritating wife forces him to tell her about Billy. When she learns from Romi that Billy has cured her, she informs Meena and Mr. Biswas of his whereabouts.

Billy's father, a retired ambassador now, moves the higher authorities to retrieve Billy. Romi tries his best to pacify Mr. Biswas and also Meena. However, they do not let any opportunity go unused. They go the Chief Secretary and narrate him the matter. He threatens to punish Romi. Consequently, the power reaches in the hands of Rele, the Superintendent of Police. They are unable to understand Billy's problem. They fail because they are rational in their approach while Billy's problem is emotional. Rele and his men enter the village where Billy resides along with his wife and two sons. None of the villagers is ready to give a clue of Billy's existence. But they have their ways of success. An item of news is spread that Billy has killed a constable. The result is that far away a constable shoots a man who appears to be a tribal in dress and habit, but he is Billy, who finally meets to his tragic death. Though Romi tries his best to save Billy, he can not avoid Billy's tragic death.

Thus, Billy's search for meaning is conducted in a very hostile atmosphere and he has to pay a heavy price for it. The sophisticated society makes it a point to bracket men like Billy with irresponsible fools and common criminals. The materialistic world does all that is possible to prevent the people like Billy from seeking such meager fulfillment of their

destiny as their tortured lives allowed. Efforts to bring Billy back to civilization by capturing him only leads to the final tragedy. He pays with his life for not conforming to the norms of the urban civilization.

Billy is, thus, a refugee from the civilization. The tenacity with which he pursues his quest in an incoherent and meaningless world is really outstanding. He withdraws from the civilized world because it begins to make inroads into his own character. He remembers that all his life he has been confusedly driving towards his real self.

Arun Joshi, incidentally, “reminds of D. H. Lawrence’s *The Woman Who Rode Away* and Graham Green’s *A Burnt Out Case*.” (Pathak, 1986: 119) O. P. Mathur remarks that “Billy’s strange case represents the universal myth of the primitive in the heart of the man ever alienating him from the superficial and polished banalities of modern civilization.” (Mathur, 1980: 35) The theme of the novel is nothing less than the search of an alienated man for the meaning in life.

Thus, in the novel Arun Joshi narrates the story of a person who finds himself alienated from the individuals, society and civilization as such. Though Billy goes on making an effort to remain uninvolved he could not avoid his tragic death. The modern society forces him to uproot from the civilization to feel alienation. He tries to live in his own way but the society does not permit him to do so.

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