

BOOK REVIEWS

Chauhan, Abnish Singh. *The Fictional World of Arun Joshi: Paradigm Shift in Values*. New Delhi : Authors Press, 2016. ISBN 978-93-5207-112-8, Price: Rs.1200/ \$ 60, pp-268

Dr. Abnish Singh Chauhan who is working as an Assistant Professor in Dept. of English, SRM University, Delhi-NCR, Sonapat, is whole heartedly devoted to the service of English literature. He has not ignored our national language, Hindi and worshipped it with equal fervour and reverence. His remarkable works in English are *Swami Vivekananda: Select Speeches*, *King Lear: A Critical Study*, *Speeches of Swami Vivekananda* and *Subhash Chandra Bose: A Comparative Study*, *Functional English and Writing Skill*. *The Fictional World of Arun Joshi : Paradigm Shift in Values* is his critical work in which he has explored Arun Joshi's novels- *The Foreigner*, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, *The Apprentice*, *The Last Labyrinth*, *The City and the River* and *The Survivor* (a collection of short stories) with thematic point of view.

The book consists of eight chapters which have been entitled (1) Introduction: A Snapshot of Arun Joshi's Fiction, (2) *The Foreigner*: Sense of Guilt and Alienation (3) *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*: Levels of Life (4) *The Apprentice*: Industrial Impact (5) *The Last Labyrinth*: Existential Struggle (6) *The City and the River*: Social Disparity (7) *The Survivor*: Moods and Manner (8) Conclusion. Dr. Abnish Singh has indicated the theme of every fictional work through its title so that every reader may come to know about it at a glance. In the first chapter he has explained the term 'Paradigm shift' which means successive transition from one paradigm to another via changes in life and society. Then he has highlighted the significance of the values in human life. This chapter is of utmost importance because it contains the definition of the term paradigm , values , kinds of values and the history of values with illustrations from Indian scriptures like *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, and the philosophy of Swami Vivekanand. All the religious books and all the saints and philosophers accept that without moral values-honesty, truthfulness, modesty, benevolence, purity and spirituality, a person cannot get peace and calm in the life, however affluent, powerful and resourceful he may be. Besides, he has drawn a brief life-sketch of Arun Joshi, his academic and literary career in order to acquaint his readers with the novelist who wanted to instil moral values in the people of the contemporary age through the examples of the protagonists of his fictional works.

In the second chapter –*The Foreigner*: Sense of Guilt and Alienation – Dr. Abnish Singh has highlighted the theme of the novel and clarified that the sense of guilt is felt by a person when he realises the futility of the false values and utility of true values. A person becomes rootless and alienated in the foreign land because

there he finds values and culture quite different from those of his motherland. He loses his peace and calm. This sense of guilt and alienation has been illustrated by the characters like Sindi, Muthu, and Babu.

In the third chapter – *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas: Levels of Life* – the writer has shown three levels of life of Billy Biswas, the protagonist. First, the affluent level of life, the second subsistence level of life and the third one value level of life. The hero of the novel achieves the true goal of life because he does not make compromise with the values of the modernised society in which moral character is sacrificed for material pleasure which is transitory. The message of the novel is that for hale and hearty life, a man should move on the path of true values of the primitive age.

In the fourth chapter – *The Apprentice: Industrial Impact* – the author has discussed paradigm shift in Gandhian values besides other values. The father of Ratan, the protagonist struggled for Gandhian values but the son does not. In the contemporary society truth is replaced by lie, honesty by dishonesty virtue by vice, selflessness by selfishness. Money is the king in the age of industrialization. There is complete corruption in the society. In spite of it, if someone repents for his past committed wrong deeds by doing some good service, he may get peace of mind as in the novel, Ratan, the hero repents by polishing the shoes of others and wants to be called an apprentice of doing good actions. The message is that if everyone reforms himself, the world would reform itself. Self condemnation is the best repentance. A person overcomes his mistakes and rises above by confessing his misdeeds.

The fifth chapter – *The Last Labyrinth: Existential Struggle* – brings into focus Arun Joshi's message to all that life is a labyrinth and a man has to struggle throughout his life in search of mental peace and pleasure. In order to attain them he must follow traditional, moral, spiritual values of life and society. A man attains highest manhood by his collaborating nature.

In the sixth chapter – *The City and the River: Social Disparity* – Dr. Abnish Singh Chauhan seems to agree with the novelist that traditional values play a vital role in human life as they provide mental peace and calm. The story of the novel is a struggle between aristocrat and proletarian, between the governor and the governed between the tradition and modernity, between the spiritualism and materialism. The life has become restless. That is why shift to traditional values becomes mandatory.

