Chapter – III

The Foreigner

The Foreigner is Arun Joshi’s first novel written is 1968. The narration keeps moving from the recent past in Boston to the present in Delhi. The Foreigner also reminds us of several other novels like Raja Rao’s The serpent and the Rope, The Nowhere man by Kamala Markanday, Bye-Bye Blackbird by Anita Desai and The Girls from Overseas by Nergis Dalal as it deals with cross-culture and east-west encounter. During the course of the novel, Arun Joshi takes us to Nairobi (Kenya) where Sindi, the central character as well as the narrator of the story was born; to London where he studied; to a night club in Soho where he worked as a dishwasher and later as a barman; to Scotland where he worked at a small village library and discussed religion, God and mysticism with a Catholic priest; to Boston where he studied for six years and met June and Babu; and to Delhi where he ultimately settled down.

To examine this novel psychologically one needs to peep inside the psyche of almost all the characters of the novel. The protagonist Sindi
Oberoi is the chief character for psychoanalysis. His mother was an English lady while his father was Kenyan-Indian. So Sindi was a child of mixed parentage. This itself makes it clear that the psyche of his mother and father was different as they were of different regions. Sindi was brought up by his uncle who has settled in Kenya as his parents died early in an air crash near Cairo. So he was away from parental nourishment and this has affected his mind and his psyche a lot. His uncle too died which left him all alone on this planet. He became rootless as had nobody to look after him. He is a kind of a character who was not only alien to the world but to himself as well. The title is very apt as Sindi was foreigner to the world and to himself. His rootless childhood had such an effect on his psyche that he himself admits: “I have no roots.” He even muses over his foreignness:

“I wondered in what way, if any, did I belong 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…. 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. I hadn’t felt like
when my uncle was living….The thought that that he moved about in that small house on the outskirts of Nairobi gave me a feeling of having an anchor. After his death, the security was destroyed. Now I suppose I existed only for dying.”

Thus, it shows that he was a foreigner cause of the death of his parents and his uncle and this affected his psyche so much that he adopted the feeling of detachment. In fact, he not only became detached with the world but detached with himself also. All his actions can be psychologically analyzed. He was not an African, as neither of his parents belonged to Africa. He was not an English man as his father was an Indian. He never attached to America where he studied: “It is much too sterilized for me. Much too clean and optimistic and empty.” And he has not seen India till he was 26. Even coming to India was not his choice but it was decided by the flip of a coin. Here is where one has to psychologically analyze him as most of us decide our fate on a flip of coin as though that is the right guide and fate of us. Our ego needs to satisfy the desires of Id maintain the moral constraints of Super ego. So at this juncture the flip of the coin was a bridge between his desire to leave America and come to India. Psychologically we are satisfied that the coin
has decided, so it might be right. Sometimes we need a medium to satisfy our psyche and at this juncture, it was coin.

Arun Joshi also plays with the psyche of his reader as he begins his novel like a thriller with the scene set in a morgue where Sindi identifies the dead body of his friend Babu Rao Khemka who has been killed in a car accident on mass Turnpike. He discloses this news to June over a cup of coffee. But the second chapter switches the reader’s attention to the house of Babu in New Delhi. Therefore, the combination of actions that took place in recent past and present is how the setting of this novel is and so a reader is bound to know what happened and why it happened.

Normally it has been observed that a man is so much touched and moved when he talks of his late parents and tends to get sympathy but in case of Sindi, he hates to talk about his parents. The frame of his mind has been so changed that he simply dislikes talking about them. His indifference towards his parents is clearly reflected when Mr. Khemka, Babu’s father wants to know how they died but he ironically replies:

“For the hundredth time I related the story of those strangers whose only reality was a couple of wrinkled and cracked photographs.”
His rootlessness has so affected his psyche that he has become emotionally futile, and so he uses the word strangers for his own parents because he hardly remembers them as they died when he was just four years old. Normally it is observed that a man who has lost his parents wants to talk about them and gets emotional at the talk and wants emotional gratification but Sindi has turned abnormal and so he hates talking about his parents. He makes it clear to Mr. Khemka and his daughter Sheila that, “I hated to talk about my parents, I hated the pity I got from the people.” This makes it clear that he does not want to get emotionally involved with anyone. He “is an alien everywhere physically as well as metaphorically.” He is a born “foreigner”, a man whose psyche has been so affected that he shows total indifference to all humanity. He confesses, “My foreignness lay within me.” Due to no parental love, no cultural roots he grows up with a built-in fissure in his personality and becomes a wondering alien. His case in totally psychological.

It is because of his psyche that he did not belong to any place and his statement and behaviour created the impression that this is a man with different frame of mind. Very early in her acquaintance with Sindi, June remarked:
“I have a feeling you’d be a foreigner anywhere.” When he settled in India, once Sheila told him: “you are still a foreigner, you don’t belong here.”

He was a kind of person who does not want to get involved and so was a misfit everywhere. Psychologically it is true that if a person is alienated, isolated like Sindi Oberoi and who doesn’t have any compulsive desire to get involved and who doesn’t want to change set pattern of his thinking is bound to be cynical and frustrated. It has been pointed out by many of Arun Joshi’s characters of the novel that Sindi is a perfect cynic. Babu Rao Khemka his friend and a student at Boston writes to his sister Sheila that Sindi is “so terribly cynical.” June’s mother, Mrs. Blyth, tells Sindi: “You are just a cynic, my boy.” His flat mate Karl once says to him, “I didn’t know you could laugh, too” to which Sindi replies: “I can if I’m drunk enough.” “You are the saddest man I have ever known,” Sheila once said to Sindi. Sindi himself confesses: “I was cynical and exhausted, grown old before my time, weary with my own loneliness.” Babu’s father Mr. Khemka is also not far wrong when he tells him that he is “living, but as bad as dead.”
Sindi Oberoi is such a character who is so psychologically frustrated and torn that he does not have any desire to live. Right from his childhood, he gets “tired of living” and “was contemplating suicide.”

As discussed in Chapter No. II during childhood our Super ego develops. It is like a father figure. It stands for all morality and Id is a beast like part of the brain. It dominates the pleasure principle. It does not care for social norms while Super ego is just opposite to Id. Super ego acts as the conscience and ego tries to mediate Id and Super ego. In the case of Sindi, his rootlessness, no parental care has devoid him of a healthy Super ego and ego. He is a character, who has no system of morality. There is no distinction between morality and immorality for him. So on a discussion between him and Sheila when Sheila says about June that she “wasn’t virtuous” because “she was not a virgin.” Sindi reacts strongly to this observation and asks her; “Is that all? Who she nods, he laughs and says:

“So you think one of these Marwari girls is really superior merely because of silly membrane between her legs?”
Here Sindi opens a debate on sex-centered attitude of morality where the psyche of West is different to the psyche of East. For Americans if a girl does sex with different partners, can still be a girl with good moral values, but in India, such an attitude is considered immoral. Therefore, Sheila who is born and brought up in India considers June immoral while Sindi who has his education at America does not considers this to an issue against morality. So moral values (standards) differ from region to region and so does a man’s reaction and psyche differ. What is immoral to East is moral to West and what is moral to East may be immoral to West. Openness to sex is not immoral in America and to American society but its immoral in India and to Indian society. Sindi Oberoi’s psyche has been so changed that he describes himself as “An uprooted young man living in the later half the twentieth century who had become detached from everything except myself.” His metal frame and condition is so distorted that it gets clear in his dialogue with Mr. Khemka:

“But you at least knew what made an ass of a man; we don’t even know that. You had a clear cut system of morality, a caste system that laid down all you had to do. You had a God; you had roots in the soil you lived upon. Look at me. What does it mean to me if you call me an immoral man. I have no reason to be one thing rather than another.”
He is a person who belongs to no place; he has no God, no social background, no system of morality. He is a distorted being and psychologically uprooted man. Even his ideas about religion and faith shows his disturbed state of mind. When June asks him if he believes in God, he finds himself caught but gives as reply, which has a bending towards the negative side.

