

# Materialistic Aspect in Arun Joshi's *The Apprentice*

Dr. Mangala Tomar

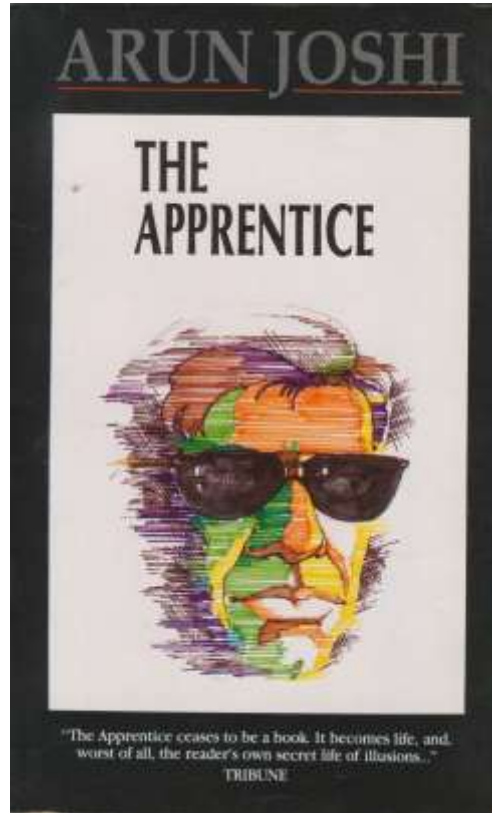
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## Abstract

The materialistic world is horrible and everyone has to face it from time to time. This work shows the materialistic aspects of modern world and its hold over man for various reasons.

## Dramatic Monologue

The novel *The Apprentice* is written in the form of a dramatic monologue. The hero Ratan Rathor is a man of double inheritance who feels that his life has descended into a “pile of

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dung.” In man’s life crisis is bound to occur and he is entangled in the maze of confusion of values and moral anarchy. The young man Ratan Rathor moves from place to place for his job and circumstances force him to shed the honesty and the old world morality of his father; he becomes an “apprentice” to corrupt civilization.

### **Efforts to Retrieve Innocence and Honour**

There are various aspects of life which lead to the selfish attitude, degrading values, corruption, dejection and frustration in the life of Ratan Rathor. The hero Ratan Rathor makes frantic efforts to retrieve his innocence and honour.

Ratan Rathor is a child of double inheritance, brought up in an atmosphere of antithetical 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.

### **Money and Corruption**

Money is also the corrupting force against traditional values. The mad rush of modern man to amass more and more wealth has resulted in the selfish nature of man with no respect for human values, ideals and morals. Man has become self-centered looking after his own interest rather than that of the whole society. This has resulted in a clash of values. The traditional values of honesty, faith, generosity, tolerance, patience, fortitude, naturalness, feeling of brotherhood and innocence have given way to modern civilization, and consequently leading to the deterioration of individuals. The reality based words of his mother ringing in his mind constantly that “Money made friends. Money succeeds where all else failed ... but money was law unto itself.”<sup>1</sup> The sophisticated and materialistic attitude of his wife compelled him to satisfy her day-to-day needs, getting him deeply involved in corruption.

### **Idealism Shattered, Frequent Changes of Attitude**

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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 him of hope and brought him to the verge of collapse.

In *The Apprentice*, intense suffering changes the attitude of the hero frequently. He repents for his wrong doings, but he desires to lead a happy life, after seeing the attitude of the people around him. The prevalent corruption forces him to accept the indecent ways of life. He is shocked to hear that modern society is corrupt and even the pujari, an agent of God, was immersed in corruption and finally also engrossed in it.

### **Spousal Choice**

The selfish attitude of Ratan is also reflected in the selection of the girl for marriage; as for the dictates of tradition, the consent of elders is required and respected, but he did not care for that at all. Modern man is caught in the whirlpool of discontent, frustration and utter dejection, since the erosion of traditional values has taken place in the wake of scientific and technological progress. It has corroded man's inner self and he has become fond of materialism which leads to major corruption. Some of the characters are completely involved in materialistic comforts and desires, resulting thereby in the neglect of interest in the entire civilization, thinking all the time about their own ambitions, interest and inclinations. This conflict between modern and traditional values creates meaningless existence and emptiness in the life of individuals. Modern men being a blend of meanness and nobility, intelligence and folly generate the feeling of hate, dislike and revenge between each other.

### **Conflict between Management and Labour**

Mechanization has made man monotonous and also deprived him of deriving satisfaction from any and everything in life. The present work force remains idle and there is no individual talent and creative potentialities. The idleness creates conflict between the labour force and the management. It profoundly affects the cultural norms, value systems, beliefs and attitudes. The

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tremendous advancement of science and technology has made a psychological change and also obliterated man's faith in religion; and due to the clash of values man has become restless, uprooted and a foreigner everywhere.

### **Value Changes after Independence**

*The Apprentice* suggests that the values of pre-Independence India have undergone considerable change. Good people adopt favorable means for favorable ends. Now ends are more important than means. The novelist presents the ultimate picture that telling lies, pretending to gain something, following favorable means, whether good or bad for one's happy life, will split man's consciousness.

### **Lamentation of the Tormented Soul**

The novel is a powerful indictment on modern society and a lamentation of the tormented soul of modern world. For any Indian the respect and honor for his nation is of prime importance because for achieving the independence and liberty, the nation required the dedication and sacrifice of innumerable nationalists who love their country. But the present trend of modern society is just reversed. Now, people adopt favorable ends. They desire to become rich, regardless of whatever means. The character of Ratan painted by Joshi represents the trend of modern people who will do anything for fulfilling their ends. He even accepts bribe for clearing the defective weapons, being used in the Indo-China war without caring for the life of innocent people. The gravity of the offence committed by Ratan Rathor is surely more intense than the solution of polishing the shoe in front of Krishna temple.

### **Ratan's Managed World View**

Seeing the ups and downs of the world, Ratan forms a view that a successful career cannot be achieved through diligence and sincerity, but it can be realized through flattery and cunning. So he deceives his very close friend by giving a false statement without admitting his crime. Ultimately, the Brigadier commits suicide. Similarly, Ratan plays havoc with many who

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are sacrificing their lives for the nation's cause. Ratan also deceives Himmat Singh a contractor holding him responsible for the supply of defective materials, but the words of Himmat Singh exposing the character of Ratan Rathor are soul-searching when he comments: "You are bogus, Ratan Rathor.... from top to bottom. Your work, your religion, your friendship, your honour nothing but a pile of dung"<sup>2</sup>

### **A Dawn?**

This highlights the material attitude, degeneration of values, cunning, deceitfulness and such qualities delineated through the character of Ratan by Joshi. It shows the modern trend that for achieving one's selfish ends, the lives of near and dear ones are hung out to dry. This rat race which is noticed in today's generation is just for fulfilling their own selfish needs, irrespective of any kind of means that may help them toward the goals. But the modern generation has forgotten that whosoever will maintain double will have to bear the pangs of agony and mental torture, whatever his position may be at the end, like the one painted by Arun Joshi, the unique one where he says:

"It is a cold dawn. But no matter. A dawn, after all, is a dawn."<sup>3</sup>

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### **Notes**

1. Joshi Arun, 1993, *The Apprentice*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, Pg 20
2. Joshi Arun, 1993, *The Apprentice*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, Pg 137
3. Joshi Arun, 1993, *The Apprentice*, Delhi: Orient Paper Backs, Pg 144

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