

Arun Josh's Novel "The Apprentice" --A Mirror of Society

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Abstract

The novel "The Apprentice" reflects the Indian beliefs, myths, cultural, social and spiritual imprints and ways of thinking. It mirrors the present day life. The outer surroundings of society stand for empty materialism, which is symbolic of the inner emptiness of modern human beings. The moral values are the true spirit of human culture and if it collapses, it creates a deserted path for future. It is the tale of conscience torn man with a curious mixture of idealism and docility, a vague sense of values.

Man, basically is a rational creature. Being a part of its social structure he must fit himself at home in these religio-social norms. If he feels uprooted for want of scientific evidences he is totally frustrated and finds support of a society through language. For him this life becomes simply a journey from nothingness to nothingness leading to dilemma. Thus, it is said "*Literature is the mirror of society.*" Every aspects of the life of the people are reflected through literature. The modern Indian literature which was born on Indian side in the hands of Indians is widely acclaimed even outside the land of its birth. It becomes more picturesque, crystal clear and deep penetrating when the author is skillful and expert in delineating the situations, circumstances, dark crisis of characters and efforts of men of our time. The portrait delineated in "*The Apprentice*" has become a mirror of contemporary society "the image of all and of no one."¹

It has become the symptomatic symbol of "A man of our times" and a revelation of inner world of RatanRathor. The dreams of RatanRathor are a sort of revolt against the system of society existing in that generation.

Ratan Rathor was a child of double inheritance, brought up in an atmosphere of anti-athetical philosophies of life with Gandhian values. His mother had a pragmatic approach towards life and money that influenced Ratan because his mother was suffering from tuberculosis and he had no money for her treatment. Thus it is clear that no one can survive in this phony and materialistic world without money. So efforts were made by him to acquire wealth by any means. The sophisticated and materialistic attitude of his wife was compelling him to satiate her day to day needs engrossing himself for corruption. The futile effort of job hunting has shattered Ratan's hope of idealism but the humiliation, insult, starvation and the trauma of physical breakdown drained his hopes and brought him to the verge of collapse. Once, Ratan managed to procure the job of temporary clerk in the department of war purchasing with the help of fellow

inn-dweller. Ratan was constantly pursuing the aim of making career and for that he was ready to do whatever was possible. For the sake of money he decided to marry his boss's niece. Seeing the girl before marriage for seeking mothers consent was mere formality for him, because he has already finalized the deal. Another corrupt deal at the end of the novel costs the life of Brigadier, who was Ratan's closest friend. He becomes the modern man in real sense by following cunningness, deceptiveness, selfish and easy going attitude. From the beginning of his career under the tutorship of Superintendent it seemed more profitable to him to follow the zeitgeist than the idealism of his father. The pomp and show of the modern world engaged him for a bribe of hundreds of rupees to change the note on the file. The thirst for power and money compelled him to disregard the rules, no respect for nation's security deceiving his own friend and never admitted his guilt for manipulating the war materials of degrading quality which led to the lives of people. Now a day's people adopt favorable end. They desire to become rich regardless of any means. The character of Ratan painted by Joshi represents the trend of modern people for fulfilling his ends. He does not care for the life of soldiers who are devoting their life for protecting the integrity of the nation. Joshi tries to make his hero a portrayed mask and mirror of the modern man baffled as much as by the loss of parameters to judge right from the wrong as by the absence of moral values.

In *The Apprentice* Arun Joshi has correctly painted the picture not of the contemporary society but also the problems of modern India. The character of Ratan tells the young and present generation that situation is very dismal so the future is uncertain. He penned down that still there is a ray of hope for the youth of the country who are willing to learn and ready to sacrifice.

In fact "The Apprentice" is an X-ray vision of Ratan Rathor's soul, a character fighting against many inner violent forces and with the unfortunate destiny. The character of Ratan in "The Apprentice" is a combination of humanism and religion which teaches the society that whosoever is steeped in corruption can save the society by way of following the path of religion.

In this way Arun Joshi succeeds in drawing the Kaleidoscopic picture of modern youth facing numerous odds. The hero feels that it is necessary to alienate in this phony worlds to adjust him in this modern society. The modern man tries and adjusts to others, society, system abdicating his true self or he may strive to keep himself fit in the corrupt society. Ratan's moving towards corruption under various compelling forces is the demand of the modern world. Ratan is a model icon for the youth's that there is nothing wrong to try to lose heart, and not yield at any cost. These facts and figures are the mirror of today's modern world.

Notes

1. Joshi Arun, 1993, *The Apprentice*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, pg. 102
2. Dhawan R.K., 1986, *The Fictional world of Arun Joshi*, New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company.
3. Hari Mohan Prasad, 1995, *Arun Joshi* New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann
4. Dwivedi Vachaspati, 2004, *The Fictional Art of Arun Joshi*, Atlantic Publishers