



Style And Narrative Technique In The Novel Of Anita Desai "Fire On The Mountain"

Preetha.R

Assistant Professor (Jr) English Division School of Social Sciences & Languages VIT University Vellore-632014 Tamilnadu

Dr. Sarika Tyagi

Associate Professor English Division School of Social Sciences & Languages VIT University Vellore-632014 Tamilnadu

ABSTRACT

Anita Desai is considered to be one of the most distinguished novelists in Indian English literature. She is different from other contemporary women writers in Indian writing in English in terms of her perception and of her unique style. Major writers like , kamala Markandaya, Ruth Jhabvala, Attia Hosain and Nayantara Sahgal write about the contemporary socio-political scene with a style which serves to highlight problems of major characters. Anita Desai has emerged as a very serious, skilled and promising novelist in India , of the entire contemporary Indian novelists. She really deserves, compels and invites plenty of critical attention. She seriously sets herself to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of men and women tormented by the existentialist problems. As an uncrowned queen by the inner-emotional world, she dexterously transcribes the subconscious , the phantasmagoria of her highly sensitive protagonists. Desai has tried to present her themes originally with appropriate adjustment and adaptations in spheres of style and point of view. Desai is no doubt a great artist with a remarkable and astounding technical efficacy. Her technique enriches the novel by lifting it above the mere narration of a story or depiction of a character and provides it the very life, blood and the soul. She is interested in exploring life and illuminating the depth of visible world.

KEYWORDS

subconscious, narration, real life

Introduction:

Anita desai is not interested in picturing the 'surface reality'. She is more interested in discovering the unknown, untapped, dark regions in the human mind in a given social milieu. But the back ground of social setting does not interfere with the minute probing of individuals. The vehicle of expression is in the stream of consciousness mode and Anita Desai follows the foot step of masters like Henry James, James Joyce and Virginia wolf in creating a particular style which suits her material.

Anita desai is endowed with boundless imaginative resourcefulness and creative vitality. She reveals amazing variety and profundity in her fictional world. She has given a new dimension to the Indian novel in English by turning from outer to inner reality. G.Rai , has called her, 'a writer with an original voice'(Shrivastava,93). Desai is well known for her use of new techniques.

Desai's Techniques:

The word techniques is derived from the Greek word , technique means an art. The method adopted by a writer to present life in the process of living may be described as the narrative technique. Though the novel gets its main sustenance from the story It intends to tell, its success depends on how it is narrated. The quality of readability, the most important of all the desirable qualities of a novel, may be achieved when there is compatibility between the narration and the narrative technique.

Wayne booth said,

Narration is an art not a science, but this does not mean that we are necessarily doomed to fail when we attempt to formulate a principle about it. There is systematic element in every art and criticism of fiction can never avoid the responsibility of trying to explain technical successes and failures by reference to general principles.(Wayne, 164).

Desai's experiment with non-traditional materials and technique has given her a distinct position among the Indian Eng-

lish novelists. Her fondness for quotes from various writers serves a definite purpose. Desai's style or technique of delivering the thematic is the vital agent. Language is the main element of her narrative style. Her use of language and dialogues is one of the characteristic features of her artistically conceived novels. Her role as a woman writer is a topic for discussion.

Feminine Style:

Anita desai is an artist. Her works are independent. The artist Anita Desai, in no way interferes with her novels. But being a woman and a creative writer, she has some special qualities to comprehend the world. But Anita Desai refuses to be straight jacketed into any brand which includes the role of feminism. A feminine style is not to be confused with feminist that is associated with 'flowery style, trivial themes and a frivolous tone'. Many contemporary women , writers have very prosaic style and masculine concerns. Majority of Indian women writers "have stopped short, from a lack of imagination, courage, nerve, or gusto-of the satirical edge, the ironic tone, the inspired criticism or the lyric response that alone might have brought their novels to life'(Prasad,42-43).

Her view on the skill of writing is better exemplified in the following quotation: "Writing has become such a deeply ingrained habit. for her it is like chain smoking. she admits that she chain-smokes with words, with books"(Ralph,94). form and structure, in the novels of Anita Desai have 'taken the shape of an exquisitely designed tapestry' (Ralph,9). The novel of Desai revealed her unique world view, but at the same time conform to the existing tendencies in modern fiction.

Narrative Technique in the novel *Fire on the Mountain*:

Anita Desai wizards is once again established by the study of the beginnings of her eight novels, each novels present a unique aspect of life, handled in the peculiar manner, the theme demanded. mostly psychological studies the narration is aimed at delineating character through the objective world. In *Fire on the Mountain* Anita Desai uses it as a subtle narrative strategy, which reveals much about the teller and at the same time highlights the functionality of the fiction thus cre-

ated. At one point in the novel Nanda Kaul feels the need of some delusion. When Raka wants to know her mother is ill in nursing home again, Nanda Kaul is immediately repentant.

In the silence that followed, Nanda Kaul bitterly cursed her failure to comfort children, her total inability to place herself in another's position and act accordingly. Fantasy and Fairy tales had their place in life, she knew it so well. Why then did she tell the child the truth? Who wanted the truth? Who could stand it? Nobody. not even her. So how could Raka?-(FOTM,176).

According to Iyengar, "since her pre occupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forgo a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream -of- consciousness of her principal characters"(Kundu,183).