“She asked me again if I believed in God. I said I didn’t know, But I supposed I didn’t.”

“I thought every Hindu believed in God.”

“Anyway, I can’t really be called a Hindu. My mother was English and my father, I am told sceptic. That doesn’t seem like a good beginning for a Hindu, does it?”

This conversation between June and Sindi can also be analyzed psychologically as most of the people believe that a Hindu is a worshipper of god. Therefore, June believes that being a Hindu Sindi might definitely be a believer of God but Sindi is not as he mentions that he is not a pure Hindu. Thus, Sindi giving the reason of not being a pure Hindu satisfies the desires of his Id, suppressing his Super ego and thereby trying to be detached even with god. He is a pessimistic character
for who this world is a godless world. This gets clear when a Policeman, towards the end of the novel asks him:

“Are you looking for something, Sir?” he replies, “Yes – have you seen God?”

K. Radha in his article “From Detachment to involvement: The Case of Sindi Oberoi” comments –

“It was part of his cynicism and sense of alienation that he was utterly indifferent as to what he studied and what profession he followed. He had a very successful academic career at the London University and at Boston where he took a doctorate in mechanical engineering – not that he cared for mechanical engineering a bit more than any other subject: “I cared two pins for all the mechanical engineers in the world.” His professor rated his abilities so high that he offered him a place in the college faculty. But Sindi opted for a job in New York from where he came to New Delhi. He accepted a job in Khemka’s factory only because it would keep him away from himself.”
This decision of choosing an altogether a different profession makes it clear that our hero Sindi Oberoi is cynic.

Sindi Oberoi’s case is definitely a case of a person having an unstable mind, a person who is cynic, a person whose Super ego is not developed. Hence, his ego is unable to control the desires and wants of Id; and does nothing but merely satisfies the cardinal desires of Id. And one such desires of his Id is “sex”, which he experience with a number of girls. When he gets tired of his life at Kenya, he joins London University but even that could not give him peace of mind as he remarks:

“I joined London University. I didn’t have any trouble with my courses and I passed the exams creditably enough when they came but the question that bothered me was very different. And my classroom didn’t tell me a thing about it. Ultimately, I decided that I needed experience other than studying, and I got an evening job as a dish washer in a night club in Soho.”

Probably the question that bothered him and whose answer his classroom teaching was unable to give him was “How can I learn to live life” and so he accepted a job as a dishwasher and soon was transferred to the bar as a
bartender. He did not accept it for money but was in search of a way to live life. Here he meets Anna a woman who is about thirty-five years old has a dark hair and a woman with finely chiseled feature. She is “a minor artist who had separated from her husband.” Here is where his mind is being overpowered by the desires of Id. He wanted to have sex and so started having an affair with her. She started loving him intensely but Sindi was hardly touched. In due course of their affair, he came to know that “Anna was not yearning for me or anybody, but for her lost youth.” It was not a healthy relationship as Sindi wanted only sexual pleasure as was directed by Id and lack of powerful Super ego could not restrict him form obeying it. He himself remarks:

“We carried on like this for six months. I think she loved me intensely and unselfishly. I enjoyed making love to her and her sadness attracted me, but engrossed as I was with my own self I couldn’t return her love.”

There is no doubt that our hero Sindi Oberoi is having an unstable mind as after six months he switches his love to Kathy from Anna. He meets Kathy at one of the parties thrown by Anna and is soon directed toward her. His Id was so powerful that as soon as Kathy started showing some interest in him, he grabbed the opportunity and started an affair with her.
Kathy is an English housewife and was not living with her husband. She hungers for adulterous love, which he is ready to satisfy. But this love affair could not flourish much as Kathy who was separated from her husband decides to reconcile with her husband and leaves Sindi as in her opinion marriage was sacred: “We imagined we were in love with each other, but she thought marriage was sacred and had to be maintained at all costs.” His goal of finding a purpose in life was temporarily satisfied through Anna and Kathy but was not permanently accomplished as he left one and the other left him. In the course of time he makes friendship with a Catholic priest in Scotland and spends hours and hours with him discussing religion and God and mysticism. He comes to have “a revelation, I had almost felt as if I had been infused with a new existence.” His meeting with the priest and discussion has changed his mental setup and he thought that he has learnt detachment. One morning all of a sudden a thought clicked in his mind: “All love – whether of things, or persons, or oneself-was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion. Love begot greed and attachment, and it led to possession.” He came up with a new idea that – “One should be able to detach oneself from the object of one’s love.” He feels that this philosophy of detachment will definitely help him meet the challenges of life.
If we closely examine the psyche of Sindi we can come to conclusion that he has developed this philosophy of detachment from his past love affairs. As he started getting involved with Kathy she left him and he could not possess her so he developed a nation that one should be able to love through detachment as it causes less pain then to develop possessiveness towards the person one loves and not getting her.

Anna’s case is also psychological. She was separated from her husband and so she wanted to satisfy her desires, through Sindi. In fact, it is also a psyche that one craves for something one does not possess. In the case of Anna, she was not having man in her life so she was attracted towards Sindi and moreover Sindi was very young. As Anna was 35, she had lost her youth and so was craving for that lost youth of which she finds a replica in Sindi. Therefore, Anna is also a psychological character. Kathy on the other hand was separated from her husband for time being. Her character can also be analyzed psychologically. She wanted adulterous love and so was attracted towards Sindi. After that desire was satisfied, she reconnects with her husband. A person who is of the opinion that marriages are sacred and have to be maintained at any cost would not go for extramarital relationship. But a person who wants adulterous love would not consider marriages to be sacred. But in the case of Kathy when
she was separated from her husband, her Id overpowered her ego and Super ego and wanted pleasure of flesh and when her this desire was satisfied her Super ego bounced back. Realizing her mistakes, she left Sindi and went back to her husband. But these experiences made Sindi develop a philosophy of detachment which will cost him a lot. After having the experience of two unsuccessful love affairs and after befriending the catholic priest and having hours and hours of discussion on religion and god and mysticism and thereby developing a philosophy of detachment, Sindi’s life became topsy–turvy.

