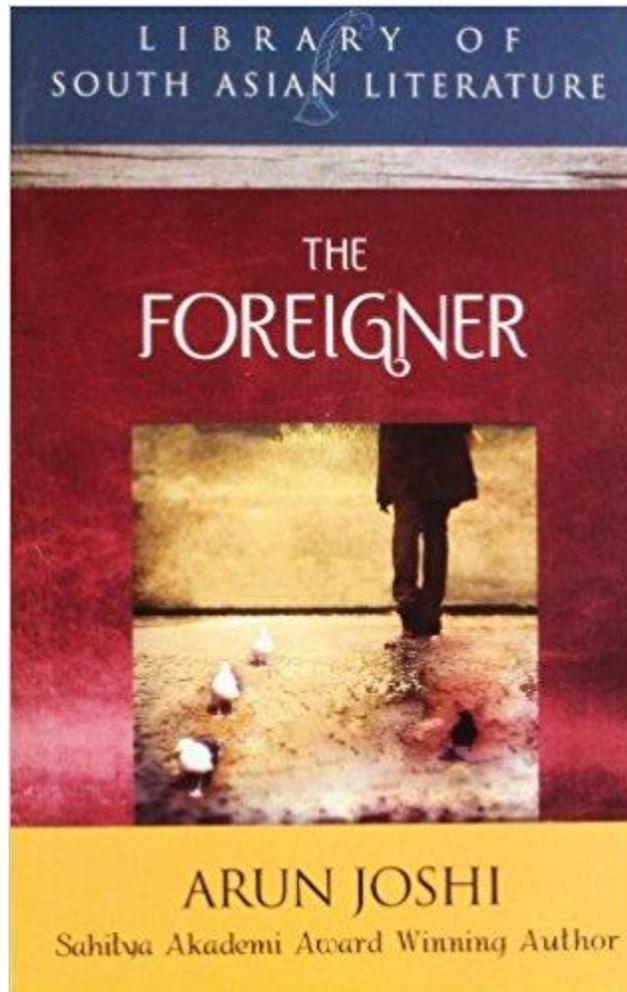


**Inheritance of the Themes of Alienation and Rootlessness in the  
Modern Writer – A Brief Study of Arun Joshi**

**Mubina**

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**Abstract**

Arun Joshi's stories often explore philosophical dimensions like an individual's yearning to decipher the meaning of life and materialistic existence. Arun Joshi was raised by a family of

eminent scholars in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. The present study aims at exploring the sense of alienation and rootlessness generated by the materialism that prevailed in the twentieth century Indian sophisticated society. Arun Joshi's ideas, his-experience based vision of life are seen in his writings. He notices the chaos and hollowness in the mind of the contemporary younger generation, which fill them with the sense of alienation and detachment. With his deep knowledge of Indian philosophy, Joshi suggests in his novels an entirely Indian solution to the spiritual crisis of the young. The present study comprehensively examines Arun Joshi's delineation of the commitment to life and action against passive detachment.

**Keywords:** Arun Joshi, Alienation, modern society, self-introspection, human predicament

### **Alienation**

Alienation is one of the greatest problems confronting modern man. Its corrosive impact can be seen in the form of generation gap, the antiwar movement, the hippie Phenomenon, the credibility gap, the stunting of personal development, the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaningfulness of life and so on. An outstanding novelist of human predicament, Arun Joshi has built into all his four novels the inner crisis of the modern man. His novels deal more with human problems than issues arising out of regional loyalties. His condemnation of the industrial, the civilized and the materialistic world is not guided by his love of Indian philosophy or the values of sensuousness, passion and action. His techniques of self-introspection intensified by self-mockery opens a new dimension in the art of Indo-English fiction.

### ***The Foreigner***

Arun Joshi emerged on the Indian English literary scene with the publication of his first novel "The Foreigner" in 1968. It deals with the journey of the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi, from his detachment from the world to his involvement in it. The novelist depicts Sindi's anguish following his loneliness and his so-called rootlessness. The novel shows the sufferings of Sindi who finds himself lost in the maze of worldly existence and is deprived of any familiar, social and cultural ties, while his soul cries for a way out of these confused ways of life. Joshi draws an x-ray of the conflict between involvement in and detachments from the world, going on in the mind of

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Sindi. In order to find out the solution to the problem of his restlessness and foreignness Sindi tries to be detached from the world.

