

**Arun Joshi's *The Apprentice*:
A Study on Narrative Techniques**

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Abstract

The Apprentice is a novel which is different from other novels of Arun Joshi, the novel uses the techniques of first person confessional narratives though which is not new in the Indian context, the narrative techniques used in the novel parallels narrative techniques used by Browning in his most of the poetries i.e., dramatic monologue. The novel is shaped as a series of dramatic monologues spoken by the protagonist-narrator to a listener. These monologues form its narrative body. The whole novel is seen through the lens of the protagonist, Rathan Rathor, son of an advocate who turned into freedom fighter. The personality of his father greatly influences him. As a son, Rathor has stuck between two different ideologies of his parents, the Gandhian ideology inherited from his father and the materialistic ideology or the ideology of realism inherited from his mother. As the novel progresses we witness Rathor's conflict with the alien world, each stage of his life he becomes a tyro and learns the tactics of livelihood to suit his living.

Keywords: Arun Joshi, *The Apprentice*, narratology, homodiegetic, heterodiegetic, extradiegetic, intradiegetic, hypodiegetic, analepsis, prolepsis.

Jonathan Culler, in his work, *Literary theory: A very short introduction* states that narrative is not just an academic subject. There is a basic human drive to hear and tell stories. Children at very early age develop the basic narrative competence of demanding stories.

Once upon a time, literature meant above all poetry. The novel was a modern upstart, too close to biography or chronicle to be genuinely literary, a popular form that could not aspire to the high callings of lyric and epic poetry. But in the 20th century, the novel eclipsed poetry, both as what writers write and what readers read and, since the 1960s, narrative has come to dominate literary education as well. People still study poetry-often, it is required-but novels and short stories have become the core of the curriculum. (Culler 2011)

The genre of novels has occupied a prominent place in literature replacing poetry after the second half of twentieth century. Narrative and the science of narratology have become dominate in literary sphere after the development of novels in literature. Narrative theories attempt to spell out the basic competence of any narrative i.e., plot, story and the aspects of focalization. And tries to answer the basic questions of a reader for instance; who speaks? Who speaks to whom? And who speaks when? Narrative voices may have their own distinctive language, in which they recount everything in the story, or they may adopt and report the language of others.

To understand the aspects of narration in any novel, first one should understand who speaks in the novel, in order to identify the dynamics involved in this question, narrative theorists distinguishes among the real author, implied author and narrator. According to Booth as the implied author and the persona 'he' constructs when writing a narrative. The persona which is visible to the reader in the narrative text as the agent who established the cultural and ethical norms of the text, the three agents of telling indicates that narration is not the direct transmittal of a story from author to reader.

Narrative theorists believe that through the narrator, the authorial communication in the novel is mediated. At a wide spectrum the author-narrator relation can vary. In one spectrum the narrator may be indistinguishable virtually from the implied author on the other end of the spectrum, the narrator who has almost nothing in common with the implied author as a fully developed character.

Genette calls the commonly made distinctions of a narrator that who speaks in the story and the point of view of a narrator as focalization. In that focalization he distinguishes between homodiegetic (participating) and heterodiegetic (non-participating) narrators. Further he distinguishes among extradiegetic (one level above the main action), intradiegetic (within the main action) and hypodiegetic (one level below the main action). Besides the issues of the relationship of a character narrator to the story, the question of reliability also arises in character narration.

For James Phelan narrative techniques is the umbrella term for the multiple devices of storytelling. In the terms of narratology, a narrative technique is a rough synonym for discourse with the publication of Henry James prefaces to the New York edition of his novels. Theorist paid increasing attention to the subject. Reminon-Kenan identifies four classifications of narrative tense representative of different ways that narratives relate to the tie of the story. First, 'ulterior' or 'prior' narration, this narration is the recounting of events that have already happened. This is the most common form of narration. Jane Austen's Emma can be a good example for this. Second anterior narration, this narration is predictive or subsequent which

suggests future happenings, such as those in prophecies. Third narratives, consists the actions and narrative occur 'simultaneously and fourth type of narration intercalated or interpolated here the telling and action are not simultaneous but impact each other throughout the narrative.