A new chapter opens in his life when he meets June Blyth, a beautiful benign, sensual, affectionate American girl at a party of foreign students. June was a typical American girl as she was free, frank but was generous and had an inner desire to be helpful to someone in need. Sindi started loving June and was well responded by June. Love affair with June was different than Sindi’s love with the other two ladies. Sindi remained fancy free with those ladies as his love was not from the bottom of his heart and so he came up very easily while June’s case was different. Sindi loved June deeply and had sex with her. June did not mind it as “she wanted to be of use to someone” and “was one of those rare persons who have a capacity to forget themselves in somebody’s trouble.” The relationship
between Sindi and June also paves way for the psychoanalysis our hero Sindi as this relationship was different and it made Sindi happy as well as nervous:

“How long could I stay free! . . . The commitment had already been made the moment I had seen June at the dance. Now it was only a matter of time. Our hands would soon give place to our bodies and then the worst will come; our souls will get involved. It was only a matter of time.”

The inner turmoil was getting strong and his psyche was changing after he met June. It all developed the same way as he anticipated. After their first sexual encounter he says: “I stayed awake, counting the broken pieces of my detachment. I counted the gains and the losses and the losses mocked me like an abominable joker.” Sindi and June made free sex and spent evenings together: “we lived like animals when we went out on those holidays.” Sindi’s mental frame was changed as he grows tender towards June. He sets apart a drawer for her in his flat, where he kept her blouses well folded. His feelings were changing he thought as if he was taking care of a little child. Very often, he would buy gifts for her and food that she liked the most and Sindi started missing her when she was not in his company or was away from him.
K. Radha rightly observes in his article “From Detachment to Involvement” –

“The story of Sindi’s relationship with her (June) is a story of the gradual breaking down of the barriers of detachment and non-involvement that he had built up all his life. He was quite conscious of what was happening and tried valiantly to resist it, but in vain.”

Sindi was so vacant from inside that he could not even know what his so called ‘detachment’ philosophy is going to cause and he is so mentally uprooted that he even can’t realize the significance and seriousness of any relationship. At various junctures, June used to often urge her for marriage. She wanted to get settled with him and have a happy marriage life but she was unknown of the inner turmoil’s of Sindi. She did not know that for Sindi no relation is permanent because he had no relations in his life that were permanent. He has even no desire to live his life. His life was meaning less, and without any specific goal. All this is happening with Sindi because of Sindi’s psyche. His psyche has developed a notion that involvement means to indulge oneself in a serious trouble. He is not an outsider to the outer world but to himself as well. The little of this novel The Foreigner is apt because Sindi, the central character and
narrator of this novel is foreigner to the world and is the same to himself. He does not know what to do, how to do and what not to do. His Super ego has not been developed properly because of lack of parental love, and so he does not know how to build a story emotional bound with any one.

Therefore, when June pleads him for marriage his reply is shocking: “Marriage wouldn’t help, June we are alone, both you and I. That is the problem. And our aloneness must be resolved from within.” He further adds that: “I can’t marry you because I am incapable of doing so. It would be like going deliberately mad. It is inevitable that our delusions will break us up sooner or later.” This is a very good example of the mental frame of Sindi. He is the one who just follows the instructions given by his Id. He has been a follow who is responsible to no one. His childhood has been parentless so no such kind of bond has been developed of being possessed and possessing someone. He does not have that feeling at all as he is not used to all such worldly affairs. On the contrary June is a character who wants to be possessed and wants to be use full to someone. He himself confesses that he in incapable of accepting someone for the whole of his life. He knows that getting married is not just bodily union but marriage comes with lots of responsibilities and he has led life that nowhere evidences responsibility.
He knows that sooner or later his emptiness will be exposed and the end will be shocking and his this desire of id is very well supported by his detachment theory and that is why he further tells June that,

“There is another way of loving. You can love without attachment to the object of your love. You can love without fooling yourself that the things you love are indispensable either to you or to the world. Love is really only when you know that what you love must one day die.”

Sindi’s detachment philosophy, which he has misunderstood, has altogether changed his psyche and has taken him on a different path, which leads to only destruction. Not being successful in any relationship of his life Sindi has developed this notion of not getting involved with the person you love as nothing is permanent and the same he is expecting from June and that is the only reason why he avoids or plainly rejects in getting married to June. His weak Super ego is the cause for his not understanding June’s pleading. June wants to make his life heaven like and that is why she wants to marry him. This shows that June’s mental frame is very clear. She wants to help Sindi come out of his presumed notions of life and get happiness, which he deserves as God has kept him aloof of most of the happiness that a man should receive in his life.
At this juncture there enters a man in their life. His name is Babu Rao Khemka. He is a son of a rich businessman of India and has come to America to continue his further studies. June, Sindi and Babu become good friends and the readers get an idea that the story may be a love triangle now on words. Arun Joshi rightly plays normally with psyche of the readers because normally the human psyche understands that if there are two male characters and one female character in a story there is bound to be a love triangle. June though as per nature wants to be helpful to someone continues loving Sindi. She once again asks him one night. When she was at his apartment after making love: “Why don’t we get married?” But Sindi once again puts his own theory on love and marriage. After listening to his theory, she stood up and puts on her dress and combs her hair and when their eyes met in the mirror:

“She smiled softly at me and a strange sadness grew in the pit of my belly. My eyes grew misty. I got up and grasped her shoulders. I clung to her with an unusual fierceness and pressed my lips against her neck.” And he said; “oh my darling, I whispered, you don’t know how much I love you.”

After she left the apartment, Sindi realized that he had “exchanged the steady tranquility of being for the excruciating moments of ecstasy in a
woman’s body” and his decision to remain detached and not getting involved under any circumstance with any one and especially with June was slowly giving way. But the best part is that he was yet to realize that “objectivity was another form of vanity.”

It is a human psyche that if one wants anything from a person and does not get that then one tends towards other for the satisfaction. What human being needs is satisfaction at all the three levels that is emotional level, physical level and mental level. June got physical satisfaction from Sindi but could not get the rest two satisfactions and it is but obvious that she will bend her feelings for another individual from whom she tends to get satisfaction at all the three levels. Sindi was so much involved with his so called ‘detachment’ philosophy that he became passive for June and paves a way for her to go to Babu Rao Khemka loves June very much in fact there was a feeling in his heart that his heart throbs only for June. Babu is a very simple hearted man. He was born and brought up in India so his roots are in Indian soil. He has been sent to America for his further studies but his ideology is totally different. He takes America to be a land where one can satisfy all his cardinal desires. He takes America to be a land of free sex. He considers America to be land where one can play with as many girls as one wants. He conveys his this ideology in his
conversation with Sindi Oberoi: “What is the good of coming to America if one is not to play around with girls?” Here one has to peep inside the psyche of an Indian. Normally it is a belief that America is a free country and in America, one can enjoy free sex with multiple partners. This is the psyche of almost all the foreigners of America but one forgets that roots are like fortifications in one’s self and they may destroy one in the process of disowning them. Babu is a correct example for the same.

Split personality is a psychological term, which means that one is divided or torn between opposites. Babu’s case is the same. He too turns into a split personality. On one hand, he loves to enjoy free sex life of America. He tells Sindi:

“I think it is wonderful country I would never go back to India if I had the choice.”

