

EXAMINING THE THEMATIC CONCERNS IN ARUN JOSHI'S WORK, 'THE FOREIGNER'

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Accepted: 10.04.2024

Published: 01.05.2024

Keywords: Arun Joshi, The Foreigner.

Abstract

Formerly, the British held a condescending view of Indo-Anglican literature, also known as Indian English literature. However, over time, it has gradually made occasional forays into the literary scene and gained recognition as a popular genre within Modern English literature. Those who haven't experienced life in India may struggle to fully grasp the quality and distinctive style found in works by Indian authors. In contrast to many other writers, Arun Joshi stands out as a particularly unique author who consistently delves into themes of human suffering across his body of work. The overarching and prominent theme in all his writings revolves around the search for a clear sense of purpose and direction in life. Joshi's literary creations reveal a profound influence from existentialist thinkers such as Camus and Sartre. Existentialism, a contemporary philosophical movement dealing with the disillusionment and hopelessness of "man," served as a significant inspiration for Joshi, drawing from the intellectual and literary contributions of Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre. The primary focus of this study is on "THE FOREIGNER," Arun Joshi's inaugural book, which explores the principal themes under consideration in the current analysis—a critical examination of the work.

Paper Identification



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Introduction

Indian author Arun Joshi (1939–1993) is recognized for his perceptive and contemplative literary works. Joshi, who was raised at Allahabad University and subsequently followed a career in the Indian Administrative Service, was born in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India. He left his work, nevertheless, to focus on literature since he loved to write so much.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Joshi's literary career was recognized for his in-depth examination of the human condition in the setting of a developing India. His writings stand out for their introspective tone, psychological nuance, and incisive analysis of modern society. In her work, Joshi explores the intricacies of interpersonal interactions, the effects of societal and cultural influences, and the existential problems that people confront.

One of Joshi's most well-known works is his first book, "*THE FOREIGNER*" (1968), which earned the Sahitya Akademi Award, one of India's most important literary accolades. In the book, a young Indian student who is studying in England struggles with cultural alienation and goes in quest of his or her identity. Joshi's later works, such as "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas" (1971) and "The Last Labyrinth" (1981), further cemented his standing as an insightful observer of Indian life at the time.

The conflict between tradition and modernity, the deterioration of moral principles, and the effects of social change on people are topics that Joshi often examines in his work. His protagonists often seem to be pondering existential issues, feeling disillusioned, and looking for purpose in a world that is changing quickly. Introspective and pensive, Joshi's writing explores the inner workings of the human brain as well as the emotional landscapes of his characters. Joshi's creative works were well-received throughout his career, leading to honors including the coveted Padma Shri award from the Indian government in 1999. But when he unexpectedly went away in 1993 at the age of 53, his life was brutally cut short.

The writings of Arun Joshi are still praised for their in-depth examinations of the human condition and their capacity to connect with readers of all ages. His books provide significant insights into the intricacies of contemporary life, the pursuit of one's own identity, and the difficulties people confront while adjusting to a quickly changing environment.

Thematic Concerns

The landscape of Indian English literature has been dynamically engaged in pushing the boundaries of originality and fostering critical analysis. Over time, the once-present layers of skepticism and doubt have dissipated from the current literary environment. This global recognition can be attributed to the representations of Indians in these works, which intricately weave in themes such as societal attitudes, superstitions, religious taboos, and the intricate caste system.

Within the literary panorama of India, the novel, a relatively recent addition, coexists with ancient epics, plays, and songs. Both English and regional languages serve as vehicles for novel writing and publication, with notable figures like Arun Joshi contributing significantly to this rich and contemporary phenomenon. Against the backdrop of the

existentialist movement prevalent in the 1950s to 1970s, which delves into the despair and disillusionment of humanity, Joshi emerges as an author who adeptly infuses his works with a profound sense of detachment from the ordinary, all while acknowledging its essential place in the literary canon.

In his debut novel, "*THE FOREIGNER*," Joshi explores the existential struggles of Sindhi Oberoi, a young man navigating a seemingly purposeless world, endeavoring to reconcile his past with the complexities of the present. Sindhi's background, born in Kenya to mixed ancestry, amplifies his struggle with a disconnection from his heritage, a lack of stability, and an overwhelming feeling of being an outsider. The narrative unfolds as Sindhi navigates relationships, deliberately avoiding attachment and involvement to evade the looming specter of alienation.

Themes of love, marriage, death, freedom, separation, alienation, and unhappiness intricately weave through the narrative, compelling readers to introspect on these profound subjects. The challenges faced by the protagonist, Sindhi Oberoi, in fitting into society due to his mixed-race background and a childhood marked by a lack of parental affection, are skillfully portrayed by Arun Joshi. Sindhi grapples with unreliability, denial, impatience, and a pervasive feeling of being an outsider to his own spirit and other cultures.

"*THE FOREIGNER*" stands out in the realm of Indian literature as an exemplary work of existentialism, reminiscent of Albert Camus' "The Outsider" and Anita Desai's "Bye Bye Blackbird." Joshi's narrative delves deep into Sindhi's quest for meaning in a chaotic and seemingly meaningless world, underscoring his struggle to strike a delicate balance between the weight of the past and the complexities of the present. Sindhi's relationships, particularly with June, serve as a poignant lens through which his deep-seated insecurities and emotional shields are laid bare, hindering genuine connections with others. His aversion to commitment and marriage reflects a profound sense of meaninglessness and rootlessness, mirroring the broader existential themes explored in the novel.

As the narrative unfolds, Sindhi's detachment takes a toll, leading to tragic consequences in his relationships. The novel becomes a profound exploration of themes such as detachment, love, and the repercussions of avoiding meaningful connections. Sindhi's transformative journey, guided by encounters with characters like Scottish Catholic priests and Muthu, depicts a shift from detachment to self-awareness. In the concluding chapters, Sindhi undergoes a profound transformation, recognizing the limitations in his understanding of detachment. Embracing a more active and engaged approach to life, he sheds his former detachment, embracing a newfound sense of purpose. The symbolic significance of the novel's title, "*THE FOREIGNER*," becomes evident as Sindhi grapples with his own sense of foreignness in the vast tapestry of the world.

In essence, Arun Joshi's "*THE FOREIGNER*" stands as a powerful testament to the complexities of human existence, navigating the labyrinth of detachment, love, and self-discovery within the backdrop of a chaotic and seemingly indifferent world. The novel's resonance lies in its ability to provoke profound introspection on the part of readers, urging them to contemplate the intricacies of their own lives and the pursuit of meaning in an ever-evolving world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Arun Joshi's *"THE FOREIGNER"* is a compelling exploration of existential themes, portraying the struggles of an individual seeking meaning and connection in a seemingly indifferent world. The novel's depth, character development, and exploration of existentialist philosophy contribute to its significance in the broader landscape of Indian literature.

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