

Infinite World of Narration: A Never-Ending Saga**Dr. Ruchi Goyal***Assistant Professor, Poornima University, Jaipur, (Rajasthan) India***Abstract**

Narration is considered as the art of voicing moods and expressions in the form of a story. In India, narration got its roots where it developed in the hands of intellectuals. A narrative is a story which has a beginning, a middle and end. It is conveyed by a person who is consigned the title of narrator who narrate it through pictures, poetry, fiction or non-fiction genre. To relate the narrower components of the narrative the writer uses different techniques and devices. In Indian English fiction narrative writing has important place. Indian writers chose language of their colonizers to express their innate feelings but they adopted, nurtured and made English language their own. Indian English fiction writers use narrative to provide creative respite and fulfillment. Through the narrative they delve into stories or observations to edify or entertain readers. They also express their purpose of story through narrative writing. Indian English writers apply different narrative techniques in their narrative. Since 1938 when Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* was published, there has been much aggrandizement in the narrative techniques. *Kanthapura* was perhaps the first most successful and influential Indian novel which has great story-telling qualities. Raja Rao mainly used oral narration. The later writers like Kamala Markandaya, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Anita Desai expand this tradition of narrative. A sound narrative leaves its readers with a dominant impression about its characters and event. The present paper provides a profound knowledge of narration and narrative techniques espoused by Indian fiction writers to nurture the art of narration. *Human Selves are centers of narrative gravity since humans are programmed to extrude narratives as naturally as spiders spin webs or beavers build dams.*

Narrative was a part of the ancient Indian sacrificial or rituals. In Sanskrit it is called *Akhyana*. It means an act of making something well-known through oral transmission. The narrative is classified into two parts-*Akhyayika* and *Katha*. *Akhyayika* is based upon a plot well known from historical records and epics but *Katha* is based on a plot imagined by the writer. The narratives have significant role in the traditional life of India as well as modern life of India. Traditionally, the narratives are

classified as oral narrative, written narrative, oral-cum-written narrative (as The Mahabharata and The Ramayana) and poetic (folktale) narrative. But according to different literatures, there are different types of narrations. There are many ways to interpret narrative. But we can simply say, narrative is the representation of an event or a series of events. A narrative is some kind of retelling of an event that happened. It can be said that it is not the story itself but rather the telling of the story. It is different from

the story. A story is a sequence of events but in a narrative those events are recounted perhaps leaving some insignificant occurrences out. For instance, *His cow has fleas* is not a narrative because nothing happens but *His cow was bitten by a flea* is a narrative because it tells of an event. On Analysis of these examples it becomes clear that the narratives shape the series of events, the story of what happened. It can be conveyed through pictures, songs, poetry, speech, fiction and non-fiction as well.

Further, a narrative is anything told or recounted, more narrowly and more usually, something told or recounted in the form of a causally-linked set of events, account tale, the telling of a happening or connected series of happenings, whether true or fictitious. There are four narrative conventions which help us to interpret the text. These are Genre, Character, Form and Time. We should know that narrative does not take place in real time but may telescope out. In the writing mode, the telling of a narrative is relegated to a special person; it becomes a technique used by that person. The person who narrates the story is called the narrator. The narrator is variously described as an instrument or a device wielded by the author. According to some theorists (Like Bashes)-“The (material) author of a narrative is in no way to be confused with the narrator of that narrative” (Qtd.in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 68).

Actually, the narrator’s perspective serves as a prism to the readers. A narrative is the person who detains the past, holds the present and prepares the readers for the future. The author uses different points of

view of narration in a novel. It is also called voice of the narrator. In other words, voice in narration is a question of who it is we ‘hear’ doing the narrating. Mainly there are three points of view to present a narrative. The simple distinction is grammar-based that of ‘person’ of which there are two main kinds in narration- First person and third person. In the First person narrative the narrator is one of the characters. He participates in the action and also comments on the events. The first person narrative is mainly used in writing personal diaries or memories, dramatic monologues, mystery novels and even interior monologues in which a character essentially has a discussion with him. In the first person narrative the narrator uses ‘I’ to refer himself. He is the part of the story but he need not be the primary character. As F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is a story told by a minor character that plays the role of an observer. In the third person narrative the narrator narrates the story in an objective manner. The narrator in the third person narrative is situated outside of the world of the story. This type of narrator can be called an external narrator. In the third person narrative the narrator generally does not include an ‘I’ or ‘me’ reference and does not call us to look at him or her (or it) as a character. An external narrator has no participation in the action of the narrative.

One more important point of view or voice of narration is omniscient. In this type of narrative the narrator is God like and can also make his presence felt with authorial intrusions. Third person narration and omniscient narration are often used interchangeably but there is a difference

between these narrations. Literally, omniscient means all-knowing. So the omniscient narrator has no limits as he knows everything but third person narrator has a limited scope. There are some limitations in his narration. The term 'Omniscient narration' is reserved for eighteenth and nineteenth century novelists by some critics. Fielding is its best example who seems to preside over his fictional universes like all-knowing gods. But here one thing is notable that even if the narrator seems omniscient, the narration is far from it. In this sense narrative point of view or narrative voice is a major element in the construction of a narrative. Narrators in different narratives use different points of view or voice to narrate according to the demand of the narration.