He further says:

“Sometimes I wish I had been born in America. Not that I have anything against India but there is nothing to beat America.”
And on the other hand as he is deep rooted into Indian mentality and philosophy, his moral values drag him to a different end making him a typical orthodox Indian as he was born and brought up in an Indian orthodox background. Why Babu turns into split personality is only because he has started loving June from the bottom of his heart and would like to marry her but because of his conventional moral values he avoids physical relationship with June. We come to know about this thought a conversation between June and Sindi where June says: “He said he didn’t want to do it until after the wedding.” But later on we come to know that he was having sex with June. Actually he is divided or turns into split personality because of his ideology. He on one hand takes America to be a land of free sex and want to enjoy sex with June but as he is a typical orthodox India he can’t tolerate that his beloved or would be wife should enjoy free sex. Here is where Babu becomes a panic of split personality, because he wants to enjoy sex with June but forgets that June is an American and she might have been involved or is involved or can be involved with another man. June is a character who is accustomed to free sex life of America. When June tells Babu about her love affair with Sindi, Babu cannot tolerate it. What adds a nail into Babu’s coffin is June’s declaration about her sex life with Sindi. She tells him of her earlier relations with Sindi: “She told him that as a matter of fact she had been sleeping with Sindi and what’s more, she had been doing that for a
year before she met him (Babu).” This sentence of June proves to be like a havoc Babu, he grows pale and even calls her a whore, hits her in the face and immediately leaves the flat and blindly drives off his car, which proves to be his final drive as he drives himself to a tragic end by committing suicide. Arun Joshi has portrayed all the character of this novel so artistically that almost all of them can be analyzed psychologically. At one juncture, it seems that all the characters of Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner* are like an ocean. They are so deep that one cannot even measure the depth of theirs. Babu seems to be appropriate character for his depth. At a glance, Babu seems to be taken right by any Indian because Indians cannot tolerate their wives to be having sex with other individual. But what makes Babu’s case so complex is his being an orthodox Indian craving to enjoy free sex life and on a voyage selects an American girl June Blyth but there by expecting her to be a virgin. He expects a lot from America, but is not ready to accept an American girl with American psyche and ideology.

June Blyth is also an interesting case to study. She is an American and yet loves Sindi. She is the character who oscillates between Sindi and Babu. She loves Sindi intensely and has free sex several times with him. But on her plead to get married she gets disappointment as Sindi has his own
cold ‘detachment’ theory and she is forced by her psyche to bend her love, affection and care towards Babu, who is in need of this as he has been a failure or a misfit in so called American study system. The following lines from a conversation between Sindi and June brings about her analytical study of Sindi and Babu and her decisive follow – up action which is backed by reasoning. Sindi initiates the conversation:

“Are you in love with Babu now”?

“No.”

“Then why did you decide to marry him.”

“I thought he needed me. I had wanted to belong to you, but you didn’t want it. You are so self-sufficient there is hardly any place for me in your life - except perhaps as a mistress.” She added with a short laugh.

“Babu on the other hand was on the edge of a break down and still is for that matter. He needs me and what’s more he says so. He loves me more than he loves himself - that’s more than what can be said for you. In return, I am prepared to give him all that I have.”
She sticks to her original character as she makes it clear very early that she wanted to be useful to a human being. The decision that June takes is democratic as she chooses Babu for marriage simply because he needs her and she wants to help him come out of his frustration. But psychologically speaking her heart and sub-conscious mind still loves Sindi. She affirms:

“You are beautiful, Sindi, beautiful as a God. I don’t think I can even stop loving you.” Here we can say that her love for Sindi is permanent while her love for Babu is temporary or on ad-hoc basis.

June’s oscillating nature makes her an interesting study. She is devoted to Sindi but when Babu starts loving her with a dog like devotion she is in a fix and cannot deny Babu’s proposal and advances. One should also try to analyze this episode psychologically. A girl is in love with a boy and wants to get married but the boy shows no interest and what happens is that another boy enters and he loves the girl so much. It would be any woman’s psyche that she will starts accepting the second boy’s love as she can understand what pain rejection can cause because she herself has faced the same. Therefore, after rejection from Sindi and advances from Babu it was but natural that June will bend towards Babu as he console her psychologically. She was mentally torn and at this juncture Babu
gives her a helping hand by loving her with a dog like devotion. Thought June accepts Babu but major canons of her heart are occupied by Sindi and so she gets mentally torn and feels a lot of pressure and tension which she tries to release through love with Sindi.

“I want you,” I (Sindi) said,

“She said nothing but got up and went into the bedroom she had been sunning herself and her tanned body was lovely as a rose in the dim light. We made love with a strange fierceness that was excruciating in its pleasure, as it was painful. And then just after the final moment her body was thrown into a paroxysm of spasm. She shuddered under me in a thousand convulsions gasping for breath. She bit into my shoulder until blood came out and then suddenly I discovered that she was crying. I put my arms around her and tried to calm her down. She bit her lip and tried to hide face in the pillow. Then something seemed to break within her and she burst into uncontrollable sobs.”

“It is also so meaningless, Sindi so utterly meaningless. All we do is get into bed and …” her sobs choked her off.

“I patted her hair mechanically. She was right, dreadfully right. After sometime her body ceased to shake and she wiped her tears.”
June wanted to be of Sindi. She was psychologically torn but Sindi’s cold detachment theory was the one that caused all havoc. When Sindi refused June for marriage, it was but obvious that she would avoid him for any reason. One day Sindi telephoned June and requested her to dine with him. But she declined the proposal of Sindi. “I’m sorry, Sindi. I will not be able to see you anywhere, I mean not as I used to. Babu and I are getting married soon.” This makes very much clear that June is going against her wish against her heart as she from the bottom of her heart loves Sindi but as there is no way out she has to avoid Sindi to cut that unbreakable thread of relationship between them. Sindi begged her to see her once, but she said she was sorry. When he put down the receiver, he pressed his face hard against the metal of the telephone and cried. By this time all his carefully – cultivated detachment had vanished and he was utterly miserable. He said: “The edge of pain was so intense that it left me completely numb.” He lay in a state of coma for a time. Gradually the coma wore out, as he was aided by his work at the college. Still he behaved like the typical lover, not the man immune to all emotions as he thought he was. Every now and then, he found himself in places where he had been with her:

“Here is where we meet, here I bought her a book, there she wanted me to kiss her, and my heart would sink with the burden of
my memories and I couldn’t help whispering to myself, My darling! Oh, My darling!” These words mock at his carefully-cultivated philosophy of detachment as these are not the words of “one who should be able to detach oneself from the object of one’s love.”

It makes things crystal clear about Sindi Oberoi from the journey that we have covered of Sindi’s life, so far that Sindi has been making love to several women like Anna, Kathy, Judy, Christine and June and has been enjoying free sex with these women under the bogus garb of “detachment”. It is his pompous philosophy of ‘detachment’ that alienates as well as torments June Blyth psychologically and compels her to switch over her direction of love from Sindi to Babu Rao Khemka, Sindi’s friend and thus Sindi is brought face to face with his hypocrisy, cowardice, jealousy and stupidity. Sindi was not having a still mind and so he not only became the victim of his own mental trauma but also made others victim as well.