First-person confessional narratives are not new to Indian English novelists. But the narrative strategy that Arun Joshi adopts in *The Apprentice* is certainly something new in the Indian context, and justly invites scrutiny; the novel is shaped as a series of Browning- like dramatic monologues spoken by the protagonist-narrator to a listener. These monologues form its narrative body. This strategy has bound definite advantages. It allows the protagonist- narrator to tell his dark story uninterrupted and so reconstruct and present a connected narrative of his life of the distant past to the present. Secondly, it helps the novelist to present dramatically the protagonist's confrontation with his own self, inner and outer, probe directly into his psyche and lay it bare for the reader to examine it without the mediation of another person. It conveys best the protagonist's sense of inner compulsion and urgency to communicate and confess, and provides the complete narrative a like urgency.

In the words of Dhawan, Arun Joshi's fiction conforms to Conrad's conception of the novel. Joshi recognizes a reality beyond the mere phenomenal world, a reality which the artist could imagine and capture by giving a consistent form to the shapeless facts of human existence. The source of most of Joshi's novels is actual experience. Joshi the artist, however, is not content merely to restate experience in a coldly scientific manner. He feels a need to shape it, a need to discover the reality which lies hidden in the actuality of his own life.

Ratan's monologues are naturally addressed to the listener, however he addresses himself too. Particularly once his narration takes an introspective flip and dwells on such repeated questions on right, wrong, God etc. On the total the monologues sustain the tone, impression and atmosphere of an oral narrative self-addressed to a single listener. They conjointly retain the language, the pace, and even the gestures of a man talking to his single listener. The role of this listener in the narrative which is chiefly spoken to him has not been properly understood by some critics. He is neither an imaginary companion, whom the narrator addresses now and then, nor he passively listens to the narrative, the listener takes active part in the narration, while the narrator himself puts the questions and expresses the disbelief that may arise in the listener's mind. In fact he has a visible and active role to play all along the narrative. He is an alert and intelligent listener and gets genuinely interested in Ratan's story as the narration further proceeds. He responds to it sensitively. His active presence is felt throughout the narration. That he listens attentively to Ratan and punctuates the narrative intermittently by raising intelligent questions, in spite the fact that his voice is audible only to the narrator and not to the readers, all implicit in the very manner Ratan tells his story, the turns it takes and the emphasis it acquires now and then, After all, the convention of the monologue requires that there is only one audible speaker. It does

not follow necessarily that the audience is or ought to be passive and silent. Ratan solely repeats the queries raised by his young friend.

The Apprentice as a novel in confessional form gives a running commentary on the decaying values of a degenerating civilization. It is the story of a young man who out of sheer exhaustion of joblessness and privation is forced to shed the honesty and the old world morality of his father to become an apprentice to the corrupt civilization. One is alienated in this counterfeit world unless one accepts and adjusts to the guilt of the modern society in order to survive. There are a number of literary influences that have worked on Arun Joshi. He has been influenced by Albert Camus and other existentialist writers. Joshi admits that he did read Camus and Sartre, in an interview with Purabi Bannerji to *The Sunday Statesman* says “I liked *The Plague* and read *The Outsider*. I might have been influenced by them. Sartre I did not understand clearly or like. As for existential philosophers like Kierkegaard, I have never understood anything except odd statements.” (Dhawan 9)

Ratan Rathor started his life as a common young man with full of ideals and defined code of conduct for himself. The days with his childhood friend, Brigadier is beyond his imagination, the protagonist, who narrates the story of his life to an N.C.C. cadet who came to New Delhi to participate in the Republic Day parade. In the beginning chapter the protagonist meets a student and then he gets into a conversation with him by that he comes to know that he is requesting the protagonist to direct him towards grounds to attend rallies. Then the protagonist continues his conversation with the student in a nearby shop, he takes him there for tea because that tea shop seems to be the best of the neighborhood and adds that the proprietor is an excellent man. When the student enquires him about his residence he explains that he lives in a government colony, which are identical flats, yellow by day and colorless at night with an occasional park, library without books, a boy’s school, a girl’s school, a sub-station, an area neither poor, rich nor hostile, friendly.

