

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND VOICE APPROPRIATION IN SELECTED MODERN INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION

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ABSTRACT

Voice appropriation' or 'cultural appropriation' might be defined as the practice by authors, and novelists who create themes, or 'voices' from cultures not of their own, mostly with first person intimacy and the implied authority of a person of the 'inside'. The dictionary meaning of 'appropriation' is 'using something that belongs to someone else', usually without having the right to do so. 'Narrative technique' and 'voice appropriation' are the two interdependent literary terms which will help writers and and to create readers' fantastic aid to decode fiction. The present study aims to focus on the modern English novels, written by Indian novels written by Indian novelists. It is proposed to study and examine the problem of speaking or writing about other cultures, and on behalf of minority groups of society, considering issues selected to the categories such as 'caste', 'gender', ethnicity', and 'race' in the selected Indian English fiction.

In the process, the narrative technique and tone/voice adopted to represent certain characters would also be taken up. Even when a writer makes an attempt to represent a society /culture or caste not of his own, she should be well prepared to compass a work of art more convincingly and authentically. This one can do, only when one cultivates the right attitude and opinion about whom he is going to represent or write about. Four Novels which are selected are: R.K Narayan. *The Dark Room* (1938, Eyre), Mulk Raj Anand. *Untouchable* (1935), Shashi Deshpande *That Long Silence*, Penguin (paperback 1989), Arundhati Roy *The God of Small Things* (1997)

KEYWORDS: Narrative Technique, Voice Appropriation, Character, Theme, Point of View

INTRODUCTION

Narrative technique is the offspring of structuralism, and narratology restricts itself to the formal features. A narrative describes a sequence of events. The word story may be used as a synonym of narrative. Paul Ricoeur says. The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character" (86). This paper relies on the narrative techniques which a novelist uses as tools of storytelling to present the major and minor characters of the novel, The writer's choice of his/her techniques of narration, will determine the theme of the fictional work. Voice and cultural appropriation is linked to narrative technique.

Writer by projecting his narrative devices, will be able to speak on behalf of the protagonist, if the adaptation techniques are right, accurate and to the point, there will be a good vice appropriation, otherwise miss understanding of categories like culture, caste, and gender takes place. Miss appropriation and Miss recognition is the result of miss understanding, and pathetic observation of the subject and culture. This does not happen only in Anglo-Indian novels,

but is any literary representation. The Women Press of Canada(1988-1990), a feminist publishing house, which is located in Toronto, did not accept three stories for an anthology of short fiction in the Winter of 1989, Presuming Women characters, their voices, races, and cultures were not used as it was in reality by the writers. Women's press argued, these practices constituted a form of racism and violated its recently issued policy guidelines which stated that the Women's Press "will avoid publishing manuscripts in which the protagonists experience in the world, by virtue of race or ethnicity, is substantially removed from that of the writer.

In March of 1992, the University of Concordia, Women's Centre rejected, two paintings of African North American women as they showed the women in a "stereotypical manner", carrying baskets of fruit on their heads. It was quite relevant to reject the paintings as, Lyne Robichaud, who created these paintings was not a member of the African Canadian community. Voice appropriation is a reality which is mostly linked to minority literature. So our project emphasizes on the "minor literature", which is the literature of those downtrodden, lower caste, vulnerable gender of people who suffer from inequalities, difficulties, and non-acceptance of the society in the domain of Indian English fiction.

As it is understood from the combination of the two words: "minority", and "literature", we are dealing with a form of literature within the structure. In 1918 and by the end of the First World War, gently the influence of the war was mirrored in literature. The war with its tyrannical results had changed the conscience of the world. Without doubt Indian writers were influenced by the war, as, the national consciousness was awakened and liberty and independence were new ideologies came to existence. The freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi gradually spread all over India. Writers started writing the freedom songs and martyrdom stories.

Novels of the endeavour for independence became fashionable. So, the Independence Movement in India was not a simple political battle, but also a total emotional experience for all Indians in the 1920s and 1930s. That experience was a national in nature. Indian writers were not able to forget this national emotion. This approach created the theme or indirectly as significant public background to a personal narrative.

Behind the National upsurge The Gandhian ideology not only changed a philosophy of life but also a way of life. Gandhian ideology was the main theme of all works of art during that period. Mahatma was behind all the discussions then. The themes of the novels were changed. A man like Mulk Raj Anand would show the profoundness of simple life and reveal dignity or majesty in the manhood of an untouchable or a coolie; another like R. K. Narayan would depict the middle class man of South India; a Raja Rao or a Karaka would soar into Utopias of the soul and proclaim.

The analysis of the old values and the inconsistency of the new ones, showing interest in modernism, national awakening for Gandhi and Gandhian ideology, the advancement of realism and humanism, the development of narrative technique and the improvement of various fictional genres are some major specification of novel during post- independence period. The phenomenon of minority literature has flourished since independence, and there have been discussions on the issue. But there has not been any attempt to understand the process of minority 'voice appropriation' in mainstream texts, the very reason why minority texts appeared, and try to build a bridge between mainstream and minority texts within the context of cultural categories.

The label of 'appropriation' is always related to works created by persons of a more dominant group about persons of a minority or subordinate group. The issue of cultural appropriation presupposes a social context where novelists' voices from both group levels (minority and dominant) are not equally heard. These people who are strangers or outsiders,

as Albert Camus in 1988 says in his novel *The Outsider* 'in their own society or tongue, no one would consider them as citizen with his/her own living right.' It is apparent that modern Indian English fiction benefits from realism. The novelists who have observant eyes and understanding hearts have searched deeper and deeper into the varied and multitudinous social life of India.

Urban and rural areas have been deeply explored by them. In the present paper an attempt will be made to analyze four selected novels, and the text of these novels, with a focus on the narrative technique employed by the writer/author. Thus analysis will help us in recognizing how 'voice appropriation' has been done to highlight or present the theme/character in a situation. If understood correctly, 'voice appropriation' will be a handle to understand the character and the theme of these novels. And at a later stage the understanding of the theme and character will be, anyway compared to the assessment /evaluation alone by other critics. This will add another perspective on the novels and appreciating the literary work more meaningfully.

Anand presentation of Bakha as an *untouchable* is not like to his friends as he wears an army coat, army boots, breeches and puttees. His desire for smoking is only a drive to make him look like British men, that why people call him *pilpali sahib* because of his typical craziness and his smoking of *Red Lamp*, which is a brand of Cigarette. Voice appropriation in *untouchable* is not as we expect from a novel, which should emphasis on untouchability. Bakha criticizes his caste more than the evil of untouchability. Anand uses the omniscient point of view which makes him relax to go in the mind of Bakha's character as he wishes. He does not give identity to his character. Mulk Raj Anand utilizes so many Indian words in the novel, that most of them are wrong.

The writer is not an untouchable himself so how is it possible for him to see and feel the difficulties of down-trodden. So miss appropriation takes place. Considering realistic tradition of presenting 'individual' characters, the particular kind of individuality bestowed on Bakha is heavily loaded and socially limited. For anyone, who has read Laxman Mane's *Upara*, or Laxman Gaikwad's *Uchatya*, the Dalit experience Anand delineates rings a false note. Anand gives an imaginative individuality to Bakha which is in paradox with reality. Minority and the humiliation of an outcaste is hardly sensed here. We feel really sorry for the main character, we sympathize with him, but nothing will be solved in this novel. The main theme which untouchability fades away.

The Second writer is R.K. Narayan the setting for most of Narayan's stories is the fictional town of Malgudi, first introduced in *Swami and Friends*. His narratives highlight social context and provide a feel for his characters through everyday life. Narayan has not been able to create a good feminist novel, as he profoundly sympathizes with the character of Savitri to the extent that he forgets the theory behind his work of art. She has valid reasons for leaving her house, but comes back and reconciles. Narayan is like Jane Austen as a realist and understands the limitations of people in their context and worlds, but he only feels sad for their poor condition.