Things were still under control of Sindi but he was not aware that worse was to follow. We can narrate rest of the episode in a nutshell. Sindi did
not know that Babu has been sleeping with June for June had lied to Sindi about this. She told Sindi that she did not really love Babu. So when June made advances to Sindi one night in his apartment Sindi yielded to her. Later she drove to Babu’s flat where they had a quarrel and she confessed to Babu that she had been sleeping with Sindi. Babu’s world turned topsy-turvy. He was totally numb. He suddenly left the flat and drove off blindly in his car and was died in a crash. Sindi and June knew that Babu had really committed suicide. He had been sent out of his college as he had failed in all examinations. He had been disowned by his father for intending to marry June. And on the top of it all came June’s confession. This makes Babu’s mental frame very clear that he was a misfit in a foreign land. His mind was in a tag-of-war between his Indian values and his free dream world. He wanted both and could not achieve any one. He wanted June, an American girl but at the same time he wanted purity, virginity that is his Indian values. He could not digest the fact that June was not virgin though he was the one who looked America as land of free sex. A volcano erupted in Babu’s mind and finally when his father, his mark sheet, his friend Sindi, his sister, and June all went into one compartment of his mind he was unable to make a balance between all of them. So Babu committed suicide considering that end of life means end of all problems of life and instead of introspecting things and himself rather chooses to put a full stop to his life. He thought that death is the
best solution of any problem. This makes us clear that how psychologically torn Babu was. He could not digest that his friend has been sleeping with his would be wife.

After Babu’s death Sindi felt that he had driven a man to death. This itself shows that Sindi’s mental condition was not well as his conscience or his Super ego was always biting him. June accuses him and says:

“Look, what your detachment has done.”

He decided that the best way to escape from this problem is to escape from the place he is living. So he decided that he could no longer stay in America. He decided to leave the country. While he was waiting for the necessary papers, a worse blow struck him. To avoid being in Boston Sindi accepted a job in New York. It is said that you can escape from a place but not from the problems related with you and not at all from your own self. Sindi received a letter from June. It was mentioned in the letter that she was pregnant. She was carrying Babu’s child in her womb. She was in the fourth month of her pregnancy period. She requested him to come to Boston for she wanted to see him. He could not leave New York for a couple of days. But when he went at her house he found it locked.
He was informed by a neighbor that June had died after an abortion. Her mother had gone away from the house. The death of June left Sindi numb and desperate. All his objectivity broke down.

K. Radha in the article “From Detachment to involvement: The Case of Sindi Oberoi”, rightly comments –

“Thus we find that all the armour of indifference and non-involvement which he was wearing was made of wax and the slightest warmth of love had melted it away leaving him naked and helpless. He thus learnt by bitter experience that true detachment consisted of right action and not escapes from it, which is also the lesson that the Gita teaches us. While Sindi’s detachment preached in the Gita is indifference to the result of one’s actions. As Eliot puts it in “The Dry Salvages”:

“And do not think of the fruit of action
Fare forward.””

We can say that June’s tragic death after the operation for abortion makes Sindi Oberoi restless, further rootless, psychologically torn and lonely
drifting into meaningless uncertainties about life and existence and “the abominable absurdity of the world.” We can say that June’s death acts as a tragic ‘peripeteia’. It brings about a sudden change of fortune as it dawns on him: “Detachment at that time had meant inaction. Now I had begun to see the fallacy in it. Detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it. The god had set a heavy price to teach me just that.” When he encounters all this and especially the death of Babu and June he comes to learn that true detachment consisted of right action and not escape from it which probably is the message that The Bhagwad Gita gives us.

We have already known much about Sindi’s much-valued detachment. What basically remains is to examine whether his oft proclaimed cynicism and aimlessness in life were really more than skin-deep. He had chosen to take a degree in mechanical engineering though he had no special aptitude for it. He did not mind whether he was going to Nigeria or India. However, when Sindi got his papers ready to fly to India, he felt unusually exhilarated. “I loved the world … I had a new lease of life. In a way, I was born again.” When Sindi comes to India, he visits Babu’s house where he meets Babu’s sister Sheila and his father Mr. Khemka. He sees “a bronze figure of dancing Shiva.” He is held in a supreme
ecstasy: “I was struck by the intense beauty of the divine dancer. America, India, Egypt, all mingled behind him in aeons of increasing rhythm.”

Mukteshwar Pandey rightly remarks in his book Arun Joshi: The Existentialist Element in His Novels –

“The archetypal image of the dancing Shiva speaks of Arun Joshi’s Indian heritage. It also expresses the paradoxical character of eternal oriental truth as Shiva is both ‘Rudra’ (destructive fury) and ‘Shiva’ (benign force). The protagonist Sindi is a quester incognito. He has been undergoing a complete overhauling. He has been passing through a process of death and a new man is being born with in him.”

After all that he had encountered he wanted to leave America in order to escape a bit of himself. He is in search of a new place, a place other than he lived in: “I only wanted a place where I could experiment with myself.” He proposes to go either to Nigeria or to India. Finally he decides to come India hoping to get “a place to anchor on this lonely
planet,” but his hopes are not fulfilled. To him, India seems exactly the same as America. He remarks:

“In truth it had only been a change of theatre from America: the snow had remained unchanged. I had met new people with new vanities. They merely had different ways of squeezing happiness out of the mad world.”

He is a misfit here also in India as he is horrified by the stagnant deadness of the Indian scene dominated by people like Mr. Khemka, “a man of the world, municipal councilor, Chairman of many committees, dynamic entrepreneur, master of ceremonies, darling of the astrologers, owner of a growing empire.”

Sindi in New Delhi accepts a job in Khemka’s factory. But here also he remains different, and strange. His psyche has been built up so that he can not adjust anywhere. Every place seems stranger to him. He tells Mr. Khemka that, “My set of experiences has taught me a reality that is different from yours.” He is a compete outsider, strange in India to both the corrupt rich man and the poor exploited labourer. He finds that the common people have the benefit of their delusions. Their delusions
protect them from the lonely meaninglessness of their lives. But our psychologically tormented Sindi has no such delusions to base his hopes upon. He has not been “fortunate enough to have been born with their simpleness of mind.” He encounters many experiences. In the social parties at Mr. Khemka’s house:

“Old men grow fat with success came with their plump wives. They drank and then they had gorgeous dinners. They talked of money and how the make more of it. They left the impression that they could buy up anybody they wanted... the fat men left me with a distinct feeling of being of out of place.”

Sindi further says:

“I would become aware of my own loneliness.”

