

Anita Desai's Narration Executive Ability for Fictionalisation in her select Novels.

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Abstract:

Anita Desai has proceeded as a very serious, skilled and promising novelist in India today. Of all the contemporary Indian English Novelists, Anita Desai is undisputably the most strong novelist. She seriously sets herself to voice the mute calamities and helplessness of millions of men and women tormented by existentialist problems. As deprived of a throne queen of the inner-emotional world she rightly copies out away from the focus of attention, the illusion of her highly delicate protagonists. She has presented a new extent to the Indian novel in English by turning from outer to inner reality, G. Rai, has called her writer within real voice, Desai is well-known for her use of executive ability.

Keywords: Narrative, Executive, style, language and technique.

The word 'Executive Ability' is derived from the Greek word, 'Executive Ability' meaning 'an art'. The method embrace by a writer to show life in the process of living may be explained as the narrative executive ability. The quality of ability to express in words, the most important of all the desirable qualities of a novel, may be executed when there is consistency between the narration and the narrative executive ability. Executive ability is a matter of prevail concern for Anita Desai. She has not only brought many changes of introducing something new changes in it but also makes use of scene in a novel set in a time earlier than the main story and stream-of-consciousness executive ability. She expresses her purpose on the skill of writing in the following words:

“Writing has become such a deeply ingrained habit, it is like chain smoking, I chain-smoke with words, with books”.

Desai employs “the language of the inward to delineate the inner strain and crisis in the lives of her characters. That's why her novels are called forte of poetic delicacy of feeling. Desai's act of exporting of sensibility and distinctive technique made her novels celebrities. Desai uses the technique of contrast among diversified settings, situations, characters and even different stages of the same characters. Her achievements composed in beautifully recording the serious conflict chaos of her treated severely protagonist with a remarkable honesty and seriousness.

In her first novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) is a poetic novel with dense imagery. Her descriptions are poetic. It is a novel, the theme of which may be described as an incompatible marriage with the focus on the heroine's psyche. It is a psychological novel, probing the workings of Maya's psyche, the narrative is not chronologically straight. There is a constant to and fro movement between the past and the present in the mind of Maya. In this novel she does it by making use of the weird animal imagery which suggests her disturbed state of mind. Such imagery is to be seen in contrast to the majestic image of the peacock which is the central symbol of the novel as suggested by the title. It is a psychological study of the hypersensitive, childless, young protagonist Maya, who haunted by a childhood prophecy of disaster, kills her elderly detached husband in a fit of frenzy. Finally, she goes completely mad and commits suicide. This novel uses technique of fantasy. Desai described the inner loneliness of Maya and the vision described above tells of her mental state. It is creditable that in her first novel Anita Desai has given such inner inquiring of Maya's psyche. Thus the novelist is able to explore the psyche of Maya, who after killing her husband goes back to her father's house at Lucknow and retrogress to her childhood days, Lost in her toys and the happy world of the childhood.

In her second novel, *Voices in the City* (1965) is an interesting novel and the title itself is an example of technique. Some critics have observed that in the novel the city is important and is skillfully handled by her, they have compared it with that of Dicken's London and Hardy's Egdon Heath. A striking feature of Desai's narrative technique in *Voices in the City* is her use of the city of Calcutta. Calcutta portrayed as an oppressive city not only forms the back drop to the action but also becomes a character in the novel, exercising a powerful influence on all the major characters. Desai describes Calcutta at least twenty times in order to accomplish the difficult task of integrating it into the plot. In this novel, as in Desai's most other novels, symbolism and fantasy are used as significant narrative techniques. The city itself is used as a powerful symbol. Calcutta conceived as a force of creation, preservation and destruction is ultimately identified as a symbol of Mother Kali, the goddess of death and destruction. The city is described in much detail, an oppressive city, a dying city but all the same exercising a powerful influence on all the three characters. This has been amply made clear in the Amla section of the novel. The city has been described as a master city:

“.....that this monster city that lived no normal healthy, red-blooded life but one that was subterranean, under let. Stealthy and odorous of morality, had captured and enchanted-or disenchanting both her sister and brother” [VC: 150].

Anita Desai also uses the technique of symbolism in the novel. The city itself is symbolic but there is also nature symbolism in section III Amla. She has arrived recently in Calcutta to begin her professional career of commercial artist.

Desai's third novel *Bye-Bye, Black bird* (1971) deals with the theme of coloured immigrants in England. It presents their difficulties of adjustment and explores their fragmented psyche. Desai employs the flashback technique to narrate the situation leading to the marriage of Adit and Sarah. The decision of the three parts of the novel titled as “Arrival”, “Discovery and Recognition” and “Departure”, also involves clever narrative technique. This has helped Desai to express her themes and execute her ideas systematically and effectively.

Nostalgia is also used in this novel as a narrative technique. But it is used here a bit differently. Adit's nostalgia for the hilsa fish and the Bengal atmosphere is an expression of a need to belong and to bridge the gulf between London and Calcutta. For both Sarah and Adit reality exists at two schizophrenic planes, the two contrasting plants of the two cultural traditions and the merger takes place only with Adit's division to return to India.

Desai's latest novel *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) examines family life into contrasting cultures and draws two different world – Indian and American. Appropriately the novel is divided into two parts. The novel is a third – person narrative. The omniscient narrator 'shows' as well as 'tells' while projecting the themes. In this novel, Desai has not used the chronological narration.

In this novel Desai uses quotes from the Bible, Hindu devotional songs, American catchphrases frequently to lend local colour to her narrative. These enable her to capture the very spirit of the atmosphere she wants to create. Thus language is an important component of Desai's narrative design in this novel. She uses it adroitly as a tool to serve her thematic purpose and project her vision.

Though the technique of contrast Desai builds up images of two world, in every sense poles apart. Melanie who is cloyed with rich food in obviously intended to be a foil for Uma to hardly gets to eat any delicacies. While Melanie "feasts" Uma obviously "fasts". Uma is shackled by traditions and obligations but Melanie is free as a bird. These contrasts are, however, merely, superficial. Deep down, they are both famished. Fasting and Feasting, as Arun learns, are merely the two sides of the same coin. *Fasting, Feasting* is a carefully balanced novel of contrasts: between foods; between life of Indian family and American family; between lack of ambition [Uma and Melanie] and too much ambition [Arun and Rod]. But, what the novel ultimately reveals are the similarities rather than the differences.

The fictional techniques of Anita Desai in her different novels shows that she uses different fictional techniques according to the demands of the story. From the point of view of the technique what is important is not innovation or novelty but how effective the technique is in conveying the meaning and narrating the story effectively. In her style, Anita Desai is very much occupied with the skill of communication, irrespective of 'the nature of experience', embodied in her novels. Anita Desai's penchant for sound of words persists in all her novels. She is carried away by the music in words. Desai's narrative technique is an apt vehicle of her themes. There is a harmonious balance between the form and content of this novel, which, as in Desai's other novels, contributes significantly to the projection of a unified artistic vision. It is therefore quite clear that Desai's technique is an apt vehicle of her themes.

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