An Analysis of the Narrative Techniques Used in the Novels of Kavita Kané

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ABSTRACT

Narrative techniques are integral components of a novel. They are the methods used by the writer to tell his story to the readers. They serve the purpose of making the story interesting, entertaining and comprehensible. "Narrative techniques are the methods and devices, writers use to tell stories, whether in works of literature, film, theatre or even oral stories. Many techniques work upon specific uses of phrases, punctuation or exaggerations of description, but nearly every storyteller, regardless of genre or style employs a few foundational techniques. (Cascio) There are a number of narrative techniques at the writer's disposal such as point of view, flashback, imagery, subversion of myths, setting, symbolism, dialogue, simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification, irony, hyperbole, story within story and so on. The present paper deals with the narrative techniques employed by Kavita Kane in her writings.

Keywords: Narrative techniques, point of view, flashback, imagery, subversion of myth.

INTRODUCTION:-

Narrative is simply a story or a tale. It is an account of events, incidents and experiences which are organised in a particular order. These events may either be fictional or nonfictional. Memoir, biography, travelogue, diary, autobiography and historical works are nonfictional narratives. While fairy tale, fable, legend, thriller novel etc. are fictional narrative.

The word 'narrative' has its origin in the Latin verb "narrare" which means "to tell". This term can be used both as a noun and as an adjective. According to oxford dictionary, the term narrative as a noun refers to "the description of events in a story" [8]. As an adjective, narrative means "characterised by or relating to storytelling". It can be said that anything that tells a story can fall under the category of narrative. Gerald Prince defines narrative as "recounting a product and process, object and act, structure and structuration of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two or several narrators to one, two or several narrates" [14]. The term technique refers to a particular way doing something. It is the way or method of performing an activity. Each art involves one or more techniques. It is the basic requirement of an art. It is the mode of artistic execution. Both art and technique are inter-related. If there is an art, there is a technique for sure. Without technique there can be no art.

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There are a number of narrative techniques at the writer's disposal such as point of view, flashback, imagery, subversion of myths, setting, symbolism, dialogue, simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification, irony, hyperbole, story within story and so on. The present chapter deals with the narrative techniques employed by Kavita Kane in her writings. She has tried her hand in various techniques to communicate her thoughts or to translate her experiences and thoughts into art. These techniques have added beauty and charm to her fiction. The techniques used by her in her narratives are as follows-

Point of view or POV is one of the most important narrative technique used by her while narrating her fiction. Point of view is the perspective from which narrative is told. It is the lens through which audience is made to view the story. Carl Beckson and Arthur Ganz define point of view as "the point from which a story is seen or told." (Beckson Karl and Arthur Ganz) [8] There are many kinds of POV. A story can be told from first person point of view, second person point of view, third person point of view and mixed POV or multiple POV. While using the first person POV, the writer writes story from the point of view of the protagonist. The second person POV is less common. A writer rarely chooses this POV because it is difficult for the writer to write a story using this POV. Similarly it is hard for the reader to read. Herein, the narrator uses the pronoun 'you' to refer to the main character. The most

preferable POV is the third person POV which is commonly seen in most of the fictions. Here, the characters are referred to by using their names or pronous like 'he', 'she' and 'they'. Third person point of view is of two types- third person omniscient POV and third person limited POV. In the third person omniscient POV , the narrator has the knowledge of each and everything. He/She knows everything about every character and every incidents. He narrates experiences, feelings and actions of each character without being partial. On the other hand, in the third person limited POV, the narrator is limited to a single character. He knows only about a single character. He narrates the story from the point of view of that single character.

Kavita Kane, being a feminist mythofiction writer, brings out the voice of overlooked and overshadowed mythical female characters. To narrate, the story of her female protagonists, she uses the third person omniscient point of view which is the most convenient one. From the beginning till the end, the whole story is narrated from this point of view. The third person omniscient narrator of her first novel *Karna's Wife* (2013) [1] starts with the narration of the vision of Karna seen by Uruvi in her dream which haunts her since the day she has seen Karna first time. From the very starting, the narrator has made it clear to the readers that Uruvi is the female protagonist of the story and she is in love with Karna. Her two novels entitled "*Lanka's Princess*" [3] and "*Ahalya's Awakening*" [5] are buildungsroman novel. Both of them recount the journey of their respective heroines from childhood to adulthood. The mode of narration, here, also is third person omniscient POV. So is with her other novels namely "*Sita's Sister*" (2014),[2]. "*Menaka's Choice*" (2015) [3]. and "*Fisher Queen's Dynasty*" (2017) [4]. The stories of Sita, Menaka and Satyavati are narrated via third person omniscient narrator. Kane has consciously used the third person omniscient narrator in all of her novels. The omniscient narrator does not play a part in the story but knows all the facts, actions and even the inner thoughts of the characters. The author uses this mode as it is the most objective and most reliable one than other modes of narration. Besides, sometimes it is found in her fictions that the characters themselves present their own third person point of view.

