The City and The River: an Anecdote of the Crisis Period

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to highlight the issues of discrimination, corruption, exploitation, victimization as depicted by Arun Joshi in the novel, Joshi. It is a political satire where he used parable as a fictional mode. It is an assessment of the political situation of the times. The occasions and events depicted in the novel are evocative of the days of the Emergency of 1974-75 in India. Joshi is a story of time, set in a more extensive background, utilizing an aesthetically fulfilling blend of prediction and fantasy. Though Arun Joshi takes up his favorite existential issues in the novel, he also sees them through the spectacles of politics and thereby elevates the novel, Joshi to the level of political – allegorical satire. The events that took part within the city at a specific point in history.

Keywords : Allegory, Satire, fictional, Emergency, politics, Exploitation, Victimization

I. INTRODUCTION

The novelists of protest and resistance prevalently known as “the angry young men” in England and “Black Humour” and “Absurd” Movement in America underline the have to be secure the realness of the self against the pressing squeezing control of the State, the military, bureaucracy, and social educates. In this novel, Arun Joshi is dealing with the universal predicament of advanced man who is assaulted from all sides by changed powers that are working all the time to debilitating him. The barren nature of the modern existence is expressed through the barren nature of the city where there is “so much water and yet no grass no flowers” (Joshi 36). The city is doomed to destruction when “the river herself would become the enemy” (Joshi 259). Consequently the whole city is dissolved into a mighty deluge: “For seven days and seven nights it rained without a stop. On the eighth day the sun rose and from a clear sky stared down at a vast sea of water. The sea was calm and gave no hint of the agitation that had gone into its making. Of the Grand Master and his city nothing remained” (Joshi 265).

The novel is a compelling commentary on the political situation of the past, the present and the future; it appropriately claims a favored put among the political books of our composing. Literature, which violates the basic human rights in a democratic system. In this novel Arun Joshi takes up his top pick existentialist issues of trust, commitment, choice, duty and identity, but the way he handles them is to some degree diverse from that of his prior novels.

Here he looks into these issues with the displays of legislative issues he has not been utilized to, raising the novel to the level of politico allegorical parody. Subhas Chandra reported that: “Joshi focus on the aspect of authenticity (one of the most significant element of existentialism) in the lives of individuals who are caught in the flux of the complicated business of living. Absurdity, Anarchy, Meaninglessness, emptiness, alienation and despair are some of the characteristic features of the existential philosophy but the most important element which stresses the sanctity of the subjective individuality is the authenticity of the self”.

The novel is a harsh observation on the times as it is a mirror image of the Indian emergency of 1974-75. O. P. Mathur (1993) stated that: “The Indian political scenario of the Emergency period is in many respects paralleled in the novel”. It is a stark allegation of the corruption and malpractices of political leaders, businessmen, the police and armed chiefs. The novel has been praised by Siddhartha Sharma (2003) when he wrote: “It rightly claims a privileged place among the political novels of our literature as it powerfully comments on the political scenario of the past, the present and the future”.

Joshi presents before us a city, which is on the verge of destruction because the inhabitants of this city have never desired to seek a righteous way of living. The problems that the city faces are contemporary though Arun Joshi raises issues that are universal rather philosophical. The basic conflict in the novel is for allegiance – should people owe their allegiance to God or to man. In a way, the conflict in temporal terms means what is superior, religion or politics. Because the dwellers of the city have opted to take a wrong path they are in the face of the doom. The river that flows by the side of the city represents Nature. It takes the irrepressible form of an ocean and sweeps away the city.

Joshi is an anecdote of political social order - - the unending disparities of the relationship between the men and power and mythic truths. The subject of the novel contains its sociological, mythical and political extents in a world and rises above its contemporaneity. The novel comprises representative characters rather than conversant human beings. Joshi has made utilizing of forecast, fantasy and legislative issues and displayed the story in more extensive environment. The novel could be a cruel commentary on the times, containing echoes of the Emergency in India within the 1970s. Parallels may be found between the Emergency administration in 1974-75 in India and the one depicted within the novel. The huts of the mud-people are deleted within the way of what the government did to widen the lanes within the title of beautification, sundarikaran, of the city of Delhi during the Emergency.

