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Tracing Mythological Elements in Arun Joshi's *The City and The River*

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ABSTRACT

Indian culture pays significant emphasis to knowledge. The history of knowledge in India is extremely ancient. Many renowned authors were inspired and relied upon by India's literary tradition. The Indian English writers, too, viewed the sources for their work as ancient epics and Puranas, myths, folklore and folk-tales. The current research tries to demonstrate, with special reference to Arun Joshi's book, *The City and The River*, the relevance of myth and its influence on the process of creative writing. The researcher has sought to explain the link between literature and mythology. The storytelling strategies of literature have impacted myth as a big tale. Beyond the imagination, it has influenced Indian storytelling traditions.

Key Words: Mythology, Myth, Legends, Indian English Literature

Introduction:

It is very important to recognise the difference between the word 'myth' and 'mythology'. The term 'myth' refers to a collection of unrelated stories that primitive people believed to be true and in which supernatural happenings are used to explain mundane occurrences. The term 'mythology' the study of folklore, or traditional tales. People's material, spiritual, and cultural ambitions are all addressed in mythology. Abrams, H. Writes:

In Classical Greek, "mythos" senses any story or plot, whether true or fabricated. In its central fashionable significance, however, a myth may be a story within the mythology system. Those are the hereditary stories of ancient origin, once believed to be true by an individual or a bunch of individuals having common culture. (230)

Under the broad heading of "myth," academics, critics, authors, and philosophers alike refer to myths of all kinds. The word 'muthos' employed by Homer, an ancient poet, refers to storey or oral communication, but not fiction. Odysseus employs the word 'muthologen' to denote 'telling a storey'. When he fabricates stories about himself. One object, save for the most artificial half, that does not fully lack truth, is referred to as 'mathoi' by Plato.



Mythological Traces in *The City and the River*

The City and the River, Arun Joshi's fifth and last novel explores his characters' problem in this unresponsive and hostile environment. This novel is both a departure and a continuation of his previous novels. Joshi's hunger tolerates this in *The City and the River*, but his image has become bigger, and the individual dilemma has been replaced by the 'City's' socio-political and existential problem, as well as the idea of mankind as a whole.

The City and the River exists in this manner as a forceful remark on the political framework of the past, participation, and the future, and so certifies its position among the contemporary political novels. Although it is a political book, it is in many ways a continuation of Joshi's previous fictional writings. The absurdity of the human predicament may be explained by a mythological explanation.

A prologue, an epilogue and nine chapters are included in the novel. It is a story inside of a story. This novel's story ends where it starts and begins where it ends. The tale is infused with everlasting significance. The environment is the City of Nowhere. The teacher, the ageless Yogeshwara, rejoices on the day of his inauguration, the thirtieth birthday of his disciple, the Nameless One by telling him who he (the Nameless One) is. The timeless Yogeshwara and the Nameless-One exemplify the regeneration and decay processes. The Great Yogeshwara instructs the Nameless-One in the Epilogue to go and avoid the city and its people's "endless repetition" and "periodic disintegration" (262). The nine chapters contain the Grand Master's tale, his dream and his prediction.

The Grand Master symbolizes the will to dominate and the urge to claim one's individuality is exemplified by boatmen. To fulfil his dream of flattering a king, the Grand Master lets his councilors follow atrocious means of subjugating the masses, smothering all rebellious voices, and dishonoring all standards of principle. Joshi has exposed corrupt leadership in this novel, which is full of smooth talk, wastefulness, and self-centeredness. An undying divergence depends on the warp and woof of the novel: "The conflict that will come will also be the same a matter of loyalty to God or man." (262) Ultimately, power struggle and infighting lead to complete annihilation, and the city is condemned. But after this doom, on the ruins of the old, a new city appeared like a phoenix and in this way, the endless cyclical process continues for good. Begins a New Era of Ultimate Greatness. The flow of the river of life son. In the decision, the Seven Hills with fresh faces persist. "In order to execute their roles, a new King, another Grand Master and an additional



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Hermit of Mountain appear on the scene: "A new city has risen on the ruins of that city, as always happens. Another Grand Master governs it which, of course, does not always need to happen. Another professor, another Bhumiputra, another tribe of boatmen, is in the new city. Another council and another set of councillors also exist. The men have other names, but they remain unchanged by the forces they embody. And when you go into all this, perhaps you will be known as another Hermit of the Mountains. And maybe you've got a disciple whose name is Little Star. This reply, this repetition of things, could appear to somebody as a charade, a joke. But then whoever said the good Lord had no humour." "In all this, you said, father. Will I go? "I have. Another Ultimate Greatness New Era is about to begin... Also, the conflict to come will be the same: a matter of allegiance to God or to man (262)

This returning growth of "repetition of things" gives life in the novel a new denotation. The novel's story is the pedestal on which the power theme resists. The Grand Master, the ruler of the city by the river, is courageous to become its undisguised king. He makes certain systems to fulfil his dream of being recognized as an attractive king and tries to normalize these schemes on his subjects especially on boatmen. However, his schemes and discards are passionately opposed by the boatmen and fall in line with the Seven Hills. "Their director, the Headman (actually a woman), informs the Astrologer: "We don't quarrel with you. If it's a matter of loyalty, our loyalty is only to the river. It cannot be shared..." (19) This refusal by boatmen to adopt the Grand Master's plans exaggerates the conflict-the conflict between the City and the River.

Joshi portrayed the inert atmosphere of the City in the fifth chapter, 'Return of the Teacher,' In the newly laid parks of the city and along its well-straight avenues and on the Seven Hills, but despite the strenuous efforts of the chief horticulturist, and to the great regret of the Grand Master, neither grass nor flowers grow. It is palpable that in such an abnormal and anarchic atmosphere. For example, the master of the Rallies is known as an unhappy man.