Rathor is from Punjab, who grew up in the foothills of Punjab, where his father was killed. His father is about fifty years of age, young, grave and clear eyed with six feet tall and his mother is short, dark and tubercular, lays on bed, coughing and spitting blood. She refuses to go to sanatorium even his father insists her to. She prefers to stay back at home in order to balance the monetary issues of her family. She mocks about her husband’s passion over processions. One fine day soon after Gandhiji’s meeting, Ratan’s father has declared that he has handed out all his wealth and abandoned his practice despite of being a successful lawyer. This act of generosity proves fatal and annoys his mother a lot. The mother who has a worldly knowledge of materialism tells him:

It was not patriotism but money...that brought respect and brought security. Money made friends. Money succeeded where all else failed. There were many laws...but money was law unto itself. (Joshi 20)

As a student Ratan Rathor also has ideals like his father and hoped that free India will bring new light to the citizens of the Republic. The hope of better India shatters after nation's independence, the politicians of free India proves to be worse substitutes for the alien Englishmen. Ratan Rathor comes to Delhi, 'a city of opportunities', after his graduation in search of a job for his livelihood. In his search for employment he realizes that the posts advertised are already filled in some manner. Even his father's friends could not come to his aid for finding job for him. During his stay in Delhi he gets shelter in a *sarai* (inn) beside a *masque* where several others also occupy the same room with him. A stenographer living at the same inn manages a temporary job for him in a Government office, dealing with war purchases.

As the novel proceeds we get to know that the protagonist begins his life as an apprentice clerk. He keeps his eye upon his career despised by his father as bourgeois filth. He leaves the inn as soon as he gets the job to settle somewhere and tries to keep him away even from the stenographer who had been instrumental in securing a job for him. He works hard to please his superintendent. In very short period of time over six months, on the recommendation of the superintendent, he gets confirmation in the service on his assurance that he would marry the superintendent's niece. Henceforth he never looks back and on the superintendent's retirement he gets this most coveted post which brings him every comfort in his life. With the accumulation of riches, Ratan rather gets himself associated with the pleasure of wine and woman in Bombay.

In the Post-independence era where career and class define any human in addition to it is the period of an inferno of corruption, Ratan also goes in the pursuit of career "one had to live. And, to live, one had to make living. And, how was a living to be made except through careers". (Joshi 39) in order to live he indulges himself in the act of corruption. At the earlier stage of his career, he hesitates and with the words of his superintend he justifies his deed that there was no point in looking for truths aside from the truth of God. Money in the world always changed hands. God was only concerned with what one did with the money. Did a man, for example, use it for good purposes (43) Deals that is what the world is all about (49) Money is law unto itself (73) Freedom, Freedom. What is freedom but a word, my friend?.....Yes, a New Slavery with new masters; politicians. Officials, the rich, old and new... (Joshi 61)