Implementation of discipline, strict control of the Media, obligatory family arranging

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and numerous such issues within the novel are reminiscent of the Emergency period. Undoubtedly there’s a close resemblance between the control structure of the two. The way the Grand Master contains boundless powers and takes off no stone unturned to bless his son to the position of royalty is reminiscent of what the at that point Prime Minister did. As Amur composes:

The events of the Emergency period of India are particularly and unmistakably found inside the novel. The important one is the by and large abdiccate to the “Supreme” as in the emergency period. The country has oppression, inspite of the façade of majority rule government at the top. Naturally, the ruler, though a dictator is supposed to be chosen by a couple of. There are no authoritative body and no utilitarian legal. organisation is run by a circle of persons known as the Council of Advisors at best and a police drive to protect law and arrange. The Indian Emergency had, no question, both government bodies and lawful. These bodies, in any case, are fast getting to be subservient to the top most person and hence lose their identity. There are internal disputes and idle desire, but the individuals of the Council are firm in their immovability to the Grand Master who is in idealize control but for the boat people whose steadfastness is to the River. Joshi has a vast span in its action than in the earlier novels, but the predilection of the Arun Joshi’s protagonist in an apparently different and hostile world runs as an undercurrent of the socio-political and existential crisis of the city by the river. But the crisis of the individual still persists and even the Grand Master is not free from it. In arranging to form the concept of political control solid, Arun Joshi has used the technique of fantasy. The use of fantasy is an oft-occurring phenomenon in Joshi’s novels. As cited in the blurb of the Joshi (1994):

“Joshi is a mixture of fantasy, prophecy and a startlingly real vision of everyday politics… that is truly a parable of the times”.

Joshi is isolated into eleven sections counting a Prologue and an Epilogue. Infixed between Prologue and Epilogue there are nine chapters, narrating the rule of the Grand Master, his becoming the King, the perpetuation of the reign of terror, people’s rebellion, the declaration of an Era of Ultimate Greatness, which is tantamount to the clamping of the rule of Emergency, the repressive measures adopted by the king, and lastly the destruction the city with the great flood. The Prologue strikes a fresh note in Joshi’s fiction. Set in an imaginary locale, the scene of activity is a No:

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There is some anonymity about the character of the novel. The majority of the characters are not known by their individual names, but by the positions they hold within the progression of the rule. City and the river are not given any names. Indeed, those who are known by their individuals lables have or maybe connotative names. The characters, nevertheless, represent not only the types, but also individuals. The novel is an existentialist discourse about the foolishness of the human circumstance. In the novel Joshi proceeds to investigate the existential and antagonistic world. The dramatic tension stems from the battle between the Grand Master and the Boatmen. The Boatmen are poor, but they are more in number and the number goes on increasing. To reduce their population mainly the Grand Master upholds family planning and passes a regulation that these ought to be as it were one child to a mother or to a domestic. This is an echo of what has happened during the Emergency. The climate of the city is completely unnatural and chaotic. It is common that in an unnatural discuss like this without a doubt sensible person preserve from certain existentialist sentiments like alienation, estrangement, rootlessness, boredom and inaneness. For example there is the Rallyies Master who is known to be “an unhappy man” and the genuine cause of his misery is rootlessness:

“His misfortune lay in the fact that instead of teaching him how to row a boat his parents had wanted him to join the ranks of the brick-people. For fifteen years they spent all their earnings on him. The master of Rallyies was good at studies but after fifteen years when he completed them, like the Education adviser, he too discovered that no one wanted his services. The boatmen did not have the money to hire him, the brick-people considered him an upstart”. (Joshi 71)

The Professor is “weary” and “tired” of the ways of the world; as he says to Little Star: “I am tired of being careful, Little Star. I am weary” (Joshi 87). Bhumiputra having been crushed by the solitude and burden of human misery feels utterly alone and alienated: “Bhma urged him (the man) to stay because he still felt very alone” (Joshi 157). “A sense of overwhelming futility filled him at such times, so much so that he saw no point in living” (Joshi 174). When the Minister for Trade sees the Grand Master standing “with his face in his hands” and his chest heaving with uncontrolled emotion, he is greatly moved. He tells the Grand Master “You are tired. In your weariness you let dark thoughts assail you” (Joshi 203). Dharma’s father suffers from “The Three Syndrom states of the soul, atrophy of the brain and locomotor functions” (Joshi 135). It means that “we have turned into robots” (Joshi 135). He himself admits openly “My insides are rotting. I too am just vanishing” (Joshi 133). He turns to his wife and says: “I am all gone, finished” (Joshi 134). Thus the life of a human being is reduced to “a strange sorry tale” (Joshi 10) comprising meaningless and “pointless episodes” (Joshi 16) signifying nothing.

