

English (Hons) Part-3; Paper-7, Unit-2; Topic -
"The Homecoming": Arun Joshi; Lec-series - 13
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The Homecoming: Arun Joshi

In short: About story:

- The Protagonist was a war survivor
- He was a young lieutenant in Indian army.
- Unable to erase the impact of war savages on his psyche
- The war debilitates his psychologically.
- Consequently he remains alienated from his family members.
- He finds himself "a changed man in the changed world".

'The Homecoming' is an unsentimental story that depicts the emotional turmoil the young lieutenant of the army goes through in his attempt to melt in to civilian social life. This story was written by Arun Joshi, a remarkable writer, noted for his works such as "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" and "The Apprentice". He won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his famous novel "The Last Labyrinth" in 1982.

The present story is about a young soldier who returns home from the war fronts; only to find the whole place strange and unnatural. The story is a dark and stark portrayal of hypocrisy and ignorance.

that plagues our society, especially in the self-proclaimed highbrow intellectual circles.

After the hectic and bloody battles on the eastern front, the protagonist returns home and is welcomed warmly by his family and fiancée. He tries to go back to his civilian life—the life led by his fiancée and his family members. However, he can not find it in within himself to mingle with the crowd his family hangs out with. His sister takes him to a party and he discovers that the whole lot are just shallow phonies, the kind of people who are big on words and minuscule on the the action. He realises that these people keep talking about things that they have no experience of, but they do it anyway because it makes them look and feel intellectual. The story documents in alarming detail the thought processes of a war-scarred man who finds the people around him to be hollow. The story is a brilliant depiction of how popular culture and society often paint picture that they want, despite the fact that they often know nothing about it. The story is noted for tearing away the fake facades under which modern society tends to lie too, modern fads which are but hypocritical. In the story the protagonist's fiancée tells him that she has put on weight and therefore is

going to die. The young man is taken back to the time just after the end of the war when he had been in charge of a relief centre where he had to dole out food to the refugee. He says:

"Every one was hungry, once in a way but to be always hungry, he had seen, was different. It made a bit of animal of you, he thought, turned you stupid. . . . When they got their ration they swallowed it in about two minutes. After that they could see that they were as hungry as before; that in fact they were waiting for the next meal. The old people had not bothered to look for food. If it came their way they ate it. If not they lay down and died. That was the way it had been where she had come from?"

The story is replete with stunning images from the battle field, images that are meant to chill the reader to the very bones. The story further goes on to scale the doings of a self-proclaimed poet, the most intellectual and well-read person in the party our protagonist goes to. We see him indulging in banal discussions that remains one very much of the pointless discussions that occur in our mainstream media with alarming frequency. His rush to define 'genocide' and to paint a picture of a terrible war from the comfort of his metaphorical armchair is despicable and Arun Joshi is bent on tearing away that facade.

The story is about all those pseudo-intellectual Campaigners who pretend to have nothing but the interests of our Jawan in their heads, about those poets who write poems about a soldier's widow when they are yet to see even a soldier, about those critics and analysts who dish-out trivia on wars and conflicts but could not operate a slingshot to save their liver. The story stand against the hypocrisy and deceit that has penetrated deep into our society, falseness perpetrated by the elite and the intellectual who have no idea that is actually going on. The story is an appeal to stop talking if you do not know what you are talking about.
