



# EMOTIONAL DISLOCATION IN *THE FOREIGNER* BY ARUN JOSHI

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to critically analyze the idea of detachment that has been discussed for a considerable amount of time in theological, philosophical, sociological, and psychological in the novels by Arun Joshi, the leading modern Indian English novelist. Actually the sense of dislocation is depicted through the act of withdrawing from social interaction and spending time alone with one's thoughts. Severe maladjustment emerge from withdrawal, which also gradually manifests increasingly painful symptoms and suppresses all feelings and outcomes. This causes a personality rift that leads to devastation and leaves an imprint on the person termed to be emotional dislocation creating a rootless being.

**Keywords:** abject, nous emptiness, exasperated, estrangement, psychological, dislocation

## **Introduction**

The twentieth century has been accurately referred to as the era of alienation, a time of lost ideals, lost people, and lost gods, during which time the human spirit has been detached and is confused, frustrated, and fragmented. The youth and post-independence artists' work in modern India emphasizes the vast degree of dislocation that exists there. Joshi's literature examines self-estrangement and centres on how the self must evaluate its level of alienation from the family and society. The protagonists of Joshi's works are helpless outsiders and lonesome strangers who live in a perplexed statement. Joshi's writing has introduced the profound conflicts of loneliness, which the protagonists experience, driving them to an existential choice. In general, feeling excluded denotes a separation from one's family, friends, society, and even one's own self.

## **The emotional plight of Protagonist- Sindi Oberoi**

Studying the sense of isolation that threatens to demolish every aspect of human life in Arun Joshi's works is the main focus of this study. When discussing the issue of alienation in Joshi's books, the focus is mostly on the two types of alienation that affect man the most: his estrangement from society and his alienation from himself. The issues of alienation and emptiness are the most difficult ones that modern man must deal with. Man's mind develops a disdainful attitude towards established standards and ideals, which causes him to struggle with the purpose of

existence. Modern man is estranged from both himself and his fellow men because he has nothing to fall back on in times of need. The spiritual tension that characterises the present day has significantly exacerbated modern man's depression. Arun Joshi discusses alienation in his book as a result of the tension between sociocultural and psychological influences. The main causes of dislocation in all of Joshi's novels are social maladjustment and emotional unease.

Sindi Oberoi the main character in *The Foreigner* has been always been feeling isolated and feels emptiness in the world of alienation to find a meaning in existence. His problem is socio-psychological; bereft of parental care, cultural roots, and affection at a very young age, he develops a personality cleft and becomes a wandering alien. Anyone who comes into contact with him is struck by his strangeness. His words and actions gave the sense that he felt like an outsider who had no place in this world. Whether he is in London, Boston, or New Delhi, he is a man without roots and will always be a foreigner. His uncle in Kenya raised him after his parents died in a plane crash in Cairo, therefore he was unable to identify any single nation as his place of origin. Due to his upbringing and origins, Sindi was the quintessential outsider and someone who belonged nowhere. He states:

*“I wondered in what way, if any, I belonged to the world that roared beneath my apartment window. Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far I had lived without a purpose, unless you could call the search for peace a purpose. Perhaps I felt like that because I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter! It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. My foreignness lay within me and I couldn't leave myself behind wherever I went”* (Foreigner 1).

Contrary to what might first appear, his alienation is caused by a sense of foreignness that cuts over geographical boundaries. He is propelled from one catastrophe to another by it, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Sindi, who is a foreign student studying in the United States, cannot imagine himself as an ambassador for his nation since he finds it to be amusing and even the bartenders don't think of him in that capacity, which makes him feel more acutely alienated. Sindi Oberoi is an outsider in every way, both literally and figuratively, but this estrangement is one of his soul, which has caused him to veer off on a completely other course. When Mr. Khemka, an Indian businessman, inquires about his family, the guy cries out that he has already told the story of the strangers whose sole existence was represented by a few scrunched-up photos a hundred times.

The book makes an effort to examine Sindi's distinct consciousness as an outsider in a wide range of society and his dissatisfaction at not being able to find a meaningful purpose in life. He was a man with no roots anywhere in the world, so to speak. The Foreigner describes Sindi, an immigrant Indian who is searching for the meaning and purpose of his existence wherever he resides, but is deluded by his own detachment. Due to his sense of alienation and rootlessness, he was destined to develop cynicism, misogyny, and detachment. The Foreigner reveals Sindi's self-conscious projection of himself as a perpetual outsider, an existentialist exile, a stranger to himself, and someone who is preoccupied with the perplexing essence of life. It is a study in alienation. His arduous journey through numerous countries, relationships, and experiences gave him a fresh outlook and helped him come to a better understanding of life.

With disinterested involvement, he gains mental serenity and rids himself of his estrangement and detachment. His sense of estrangement from the world is one that many heroes in the west now experience. He is driven from crisis to crisis by his rootlessness, which is ingrained in his soul like a curse from long ago. Sindi feels like a wretched alien who left him pallid and drained, and his isolation is worsened by his withdrawal from the community around him. Sindi is a dependant, lonely, worried, depressed, and lonely individual who suffers from depression as a result of living a tragic life. He is trapped in a wilderness while he fights for his life. At a get-together for international students, a Boston-based engineering student runs into June, an American girl. June is a woman who is desperate to assist someone. When June inquires about Sindi's origins, it is clear that he feels detached and rootless. This response reveals a hint about his alienation:

All gathered here always asked him the same silly question. *“Where are you from?” as if it really mattered a great deal where I was from?*” (The Foreigner 2). Sindi looked painful at the very beginning of the encounter with June, when she says: *“There is something strange about you, you know. Something distant. I’d guess that when people are with you they don’t feel like they’re with a human being. May be it’s an Indian characteristic, but I have a feeling you’d be a foreigner anywhere”* (The Foreigner 3).

As soon as June came into intimate touch with Sindi, he noted that he would be a foreigner everywhere. Sheila also recalled that Sindi is the saddest man in India. He acknowledged that he was jaded and worn out, older than he should have been, and weary of his own loneliness. To Sindi, nothing was ever serious or seemed to be real. He uses strong language to convey his displeasure with his own life, which was the result of a lifetime of effort. He enrolls in London University in an effort to find a solution to this existential conundrum, but he is unsuccessful. Sindi endures significant suffering as he looks for the meaning and goal of life. On the eve of leaving for India, he asks his professor once more: "How does one learn to live a life?" He comes to understand that there is a power inside of him that prevents him from blending in with other people.

After identifying Sindi's loneliness, a doctor gives him the companionship-seeking advice to get a girl. His affection for June helps some degree to alleviate his loneliness, but because it is distant, he feels alienated from her. June is passionate about Sindi. June believed that being married would bring them closer together, but he does not think that way because marriage indicates that there is a very different kind of possession than there is with anything else. New cars were purchased along with weddings. They later devoured one another. According to him, the difference between love and pity is worse than love that wants to possess (in marriage). His pessimism is most apparent in his perspective on romance and marriage. In June, he declared that he "didn't believe in marriage" because it was frequently just a thirst for true love. Without the ability to love without the want to possess, you end up doing much more harm than good.

Sindi tells June:

*“Marriage wouldn’t help, June. We are alone, both you and I. This is the problem. And your aloneness must be resolved from within. You can’t send two persons through a ceremony and expect that their aloneness will disappear. I can’t marry you because I am incapable of doing so. It would be like going deliberately mad”* (4).

Due to Sindi's misunderstanding of the meaning of the word "detachment," which is simply a euphemism for "non-involvement," he avoids taking the most important duty for June. This coldness is not a sign that he doesn't care for June. Though he claims to adore June, he avoids a full integration with her and questions whether his relationships with Anna and Kathy qualify as romantic. His illicit interactions with Kathy and Anna leave him feeling haunted by the meaninglessness of interpersonal ties. Even June laments Sindi's lack of romantic experience with women, which he later admits to Shelia. His objective relationship with June and persistent attempts to avoid any contact with her reveal a triangle of self. However, as Babu prepares to marry June, a weird desperation develops, and Sindi warns Babu with an uncontrollable word.; *“Listen Babu, “don’t do anything in a hurry. Women are desirable creature, but they can also hurt you. We all make use of each other even though we don’t want to, in your part of the world you marry only once in a lifetime. It is quite a serious matter. Don’t just rush into a wrong thing for a temporary need”* (5).

Only until she leaves him for Babu does Sindi understand the value of June. He becomes aware of how his feelings of sadness and wrath have evolved, feeling as though two high-voltage electrodes have taken root in his skull and are continuously spitting poison into his brain. He sees himself as the victim of an enormous deception; the so-called detachment disappears, leaving nothing but grief behind and draining all of his wrath. The realisation that he had estranged himself from his inner self by not acting in accordance with his genuine nature, not integrating himself fully with her, and by acting detachedly occurs at this point. After all, he did love her and wept when she refused to see him. He is tormented by the need to discover the purpose of life from the outset. He gives the following account of the startling event: *“Babu’s death had drained something out of me. It was my confidence in the world. At one blow, most of what I had cherished in life was taken away [...] Babu had kicked out all my beliefs and disproved my theories. I felt like a desert or like a vast field of naked oaks in winter time. I felt more alone and naked in the world than I had ever felt before”* (The foreigner 6).

Sindi's belief in the real world, which was formerly thought to be beyond good but now generated evil on a massive scale, was shaken by Babu's death. He had never felt so naked and alone in the world as he did because of this estrangement. He feels alone and that he is sitting in his own tomb while in the unusually busy room. He saw himself like a peacock in his ridiculous self-importance. The real Sindi is not the cynical person he wants to appear to be; he is not a lonely person who wants to love and be loved but is hesitant to commit. His situation is a clear illustration of the state of modern man. The fact that June passed away while trying to abort Babu's child dealt him the biggest blow. He was perplexed about this incidence to the point of discomfort. He understands the ridiculousness of his detachment thesis, which was to blame for the deaths of two close friends of his. Sindi maintains a false self-perception and fools himself into thinking he has attained the spirit of detachment. His impressive academic credentials and promising professional possibilities are useless since he is constantly plagued by a nagging sense of loneliness and the disorder within him.

He remembers: *“Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachments consisted of right action and not escape from it. The gods had set a heavy price to teach me just that”* (The Foreigner

7). Sindi's utter confusion pricked of conscience and sense of remorse are evidently manifested in the following words. *In short, I was seized with the problem of once again putting together all that had happened to me and coming to grips with life. For twenty years I had moved whichever way life had led me. I had learnt much on the way. I had learnt to be detached from the world, but not from me. That is when the fatal error was made that ultimately led to Babu's death and then to June's death.* (The Foreigner 8).

In the initial stage, this distressing event weighed heavy on his heart, and he suddenly became detached from everyone and everything but himself. When Sindi learns he had no friends before June passed away, his agonising sense of loneliness grows even more acute. In actuality, June and I had a brief romantic relationship. He carried her memories around with him like an incurable ulcer until it finally soured his love for himself. Sindi's attachment, peculiar loneliness, and need for detachment were finally broken by June's passing, and as a result, she endured perplexing misery. He tries, for the first time in his life, to find the source of his difficulties by figuring out what life's purpose is. He suddenly feels the strong urge to start again in life. In such a situation, only the outcome of a coin toss determines the next step: he will depart for India in quest of a location to anchor on this lonesome planet. When he gets to India, though, he realises that despite his 20 years of learning to be detached from the world, he hasn't learned to be detached from himself.

### **Conclusion**

Arun Joshi provides the impression of being a rebel who opposes the avarice, brutality, shams, and hypocrisy of the populace while alienating himself and his art from his fellow animals in the process. Joshi's lack of recommendations for the individual's integration with society furthers the notion that his art is not socially conscious. To combat this shift, one may argue that Joshi's depiction of such a society in the first place shows his concern for social ills and is thus undeniable proof of his social consciousness. An individual's internal conflict is essentially his internal relationship to the external conflicts. An artist is not a preacher in any way, nor is it his duty, like a doctor, to offer prescriptions for treatments. Arun Joshi uses the idea of alienation as a myth, and the protagonists act either as outsiders to society or as outsiders to themselves. The main characters are foreign because either their sensitivity or lack of identification with the outside world exposes them.

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