

RETHINKING HUMANITY AND HUMAN SITUATION IN ARUN JOSHI'S *THE FOREIGNER*

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Abstract

Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* (1968) is a psychological novel that delves into themes of alienation, identity crisis, and existential angst. The narrative follows Sindi Oberoi, a young man of mixed Indian and European parentage, who struggles to find meaning and belonging in a world where he feels emotionally detached and culturally displaced. Joshi explores the protagonist's internal conflict and moral dilemmas as he navigates relationships, career choices, and philosophical questions about life and freedom. Set across different cultural contexts—America and India—the novel examines the impact of Western individualism and Eastern spiritual values on the self. Through Sindi's journey, Joshi critiques modern life's rootlessness and emphasizes the need for emotional commitment and self-awareness. *The Foreigner* stands as a powerful exploration of modern man's search for purpose in an alienating world.

Keywords: Moral Dilemma, Western Individualism, rootlessness, self-awareness

Arun Joshi adds a wider dimension to the genre of Indian fiction in English like the theme of self, human and humanity in his novels. His fictional world is characterized by the issues of the individual which is embodiment of mass in general way shown through a crisis of the self in an emotionally disturbed environment. Joshi's first novel *The Foreigner* (1968) depicts the loneliness of the protagonist Sindi Oberoi and explores the individual's anguished consciousness of being separated from the common mass. The story is about a young person, Sindi Oberoi who has twice detached from his country of birth. Since he has no strong bondage and he calls himself an alien. Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner*, an Indian Kenyan who returns to India after many years in the West, lacks involvement in the life he heads. *The Foreigner* opens in a morgue where Sindi Oberoi has to identify his dead friend, Babu Rao Khamka who has died in an accident. Babu was his friend and even more than that whose death brought Sindi on the bitter ground of reality. Sindi's relationship with Khamka, throwing together the past and the present, the real and the remembered, the world of imagination and of reality. Of mixed background, Sindi has to be haunted by the reality of rootlessness and restlessness too.. At the same time, the inner struggle in him makes him refuse to accept the proposal of marriage with

June whom he loved and probably real cause of Babu's death. On his return to India, Oberoi, still a foreigner, is given a job by Khemka's father in his firm. It is Sheila, Khemka's sister who gives him a sense of commitment in life Oberoi. So, this paper will explore inner agony of Sindi Oberoi who is rejected everywhere and he wants to achieve tranquility and attachment and these are the urgency of general mass.

Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* (1968) stands as a landmark in post-independence Indian English literature, notable for its introspective tone and existential themes. Unlike many of his contemporaries who addressed social, political, or historical concerns, Joshi turned inward, portraying the psychological turmoil of the modern individual. The novel's protagonist, Sindi Oberoi, is a quintessential "foreigner," not only by citizenship but also in emotional and philosophical terms. He is a man estranged—from his cultural roots, relationships, and even from himself. This paper explores how Joshi uses Sindi's character to depict the themes of alienation, cultural dislocation, moral detachment, and the search for identity in a rapidly modernizing world. Sindi describes himself as someone who does not believe in forming attachments, for fear of pain and disappointment. "I do not like to involve myself," he repeatedly states, highlighting a core theme of emotional detachment. He views life through a lens of cynicism, influenced by Western existentialist thought, particularly writers like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, whose works question the meaning of life in an indifferent universe (Camus, 1942). Sindi's identity crisis is compounded by his mixed heritage. Born to an Indian father and European mother, and raised in Kenya, he is neither fully Indian nor completely Western. When he returns to India, he is seen as an outsider by those around him. Yet in America, too, he fails to integrate meaningfully. This cultural hybridity leads to a sense of rootlessness, echoing Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "third space"—a liminal zone where the hybrid individual dwells, never fully accepted by any one culture (Bhabha, 1994).

Despite returning to India, Sindi remains alienated. He questions not only Indian traditions and spirituality but also the materialism and superficial relationships of the West. This cultural schizophrenia reflects the condition of many postcolonial subjects caught between two worlds, belonging to neither. One of the novel's most significant philosophical undertones is the conflict between freedom and responsibility. Sindi constantly rationalizes his detachment as a form of intellectual freedom. He believes that by avoiding emotional entanglements, he can live without suffering. However, this freedom soon reveals itself as a form of moral cowardice. This becomes especially evident in his relationship with June, an American woman in love with him. Sindi refuses to commit to her, even though he has feelings for her, leading to tragic consequences. Later, in India, a similar situation arises with the characters Babu and Sheila. Sindi's refusal to intervene in Babu's personal life and prevent his emotional ruin once again showcases his inability to take responsibility, even when his inaction indirectly contributes to Babu's death.

Through these narrative arcs, Joshi critiques the modern individual's tendency to shun commitment in the name of personal freedom, showing how such detachment ultimately leads to guilt, emptiness, and further alienation. Joshi does not leave his protagonist in a state of despair. The latter part of the novel sees Sindi undergoing inner transformation. After Babu's death, he begins to reflect deeply on the consequences of his aloofness. He starts to realize that disconnection is not freedom but a form of existential evasion.

This transformation culminates in Sindi choosing to stay in India and take over the running of Babu's family business. This act symbolizes his acceptance of responsibility and a commitment to life and people—something he had long avoided. In doing so, Sindi finally begins to forge a meaningful identity, not by rejecting society, but by engaging with it.

This shift mirrors the existentialist belief that while life may be inherently meaningless, meaning can be created through action, commitment, and authenticity (Sartre, 1943). Arun Joshi, influenced by both Western philosophy and Indian mysticism, portrays in *The Foreigner* a vision that merges existential angst with spiritual insight. While the novel critiques the alienation of modern life, it also suggests that self-realization and emotional engagement are possible through introspection and moral choice. Unlike many Western existentialist texts that end in despair or absurdity, Joshi's work offers a possibility of redemption. This reflects the Indian philosophical ethos, which, even in its bleakest moments, often points toward renewal and self-discovery. *The Foreigner* is a profound exploration of the alienation of the modern man, especially in the context of postcolonial identity, cultural dislocation, and the search for meaning in an indifferent world. Through Sindi Oberoi, Joshi presents a deeply introspective journey marked by pain, guilt, and eventual transformation. The novel suggests that while alienation is a central condition of modern life, it is not irreversible. Authentic living begins when one chooses to take responsibility and forge meaningful human connections. In this sense, *The Foreigner* transcends its setting to touch upon the universal condition of human existence.

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