The seventh chapter – *The Survivor: Moods and Manners* presents the author's exploration of Arun Joshi's stories – Survivor, Gherao, Harmik, The Home Coming, The Frontier Mail is Gone, The Servant, A Trip for Mr. Lele, The Only American from Our Village from every angle. Arun Joshi's social realism, paradigm

shift of values due to industrialization, urbanization and globalization ,(mostly seen in the high profile society) narrative techniques and art of characterization have been focused upon by the writer. His stories leave a common message that all values – social, moral, cultural, human and spiritual provide mental peace and contentment. Their ignorance brings discontentment and decadence to all.

In the last chapter the author has concluded his criticism of the book and briefly presented all aspects of his novels and stories.

After going through the book I came to this conclusion that the book is the proof of Dr. Abnish Singh Chauhan's deep and accurate knowledge of the fictional works of Arun Joshi. His critical appraisal of Arun Joshi's novels and short stories from thematic point of view is worth appreciating. His critical insight, acumen, objectivity, rationality deserve praise and appreciation. The book is ,no doubt, a reference book for the research scholars and readable by lovers of Indian English fiction. It deserves a place on the shelf of all the libraries of the universities and the colleges.

Reviewer : Dr. Madhu Bala Saxena, Former Associate Professor of English
M.H.P.G. College, Moradabad (U.P.)

Singh, Hemlata. *Ashes of Time*. Patna : AMS Publication, 2012, ISBN : 978-93-84489-10-6, Price: Rs. 400.00 pp. 142

Ashes of Time is a collection of poems by Dr. Hemlata Singh. This collection represents the poetic sensibility and maturity of the poet. The language is lucid and the diction is quite appreciable. Readers feel inspired to go through this collection when they happen to witness the title of this distinguished poetical work. The title itself is self-revealing of the fact that the author has given linguistic shape to the experiences undergone by the narrator in the past. Ashes may be taken to be the imprints of time.

A real picture of woman's emotions and sensibility has been outlined in this collection. A very close and true observation of the male-dominated patriarchal society has been presented through the poems. She raises questions about the modern authority of a woman, what position a woman holds in family or in the society – an enigmatic question that has been baffling the psyche of sensitive women since time immemorial.

In the poem "Cast Away" her question is:

When God made both Man and woman alike
 With the breadth of awareness
 And depth of wisdom
 then, where and how,
 Arises the question of empowering one
 And disempowering another?
 Why then,
 A woman has to fight for her identity,
 For her dignity and rights.

And then she says :

Despite the Seminars and symposium,
 on feminism,
 Lectures on 'women empowerment'
 and literacy campaign
 Hundreds of writings and women faculties
 Failed to educate the world
 Forgotten the mind blowing words
 That 'love begets love'.

Love is significantly unheard melody of life. Its fragrance and pollen enrich the life of all creatures. Really love is a divine experience of life. Love emanates from love and it creates reunion with the ultimate reality. This true love is missing from life and women remain an object of play in the patriarchal set-up of this globalized world.

For her marriage is 'a hideous mistake', 'a sheer gambol', 'a bizarre association' – such images created by the author symbolically speak of the position of women in society. Though couples try very hard to mould the incongruities and dissimilarities in their relationship, the struggle, strife and wrath of daily life in this modern world burn the tenderness of marriage and what remains is a 'torn and tattered', 'battered', 'shattered' relationship in 'rubble'.

Even then the woman loves her man because he 'breathes the air of custodian' and 'shields' her from 'spying', 'lustful' eyes in the man-dominated world. His possessiveness becomes a guard for her.

She has touched almost every aspect of woman-life in her collection of 81 poems. Loneliness and alienation – a part of the modern day-to-day life of struggle and utter desperation has been dwelt upon, in the poem entitled "Loneliness". Exploitation of working labour-class women and child labour has well been portrayed in "Trampled Childhood". She talks about female foeticide in "Heartfelt Apology".

From infancy and crossing thereby through adolescence to the stage of marriage and decadence of womanly life the poet tries to reach the Divine. After all the experiences undergone, life culminates in spiritual feeling in poems like “The Saviour” and “Tired feet”. She aspires for ‘Nirvana’. It stands for liberation. ‘Nirvana’ is a term of Buddhist Philosophy which actually stands for extinction of all human desires.

Pressure of experience causing creativity seems to have been released at different points of time in the larger canvas. Chronological placement of experiences would have turned it into a saga, which actually it is – a saga of struggle of woman in a world seemingly dominated by men folk.

Reviewer : **Dr. Nibha Singh**, Professor, P.G. Dept. of English & Research Centre
Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya
