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Existentialism In The Foreigner: Alienation, Freedom, And Moral Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how the book "The Foreigner" by Arun Joshi, written in 1968, deals with big questions about life, like feeling alone, being free, and doing the right thing. The main character, Sindi Oberoi, is like a symbol of people today who are trying to figure out who they are in a world that doesn't seem to care. We're using ideas from philosophers like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus to understand how Joshi uses these concepts in an Indian setting. What we found is that Joshi doesn't just show how sad and hopeless life can be, but also how people can wake up and start making good choices by taking responsibility and getting involved. By closely reading the book and using critical thinking, we're saying that "The Foreigner" is an important part of talking about these big life questions in Indian English literature.

KEYWORDS : Existentialism, Alienation, Identity, Freedom, Absurdity, Moral Responsibility, Indian English Fiction, Arun Joshi.

INTRODUCTION

Arun Joshi's book, *The Foreigner*, is special in Indian English literature because it's really deep and complex. It doesn't just focus on what's happening in society, like a lot of other books from that time. Instead, it looks at the individual and their struggles with existence. The story has a lot of similarities with the ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, especially when it comes to freedom, absurdity, and finding meaning in life. This makes *The Foreigner* a unique and thought-provoking read. By exploring these big questions, Joshi's novel takes readers on a journey of self-discovery and challenges them to think about what it means to be human. *The Foreigner* is a great example of how literature can help us understand ourselves and the world around us.

Sartre's proposition that "man is condemned to be free" underscores the burden of choice that defines Sindi Oberoi's life. Similarly, Camus' concept of the absurd² is reflected in Sindi's perception of a meaningless universe. This paper aims to analyze how these existential ideas are embodied in the novel and how they are reconfigured within an Indian cultural framework.

Sindi's life is marked by a deep feeling of not belonging. He says, "I have no roots anywhere. I am a foreigner everywhere", which shows how lost he feels. This feeling of being disconnected is not just about culture, but also about who he is as a person. It's like he's cut off from the things that normally give life meaning and purpose. As M. K. Naik observes, Joshi's protagonists are "men in search of a viable identity". Sindi's rootlessness aligns with Sartre's concept of "nothingness," wherein the individual exists without a predetermined essence. His inability to belong underscores the existential predicament of modern man.

Existential philosophy emphasizes that human beings are free to choose, yet this freedom is accompanied by responsibility. Sindi's refusal to engage emotionally—"I did not want to be involved" demonstrates his attempt to evade this responsibility.

Sartre calls this kind of behavior "bad faith", which is basically a way of deceiving ourselves. Sindi's way of pulling back from things isn't about being neutral, it's more like he's refusing to admit his own role in what's happening. And because of this, his relationships start to fall apart, showing us that when we avoid taking responsibility, it can have some serious ethical consequences.

The absurdity of existence is a recurring theme in the novel. Sindi's reflection—"Nothing seemed to matter anymore" echoes Camus' assertion that life lacks inherent meaning. The conflict between the human desire for purpose and the indifference of the universe creates a sense of existential despair. Joshi goes further

than just showing how absurd things can be. His novel says that we can find meaning by getting involved and dealing with things, rather than just pulling back. This is similar to what Camus said about facing absurdity with bravery.

The death of June serves as a turning point in Sindi's journey. His realization—"I had not remained innocent"—marks his existential awakening. He recognizes that detachment does not absolve him of responsibility. R. K. Dhawan says that Sindi's problem is that he doesn't realize "detachment is a moral choice" too. This idea strengthens the ethical side of existentialism, which means people are responsible for what they do and what they don't do. It's like, our choices, even if we choose not to do something, can still have a big impact. So, we have to think carefully about what we do and how it affects others.

The existential principle that "existence precedes essence" is central to Sindi's transformation. Initially, he views identity as imposed by circumstances, but he gradually realizes that it is shaped through choices and actions. This shift toward self-awareness reflects the movement from inauthenticity to authenticity. By accepting responsibility, Sindi begins to construct a meaningful identity, illustrating the existential process of self-creation.

The *Foreigner* takes ideas from Western philosophy, but it makes them work in an Indian setting. Sindi feels like an outsider, and this is affected by the tensions between different cultures after colonialism, which makes his story different from the typical Western stories about people searching for meaning. Joshi's story brings together two big ideas: being true to oneself and respecting Indian values like being responsible and connected to others. This mix makes the book deeper and more meaningful to its culture.

CONCLUSION

The *Foreigner* is a really deep look at some big questions about life in Indian English literature. By following Sindi Oberoi's story, Arun Joshi explores some tough ideas like feeling disconnected from the world, being free, and trying to make sense of things that don't always add up. He also thinks about what it means to be a good person and make good choices.

The book ultimately says that even if life doesn't have any built-in meaning, people have the power to create their own purpose by making conscious and responsible choices. By combining existential ideas with an Indian perspective, *The Foreigner* makes a big impact on modern literature. It's a unique blend that sets it apart and makes it worth talking about. The way it explores these deep ideas and connects them to everyday life is really significant. Overall, *The Foreigner* is an important work that adds to the ongoing conversation about what it means to be human and find purpose in life.

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