The dejected boatmen living in the mud huts by the side of the river lead a true presence. They are prepared to pay the taken a toll they are assumed to, for the life they lead. Nuts and bolts as they are, they are removed truant from being straightforward morons. They have the quality to be honest to goodness and striking and are able to call a spade. To the Grand Master they are both “incomprehensible and stubborn” (Joshi 14) The
novelist tries to picture them clearly:

“They are poor, but refuse to work for anyone except themselves; refuse, it seems, even to do that, for half their time they spend sitting about on the sloping river bank talking, singing, meditating, playing the one-string. When the Grand Master goes out he rarely sees them greeting him. Where others always have a ready salute to him the boatmen simply stare out dark unblinking eyes as they thought he were a stranger. Boatmen are not as simple as they seem, Grand Master’s father had once cautioned. They consider themselves to be the children of the river, and to the river, and river alone do they hold allegiance. They believe, unfortunately, with their hearts, and for their beliefs they are willing to die. And don’t let their poverty mislead you into believing that they can be bought” (Joshi, 77).

The high class and middle class people need realness as they get themselves balanced to the circumstances they are put in and never protest. The level of authenticity varies in inverse proportion to the social status of the occupants. The highest-class people most awfully need realness. They are the foremost degenerate, ethically bankrupt, deceivers. They are enormous fakes. They safeguard their authenticity in the Heideggerian sense in as much as they taunt the dangers and peril to them by the Grand Master and his fawning associates.

They strongly deny to take the pledge of dependability to the Grand Master. Their Headman (who is a woman) symbolizes courage, strength and commitment to free form. Of course, they got to pay an overwhelming cost for their resistance; either detainment or misfortune of life.

An archetypal case of genuineness of the mud people is the old man named Patanjali who is captured as a substitute of Master Bhoma Patanjali’s boldness is exemplified in his replies that he makes in answer to what the arresting Police Officer Dharna tells him. When Dharna says: “You only have to apologise and you will be set free”, Patanjali boldly replies, “But why should I apologise? I have done no wrong. Rather the Grand Master should apologise for making such absurd rules” (Joshi 26). Likewise, the other boatmen follow the suit. They are imprisoned in the horrible Gold Mines, terminated upon and murdered, but they do not surrender. They have their authenticity in the Sartrean sense of the term. As according to Subhas Chandra (1986): “Satre says: For the secret of a man is not his Oedipus complex or his inferiority complex, it is the limit of his own liberty his capacity for resisting fortune and death”. Thus the boatmen remain free even if they are imprisoned as their liberty consists in their resistance. Bhumiputra a mud hut man, stands for all those who are restricted to the dictatorial rule of the Grand Master and his courtiers. Among the brick people, too, there are some who are much concerned about the authenticity of the selves. One of them is the Professor who gives up everything, including his life, in search of his pupil Bhoma who is supposed to have been picked up by the police in one of their night operations In show disdain toward of the notices to go without from doing so, he goes on with his look. Consequently, he is incarnated in the Gold Mines, where he becomes weaker and weaker day by day and ultimately dies.

The Grandfather, Dharma’s father’s father, who bears unique roses on his farm in the Barren city, is another person who dares to oppose the powerful rulers.

The Grand Master is not content with consolidating his position only. He wants his son also to ascend the throne after him. Like all dictators, he seeks to elevate himself to begin with by getting to be the King and at that point to guarantee the progression of his child to the position of authority through his sycophants who contend the inimitable quality of the heredity and the typical prevalence of the higher castes. This reminds one of what happened during Emergency to promote hereditary rule. In the opinion of O.P.Mathur(1993): “The politics in the novel is an allegory not only of the Emergency, but it broadens out first into the generalities of politics which, as is often said, consists of the art of attaining power and the craft of retaining it, and then into the higher ethical and metaphysical dimensions”.