Flashback is another effective tool of narration used by authors to recount the events that have occurred chronologically earlier than the present story take place. It connects the chain of events via introducing the background story. It is an insertion of a scene, which is related to the scene being narrated. A flashback, according to J.A. Cuddon(2013),[9] is "a term which probably derives from the cinema, and which is now also used to describe any scene or episode in a play, novel, story or poem which is inserted to show events that happened at an earlier time. It is frequently used in modern fiction.

Kavita Kane has very efficiently employed this technique to recount the past episodes. She has used this tool in her mythofictions like *Karna's Wife*, *Menaka's Choice* and *Ahalya's Awakening*. Flashback scenes have been consistently inserted throughout *Karna's Wife*. Actually the novel starts with the flashback itself. The heroine Uruvi, the princess of Pukeya is seen sleeping in her quiet "marbled bedroom" and having a sweet dream of Karna, the hero of the narrative. The memory of Karna haunts her repeatedly leaving her restless and awake everytime. "She had seen the same dream. Again. Over and over again. And each time the persistently vivid dream spawned a haunted restlessness, pushing her into uneasy wakefulness."

Imagery is an important narrative technique. It is commonly used by poets, novelists, dramatists and story writer. The term 'imagery' has its origin in an old French word 'imagerie' meaning 'figure'. In English, it was first used in the middle of the 14th century. It is the vivid description of the experiences, actions, characters and places through the medium of words in such a way that create a mantle image in the mind of readers. It enables the readers to imagine the characters, emotions, situations and settings of the story. While going through the story, the readers can experience exactly the same written in the text. The aim of imagery is to portray the sensational and emotional experiences within the text. It uses the descriptive and sometimes figurative language that appeals to the senses of the readers.

It is significant to remember that several writers and critics have given distinct definitions to the term 'imagery'. This may help the readers learn about the meaning of the term 'imagery'. Cecil Day Lewis, in his work entitled "The Poetic Image"(1947) defines as " In its simplest terms, it is a picture made out of words. An epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image ; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it descriptive, but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality." Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in their book "The Theory of Literature (1949) point out , " Imagery is a topic which belongs both to psychology and to literary study. In psychology, the word image means a mental reproduction, a memory, a part of sensational or perpetual, experience, not necessarily visual." According to Karl Beckson and Arthur Gunz , "In general, the term imagery refers to the use of language to represent descriptively things, actions or even abstract ideas."(A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms:A Dictionary 1961) [8]

Kavita Kané has mastered imagery. She is deft in handling this technique of narration. She is an expert in creating the scenic effect. She describes the scene in such a way that seems to occur in front of the eyes of the reader. Her words are so powerful that evoke all the senses of readers. She has very finely presented the images. She gives sufficient detail and description of events, situation and characters in such a manner that the reader can easily and vividly imagine what is happening. The description is so adequate and concise that it appeals to the senses of the readers. Her efforts to provide as much detail as possible are really admirable and remarkable. She tries to capture every aspect of scene to make it more vivid and alive. Instead of being dull, simple and monotonous in her writing, she chooses to be descriptive and detailed in her writing. Her writings provide a vibrant experience for the readers.

Her works are full of images. The description of the palace decorated for the swayamwara of the heroine Uruvi in Karna's Wife is as follows-"The palace resembled a floral palanquin. Flaming marigolds and crimson hibiscus with fragrant jasmine flowers, strung together into thick garlands, festooned each cornice and corridor of the palace. The perfume of the threaded flowers merged with the fresh scent of the dew moistened earth. She heard the soft twitter of birds, the rustle of the gentle breeze in the garden. Finally, she saw the crimson light signaling the birth of a new day, and stepped inside for her bridal bath. Kunti was waiting for her holding a silver bowl of sandalwood paste." The words are so precise and well chosen that they are enough to appeal not only to the sense of sight but also to the sense of smell and hearing.

The novel "Sita's Sister" [2] opens with a visual image of four sisters namely Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Shurtakirti playing hide and seek in their private garden. Urmila has found out Mandavi and Shurtakirti "from their respective hideouts- a tall trucked, high-branched tree and a chest..." but exhausted to search Sita as Sita always chooses "the most unexpected hideaways." The statement helps the reader conjure up an image of four sisters playing in the vast garden.

