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Studying Self-Existence in *The Foreigner* of Arun Joshi

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Abstract

Numerous story subjects are covered by Arun Joshi, including alienation and engagement, east-west encounter and compromise, existentialism and materialism, search and complacency, and existentialism and materialism. In his writings, he creates a mental image of the spiritual suffering experienced by his lone seekers. They are perplexed people wandering the Earth in quest of their ancestors and trying to understand why they are alive. The idea of quest serves as his main overarching topic, and the major emotional experience of Arun Joshi's writing is that of a crisis, according to a thorough analysis of his book *The Foreigner*. In *The Foreigner*, which is about Sindi Oberoi's transition from being cut off from the outside world to becoming immersed in it, the author depicts Sindi's anguish as a result of his seclusion and his alleged rootlessness. The novel's main theme is Sindi's transformation from an outsider to a part of the world. Since he was born in a distant nation, Sindi has always felt the need to maintain his separation from the rest of society. Although he is involved with several women at the same time, June is the one who compels him to confront his hypocrisy, cowardice, vanity, and stupidity. His feelings of alienation are exacerbated by the deaths of June and Babu, who also function as a peripetia for him. He decides to find out more about himself by going to India. Sindi experiences many hardships and difficulties on his path to enlightenment, but he feels his soul is being refreshed and cleaned at the end of his trip. He learns the significance of his presence in this world. He knows the detachment theory's true meaning: it does not advocate renunciation, but rather an effort driven by charity, as described in The Gita. The novel's tragic ending is an indictment of Sindi's alienation and his erroneous concept of detachment from his family and friends.

Keywords: Alienation, self-existence, materialism, identity

Introduction

One of the Indo-English writers who changed the course of Indian Fiction written in English is Arun Joshi. He also wrote in two languages, like other authors. His fictional characters frequently lack a solid sense of who they are and constantly seek new facts about themselves. He used several distinct personalities in his writing to illustrate his experience of living abroad. In his works, Joshi explores ideas like commitment and alienation, East-West encounter and compromise, love and hatred, search and contentment, and existentialism and materialism. His imaginary universe reflects the real world, where a man must face questions about his existence and identity. His writings represent an effort to comprehend the cosmos and



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oneself better. Albert Camus and other existentialist writers have had an impact on him. Arun Joshi is a talented artist who delves further into the ethical and spiritual problems that Indians of today are facing. Through his labour, he has achieved this. He is one of the few well-known Indo-English authors who has written some very fascinating novels, and he is the one who wrote them.

The release of several books and short tales was the pinnacle of his writing career. He was developing into a remarkable author, as evidenced by the release of *The Foreigner*, *The Strange Case of Billy*, *The Apprentice* (1974), and a collection of his short tales published under the name *Biswas* (1971). *The Survivor*, which was published in 1976, was given this title. He had already introduced the biography *Lala Shri Ram: A Study in Entrepreneurship in Industrial Management*. His next novel, *The Last Labyrinth* (1981), won him the Sahitya Academy Award in 1982. His last novel, *The City and The River*, was published in 1990. At last, his untimely death in 1993 cut short his literary career. Arun Joshi has to his credit five novels – *The Foreigner*, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, *The Apprentice*, *The Last Labyrinth*, and *The City and The River*, and a collection of stories entitled: *The Surviving*. His books address societal alienation while also delineating, in Varghese's words, "the search for the essence of human living" and examining certain universal themes of human existence in the context of India.

In contrast to the characters in Camus's novel *The Outsider*, his heroes, even though isolated from society, do not lose interest in the world around them. They never stop seeking an explanation as to why their lives have meaning. They do ultimately "step out of themselves and question on their consciousness, but their self-indulgent attitude keeping them away from facing the truth." The source of their unease and existential pessimism is this self-indulgent attitude and their hesitancy and ambiguity. This laziness in their characters brings to the culminating crisis of their lives, and it is at this point they finally see how silly their previous hesitance and passivity had been. When a person is unable to connect with the ideals of life, then is when they come to the understanding that all humans, in essence, are alone and that death is the only reality that exists beyond this life. This article examines the concept of identification and the problem of identifying oneself, as described by Arun Joshi in his book *The Foreigner*. Consequently, an existentialist approach will be taken in evaluating his text. In the piece to follow, an attempt is made to solve the mystery of man's psychology and get back to man's primal roots.