Grand Master tries to guarantee that he is succeeded by his descendant. Rallies Minister has to organize such rallies to the Grand Master and to his son as well to give an impression to the people that he as well has charmed himself to the masses. The Rallies Master tells the journalist: “And now, journalist, I must gather rallies not only for the Grand Master but his son as well. The city must now face its final humiliation and I must be an instrument to it”. (TCTR76) The role of the Astrologer is to put forward alluring contents in arrangement to legitimize the propagation of the rule of a family. When he contends: “The sacred and mysterious has shown us the light and we have unanimously concluded that the Grand Master must immediately request his son to help him maintain the Dharma Rajya that he has established. We know what we are asking. We know we are asking for great sacrifice. No sacrifice is greater than the sacrifice from a family that has for a hundred years sacrificed its men, its women, its children, its wealth, its very all for the sake of this city. They have suffered endless privation just so that this city might prosper. Such is the family that we are asking this sacrifice of and we have no doubt that the Grand Master will listen to our pleadings. This city needs his son and he must give him to us”. (Joshi 101)

In this novel Joshi shifts his focal point from the private to the open. Rather than centering on the existential bind of a person, here he bargains with the socio-political and existential emergency of the complete “City” and in this way of the entire humankind itself. The story is saturated with an interminable importance. The scene of activity is a Nowhere City. The two critical characters in it, the teacher, the ever enduring Yogeshwara, and the disciple, the Nameless-One, symbolize the forms of recovery and rot.

The city, portrayed within the novel is itself rootless and outsider to the common climate. This city flourishes in “tall structures of steel and glass” (Joshi 12) but is “falling apart before our eyes”. (Joshi 199) City’s atmosphere is so unnatural that not one or the other grass nor bloom develops on the Seven Hills. “In the city’s newly laid parks and along its well-straightened avenues and on the Seven Hills, however, in spite of the chief horticulturist’s strenuous efforts, and to the Grand Masters great regrets, neither grass nor flowers grow.” (Joshi 136).

In this “city of wonders” (Joshi 31), the palace lawns “leave much to be desired. All brown and yellow. No trees, no flowers. Not a patch of green”. In the city, “The road was wide and well-paved but it was treeless and without flowers” (Joshi 31). The people, except boatmen, are generally “subdued and not (in) their normal self” (Joshi 96). There is “nothing to change, no new idea to survive” in the city. In its “nothing was moving in the right direction or, if anything moves, it was at a snail’s pace”
and subsequently everybody “was waiting for something to happen” (Joshi 55). “Chaos is piled upon chaos” (Joshi 180) is the extreme impression of the city.

In such a setting, the characters feel their presence rootless, ridiculous and are in search for something important. Life appears to them as simply “a strange sorry tale” containing “pointless episodes” (Joshi 10).

“The master of Rallies, a child of a boatman, for example, is “an unhappy man” (Joshi 71) and the real cause of his unhappiness is rootlessness. “His misfortune lay in the fact that instead of teaching him how to row a boat his parents had wanted him to join the ranks of the brick-people. For fifteen years, they spent all their earning on him. The Master of Rallies was good at studies but after fifteen years when he completed them, like the Education Advisor, he too discovered that no one wanted his services. The boatmen did not have the money to hire him; the brick-people considered him an upset”. (Joshi, 71).

He appears as “tired” (Joshi, 76), ‘afraid of humiliation’ (Joshi 75) and at “no peace” (Joshi 76). “He says: I have no family, no wish to get rich. I do not wish to become famous; I have no friends to lose. Am I afraid of going to prison? In fact, I am, but, why?”. There is no one to mourn me, nor do I have commitments that would suffer”. (Joshi, 75) It accounts his alienation and rootlessness.

The Professor, a star watcher and a teacher of Master Bhoma, separated from his grant is fatigued and tired “I am tired of being careful ... I am weary” (Joshi, 87). His search for Bhumiputra “had turned into a search for some lost bit of himself” (Joshi, 159). His journey leads him to detention at Gold Mines. He communicates in appall: “Forgive me; I have spent my life in sleep. My life has been a joke, even as the lives of brick-people are a joke ... I have squandered it on baubles”. (Joshi, 163).