Narayan's characters rebel against a traditional and regressive society. The point of view is third person and for some sensitive feelings we see from Savitri's point of view (first person I). However as a male writer and opposite to Thomas Hardy's "Tess", Savitri cannot show us the problems of women vividly. She is really sad of so many humiliations, she protests but she comes back. For a modern day reader, it does turn out to be surprising the way Savitri is shown to be a dutiful wife. The author has nearly given the impression that she is the perfect prized wife that every man must have given the fact that the wife accords such high regard for her husband. Yet at the same time, the underlying message for women's

emancipation becomes evident as the story progresses. The self-pity of Savitri is all too obvious as she decides to leave her home without her belongings. Yet, the thrill she gets by earning her quarter *anna* and rice makes her realize her worth in this world. Our third novel is "*That long silence*", by Shashi Deshpandeh, She is a well known name in the field of Indian literature. She was born in Dharwad 1938 in Karnataka as the daughter of the renowned Kannada dramatist as well as a great Sanskrit scholar Sriranga.

She pursued her education in Dharwad, Bombay and Bangalore. Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence*, through details of everyday practices, routine, mundane, and particular stories, engages with issues of collective identity. Firstly it is better to say that Shashi Deshpande, herself is a woman, not the "Other". She is more able than a man like R.K.Narayan to feel a female protagonist, to put herself in the position of a vulnerable character. Voice appropriation is speaking on behalf of an absent voice, considering this when we observe "That Long Silence", we figure out that although Jaya is Absent and not alive character, Deshpande gives her soul and spirit so professionally to her that Jaya voices out, speaks, and can tell her difficulties to the world.

She knows what does a marriage institution mean, She is a mother, a wife, above all a woman. No one can understand the profound feelings and sensations of a woman than herself. She is not afraid of the patriarchal environment of the society. She knows that men are dominant, but on the contrary to R.K.Narayan because of pleasing the mainstream male dominated literature, She will not forget "Savitri" or "Jaya" who are from her own blood to be sacrificed, and she rebels against Savitri's returns to her cruel husband, because of the orthodox traditional society.

The last Novel we are going to elaborate is "*The God of Small Things*" (1997), by Arundhati Roy. The story describes the lives of people in Kerala who are the captives of Communism, the caste system, and the Keralite Syrian Christian way of life. It embarks on the journey of the dizyotic twins Rahel and Esthappen (Estha), the children of Ammu Ipe. She is also a woman and she can understand the difficulties of Ammu in a correct way. The point of view and characterization are also well designed.

CONCLUSIONS

'Voice appropriation' is a new term which has been used in Canadian Literature for recent years, but in Anglo-Indian Literature the use of this evaluation is hardly seen. There has been an attempt to represent this new term by the help of narrative technique. This is through the narrative technique such as characterization and point of view which a writer depict his theme and ideology. Major resources which were selected could be the texts of the novels themselves, as hardly any work has been done on this subject. This is actually a new way of evaluation of the Indian-English fiction. Four novels were selected for the present study.

For example one of the novelists selected is Narayan who is a male writer and related in to the patriarchal world, the character of Savitri is not suitable and convincing for the role that "*The Dark Room*" desires. Narayan likes to be a feminist and depicts the story very well, everything is perfect, he shows the hard times Savitri tolerates. She is reluctant of the betrayal of her husband and elopes again she faces problems and difficulties which makes her come back home and go to the dark room of the house, which is not the aim a feminist writer anticipates.

Thomas Hardy is also a male writer, in his novel "*Tess of D'Urbervilles*" has depicted and presented a female character like Tess in a patriarchal world very well. So being a male or female writer doesn't matter, what is important is

the way the writers are going to describe a character. How they project a character suitable to the theme of the story. By selecting this topic, and describing the "voice appropriation", it is expected that writers consider caste, gender, ethnicity, race and culture of a society in an appropriated way while writing a novel. A good work of art is the result of careful study of the target society, and the people who are going to play a role as characters of our novel.

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