Besides the voice there are some more useful elements of a narration as focalization, distance, reliability etc. Focalization serves as the lens in a narration through which we see characters and events in the narrative. In other words the narrator is our focalizer. When we hear the voice of the narrator, we often see the action through the narrator's eyes. Although it is not by any means always the case. The process of focalizing can contribute richly to how we think and feel as we read. Distance refers to the narrator's degree of involvement in the story. Narratorial distance presents the closeness or the distinction of the narrator from the story, he tells. In some narratives the author has sought to create a narrative voice totally cut off from involvement in the tale. Voice, distance and focalization all have much to do with the narrator's reliability. Reliability is very much

important in the narration. It means to what extent we can rely on the narrator to give us an accurate rendering of the facts. If the interpretation of the narrator has reliability, we have to respect the narrator's opinions. At the same time, some authors choose an unreliable narrator in the first place.

Narrative technique is a binding vine of the narrative. It is vastly an aesthetic enterprise. A narrative technique is one of the most important aspects of imaginative literature. As Angus Ross says – "a discussion of the nature of the narrative and the mode of narration can carry us to the heart of the 'meaning' of a work of fiction." (Qtd. in Ramana156) Narrative writers use a variety of techniques in their narration. A narrative may include multiple characters or it may have none at all. It may have the scope of 'Gone with the Wind' or consist of a single page. It becomes possible through the narrative techniques. A narrative writer may choose to draw upon tremendous variety of these techniques to accomplish this goal. However, fictional or non-fictional narratives rely on a handful of techniques to effectively engage readers from beginning to end. Here we discuss about some of the more important and commonly used narrative devices.

Stream of consciousness is a very famous narrative technique in which events are described as though through the arising thoughts of one of the characters. It is very close to the free indirect style. In the case of free indirect style the narrative voice is so free and fluid that it makes you wonder about the status of the narrator and whether one can even speak of a narrator. William James, a psychologist of the 19th century, is

the first person for whom the phrase 'Stream of consciousness' is used. He used it to describe the succession of thoughts and impressions characterizing the individual consciousness. Mainly modern writers like Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner etc. are associated with this technique. Interior monologue is greatly associated with this technique. These two terms are often used interchangeably for a technique that is very close to free indirect style. The interior monologue is written from a first person perspective, as though it was a record of the character thoughts. It was first used by the French novelist Edward Dujardin in his novel *Les Lauriers Sont Coupés* (1887). Interior monologue is more extended and it gives a character's stream of consciousness more thoroughly. It is usually direct rather than indirect. Stream of consciousness writing can also be used in a third person narrative, as the narrative seamlessly gives way, sometimes mid-sentence, to the inner thinking of character's mind without switching to the first person. These two techniques can be combined with sensory impression which can present stream of consciousness technique at its most fluid way. It conveys a character's sensory experiences and impressions at the conscious, verbalized level.

Flashback, Foreshadowing and Back-story are other techniques of narrative writing which are interrelated but also different from each other. The flashback technique is used to provide background information about a narrative. By the dream sequences and retelling of memories characters of the story can flash back in time. It interrupts a narratives linear time flow. The movie

'Titanic' (2007) is the example of this technique in which the main character Rose recalls her time aboard the ill-fated ship. Foreshadowing is opposite of it. In this technique, the writer gives clues about events to come. These clues may be subtle. The writer uses different literary devices such as dialog and symbols to foreshadow future events. Differ from these two techniques, a back-story technique adds depth or layers to a tale by attaching the story to an outer event either real or fictional. The narrative writer also uses dual narrative technique to tell stories using two perspectives. It gives a larger perspective of the whole event to the readers. For instance, one character tells about his experience and another character that is the eye-witness provides additional details about the scene. Mystery is also used as a technique to compel readers forward. Techniques are used to convey the story more effectively. Narratologists always use new and different techniques to draw the reader in, compel the reader forward and leave the reader satisfied.

Along with these techniques the writer uses some necessary devices in his narrative such as dialogues, the summary method, myth presentation, behavior and description etc. which add realism and depth in the narrative. In these devices myth presentation is an important device in Indian English fiction. 'Myth' is defined by *The Oxford concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* as a "rudimentary narrative sequence normally traditional and anonymous, through which a given culture ratifies its social customs or accounts for the origins of human and natural phenomena, usually in supernatural

on boldly imaginative terms.” Our culture is reinforced by these myths. Myths are the base of human belief in culture and relate them with culture.