Fire on the Mountain is a novel in which she makes use of symbolism. she also makes use of the flash back technique in narrating the story. The novel centers on the character of Nanda Kaul, the widow of vice- chancellor who is compelled both by choice and circumstances to live in seclusion in an old bungalow in Kasauli. The novel also makes use of fantasy and it is Nanda Kaul who lives in the world of fantasy. In order to engage attention of her granddaughter Raka she spins several fantastic tales about her father. It is interesting to note that it is a grown up person and not the child who goes into the world of fantasy. The use of fantasy in the novel has attracted the critical attention and one of the critics has observed that Anita Desai has used fantasy not only in this novel but in her other novels too. This is how she has described the use of fantasy and various purpose for which it is used in the novel. From the very start the most noticeable aspect of the novel is its sense of geographical space. at the opening of the novel the author carefully and elaborately introduces the Kasauli and Carignano, the mountain and the house on its ridge.

At the beginning the mountain seems to be not only a real empirical space, but also a symbol of shelter, freedom, and fulfillment which Nanda Kaul at last receives after long years of unfulfillment; it is " the place.... she had wanted and prepares for all her life"(FOTM,40). Paradoxically, even this space has not been free from violence as is shown by Ila Das's gruesome death. The mountain has been made vivid and fascinating with its varied sights, its wide range of sounds, its smell, its occasional dust-storms, long spells of rain, sudden flowers bursting out after a night of rain. The reader can, as it were, share Nanda's peace, her cool solace, in this mountain reclusion. However, the mountain has not been envisioned here as an idyllic place. The threats of disharmony, cruelty, and violence are also there, and cannot be ignored. the author carefully weaves a network of details in order to bring out this duality Although the mountain is far way and high up from the mundane plains, yet painful memories of life in the big cities, remembrance of other locations where Nanda Kaul had suffered, where Tara is suffering right now, float back en route the protagonist's consciousness down memory lane. At the end we also learn that coming to the mountain was not Nanda's own choice, that this was but the appropriate closure to her inwardly barren life, though after being compelled to settle down here all alone. She had persuaded to believe that she had at last found her real home and fulfillment. As J.Jain-observes:

The world of Anita Desai's novels is an ambivalent one; it is a world where the central harmony is aspired to but not arrived at, and the desire to love and live clashes- at times violently- with the desire to withdraw and achieve harmony. Involvement and stillness are incompatible by their nature, yet they strive to exist together(Jain, 16).

The geographical location of the mountain has been clearly indicated. at the same time it is also apparently a fictional space. This fictional space is marked by an essential ambiguity, furthermore, corresponds to an ambiguity in Nanda's approach. Nanda seems to incarnate self-assurance; at the same time she is also haunted by innate uncertainties. she reflects both firmness and hesitation, both withdrawal from, and reaching out to, life. The mountain as fictional space does not scaffold a political, social ideology; it rather to a feminine consciousness which is essentially ambiguous in its ambivalences between stark truth and the lure of fantasies.

Anita Desai takes recourse to lexical repetition, the use of pronouns and definite article. Besides these the underlying idea is a strong unifying link between paragraphs. the alienated mind suffers from lack of communication with the outer world " empty space and silence", reflects her life which is also empty and undistributed.

The result is her comparative superiority over other Indian women novelists writing in English. Her achievements are aptly summed up by Meenakshi Mukherjee. she, takes a note on Desai's language and style, relates the novelist's manner of narration to the element of her protagonist's personality. She believes that it is marked by three characteristics, sensuous richness, a high strong sensitiveness and a love for the sounds of words. Pandey said, "Anita Desai's gifts as a prose are now acknowledged. What is perhaps overlooked in the process is the fact that most of her problems as a fiction writer begin with her insistence on too much style on too small a canvas"(Pandey, 93).

Desai's preoccupation is with the human mind she does not focus on social and economical problems. Her characters always engage in isolation and loneliness in the midst of self centeredness. The main problem of almost all the heroines of Anita Desai is their problem of identity and individuality. Her narrative style and imagery aptly reflect this quest of identity.

Conclusion:

Desai has tried to present her themes originally with appropriate adjustment and adaptations in spheres of style and point of view. Desai is no doubt a great artist with a remarkable and astounding technical efficacy. Her technique enriches the novel by lifting it above the mere narration of a story or depiction of a character and provides it the very life, blood and the soul. Technique is a matter of predominant concern for Anita Desai.

REFERENCES

1. Desai, Anita. Fire on the Mountain, New Delhi: Allied Publishers,1977. | Secondary resource: | 1. Iyengar, Srinivasa K.R.Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sterling,2006. | 2. Jain, Jasbir. Anita Desai, Indian English Novelist. ed M.K. Naik, new delhi: Abbinav publishers, 1985. 179-185. | 3. Kundu Rama. Anita Desai's. Fire on the Mountain: The Atlantic Critical Studies, Atlantic, Delhi,2005. | 4. Mukherjee,Meenakshi. TheTwice-BornFiction,Arnold-Heinemann, New Delhi,1974. | 5. Pandey, L.U.B. Woman's Escapades to Oasis of Freedom: A critical analysis of the novels of Anita Desai, AITBS, India,2009. | 6. Ralph, Freedman. The Lyrical Novel, Princeton University Press, 1973. | 7. Wayne, C.Booth. The Rhetoric of Fiction. Chicago university Press,1961. | 8. Shrivastava, K. Indian writers Problem, Perspectives on Anita Desai, Uimal, Ghazibad,1984. | 9. <http://www.indiaclub.com/8699.html>. | 10. <http://www.langaugeinindia.com/sunithautopia.pdf>. | | | | | | | | | |