All these experiences tend our hero to remain a foreigner to himself. There was no change in his psyche. Psychological condition of Sindi remained same in Kenya, in London or Boston or even in India and so he was a foreigner to himself and to the world. He neither could know his mind nor of others. He continued to remain a foreigner not only in Kenya, London or Boston but equally a foreigner in India too.
Sindi undergoes many experience in life. He exclaims upon his own mental trauma: “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 streets of the world.” His psychological uprootedness, existentialist quest and experiments with himself simply added a lot to his loneliness and meaninglessness of life. Because of his strange reactions to different situations Mr. Khemka takes him to be “as bad as dead.” Sheila considers him “the saddest man I have ever known”, and tells him plainly: “You are a foreigner. You don’t belong here.”

The problem with Sindi is that he doesn’t belong to any place. He even doesn’t belong to himself. A man gets pleasure in being loved, having sexual encounters, getting jobs etc. but here is a man who is totally different to all these things. If one wants to analyze what’s so different about this individual one needs to peep inside to Sindi’s mind and experience the psychological trauma that Sindi is undergoing from his birth. His state of mind is totally different from an ordinary man. His reactions are different. His way to deal with life is totally different and if some body asks the question why is he different? The answer would be because his psyche is different. The way id, ego and Super ego are developed in a normal man, the same way these mental elements are not
developed in Sindi, which makes Sindi’s reaction different. The stages of life which Freud discusses from the time a baby is born till complete maturity have not been properly developed in the case and the result is Sindi Oberoi.

One more episode takes place in the life of Sindi Oberoi, which defines him, even more than what we know him. Once the income tax officers raided Mr. Khemka’s office and his house and took away incriminating documents, Sindi’s reaction were not as it would have been of any stereotype worker. He said Mr. Khemka to his face that he was a crook who deserved the punishment, which he was sure to get. He then walked out, determined never more to have anything with him or his business, which was sure to be ruined. Due to the income tax raid, Mr. Khemka was sentenced to jail on playing fraud with income tax accounts. The workers of the firm persuade Sindi to take over the charge of Khemka’s business and save them from starvation. Now here is a change taking place within Sindi and within people around him also. Now people, especially the workers of the firm though being aware that this man is totally different form the world, see a ray of hope within him and try to change the mental frame of Sindi in order to save them. Sindi has already secured a job in Bombay after brief hot discussion with Mr. Khemka. But
when the employees of the firm request him to take the charge. We came
to know that it is at this critical juncture that Sindi is on his way to
becoming wiser. His understanding deepens when he associates himself
with the poor and starving. A new man, who is more human and merciful,
is being born within him. Sindi’s psyche is gradually shifting its gears.
We see that Sindi, having finished packing late in the evening goes to the
station to reserve a seat to Bombay. Before he goes to sleep that night, he
takes “a general stock” of himself:

“In many ways the past had been a waste… I had started adult life
as a confused adolescent awesomely engrossed with myself,
searching for wisdom and the peace that comes with it. The journey
had been long and tedious and still was not over. And the future?
In an ultimate sense, I knew, it would be as meaning less as the
past. But, in a narrower sense, there would perhaps be useful tasks
to be done, perhaps if I were lucky, even a chance to redeem the
past.”

We can easily sort out that there is a paradigm shift of psyche within
Sindi and he considered his past to be a total waste. He thinks that his
adult life was full of confusion perhaps we also come to know that he is
not sure about his future but if given a chance, he would redeem his past
deeds. He confesses to himself that his so far journey has been long and tedious but its yet not over. He wants to be a good human being now, good in the sense that he would like to help people and be useful to someone in need. This is the change that is taking place in our hero. He never introspected himself but went on living life as it came but now he want to utilize his future life for the well being of others. He has learned a lot from this past follies and does not want to repeat them in future.

Arun Joshi has very aptly painted this change in Sindi’s psyche. Arun Joshi had been very symbolic in showing the change that is taking place with his hero. During the night the temperature suddenly drops and by dawn it starts raining: “It was the first of the monsoons carrying a freshness and coolness that was a welcome change from a humid heat of the previous day.” The shower, as in T. S. Eliot’s The waste Land is fertility symbol. It symbolizes the stirring of life in Sindi. It is his reawakening, his rebirth, his regeneration. That afternoon when the sky is clear, he goes to meet Muthu, who was a low-paid employee is Mr. Khemka’s office. He lived in one-room tenement with a dozen other people. Sindi was deeply touched by the squalor of the place and the wretchedness of Muthu’s lot. Muthu made and impassioned plea to Sindi to take charge of Khemka’s business and save him and others like him
from starvation. The clear sky symbolizes the light of knowledge that will
dawn upon Sindi. Muthu becomes the human voice of the divine truth.
When Sindi says that he does not want to get involved. Muthu replies:

“But it is not involvement, sir. Sometimes detachment lies in
actually getting involved.”

It is Muthu, a man in a pathetic situation and perplexed who drives Sindi
on the right lines. Human suffering purges and purifies him. Muthu is
human suffering personified. It is this suffering in the shape of Muthu
that drives Sindi from indifference to participation and from detachment
to involvement and leads him to conclude that “for me (Sindi),
detachment consisted in getting involved with the world!” It is here we
come to know that Sindi’s psyche is getting changed. He has now started
taking things positively. He now comes to know the meaning of life and
perhaps what life wants from him. Through out now he was in a wrong
notion but now he has come to know the people and their suffering. It is
Muthu who helps him change his mental frame. It is Muthu who brings
change in him and enlightens his life. Muthu altogether belongs to such
strata of society who though poor but never leave the path of honesty.
Muthu is a person who live with dozen of people in one room only but his
psyche is such that he never leaves his track of being good and rather
shows the right track to Sindi so that Sindi’s life could be useful in helping the employees of Khemka to get bread and butter.

Mohan Jha rightly remarks:

“It is the nature of human distress and suffering, of which Muthu among others, is a living image, that drives him from detachment to involvement, from indifference to participation from neutrality to commitment, and as Muthu says and Sindi sees, detachment consists in getting involved with the world.”

Sindi, now, sticks to Muthu’s words:

“Still the old, nagging fear of getting involved with anything, anyone, was pushing through the mists of reason – a line of reasoning that led to the inevitable conclusion that, for me, detachment consisted in getting involved with the world.”

Now, he finally understands that detachment does not mean inaction, escape or alienation; it really stands for right action, devotion and involvement:

“Detachment consisted of right action and not escape form it.”
See the change that Muthu has brought in Sindi. Sindi who used to let go anything, any one that came in his life in the name of detachment has now understood the real meaning of detachment. His psyche was such that he use to judge everything in the name of detachment and Muthu’s words have really changed the thinking procedure of Sindi.

Mukteshwar Pandey rightly remarks in his book *Arun Joshi: The Existentialist Element in His Novels* –

“Muthu’s psyche is like that of a “Karmayogi”, as it is from him that Sindi learns the secret of non-attach action or “Nishkam karma” or “Karmayoga” as propounded in the *Gita*:

“Karmanyevadhi karaste ma phalesu kadachana,
Ma karmphalhetarbhur ma te sangostvakamani.”

That is: your right is to work only, but never to the fruit there of. Let not the fruit of action be your object, nor let your attachment be to in action.” Sindi learns an important lesson from the *Gita*. And it is after this that his psyche changes and his way to deal with the things totally changes. Now, Muthu’s meaning of detachment prevails on Sindi and he takes over the management of Mr.
Khemka’s business. He is led on “to concentrate on decisive action.”

