

Narrative Style in Vasanthi's Short Story Murder

Abstract

Narratology is the science of narration. Postmodern Indian English short stories are vibrant and colourful and exhibit the art of the story teller. Each short story in the Indian literary tradition is finely crafted work of art, carefully ordered and richly detailed. Narration is a complex work of art and has a traditional base which follows certain norms. The narrator, the narratee and the narration correspond to the messenger, the receiver of the message and the message itself. The narrator/writer employs certain techniques in narrating his tale.

Keywords: Narration, Techniques, Styles, Tools.

Introduction

Stories are shared memories. They are spread across a variety of cultures, yet there is a common thread running through them all.

Aim

The aim of the study is to examine the tools which are employed by the writers in order to create a narratological structure for the rendition of the short story.

Hypothesis

It is suggested that perhaps stories, whether in the oral or the written medium, almost always follow a certain pattern or structure, and although structures may vary, the basic tools remain the same.

Review of Literature

A lot of research has been directed towards the study of short stories in Indian English, yet there is a noticeable gap. The missing piece is the study of the narratological tools employed by postmodern Indian English short story writers.

Murder is a short story written by Vasanti, a Southern Indian short story writer. The story is about *Thatha* meaning grandfather. Thatha heads a large family of sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and grand children. He exercises firm control over all the members of the family. He has a young granddaughter named Chellam, who wishes to break free from the feudalistic control of her grandfather. The myth of the family patriarch is maintained in the story, but the younger generation no longer wishes to feel fettered.

The title of the short story is very revealing and deeply symbolical. It is a story about the murder of an individual's freedom and the entire concept of freedom has been critically viewed in the short story.

Narratives are messages conveyed by a narrator to a narratee. Every culture has a rich store of narratives; and although the narratives themselves may or may not be original, the style of rendering them makes them novel and appealing.

A narrative is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure). (6)

Helmut focuses on the mechanics of writing a short story, in which the short story writers use various narrative devices. Helmut distinguishes four narrative modes relating to the way a short story begins. They are report, speech, description and comment:

In our own age, speech stands high in the esteem of most readers. Description is thought boring except in small doses. Comment of a particular kind, namely moralistic generalizing, is almost taboo, even where embedded in speech; and even report is preferred in the dress of, or at least heavily interlarded with speech. (8)

These modes perform certain narrative functions and they are very relevant to modern and postmodern Indian English fiction.

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Often the action in a short story becomes brief and condensed since modern and postmodern Indian English fiction writers render the entire action through conversation, as a result of which *speech* becomes the predominant mode of narration.

Similarly, the mode of description is not confined to describing a situation by itself, it often conveys a sense of action. The short story *Murder* begins with a description of the old patriarch *Thatha* (grandfather). He rules the family with an iron hand.

Narratives follow certain accepted styles of narration, which in reality allow the reader to participate in the story telling, even though the reader is a silent spectator of the action in the short story. Stylization and Improvisation are tools which a story writer uses. Satisfying the curiosity of the reader is a case of stylization, but it restricts the imagination of the reader. On the other hand, the device of improvisation allows the reader's mind to imagine other possibilities within the story. However, when the story moves forward or concludes in a direction which the reader had not expected, it involves the device of Improvisation. Both these devices come into play within the short story *Murder*.

Indian English short stories involve other stylistic devices too:

Indian narrators by and large, with few exceptions, try to coax the reader to wind his way into the core of a text. A text may be a hard nut to crack like a coconut, but the interior may be soft and sweet. This is the *nalikerapakam* or the coconut model. (5)

Within the plot of the story, the reader can detect several layers, which mirror the layered reality of human life. The story ends with the death of *Somaiyya Thatha*, and there is a subtle hint that perhaps he was murdered by one of the members of his family, however it is merely a suggestion. Within the story of his death is the story of the death of another female character in the story *Kamalakka*. Deeply embedded in the story of her death is the story of the death of *Chellathayi*, yet another female character. The model of the story within the story is a popular feature in many Indian narratives, both ancient and modern.

Narrators may be homodiegetic (first person narration) or heterodiegetic (third person narration). *Murder* is an example of heterodiegetic narration.

Conclusion

It is thus right conclude that Indian English short stories in the modern and postmodern traditions follow various styles and employ several stylistic devices in order to capture the interest of the readers. These stylistic devices form the structure of the short story and reveal the narratological skill of the writers. Those devices help in creating a rich effect on the reader's mind.

References

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