



The Theme of Alienation in Arun Joshi's Novel '*The Foreigner*'

Dr.R.Rajmohan¹, Dr.A.Palaniappan²

¹Associate Professor, Department of English, K.S.Rangasamy College of Technology, Tiruchengode. India

²Professor and Head, Department of English, K.S.Rangasamy College of Technology, Tiruchengode. India

Abstract

This paper explores the theme of alienation in Arun Joshi's novel *The Foreigner*, focusing on how the protagonist Sindi Oberoi represents the dislocated individual in a postcolonial, globalized world. Drawing on existential philosophy and postcolonial identity theory, this study examines how Sindi's emotional detachment, cultural rootlessness, and moral ambiguity reflect broader concerns of alienation in modern literature. The novel is positioned as a profound exploration of internal exile and the human condition in the face of spiritual emptiness and cultural disintegration.

Keywords: Arun Joshi, alienation, postcolonialism, identity crisis, existentialism, modern Indian fiction

Introduction

Alienation is a recurring theme in twentieth-century literature, particularly in the context of modern existential thought and postcolonial identity. In Indian English literature, Arun Joshi stands out for his psychological insight into the lives of urban individuals grappling with identity crises, emotional detachment, and a sense of spiritual void. His novel *The Foreigner* (1968) offers a nuanced portrayal of alienation through the character of Sindi Oberoi, a man caught between multiple cultures, unable to forge meaningful human relationships, and haunted by the futility of existence.

Sindi Oberoi: A Portrait of Alienation Sindi Oberoi is a quintessential outsider. Born in Kenya to an Indian father and a European mother, educated in London and Boston, and eventually settling in Delhi, he is a character without a clear national or cultural identity. His "foreignness" is not limited to geography—it is existential. He is

psychologically and emotionally disengaged, choosing to live a life of detachment and non-involvement. His belief that involvement leads to suffering is a defense mechanism that distances him from others and from himself.

This alienation manifests in his relationships. His romantic involvement with June Blyth is characterized by his reluctance to commit. He views relationships as burdens and seeks to maintain autonomy at all costs. When she turns to Bharat for emotional stability, Sindi is left in moral confusion and guilt, further deepening his isolation.

Cultural and Existential Displacement

Sindi's predicament is emblematic of the postcolonial subject who does not fit neatly into any national or cultural narrative. His identity is hybrid, yet he finds no solace in hybridity. Instead, it becomes a source of anxiety. In many ways, Joshi critiques the romanticization of cosmopolitanism by showing the psychological cost of cultural dislocation. Sindi is spiritually barren, disconnected not only from others but also from any anchoring cultural or philosophical worldview.

The novel also echoes themes from existentialist literature, particularly the works of Camus and Sartre. Like Meursault in *The Stranger*, Sindi is a detached observer of life, incapable of participating fully in the world around him. He avoids emotional entanglements, seeks freedom from obligation, and views human relationships with a mixture of fear and apathy. Yet this freedom brings not peace, but a deep sense of emptiness.

The Illusion of Freedom and the Burden of Choice

Sindi's philosophy of non-involvement is an illusion. His refusal to act or commit is, in itself, a choice with consequences. When he indirectly contributes to Bharat's death and June's suffering, he is forced to confront the moral consequences of his detachment. The narrative suggests that alienation cannot serve as a sustainable ethical position; eventually, one must confront the world and assume responsibility.

This realization marks the beginning of Sindi's transformation. His decision to stay in India and work in the firm reflects a movement from isolation to engagement, from negation to affirmation. The novel ends on a note of tentative hope, suggesting that alienation, though powerful, is not irreversible.

There are other characters who are alienated in *The Foreigner* like Babu Khemka, Karl (roommate of Sindi), and June and of course Mr. Khemka. They all are alone and have been fed up with their life. Babu Khemka feels alienated when he thinks about June and Sindi's relationship and commits suicide. Mr. Khemka is alienated from his own son who is taken only as a puppet of others hand rather than a human being. In the end, Sindi becomes

oriented towards duty without selfish means which led to the inevitable conclusion that detachment consisted in getting involved with the world.

In short, we can say that the novel *The Foreigner* gives the impression of loneliness, separation, hypocrisy, coldness, death, corruption, death, honesty and human values. *The Foreigner* has a spirit of maturity which is suited to his theme. Sindi perceives the real meaning of life through Karmayoga and the principle of action without attachment achieving him in the end.

Conclusion

Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* is a profound exploration of the theme of alienation in the modern world. Through the character of Sindi Oberoi, Joshi presents a psychological study of the fragmented self in a postcolonial, globalized landscape. Sindi's journey from detachment to tentative involvement illustrates the painful yet necessary process of overcoming alienation. The novel ultimately affirms the possibility of meaning and belonging, even for those who seem irretrievably lost.

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