We find such a change in the psyche of Sindi that he speaks almost in the phraseology of the Gita as he utters: “The fruit of it was really not my concern.” Sindi’s decisive action of taking upon himself the responsibility of saving Mr. Khemka’s concern brings him and his total staff peace, prosperity and happiness. Once upon a time there was nothing called happiness and peace in Sindi’s life and he even failed to give peace and happiness to Babu or June or any other who came in his life and now the same Sindi is giving happiness, peace, prosperity to others and by doing so he himself experiences peace of mind. It is all because of thinking procedure. He was totally negative about life and had wrong notions but then he undergoes a process of psychological improvement and things changed in his life. His thinking has also been now positive from what he earlier had. “By the end of the first month sales had begun to look up and the situation improved generally as a result.”

Even Sheila’s behaviour towards Sindi also changes. There were certain misgivings that Sheila has about Sindi but they are now over and they
both try to understand each other in a better way. Sindi feels “amused by the random absurdity” of his present involvement. He has learnt from his experience that it is not inaction or involvement that turns out to be genuine detachment, the state of ‘Sthita prajna’ of the Gita, having the stability of mind and that ‘yoga’ of selfless action, which alone can redeem man.

Sindi’s way of thinking has been largely changed. We come to know about it when he speaks,

“All love—whether of things, or persons, or oneself—was illusion and all pain sprang from this illusion. Love begot greed and attachment, and it led to possession.”

He seems to believe that God alone is truth and the entire world is a big illusion. He considers this world to be only illusion – ‘Maya’. He once tells June:

“One morning I had gone for a walk. I climbed a hill and sat down on a weathered stone. The sun had just risen and the valley seemed strangely ethereal in the clear light. Suddenly, I felt a great lightening as if someone had lifted a burden from my chest and it
all came through in a flash … birth and death are real. They are the constants. All else is variable . . . according to the Hindu mystics there is a reality beyond all this. But I don’t know. I would like to know someday.”

Probably it is Muthu who makes him understand this as Muthu suggests Sindi that “Maya” (illusion) keeps the reality hidden and tells him that some persons “mistake the action of their senses for their own actions. It is all ‘Maya’.”

Psychologically Sindi has been so differently moulded that now he comes to realize that detachment, in the true sense of the term, should not only be from the world and its objects but also from one’s own self. He know understands that one can be of some use to others only when one is really detached from one’s own self. After Sindi’s psychological frame has been changed he introspects himself and makes a genuine confession to himself that it is actually he who is the cause of Babu’s and June’s death. He rightly remarks:
“I had learnt to be detached from the world, but not from myself. That is when that fatal error was made that ultimately led to Babu’s and then to June’s death.”

No doubt about the fact that he has to struggle too hard to get freedom from the fear of involvement. He says:

“Still, the old, nagging fear of getting involved with anything, anyone was pushing through the mists of reason – a life of reasoning that led to the inevitable conclusion that for me, detachment consisted in getting involved with the world.”

It is only at Muthu’s request that he takes over the management of Mr. Khemka’s business but as now he has learned the lesson of life, he works in a detached manner, as he says: “The fruits of it was really not my concern.” He becomes more or less, a ‘Sthitaprajna’, abandoning attachment whatsoever as per Lord Krishna’s preaching’s in *The Gita*:

“Yogasthah kuru karmani Samgam tyaktva Dhananjaya, Siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva samatvam yoga uchyate.”
That is: “Arjuna, perform your duties dwelling in yoga, relinquishing attachment and indifferent to success and failure; equanimity is called yoga.”

Sindi’s life undergoes various psychological changes and he happens to experience different facets of life at different stages. Sindi is often addressed with adjectives and if one closely retrospect these adjective one comes to know the psyche of Sindi Oberoi. Basically he is ‘a foreigner.” He has been a vain young man, a sad lover, a jealous competitor, a mechanical engineer, “a philosopher”, “a saint”, “a conceited little squirt”, “cynical and exhausted, grown old before my time, weary with my own loneliness”, “a lusty beast”, a pretender, a person having “so little control over his own destiny and actions”, “an uprooted young man”, a perennial outsider, an alien everywhere physically as well as metaphorically, “a narcissist,” a liar, “so heartless”, selfish and “awesomely engrossed with myself”, “an ungrateful upstart”, and what not? But, finally, Sindi Oberoi becomes “Surrender Oberoi.” He settles in his business. Arun Joshi also gives us ground to hope that it will not be long before Sindi will find a loving and loved wife in Babu’s sister, Sheila. Clear indications are given of a growing mutual tenderness and attraction that promises a closer relationship. We can say that Sindi also
settles in his life with Babu’s sister Sheila. Although there were certain misgivings in the beginning, but they try to understand each other. Sindi is sorry for Sheila, and says: “I had a feeling we were just beginning to understand each other.” The following lines of the dialogue are expressive of an amicable settlement between Sindi and Sheila:

“I didn’t think you would come back.”

“Nor did I”, “I thought you had become too detached to get involved in this mess.” “A smile played at the corners of her mouth. I too smiled, amused by the random absurdity of it all.”

From all the recent experiences and tender and gentle shift in Sindi’s psyche we can say that he seems to unlearn the so-called code of detachment and learn, by and large, from his experience, that it is involvement that can and does redeem man. The change in Sindi’s life from ‘detachment’ to involvement is certainly “a study in experience.”

Sindi’s psyche represents nothing but the contemporary man who, irrespective of all sorts of scientific and technological advancement of the modern times finds himself in a tragic mess. He is a foreigner in the true sense of the term, with all bonds of love and social relationship
disintegrated. Hence, his life is all hellish and there is no end to his suffering. The loneliness and mental working of the contemporary individual is well articulated by Arun Joshi in the novel:

“We’ll see you then”, she called. They waved and drove off.

“So they would see me, would they? That is the loneliness and mental frame of our times, I thought as I rode up in the elevator. You are a king in a deck of kings, shuffled and reshuffled, meeting fifty one similar kings but never saying anything sensible, never exchanging names.” (underlined mine)

We can say that there is Heaven when one goes out to one’s neighbour, and Hell when one turns back to oneself. One may go through circle after circle of Dante’s Inferno, down and down, and although there are always crowds there is never relationship. Sindi’s fallacy of detachment is mask to cover his in ability to belong to people and have a proper understanding of them. He finds himself utterly naked in the hands of existence. He moves around the streets of the world with the feeling of loneliness. He gets psychologically torn and his agony deepens when he finds that he has no friends at all. The psyche of human being is such that it need a partner of human being is such that it needs a partner to be fully
developed. In the absence of a partner, any human being has an abnormal behaviour. Isolation and neglect are men’s hell and acquaintance, fellowship are heaven. That is why he was not only a foreigner in Kenya, London or Boston but equally a foreigner in India too. This is the irony of predicament. Hi this predicament and loneliness has been shown by Arun Joshi in his behaviour at the social parties at Mr. Khemka’s house. It is only after his meeting with Muthu that Sindi’s attitude towards the meaning of human life gets completely overhauled and changed. Muthu’s request to Sindi to take over the charge of Mr. Khemka’s business leads him to take a general stock of himself and compels “to concentrate on decisive action” that instills an altogether new sense of belongingness. He visits Muthu’s home and is moved by the pathetic situation to see his daughter in her frock much “dirty and too large for her” and his wife suffering from tuberculosis that “gets rather bad in weather.” He cancels his visit to Bombay where he has been given a job. His instantaneous actions affirm his new-found sense of belongingness:

“I went to the station and cashed in my ticket to Bombay, then went home. After dinner much to the surprise of my servant, I unpacked my things and put them back as nearly as possible in their old places.”
All the time he has been “pushing through the mists of reason—a line of reasoning that led to the inevitable conclusion that, for me, detachment consisted in getting involved with the world.”