In extreme distress, he communicates “I am lost” (Joshi, 163). Smashed by the isolation and weight of human wretchedness, indeed Bhumiputra, a educator of Arithmetic and a devotee of the professor “felt very alone” (Joshi, 157). He was constrained to wander the wild, feeling “wandering through a desert land” (Joshi, 176). Like Sindi Oberoi in The Foreigner, Bhumiputra figures the meaning of his life, not in elude but in activity. He decides to fight with the Grand Master. He energizes the demoralized boatmen by reminding them that they are children of the sacrosanct waterway and they ought to not offer their soul to a man be that as it may effective he may be. But be before long, “A sense of overwhelming futility filled him at such times, so much so that he saw no point in living” (Joshi 174). Sometimes, he feels “so old and lonely and useless” (Joshi 150).

The case of Grand Master is exceptionally comparative.. The minister for Trade openly tells the Grand Master that he is “tired and that in his “weariness” he lets “his dark thoughts assail” him (Joshi 203). According to M. Mani Meithei (1997): “It is his inordinate desire to become a King that leads him from one chaotic step to another, alienating himself from his subjects”. The delay in the prediction satisfaction and the developing outrage of the people make the headstrong Grand Master impatient. He endures from a crisis of trust and grows suspicious of his own counsels: “Who’s there in the wider world that I can trust?” (Joshi 57).

A Police Officer Dharma also feels alienated. When a silver chair offered him to sit on by the Grand trader, he takes it “surprisingly uncomfortable” (Joshi 91). Dharma shocks that how a Fantastic Exchange is in affiliation with effective people with whom he offers his benefits. When knowing it, in as much anguish, “For many weeks, he had been having trouble deciding whether he was living in a city that he used to know” (Joshi 93).

Dharma’s father is an extortionist who endures from an unconventional kind of malady. He feels like weeping, but he cannot do so. He stands in front of his reflect and conversation fiercely. After seeing this all in the mirror image he starts thinking, that “My insides are rotting. I too am vanishing” (Joshi 133). He suffers from the “Three Truth’s Syndrome, stasis of the soul, Atrophy of the brain and locomotor functions” (Joshi 135); the solidness of his joints is symptomatic of the solidifying of his soul. His condition ruffians each day so much so that “his mind turned blank, [and] his will was reduced to zero” (Joshi 134). His doctor suggests him in good faith: “Exercise your soul” (Joshi 134) as it will cure him better than medical treatment.

Thus the important characters in the novel, go through with the existential predicament for distinctive causes. According to Siddharth Sharma (1993): “They suffer from alienation, weariness, boredom, rootlessness, meaninglessness in their lives”. In the same manner O.P. Bhatnagar (1983) commented that: in this persistent quest “they withdraw from the human ambience to the natural environs of peace and tranquillity but here too they find no response and equanimity. They are nowhere men in quest of a somewhere place”. They are tormented by their possess void presence. The search for real meaning coupled with value and freedom needed for spiritual nourishment is central to Joshi’s individualism in the world full of chaos. Joshi faces a deep trouble of existential conflict emerging from his desire to be complete with “certain psycho-emotional need” and his desire dealing with spectral of seperateness, and the impassivity in resulting in powerlessness.

Cruelty and coercion, violence and destruction, selfishness and corruption, hypocrisy and deceit rule the political and administrative class of society in the ‘City’ ruled by the Grand Master. The events depicted in the novel are the recollection of the days of the Emergency crisis in India, the after effects of which proved as ruinous to the political image of the Grand Master as it did in the case of the then Prime Minister of our country. Not only the political image is shattered, but the wrong-doer must suffer also. The novelist strongly believes that if you wrongly use your power and position you cannot elude from punishment. It does come sooner or afterward. Even if the wrong-doer succeeds in getting rid of all his worldly adversaries, the even-handed Divine Justice comes forward to punish him. Here in Joshi, all the dissenters absolutely fail in their rebellion. The followers of the Headman (who is actually a woman) deserted her later on. Bhoma’s pronouncement that the King is exposed comes to a halt when he remains with the Grandfather and later passes on when the Son annihilates the Grandfather’s house in an endeavor to arrest him. The Professor dies because of his quick in prison. Shailaja’s brother sacrifices himself. But when men fail, it is Nature that punishes the wrong-doer. There comes a flood in the river and the King “gazed at the vast sea in a stunned silence” (Joshi 257).
The detainees of the royal residence shivered in frightfulness as the unused Amazing Master’s building broke within the center and floor by floor, outline by outline fell into the ocean. One final wave evacuated the establishments and sent them flying into the sky. The waters swept over the top of the hill and cascaded on the other side in a loud waterfall (Joshi 258).