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One of the Indian writers who examine the problems and challenges that men encounter in modern society is Arun Joshi. He writes about the obstacles and difficulties that men face. The current state of the economy has made life more difficult, even though globalization is often regarded as the best business strategy ever conceived. In pursuing an ideal way of life, man has distanced himself from his civilization. It's possible that he was able to obtain all of the worldly comforts, but in the process, he lost the peace of mind that came along with them. Arun Joshi demonstrates in his writings, most notably in *The Foreigner*, that even if people can gain material luxury, they will never get the peace they seek, no matter how hard they try. For a man to achieve peace and tranquillity, he must fight like Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner*, who, according to Joshi, can do so only by entirely detaching himself from himself and devoting himself to the service of others. There are times in the protagonist's life when he has the epiphany that existence is futile, which is one of the primary problems associated with existentialist philosophy; nonetheless, Joshi provides a method for making this life worthwhile.

Discussion

Arun Joshi debuted on the English-language literary landscape in India with the release of his debut book, *The Foreigner*. It enhanced Arun Joshi's accomplishments and reputation as a wise and informed author. Reviewers hail *The Foreigner* as one of the "most compelling existential works of Indo-English Fiction." Reading this book transports the reader to the depths of human suffering and the abyss of existential despair, further developed in his subsequent works. According to the description of the main character of *The Foreigner*, he is "an uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century" who is seeking "moorings and a meaning in his randomly drifting life." It gives a powerful account of Sindi Oberoi's miserable situation and the pointlessness of her life. In it, Arun Joshi investigates the agonizing consciousness that a person has of being cut off from the complete system of societal norms and moral etiquettes, as well as the individual's attempt to understand the evil absurdity of the universe and face it with dignity, even though it is so disgusting.

Because Sindi Oberoi has no roots, he always feels lost, strange, and all by himself. He is completely unable to understand the point or value of his existence. His parents were killed in an aircraft crash near Cairo when he was four, leaving him an orphan. His father was of Kenyan and Indian origin, while his mother was of English descent. He only knows "a few scrunched-up photographs" representing their reality. A child's sense of security and stability is severely damaged when they are robbed of the love and affection of their parents. Due



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to the demise of Sindi's uncle, his primary caregiver, while his parents were gone for work, Sindi has irrevocably lost his emotional compass.

When seen against the backdrop of Sindi's emotional numbness, the countless events that have transpired in her life become easier to comprehend. This wandering thinker, who was born in Nairobi, had his schooling in London, worked as a dishwasher and a bartender in Saho, and then relocated to Scotland, where he worked at a small-town library and had conversations with a Catholic priest about religion, God, and mysticism. He later relocated to Boston, where he studied for six years and met June and Babu before settling in Delhi. However, he could not forge significant connections with the rest of the world. Even in Delhi, he has emotions of alienation: "I was seen as such a mismatch." My ancestry from another country was a disadvantage for me. He "is an alien everywhere, physically as well as metaphorically" because he was born outside the nation. He is a wanderer who does not have a sense of belonging in any particular area. His only regret is that no amount of education or degrees can teach a person how to live their life. This will remain the case even when he earns his doctoral degree.

Sindi's aloof demeanour was not his practical outlook on life; he was looking for the wrong things in the wrong places. His scepticism and distancing himself from situations belie a reluctance to become engaged and commit, resulting in him experiencing some problems. When he was deeply involved with June Blyth, his ideal theory of non-relationship came into conflict with the facts of life, which badly shattered his erroneous conviction that it was possible to live without desire. Because of the predicament, Sindi is compelled to face his folly, cowardice, and hypocrisy. Sindi is scared of commitment and engagement due to the natural shyness he was born with, even though he wants to love and be loved. His previous affiliations with Anna and Kathy are very different from his contacts with June, which are very different. "The progression of Sindi's relationship with June is a narrative of the slow dismantling of the walls of non-engagement and detachment that he had constructed throughout his life." Sindi finds herself in a difficult moral situation because of her religious beliefs and the person she loves. He is trapped between connection and detachment for the first time in his life, two forces that are opposed to one another. Because "one should be able to love without wanting to possess and should be able to detach oneself from the object of one's love," even though he loves June very much, he makes an effort not to grow connected to her.



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On the other hand, he begins a relationship with June Blyth. The story of how his profound connection with June broke through the wall of nonattachment that he had constructed around his heart is told in this phrase. Even though he is aware of what is happening, he is helpless to halt what is happening.

Despite his heroic efforts to abstain from giving in to the temptation, Sindi is head over heels in love with June. He only acts like he wants to be free and uninvolved in the situation. In his mind, he conjures up the idea that he is untouched by what is happening around him. In any case, June is unable to fathom Sindi's detachment, which results in their relationship between the two of them being more distant. She cannot stand Sindi's aloof attitude and finds it unpleasant. She tells him, "I had wanted to belong to you, but you didn't want it." He responds, "I wanted to belong to you." Because you are so self-reliant, I play very little of a part in your life beyond the one of a mistress, if any role at all. June, who feels that her life's goal is to serve someone, turns to the young Indian student Babu after being let down by Sindi. June believes that her life's mission is to help someone. Even though they are both engaged to be married, their relationship ends just before the wedding. Due to her difficulty adjusting to living with Babu, Sindi makes love to her when she is in extreme suffering. He does this with the mistaken belief that he is assisting her. But he fails to mention that "she belonged to Babu, and there were three, not two, persons involved." Because of his emotional frustration with his academic failure, his fear of his father's booming image in front of him, and his suspicion that June is having an affair with Sindi, Babu gets into an argument with June before succumbing to a depressive episode. Babu thinks June is having an affair with Sindi because of all these things.