During the time of Indo-China war, he is not only one to gain prosperity by clearing sub-standard war materials supplied by the Sheikh Himmat Singh, being used in the war ignoring the safety of the lives of innocent people. The gravity of the offence committed by Ratan Rathor is surely more intense than the solution of polishing the shoes in front of the temple. Ratan rather forms a view that a successful career cannot be achieved through diligence and sincerity, but be

realized through flattery and cunning. So he deceives his very close friend by giving a false statement without admitting his crime. Ultimately, the Brigadier commits suicide. His best friend Brigadier's death acts as an eye opener for the protagonist, he never confess this with anyone apart from the reader and he silently bears guilt and at one stage he wanted to confess it to the omnipotent, but he couldn't do so because the evil of corruption has stretched its arms even there too. When he heard poojari's word of paying some amount to him in order to bring out his son unlawfully makes Ratan to come back from temple in the later days of his life he stands outside the temple and cleaning the shoes of devotees through his deed he wants to cleanse his guilt. The whole novel is in first person narration, every words of other characters are spoken by the protagonist himself, this novel seems to be in a confessional tone and by narrating story of his own he confesses his guilt to the reader through the NCC student.

To avoid the monotony of listening to a single voice in a series of monologues, Joshi uses certain devices. First he varies the duration and length of the monologues. The first few are short and brief, and more or less introductory. The contents become tangled and complex making it difficult for Ratan to speak with ease and clarity, as the narrative progress. The monologues tend to become long; In fact the varying lengths of the monologues indicate the pattern of the narration as well as the narrator's state of mind. Further the monologist Ratan is made to report faithfully, often in their own words, his conversation with different people. This device brings into the monologues several other voices – those of Ratan's parents, the Brigadier, Ratan's companions in the sarai, his colleagues in his office, the Sheikh, the police officials, the young listener etc. - so that one is hardly aware that he is listening to a monologist. By these devices the attention of the reader is held and the narrative interest is sustained from first to last.

The distinction of narrative audience and the narratee has been made by Peter. J. Raninowitz that the narrate is a textual construct identifiable through the teller's address, whereas the narrative audience is a role the real audience takes on as it assumes an observer position in the story world and regards the characters and events as real. The concept of narratee and narrative audience nicely complements each other with a characterized narratee in a novel.

Oral narration of the narrator, its continuity, development and success depends upon the interest evinced by the listener, the narrator's confidence in him and in his own ability to establish rapport with him. The questions implicitly raised by the auditor also form a part of the narrative. By asking the right questions at the appropriate moments Ratan's listener helps him to maintain the continuity of the story. Further, whenever he tends to digress or go off at a tangent from the main story, the young man's questions bring him back into it.

The novel enacts three stages in the human-divine comedy of Ratan. The pre-independence period is the dawn, the period of idealism, the phase of innocence, the post-

independence India is the broad daylight of experience, the inferno of corruption, the last part the area of expiation, and is the door to the purgatory. (Prasad 65)

In the view of Dhawan, for Joshi, the fiction is neither a source of entertainment nor an instrument of publishing some sets of ideas unlike Mulk Raj Anand, he does not use his genius for propagating any political or social creed, nor does he escape from the world of human struggle and seek aesthetic relief in an imaginary place as R K Narayan does. Joshi does not write fiction according to a formula, rather he grapples with the moments of acute trying situations in human life. He experiments with the medium of literature for studying man's predicament, particularly in the light of motives responsible for his action and the reaction of his actions on his psyche. In a particular context Joshi says that his novels are essentially attempts towards a better understanding of the world and of himself...if he did not write, he imagine he would use some other medium to carry on his exploration.

Genette's views on narrative structure states that the reconstruction of the story in narration can be chronological order or it can be anachronisms such as flashback (analepsis) and foreshadowing (prolepsis). Here the protagonist uses the techniques of analepsis in order to narrate his own story to the N C C cadet and confesses his guilt. He feels guilty over the involvement in the deeds of corruption. He hesitates to accept his guilt in front of anyone despite knowing the truth that his childhood friend Brigadier's life hangs over the truth of him. The novel ends with the anticipation of Ratan on the youth of the nation. "Mark my words, youth can conquer all but not the mischief of older men, in fact like me." (Joshi 127) "there is a hope as long as there are young men willing to learn from the follies of their elders. Willing to lean and ready to sacrifice. Willing to pay the price." (Joshi 144)

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:12 December 2018

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