



CLASH OF VALUES IN IMPORTANT SHORT STORIES OF ARUN JOSHI

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ABSTRACT

Values play an important role in man's life. But it has been noticed that values are deteriorating in today's generation. This work mirrors clash of traditional and modern values in the short stories of Arun Joshi. They have thematic varieties and have deep insight into human realities and characters. The stories mentioned below represent an authentic and real picture of human soul which is heart touching and convincing

In the collection of stories *The Gherao* occupies the first place. The incident of this story takes place in a college in which a young lecturer of English Mr Chatterjee works. The author has appropriately given title –The Gherao as it is one of the powerful weapon of Trade Unions and political parties to put forth their demand forcefully. The President of the Student's Union objected for something written on the board erasing the same where he says "leave our sacred demands" Chiru cried-- (President of Student Union)

"There will be trouble" ---"I will break your head."¹ The above statements highlight that declining values among the youth of post-colonial India. To pay respect to elders and teachers is a traditional value which is disappearing in the modern time. Other examples of declining and degrading values where in indecent words and slogan for tarnishing the image of elders are used. The Principal of college remembers his youthful days wherein he goes to jail for the sake of values and principles. The modern youth suffocates the old ideas and use unfair and nefarious means for settling the demands. It reveals that the gap between two generations is widening day by day. This can also be treated as the conflict or clash between the two generation and as a satire on the growing politicization in educational institutions. Most of the political educational institutions are running after material gains instead of respectful values

without caring for the relation between students and teachers

The story *The Frontier Mail is Gone* deals with the problem of the young widow of nearly sixteen years of old. In this story Arun Joshi is narrating the clash between the poor and the rich society. A young girl of a poor old employee living near the railway track of new industrial town Faridabad used to man the railway crossing. In Faridabad as usual rich and poor people are residing. The modern trend of the people is to achieve more and more money within a short period of time and if it is not achieved they use any means to fulfill it. The young widow was deprived of the pleasures of life and her passions were suppressed by an old father and brother Surrinder by keeping a constant watch on her. Daily the Frontier Mail was passing through the Faridabad railway crossing and viewing the persons in the train she intends to come in contact with the rich and big man. "Men," She said," rich men, big men, men like you."²

The young widow was fascinated by seeing the train. So long as Leela was living in Faridabad her discontent life preserving the traditional morality was delineated by Arun Joshi but her intention to come in contact with the rich and big people was the aspiration of modern world. The desire to lead happy life was very intense hence she managed to elude the surveillance of her alert father and brother Surrinder. One day she boards the Frontier

Mail that had stopped for couple of minutes at the railway crossing. People forget the incident "The incident soon blew over, dissolved, as it were, in the smog of our industrial existence."³

Joshi in the above line wanted to paint a picture about the busy modern trend who forgets immediately the harrowing incidents. Leela reached Bombay and she was picked up by a baggi man who deposited her in Kamathipura in pimp's house. Leela is a survivor of traditional morality moving towards a modern Indian society having a bitter commentary on a life where emotions are often dissolved. She comes across the rich and big men of the underworld. But it has been seen that rich people do not have any emotions and they treat the poor as if they are their slaves

Modern young children aspire to lead happy, comfortable and prosperous life within a short period of time, without caring for its repercussions and neglecting the lives of elders resultantly they endanger their life and repent for the whole life. The contents of this story is a commentary on the modern Indian society where emotions are dissolved in the smog of industrial existence.

The Eve teasing is a tale of modern India and it is one of the malaise prevalent in young people. Arun Joshi narrates the psychology of young boy Ram and Shyam who tries to seek pervert pleasure by teasing the young girls. In the bus they were pulling the female clothes and blocking their entrance so that they could feel the passing pressure of female flesh. Finally one day, one of the boy was put to shame by his friend who had short pleasure by teasing his sister. The tale of *The Eve teasing* represents the suppress desires of the modern young people who seek pleasure in teasing the young girls and harassing them whenever they get an opportunity in the college. This malaise is generally noticed in today's world. The traditional values are forgotten where the feet of Sita is touched by Laxmana and preserved the sanctity of traditional relationship.

In this story the activity of modern younger generation has been predominantly depicted. They never realize that she (girl) can be the sister or mother, bhabi, of some. Ultimately one student whose sister was being harassed by Ram and

Shyam has compelled them to realize the fact and they have been ashamed of by their malaise.

The story of *The Only American from Our Village* written by Arun Joshi narrates through the character of Dr khanna that people easily adopt the western/ modern values and forget the feeling of their elders who have educated them by sustaining lot of labour and even by doing extra jobs. Older generations are also fascinated towards the old values and sometimes exaggerates them before their colleagues. Expectation of return ticket by Kundan Lal from his son is shattered thereby he is frustrated. The modern youth never care for their parents or even in pathetic conditions. Other modern trend is that they never feel humiliated when they are reminded about their bad condition. Thus in this story their appears an erosion on moral and western values due to rapid industrialization, urban development, technological progress and absurge of materialism. Dr Khanna forgets his roots and accepts the principles of Western materialism.