In a narrative figure of speech, sensory language, transitional expressions such as ‘above’, ‘instead’ and ‘next’, different points of view, concrete nouns, different elements of language and style provide rich detail and add a smooth flow between sentences and paragraphs. Paradoxical statement is an important narrative device. Paradox functions as a method of literary composition and study which comprises examining speciously opposing statements and drawing conclusions either to reconcile them or to explain their presence. It is a self-contradictory statement that hides a rational meaning. For instance, “Sweet are the uses of adversity.” The apparent meaning of this line appears contradictory as, usually, adversity is bitter. But when we think deeply, it means that adversity carries within itself the sweetness of advantages. Verbal paradox and paradox of situation are used most in literature. Verbal paradox especially oxymoron, remains a distinctive feature of narrative writing. Mainly women writers employ paradoxical statement. They also use concentrated phrase, an oxymoron especially in the form of two parallel but incompatible nouns, verbs or adjective. It gives the true vision of the complexity of human emotion and of the human situation more generally.

Women writers also make use of fantasy in their narratives. Through it they establish a way of escaping the restrictions of convention and create a connection also between oneself and the outside world.

Along with fantasy, realism also occupies important place in post-modern fiction. It is assumed as opposite to fantasy. Realistic discourses convey that the world is ‘describable and intelligible’ rather than bizarre. Most of the post-modern writers write about realistic observations. Their realistic approach brings their narratives closer to the readers. They read stories and feel themselves as a part of their stories. Through this approach post-modern narrative writers raise real problem of day to day life and give encouragement to the general masses to raise their voice high against their difficulties or injustice. Imagination plays an important part in narrative writing. The writer’s imagery is the main source of narrative which gives flow to the story. With the help of imagination narrative becomes interesting and dramatic also. In some narrative the basic element of the story is writer’s imagination. For example, R.K. Narayan’s small town Malgudi is only an imagination of the writer. David Davidar’s small village Chevathar in his narrative *The House of Blue Mangoes* is also an imagination. These imaginations of the writers give base to the plot of their stories. Apart from it various images have great significance in the narrative writing. A narrative writer uses different images to give the real thought of the narration. These images provide deep insight of the character’s psychological condition also. Some images have symbolic meanings. When these images are used symbolically, these symbols throw light into the motions, expressions and observations of the characters.

A narrative is a story which has a beginning, a middle and end. To relate the narrower components of the narrative the writer uses different techniques and devices. In Indian English fiction narrative writing has important place. In the 1990s the wave of post-modernism brought radical changes in English fiction. After independence Indian English novelists wrote under the impact of post-colonialism. Post-colonial literature deals with the changing scenario of society. It is a revolt against authority and signification. Indian writers chose language of their colonizers to express their innate feelings but they adopted, nurtured and made English language their own. Indian English fiction writers use narrative to provide creative respite and fulfillment. Through the narrative they delve into stories or observations to edify or entertain readers. They also express their purpose of story through narrative writing. A sound narrative leaves its readers with a dominant impression about its characters and event. Indian English writers apply different narrative techniques in their narrative. Since 1938 when Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* was published, there has been much aggrandizement in the narrative techniques. *Kanthapura* was perhaps the first most successful and influential Indian novel which has great story-telling qualities. Raja Rao mainly used oral narration. The later writers like Kamala Markandaya, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Anita Desai expand this tradition of narrative.

Post-modern writers employ magic realism in their writings as a style of expression through which a realistic world is presented that has elements of the magical or

fantastical. The term 'Magic Realism' is taken from the German phrase *magischerrealismus*. It is invented by European art historian Franz Roh in his book *Nach - Expressionismus (Magischer Realismus): Probleme der neuesten Europaischenmalerei*, published in 1925 to describe a school of painting. It considers as a story which is set in a mostly realistic setting, but with some magical elements. If there is one narrator, takes a tone towards a magical or fantastical elements that would indicate that she finds them totally normal. It has been an important branch of post-modernism. It is mainly employed by the post-modern writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie, W.P. Kinsella and Amitav Ghosh.

If the narrative techniques increase the charm and flow of the story some other elements organize the whole narrative. These are the base of the narrative. These elements are plot, characters, theme and setting. The plot and its structure is a basic element of a narrative. The plot is a base of what happened, as a result that happened, which further resulted in this or that event. There is no narrative without a clear plot. Narratologists use different elements as exposition or information, rising action, complications, climax, denouement, resolution etc. to set a perfect plot structure. The setting of a narrative necessary for a perfect plot, that deals with the place or surroundings in which the plot occurs. It gives the plot context. In a narrative the people or other sentiment beings play the role of characters that are subject to the plot and setting. The readers can focus their attention upon their point of view. To make

these characters alive the writer uses his art of characterization. The most important element of a narrative is the theme which is an issue or phenomenon that a narrative about. All the elements and narrative techniques work on a theme which help to drive a plot forward and unify it.

The importance of narrative writing in defining and representing ourselves is aptly incontestable. Narrative writing is an art which explores the strange world of narration that has no margins. With all diversities all the narratives have the distinctive mark of ingenuity.

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