

## THE INTERNAL AWARENESS OF THE HUMAN SOUL IN ARUN JOSHI'S NOVEL "THE APPRENTICE"

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### ABSTRACT

*The Apprentice (1974) Arun Joshi's third novel explores deeper into the inner awareness of the human soul. It depicts the tormented attempt of a guilt-stricken individual to retrieve his innocence and honour. In all his novels, Joshi describes the painful predicament of his protagonists. In his first novel The Foreigner the protagonist Sindi Oberoi, an alienated rootless young man searches for his identity and roots, withdraws himself from all humankind. Finally, when his vision is clear, he returns to the human world from detachment to attachment. The Second novel The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, describes the withdrawal of Billy Biswas the protagonist, from the civilized society and emotionally dehydrated which he belongs to. He finds himself the primitive society of the tribals into which Billy vanishes deliberately. And in The Apprentice (1974) Arun Joshi depicts the protagonist, Ratan Rathor, estranged from his unpolluted self and as a victim of money-minded corrupt society. Finally, he tries his amendment through humility and penance by wiping the shoes of the temple-visitors daily.*

*The Apprentice is a confessional novel wherein the narrator protagonist unfolds the story of his life in the form of an internal monologue. Ratan Rathor, who is both the hero and the antihero of the novel, probes into his inner life and exposes the perfidy, chicanery, cowardice and corruption of his own character in the mock-heroic novel. He is neither a rebel like Billy Biswas nor a rootless foreigner like Sindi Oberoi. He is a practical man who, getting his idealism shattered in the corrupt society, proposes to survive by sycophancy and practically adapts himself to the mysterious ways of the world. The novel is both a treatise on current social and political scene and lament of a distressed soul. The novel reminds us of Charles Dickens' Hard Times. Here the social reality becomes the nucleus of the novel where in Ratan, like Sindi and Billy, comes out yet another reflective introvert whose life corresponds to bitter social norms and consequently undergoes suffering and, of course, salvation towards the end.*

**KEYWORDS:** Social Reality, To Bitter Social Norms, Sense of a Profession