Mukteshwar Pandey in his Book *Arun Joshi: The Existentialist Element in His Novels* comments:

“We see how Sindi, the ontologically insecure outsider, comes to learn the real connotation. The anomic wanderer ceases to be a wanderer anymore. He takes the most heroic decision to infuse new life and freshness into the most decayed concern of Mr. Khemka. He transcends his selfish motive of self-interest and self-conceit and is thoroughly prepared to help all the employees of Mr. Khemka’s business who have been earning their family’s daily bread by working there. He earnestly desires to serve the needy and the poor whole heartedly. Such an attitude makes his nature too full of the milk of human kindness. It minimizes psychic tensions arising out of the sense of loneliness and ushers into a sense of belongingness that yields human happiness and shared enjoyment.”
Sindi Oberoi has been completely changed. He has settled in his life, and it is only because his psyche has been changed. He was a disturbed being but then the whirlpool in his mind has now been pacified and he has become cool and calm. Our hero Sindi Oberoi has become more humanitarian in his approach. Sindi Oberoi, the psychologically torn protagonist, finally arrives at peace within and calm around. He not only settles with the business of Mr. Khemka but also settles with Babu’s sister and Mr. Khemka’s daughter Sheila. Above all he settles with himself, with his mental trauma, with his mental imbalance. We can say that Sindi Oberoi’s journey from Boston to Delhi has been a journey from alienation and psychologically tormented human being to arrival, from selfishness to sacrifice, from an anomic responsible to himself to a member of mankind, from being to becoming. We encounter a totally different Sindi when he answers Sheila question about his plans to stay with the company, he replies: “I don’t know. As long as I’m needed, I suppose.” About Sindi Oberoi one can definitely say that in his interpersonal relations, he ultimately succeeds in imbibing the rare and enviable quality of forgetting his separateness and individual identity. The journey from America to India has been a long journey indeed. He has reached his destination. The most coveted goal of peace within and around, emanating from a meaningful existence and a sense of belongingness has been attained. His mental thinking has been so
changed that now he is not afraid of love, of freedom, of growth, of change, of the unknown, in short he becomes what he should be that is he becomes himself.

Arun Joshi’s: **The Foreigner** is a superb study in the psychology of two different cultures. It deals with the terms of the meeting of the West and the East at the level of human psyche and human emotions. Arun Joshi’s **The Foreigner** is a case study of a person who has been made foreigner from all perspectives by his creator. Arun Joshi chooses Sindi Oberoi, a Kenya-born Indian, as the protagonist. He is a ‘foreigner’ both for the East and for the West. His mother is a British lady and his father is a Kenyan-Indian. Sindi Oberoi has been created in such a fashion that everywhere and for everyone he is a “foreigner.” In America, June rightly remarks: “I have a feeling you’d be a foreigner anywhere.” In India, Babu’s sister Sheila points out, “You are still a foreigner. You don’t belong here.”

Arun Joshi in this novel has shown the psyche of East and West and has also shown that East and West have their own social and cultural milieu. Sindi lives in America and has free sex with couple of girls manages
enough not to marry any of them. This is possible in West as they approve free sex and one can change partners as many times as they wish. Sindi Oberoi believes: “Marriage was more often a lust for possession than anything else. People got married just as they bought new cars.” Babu Rao Khemka altogether has a different psyche. He being a typical Indian believes that America is a land of free sex and America is known for beautiful girls having sex with different partners. Babu projects a “secret image of an Indian Casanova” and considers America a dream land and free sex as he emphatically questions: “What is the good of coming to America if one is not to play around with girls?” Arun Joshi has also shown the typical orthodox psyche of an American citizen towards India. Sindi and June know that Americans are not “very congenial towards foreigners.” It is through Mrs. Blyth that Arun Joshi reveals the typical thinking of an American as how Americans laugh at poverty in India. Their snobbish attitude is pronounced in their charities they give to India. Even through the comments made by Karl, Sindi’s roommate Arun Joshi wants to highlight on the psyche of an American. Karl exclaims that, “You Indians and your merely-mouthed philosophies!” and he also mocks at Gandhian philosophy of non-violence.
If we compare the mental thinking of June & Sheila, we will definitely love to know that how beautifully Arun Joshi has presented the psyche of two different girls almost of equal age. They are almost of same age but due to the atmosphere, social cultural diversities their way of thinking changes. To Sheila June is not acceptable because according to Sheila June does not know the tradition, the language, the customs and the religion of India and to add more Sheila thinks that June is not a virtuous girl as she is not a virgin. This particular concept of being a virtuous girl only when one is a virgin is not digestible to Sindi as his upbringing is in West. Sindi laughs at the sex-centered morality of India and tells Sheila: “So you think one of these Marwari girls is really superior because of a silly membrane between her legs?” So Sheila’s psyche is typically that of an Indian orthodox girl who thinks that if one wants to be virtuous then one has to be a virgin. On the contrary to this Arun Joshi has portrayed the character of June Blyth. June is the representative of American life. She is accustomed to free sex life of America. She does not hesitate to have sex with Sindi Oberoi at all. She finds no sense in Babu’s avoidance of physical contacts with her before marriage. But she has sex with Babu before marriage. June’s psyche is such that she does not consider free sex to be immoral. She even does not think that one can only by virtuous only when one is virgin and that is why being a typical can did American girl. She tells Babu about her sexual life with Sindi Oberoi. Babu cannot
tolerate this. He is surprised and shocked. He calls her “a whore,” lits her on the face, goes out and commits suicide in a car accident. Now here one needs to peep inside the psyche of Babu once again. He was the one who had the notion that America is a dreamland of free sex and American girls have sex with different men. But when June is ready to marry him, he has the problem as he wants an American girl with Indian mentality. This was like a shock to him and so he committed suicide.

In the end of the novel there is a transformation in Sindi and he turns out to be a pure human being, who is ready to sacrifice, to share with Muthu, Sheila and other factory men, with hearts joined together, because his psyche is totally changed. The chaos prevailing in his mind settled into peace and order. What we notice at the end of the novel is a hero who is morally and psychologically uplifted. The lusty beast in Sindi ultimately changes into a humble man who is essentially human and is eager to learn lessons from the problems of life. He finally has the competence to modify and change himself and there by saves himself from his total mental failure.