### **Sindi**

Sindi pretends to follow the 'karmic' principle, propounded by lord Krishna in Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. For him life becomes a receptacle of confusions. Aimlessly he roams through the 'labyrinthine' ways of his existence in search of his life. Disappointingly, he tries to escape from the world as a solution to his rootlessness; steeped in the ancient Indian philosophy, he never accepts detachment as the final solution to the problems of life. He has faith in the notion that estrangement is something to be overcome, and not to be nourished. Through Sindi, Joshi presents before us tremendous capacity for transcendence. The novel shows the protagonist's journey from inaction to action, from detachment to involvement and from illusion to reality.

The parentless childhood of Sindi develops in him a deep sense of emotional insecurity and forms his vision of life. Everywhere Sindi finds himself a foreigner and in solitude. The feeling of having no family ties and being rootless everywhere, teases his soul. Sindi's soul cries out occasionally, "I have never had a home". (p.20) There is hardly any time when he is not conscious of his lack of any home ties, and his being a foreigner. When professor White says, "Every foreign student is an ambassador of his country", Sindi asks himself, "And what country had I represented, Kenya or England or India". (p.43) He thinks himself to be "An uprooted young man living in the latter half of the twentieth century, who had become detached from everything except himself". (p.195) He further exclaims his sorrow of being a foreigner everywhere, "And yet all shores are alien when you do not belong anywhere". (p.92)

### **Collapse of Old Values**

Arun Joshi noticed the collapse of old values resulting in an abjured universe. He saw contemporary man in search of a way to lead a meaningful life. This concept is echoed in all his novels. Arun Joshi presents the chaotic conditions in this world. He shows present man alienated from his fellow beings. He therefore in his works provides solution to the existentialism. "Though Arun Joshi has highlighted most effectively some of the metaphysical and ethical questions", he

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resorted to the Indian philosopher for the solution of the crisis created in his novel. The Vedanta philosophy, the teaching of Gita and the way of life as taught by Mahatma Gandhi had a great influence on him. “This impact is not casual or coincidental and ethical fabric of some of his major work, in “The Foreigner”, the question of involvement and the detachment from the world has been dealt with. The story is told in a series of flashbacks.

### **Agony of Loneliness**

Joshi exhibits the agony of loneliness in uncovering the psychological conflict in the character of Sindi Oberoi in his quest for meaning through a series of relationships. Impressed by the authenticity and insightful peering into the agonized psyche, Meenakshi Mukherjee comments that ‘The Foreigner’ is the first Indo-Anglian novel to deal with a genuine human predicament without compromise and without clichés. since Anita Desai’s “Voices in the City”. “The feeling of my nakedness in the hands of existence grew with every passing day and a strong urge possessed me to once again roam the streets of the world. I didn’t know where I would go or what the future had for me, but one thing was certain my search had to continue”. (p.175) Sindi realizes and regrets his indecision and negative intent of detachment for about twenty years he has moved whichever way life has led him. He has merely learnt to be detached from the world and not himself. “I saw myself as I had always been, an unrooted young man living in the latter half of the 20th century who had become detached from everything except myself”. (p.195)

### **Isolation, Despair and Purposelessness**

There is isolation, despair and purposelessness of human existence which find prominence in “The Foreigner” which is similar to T. S. Eliot’s poem, *The Wasteland*. Sindi’s vision of life is morbid. His feeling of futility of his life quite evident for his words “twenty-five Christmases on this planet, twenty-five years largely wasted in search of wrong things in wrong places, twenty-five years gone in search of peace, and what have I to show for achievement?” The feelings of Arun Joshi on the concept of detachment as expounded through Sindi Oberoi appears to be closer to the one explicated by Aldous Huxley. Huxley believes that the ideal man is the non-attached man and his non-attachment is negative only in name. The practice of non-attachment entails the practice of charity, courage, generosity and disinterestedness. The non-attachment man puts an

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end to pain not only in himself but also to such pain as he may inflict on others. He thus qualifies to be “blessed” and “good”.

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