The Grand Master lives on the highest hill, if we believe the high-class people, and the Ministers live and run the City from the Seven Hills. Depending on the elevation of the Seven Hills, the status of the Minister's income there differs. In the town, in the colony of pink brick construction, middle-class people live on a reasonably lower ground. In the mud shed by the side of the river, which is the lowest in elevation, live the lowly poor, the boatmen. The lowest and poorest boatmen, however are the larger in the real sense of the word because they do what they want, and therefore lead a genuine continuation. Although the middle-class people living in pink brick houses are lower than the boatmen, in this respect they are much higher for the



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high-class people. There is no legitimacy for middle-class individuals because they adapt to the conditions, they are placed in. They don't practice what they feel like doing, and it doesn't matter to them either. With this forced life, they have become familiar.

They're not filing a complaint. However, if we evaluate the people of the middle class with those of the high class, they (the people of the middle class) are not as thick-skinned as the people of the high class are. In the middle class, there are certain individuals. They come to meet the reality of their state slowly. Under the burden of "Bad Faith" and thus breakdown, they begin to understand their insincerity and to chafe. For instance, since understanding the loss of their authenticity, Dharma, a police officer, and his father, a high bureaucrat in the administration, have had a nervous breakdown. Dharma begins, after his collapse, to imagine him as a boatman. He clothes himself like a boatman and therefore, tries to remedy the mistakes committed in his capacity.

The father of Dharma is steadily becoming a complete wreck and beginning to languish. The legislature of the highest class is made up of the Minister of Trade, the Education Adviser, the Master of Rallies, the Astrologer, the Police Commissioner, the Army Commander and General Starch. Most appallingly, people fit into this very class without authenticity. The most corrupt, morally insolvent, hypocritical, and deceptive are these individuals. The Grand Master declares the Ultimate Greatness Era and tries to make everyone believe it is intended for the City's welfare and opulence. The Grand Master spreads this note among people to mislead them because after this statement, the original motive is to combine his position and pave the way for his dream of becoming the King to be understood. He and his ministers practice "Bad Faith" to address this reason. The Grand Master believes only in people's compliance with the strains. He never really plans to enforce them. "Once he (the Grand Master) advises him (the Grand Master) not to think of implementing it while coaching the Astrologer to issue a decree:" Issue a decree. (The City and the River, 168) The Grand Master and his flatterer and over striving councilors, living at the highest altitude of the Seven Hills, are desperately lacking in leading a good life. Astrologer does not mean its immediate execution. In the nature of their "freedom," freedom to become "for-itself" or in-itself the ministers fail to go through.

The authenticity of the boatmen in Heideggerian and Sartre terms has been patented by Joshi in the novel. Heidegger believes that "genuine life is a life that dares to face death." In the Heideggerian sense, the boatmen defend their legitimacy as much as they disdain the threats and dangers that the Grand Master and his flattering coterie throw at them. Their loyalty is only to the river and not to the Grand Master. They



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decline very boldly to take the oath of dedication to the Grand Master. Their headman (who is a woman) is the embodiment of bravery, strength, honesty and commitment to liberty. They are very aware that they're going to have to pay a high price for their confrontation. To understand the phoniness of the Astrologer's speech to the boatmen, their headman is wise enough. The Astrologer is the Grand Master's representative.

The Headman confronts, very courageously, the objectives of the Grand Master. She states very clearly that the welfare of the boatmen is merely a facade and after declaring the Era of Ultimate Greatness, the real meaning is the subjugation and mortification of the poor. The poor are required to practice family planning in the words of the Grand Master's rule, and more than one child is required for a mother, and more than two families are illegal for a family as the food grains are short. She asks the Astrologer, being disgruntled with this absurd rule:

Is it not true Astrologer, that the city's granaries are full? And is it not a fact that out of the mud-people the city shall always extract work equal what it feeds them even as it is done to the animals, even though that cannot be said of the brick-people or their children?" (20)

She is aware of the fact that food is not scarce. She understands that food is underprivileged to the poor because the food morsels are so expensive that they can't afford to buy it. In the wake of the Era of Ultimate Greatness, the boatmen follow their Headman and tackle the Triple Way intended to strengthen the position of the Grand Master and compel people to comply with the suppressive laws.

Arun Joshi's last novel, *The City and the River*, also focuses on Hindu philosophy's fundamental principles that teach an affirmative attitude to life. The novel presents a town before us that is in the jaws of destruction because of its inhabitants who never look for the right way of living. In the novel there is a tension in the city folk to choose between "allegiance to God" and "allegiance to Man," or in plain words, between faith and politics. The doctrine of Karma claims that man's final growth depends upon him. For him, there's no fixed future. He is a responsible agent who through the "integration of Karma, jnana and Bhakti" achieves his redemption (Rao 150).



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Conclusion:

To sum up, Joshi utilised many myths, stories, and archetypes to emphasise the need of living a genuine life, trusting others, and doing the appropriate actions, which are the fundamental necessities of contemporary man. The political environment of the city serves as the novel's backdrop, allowing the author to portray a current issue with a philosophical review of the construction and breakdown of Indian myths, Srishti and pralaya. They are drawn to them by chaos and meaninglessness whenever human people degrade into nothingness. If the Srishti and pralaya systems do not change their ways, the whole cosmos will be cleaned after a period of time. The City and The River's canvas is rather large, and it encompasses Heaven, Man, and Nature within its temporal frame. As a result, Arun Joshi employs Vedanta, Karma's philosophy, and Lord Krishna's concepts of "detachment" and "involvement" to reveal the inner workings of his heroes.



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