In his speech, the Astrologer, admires Grand Master’s family for a hundred years sacrifice for the sake of the city. e can observe Nehru’s family resemblance clearly here. The Grand Master compares himself with the nation. Shankar Kumar (2003) mention, “It is perhaps an ironic reference to the slogan during the Emergency—“Indira is India”.

Minister for Trade remarks: “At one go every tradition of the city is abandoned. But even that does not satisfy the Grand Master. He must crown the son as well, make him an heir apparent above the heads of all of us, put him on the Advisory Council, and, in the days to come, train him for a thousand mischief”. (Joshi 111) Like any despotic ruler, the Grand Master wishes to uplift himself by becoming the king. Next comes the wish to guarantee progression of his child to the position of royalty. Consolidating his position and making his son ascend the throne after him are the two goals before the Grand Master.

We can clearly see that Joshi’s Joshi continues to treat, in its own ironic way, the dilemma of his characters in a contentious world. The focus of the writer from individual now has been shifted to socio-political issues of the city, which is an amalgamation of people and represent the entire civilization. R. S. Pathak (1987) commented that in this novel also, “Joshi poses significant queries about identity, dedication and faith. But all these queries are approached from the standpoint of politics. The novel also throws significant sidetlights on the relevance of meaning in life”.

In the City & the River, Arun Joshi suggests that all sorts of problems is to be solved within oneself : “The cure, surely is within oneself” (Joshi 69). The human heart must be pure, and this purification can come only through sacrifice. Unlike The Last Labyrinth, this novel also insists on the significance of prayer, understanding, trust and fact. Whatever life’s problems are, we have no option but to trust and pray if we want to lead a really peaceful life. Prayers and vows perfect a person. In this novel, Joshi puts his theory through the Astrologer: “Ours is a spiritual civilisation. It is through prayer and through vows that a man perfects himself” (Joshi 100). Understanding brings tranquility (Joshi 9) and enables us to “learn only by ourselves” (Joshi 142). A Clear understanding or intuitive self-knowledge unfolds Truth, which “destroys the falsehood at its very roots, (and) leaves all men free to choose as they will” (Joshi 112)

The fictions of Arun Joshi successfully reveal the subtleties and complexities of modern life. They have excelled in exemplifying the existential dilemma of the self in the society. As Edmund Fuller (1958) observes: “In our age man suffers not only from persecution, famine and ruin but from an inner problem... a conviction of, isolation, randomness and meaninglessness in his way of existence”.

The events depicted in the novel are redolent of the Emergency in India. The novel does not suggest the perfect atmosphere for the people. The writer does not recommend any other political structure, but wishes for one where there is no subjugation. Subash Chandra (1986) comments that the novel seems “...to teach people to fight for their freedom and authenticity. The oppression goes on, but so does the fight against it”.

There are so many resemblances among the Emergency era of 1974-75 in India and as occurred in Joshi. Attainment of infinite powers, projection of the son as the successor, the presence of a coterie of self-seeking sycophants, beautification of the city of Delhi, bulldozing huts for broadening of the roads, twenty-point programme, illogical family planning, loss of personal liberty, restriction on press, arbitrary arrests, etc. are few of incidents linked with Emergency that find unmistakable appearance in the novel and make it a stark commentary on the Emergency period of India. Therefore, we can claim this as a political fiction that blend satire along with philosophical discourse.

are fine and satisfactory. Author(s) can make rectification in the final paper, but after the final submission to the journal, rectification is not possible.

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