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## A QUEST FROM DEGENERATION TO REGENERATION: A STUDY OF SELECTED NOVELS OF ARUN JOSHI

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### Abstract

This paper examines the protagonists' journey from degeneration to regeneration in the Arun Joshi's select works. This journey of alienation to the establishment can easily be analogous to what I precisely call "Quest from Degeneration to Regeneration". His protagonists are a stereotype or what we may call Northrop Fry's "Archetypes". These archetypes rose in abundance in the post-war world. The archetypal protagonists created by Joshi can easily be traced, talked to and be familiarized with even in our ordinary life. Arun Joshi claims this prerogative to be in the honoured lineage of world literary figures which explored persistent skirmish of thoughts and ideas with oneself, in their characters, more precisely in their protagonists.

Keywords: Self-rootlessness, Degeneration, Meaninglessness, Alienation

### Introduction

Postmodern and Postcolonial literary tendencies are generally considered to be revolutionary and ground breaking in terms of stylistic changes and thematic planning. In mid to late twentieth century, old fashioned devices had grown fatigued and lacklustre. There did arise some key components in new novels of the late twentieth century which are found in abundance in characters and protagonists. Both the bloody world was induced unprecedented and incredibly catastrophic impact on the human psyche in the twentieth century. As the depression and moral decay prevailed, so did the authors of such elements in their works. Existentialism and Alienation are the core doctrines and instrumental in postmodern writings. The research paper concern a varied and

extensive study of renowned Indian author Arun Joshi's selected novels and protagonist's quest from Degeneration to spiritual Regeneration

Arun Joshi's writings are not the culmination of innovative work in the area of creative writing. However, he discusses the societal realities. He is in the line of numerous English writers who brought the human psyche's rootlessness and irrelevance to society, to the fore. Mr Joshi, in most of his novels, keeps on focusing on the protagonist's quest to alienate and then establish himself segregated from society. Mr. Joshi meticulously observes his protagonists with the discomfort and insatiable desire to fit in a materialistic and frivolously ostensible world. His protagonists are not the ones with grit and guts to conquer the world or set themselves atop professionally, but a mere whim to

fit in their milieu, which they eventually fail in and subsequently, are socially degenerated.

From that point of degeneration and alienation, they artistically find a way to their regeneration. And this is what Joshi's art is all about. Mr. Joshi's protagonists don't represent a mere human being or a character of a novel; on the other hand, those are species, pervasive around the globe. The protagonists induced by Joshi are consequential to his deep study and observation of the human psyche. The Post War world is notorious for administering anti-social insights in tired human brains. And the same tired and fatigued brains are typically possessed by Joshian Heroes.

The first work of Arun Joshi's is *The Foreigner*, which discusses the issues of the isolation of the protagonist, Sindi Oberoi. In this novel the young hero, after experiencing life and love in America, is, back in Delhi, at last persuaded by a humble office worker that sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved. The novel generates a weird sense of isolation and aloofness. Sindi is a foreigner in every city he visits, whether it's London, Boston, or New Delhi. He is the offspring of two parents. He was born in Kenya to an English mother and a Kenyan Indian father. When his parents die in an aviation disaster near Cairo when he is four years old, he becomes an orphan. In Kenya, his uncle raised him, who also died young. He's completely destitute and adrift. He was robbed of parental love and affection during his upbringing. Even when he is among foreign students, he has a strong sense of foreignness when he arrives in the United States. He says;

"Everywhere he goes, he's an alien - both physically and mentally." He acknowledges "He is a born foreigner. "My foreignness lay within me."

He has no family links and no sense of belonging to a country as he grows up. He becomes a roaming alien and rootless as he is denied affection and cultural roots.

O. P. Bhatnagar writes "A strange feeling of aloneness and aloofness permeates the entire narrative and provides the necessary texture and structure of the novel."

Sindi Oberoi's escapades with Anna, a minor artist detached from her hubby, who was not interested in him or anyone else but her lost youth; and Kathy, who later left him and returned to her husband because she was unhappy with him. These occurrences led him to practice detachment from human emotions and non-involvement in them. He becomes "engaged" in a short-lived but passionate love for June in Boston, but he does not become involved, despite his resolve. He decides to leave the country and travel to India after witnessing the awful repercussions of practising detachment. "Like many of my kind, I mistakenly imagined that jumping from one landmass to another would allow me to escape from a part of myself."

His second novel in the list is *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, Billy's decision to reside in an European slum is enough to enlighten how much he is fatigued from so called shiny but showy European society and culture. Billy Biswas evidently emphasises on getting alienated from hollow European surroundings. His decision to pursue a PhD in anthropology rather than engineering demonstrates his passion for people. His attack on the automobile driver, which splattered mud on Turla Lindgren, may appear vicious, but it is a symbolic human act of protest against mechanized, dehumanized people who are unconcerned about others' feelings. He not only withdraws from society but also strives to reconnect himself with nature and primitive people by disappearing into the saal forests of the Maikala hills. His recurrent quarrels with his wife, Meena, and the discontinuation of their sexual relationship demonstrate his alienation. Meena now represents the greedy civilization that did everything for the sake of money to him. He now lives in the Maikala hills as a "refugee from civilization" and shares the pleasures, worries, and agonies of the Bhils. He, too, falls in love and marries Bilasia, a tribal beauty, not long after. Billy's primordial self is reinvigorated in the presence of the Maikala hills. He is content in the forest because of "the earth, the woodlands, rainbows, mahua liquor, an enormous feast, a lot of dancing and lovemaking, and above all, no ambition, none at all".

After ten years, Romi the Collector finds Billy in a loincloth, thoroughly tribalized. When

Billy's father learns of his disappearance, he organizes a hunt for him. He was eventually apprehended and slain. Consequently, Billy meets a tragic end toward the conclusion of the novel, reluctant to give in to the pressures of modern materialistic civilization.

In his third novel *The Apprentice*, Ratan Rathore, the protagonist, represents the materialistic aspects of the contemporary world. This novel reflects the modern scenario of the Indian state. The story is more related to values and ethics that the young generation is adopting today.

*The Last Labyrinth*, is the paragon sentence of modern alienated man. He is entangled in a variety of complexities and never free from settling the same. Moreover, he doesn't forget his predicaments which can better be a way to sooth the afflicted heart and fatigued mind. The opening lines of the novel;

"Above all, I have a score to settle. I forget nothing, forgive no one."(1)

The long journey from degeneration to regeneration of Joshi's protagonists consists of sexual escapades also. The protagonists are excessively detesting of the life and culture they lead. Social alienation and deliberate defamiliarization of the protagonist are the paramount characteristics of Joshi's works. Be it Sindi (*The Foreigner*), Billy (*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*), Ratan (*The Apprentice*) and Som (*The Last Labyrinth*), the protagonists are always a fish out of water when they are in a conventional world.

Arun Joshi is an exceptional figure as far as Indian Writing is concerned. Why he is claimed to be exceptional because of his intellectual knack of exploring contemporarily fresh and unfamiliar western insights in his novels unlike his fellow counterparts of the time. Joshi exploits the banal frustration and incessant afflictions of man on street in post war world. In the twentieth century, technical advancements and intellectual progress proved to be a double-edged sword for man as it proved beneficial and aiding. It also added fuel to the fire and added insult to injury. It added alienation,

acute frustration, depression and moral decay in social discourse.

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