The Homecoming is one of the significant stories in the collection. The theme of this story is related to young military officer who has just returned from Bangladesh war to his home town most probably Delhi. He intends to establish meaningful contact with others but painfully failed in his purpose and leads a lonely life. After coming to his town the military officer notices the contrary position of the front area and civil area. He is unable to fit in the old surroundings as he finds changes everywhere. He is lonely and estranged. It is a tragedy of a man that he is a man of nowhere. Modern world is very busy in their affairs and nobody has time to listen. The influence of modern world on man is more because he is attracted towards the fascinating world easily and old values are discarded. Nobody is bothering over them. He is running in the race but not knowing the correct destination. It is a mad race. The man possessing the traditional values cannot easily fit himself in the present modern situations as so was the situation faced by military officer.

The boy with the Flute is a story of successful business man Mr Sethi said to be the thirty riches man among the country. In his boyhood days his mother is teaching him a prayer and a hymn

frequently recited by him till the age of fifteen. Here the author tells about the old values inculcated by the parents to their children from their childhood days. Mr Sethi later on forgets to pray and recite hymns in the influence of increasing wealth. But a new thing has seized his mind that is fear of death. This hidden fear paralyse him completely and disturbs the harmony of normal life. Though he tries to forget his obsession and thinks that some solution should be taken out that was to take a mistress. At least for few days he leads happy and peaceful life in the company of female flesh but when she tries to extract more and more money he feels angry and disgusted. One day he is robbed by a man at gun point and leaves him in a unknown house. This incident again creates fear of death in him. When he listens the song of his childhood nursery hymns and rhymes, he achieves solace and happiness of life. Mr Sethi starts reciting of his mother's prayer and hymn for getting peace and sound sleep. One day, he feverishly chants hymns and goes to unconsciousness. After regaining consciousness Sethi points a boy standing before him with a flute. Sethi thinks the boy as a village boy but he was a God himself which he never realizes. The author wants to tell here that money corrupts a man and he forgets the good thing in the shadow of the darkness of money. Money also creates various kind of fear and even of death. Under the garb of growing money man forgets the old values and even God. Som Bhaskar the hero of *The Last Labyrinth*, Ratan Rathor in *The Apprentice* and Mr Sethi in this story lost their innocence, decency and goodness in the mad pursuit of worldly success/money. Ultimately man should know that the maze of life with number of evils, darkness and death are very dangerous and they can be saved only by goodness and prayer.

The story *The Trip For Mr Lele* is concerned with a commercial sale man and degrading aspects of his job. The new socio-economic phenomena continuously exploit the individual from the essentials of the life. Mr Lele is the second highest paid vendor of toothpaste in the country. His boss who is fifteen years Junior to him admonishes Mr Lele for the dwindling sale of the toothpaste in the market. In spite of the continuous insult and

humiliation, the thought of his wife and of her possible reaction constantly hunts him and he is unable to resign from the job. Mrs Lele is too much impressed by Western emancipation and dominates the family life. The author here gives a picture of a middle class family where dominance of ladies are noticed. In offices also the juniors who become boss by grace humiliates the seniors. The only hope for Mr Lele is his nine years daughter who is fragile, club footed, bright eyed and pale of face. Lele has a strange feeling for his daughter. She reminds him of all the perishable thing and with this feeling Lele wants to keep in good humour.. The wife of Mr Lele visits ladies club, takes to zoo, goes for children films, and collects stamps picture post card after office hours. The different behavior of all the three people disorders the house and family peace is disturbed. The very important thing of this family is to celebrate her birthday but on one occasion Lele is ordered to go for a trip to southern part of the country for checking the sales. But on the last leg of his tour he could not perform his duties in time and returns to Delhi but reaches late at home on her birthday. His daughter is asleep when he arrives. Lele loses his job as he did not attend the job properly. Later he gives application for job, waiting for interviews but never gets the same. This story teaches to follow the order of boss, attend duty properly and lead the normal life otherwise tensions are bound to arise. The ladies should also co-operate the karta of the family and should maintain the moral values for a peaceful life.

The Servant is a marvelous story having remarkable theme and technical novelty. It has been written by the author in the form of a criminal case diary. It provides information gathered from various sources about a servant who is an accused of an attempt to rape. He commits crime on the wife of his master and ultimately kills her. The concerned officers were trying to find out the motif and circumstances behind the crime. The circumstantial evidence provide that childhood adolescence of a servant is neglected. The job provided to him is humiliating has been forced to suppress his sexual urge that had led him to visit brothels and tease women. The postmortem report tells about the psychological condition. The pieces of information

received from various witnesses form a collage that throw light on the private life of upper class Indian society. It also gives, the correct picture of superfluous glamour and hollowness. This class of society treats the servant as manual labourers. This story also narrates about the boredom, the hypocritical, insensitive, marital discard and extra marital contacts of the upper class society. This story paints a kaleidoscopic picture about the moral values and degrading immorality of so called upper class. It gives a psychological insight and panoramic picture .of lower class of people living in society and also the treatment meted to them by the upper crust of the society.

In real term the stories of Joshi are correct picture of real human experiences. In these stories the human life and the world is brought through characters and situations.

The confusion and erosion of moral values has corroded the inner self of human being. There may be various reasons which have been narrated by Joshi in these stories. One who is cut off from spiritual moorings has to face deadlock in life. This type of deadlock is aptly devised in *The Frontier Mail is Gone*. These stories are outcome of frustrated dreams, wrong decisions, perversion of younger generations, irony, quest for survival and pseudo Western effects on affluent society of India. Money is a cause for all miseries so man should avoid it. Thus these conflicts of modern and traditional values create meaninglessness and hollowness in the life of an individual.

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