Babu loses his life due to Sindi's deception over their breakup. June chastises him by saying, "Look what your detachment has done," and she blames him. The Western idiosyncrasies that caused Babu's death destroyed the Eastern ideal of perfect purity. After some time, June also passed away. Her dying reflects "cultural lag." As a direct consequence of Sindi's erroneous interpretation of the concepts of detachment and connection, both Babu's death by suicide and June's passing are directly responsible for Sindi's decision to leave the United States. It alters the way that he will proceed in his professional life. It is very evident that conscious choice and careful preparation no longer appeal to him because of how he concluded that he should travel to India. This signifies a transition away from the mode of being known as "having" and toward the mode known as "being."

Because of this, Sindi can witness the bronze statue of Shiva dancing when he travels to India and stays at Khemka's house. The figure of Shiva dancing reflects the complete opposite of what is happening; he is both a positive and a negative force in the world. He is a paradox, much like Sindi Oberoi, who goes through the



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experience of dying and then being reborn. Due to the events that have occurred up to this point, Sindi eventually succeeds in his goal and realizes why he is here. He has been aimlessly searching for this while moving from one location to the next. Because he has become more of himself, he is no longer afraid of commitment, love, independence, or advancement. He ultimately gains an understanding of the authentic character of man, and with this awareness, he develops into a man. The uprooted Sindi discovers what her life is all about and the path she should follow. Instead of being disconnected from society, he is estranged from himself. After vacillating between feelings of connection and detachment, love and loathing, engagement and withdrawal, he eventually finds himself settling down in India because he has the sense that here is the place where he truly belongs. His life in America and England, where he felt like an outsider, gives way to his life in India, where he feels like he belongs.

The progression of the story's storyline does not follow a straight path; rather, it zigzags. Because the tale takes place in several cities, including Boston, New York, and London, amongst others, due to the key events in the hero's life, the story's setting shifts frequently. The sequence in which the events occur has been jumbled up to heighten the tension and keep the reader interested. *The Foreigner*, written by Arun Joshi, is a work that is generally quite well-written. One of the few works in its genre to earn this distinction, it is one of the few novels in Indo-English literature that specifically explores the benefits and drawbacks of existentialist philosophy in terms of art.

Conclusion

Arun Joshi stands out as a renowned author on the modern landscape of the Indo-English publishing sector. As a responsible writer, he uses literary devices to show his protagonists' existentialist issues and dilemmas as they attempt to deal with periods of severe spiritual crisis. He does this to demonstrate the relatability of his characters. In comparison to authors like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Anand, Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, and Bhabani Bhattacharya, it appears that Joshi writes more in the vein of Kafka, Camus, Sartre, Saul Bellow, Elison, and Malamud. Most of his primary characters are looking for their former selves or identities. Like the writers of the existentialist school, Arun Joshi is particularly interested in how anxious and alone a man could feel in daily life.



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Contrary to existentialists in the West, his existentialist predicament, alienation-related suffering, and the situation's absurdity is never his final condition of affairs. He varies from existentialists in the West in this regard. He also differs from other Indo-English writers like Sudhin Ghosh and Raja Rao. They base their works on Indian philosophical tenets and promote renunciation as the perfect way to live in India. The writings of these authors are based on their native tongues. He rejects the notion that absurdity or loneliness are fundamental aspects of the human condition. Instead, the quest serves as the central theme of his writing, and every one of his characters is either actively pursuing something or travelling somewhere.

To sum up, it may be said that Joshi's portrayal of the damaged and confused ego of the modern man has given the Indo-English novel new dimensions. The fact that Joshi wrote the book lends credence to this claim. His works will continue to be significant to everyone for a long time because they convey an eloquently hopeful message about humanity. His unmatched intelligence and exceptional inventiveness emerge from this source. Through a process that involves active experience, his protagonists sincerely seek the meaning and definition of life. Typically, they realize that the sense of sterility and meaninglessness in contemporary life can only be offset by love, compassion, sincerity, courage, and fidelity to one's self. Unlike many existentialists who claim that the quest for values must always be open-ended, Arun Joshi always believes there is a chance of receiving a positive confirmation. Arun Joshi appears to be a brilliant light in the constellation of Indo-English authors, despite having only five books and a few short stories. This is true even though he only produced a handful of brief works and five volumes.



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