Kané offers intrinsic details of the colours, hair, eyes, height and temperament of the characters that makes it easy for the readers to create a mental image of characters. "Sita- elegant and ethereal, whisper- slim and delicately framed, always meticulous and impeccably dressed...Shurtakirti was smart and striking with her long, thick mane of curly hair framing a small, sharply cut face, illuminated by her large, dark intense eyes... Urmila's fetching roundness blunted her height. She was like the colours she was blending so dexterously- warm vibrant and sparkling, her quicksilver temper included."

Subversion of myth is one of the favourite techniques of the mythofiction writers like Kavita Kané. She has subverted the age old classical myths and presented them with a new freshness. Myths show the deep curiosity that humans have for the world and for themselves, as well as the attempts they have made to relate to and comprehend one other. It also demonstrates the sincerity of an evocative metaphor. There is a recent trend of subverting myths and mythological worlds to create new ones that suit the view point of the writers. As a result, by giving the myths a fresh organic significance and relevance in the contemporary world, they might be seen as producing innovations.

Feminist revisionist mythmakers have de-mythified and consequently re-mythicised the popular myths by retelling them from the feminist perspective. They have broken down the stereotypical image of women as docile and submissive and portrayed them as strong independent individuals. Francis Babbage in her work, "In Revisioning myth: Modern and Contemporary Drama by Women" points out, "Myths and practices of rewriting can be means of revealing shared attitudes as experience." [9] Kavita Kané is one of the emerging feminist revisionist mythmakers who has narrated the age-old stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* from feminist point of view. She has attempted to explain the conflict found in the narratives that have essentially shaped the mindset of society. In an interview to the Hindu, she has advocated the importance of mythology in contemporary world- "If myths reflect the socio-cultural ethos of earlier times, they can also be used to contemporarise those same issues in today's world. Actually nothing has changed. Love, rivalry, disappointment, war, anger, greed, all these emotions still exist. There's a chance of an alternative perspective by looking at the epics through women and minor characters at that."(The Hindu)

Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen challenges Vyasa's interpretation of the *Mahabharata* by re-creating Karna's journey through the eyes of his second wife, Uruvi. Kané has already made it clear that the character Uruvi is the creation of her own mind. It is extremely important to take into consideration that, according to author's own declaration, Uruvi is a fictitious character who was created in order to satisfy certain requirements outlined in the work. In the persona of Uruvi, Kané demonstrates the ability to confront societal customs as well as the strength to oppose them. Uruvi is a space that Kané builds so that there will be an opportunity for more brazen protests against long- standing traditions. Kané includes in her character charts both the possibility of unorthodox alterations and the possibility of alternative interpretations. The way in which, she has blended Uruvi's story with the *Mahabharata* is really remarkable.

Sita's Sister" [2] is the next novel by Kavita Kané which is a re-creation of the *Ramayana* wherein the whole story is narrated through the point of view of Sita's sister i.e. Urmila. She receives little attention in the epic. She is merely mentioned as Lakshman's wife sleeping for fourteen years. The myth has been twisted by Kané, who has brought her back to life as a heroic figure holding the fort while everything else is collapsing. She has been elevated by Kané to the title role of a living heroine who keeps the family of Ram tied together in the midst of severe crisis. Thus, Kané has challenged the stereotypical perception of women in mythology. In the great epic not much is said about Urmila's sacrifice. She is only depicted as a wife who chose not to accompany her husband into exile and as having embraced slumber for fourteen years.

The author, in her third novel "Menaka's Choice" [3] presents an interesting subversion of the Menaka myth. The mythical Menaka is generally perceived as an apsara, who was sent down from heaven to Earth by Indra to interrupt the deep meditations by great sages like Vishwamitra. However, Kané's perspective is distinct as she described Menaka as a woman having her choices. Here, Menaka chooses to marry and become a mother. Her Menaka is bold and outspoken who raises her voice against Indra's patriarchy and leads her life as per her own choices.

"Lanka's Princess" [4] by Kavita Kané subverts the Surpankha myth. Surpankha has been stigmatised for a very long time as an embodiment of all that is vile and immoral; yet, the author Kané presents a marvellously original perspective on the character in her novel. Kané retells the story of Surpankha from feminist perspective. As Madhavi Arekar writes in her research paper, "Surpankha: The Subversive Journey of a Woman Unheard in Kavita Kané's novel Lanka's Princess" (2018) [7] " Kavita Kané, in her novel Lanka's Princess lends a feminist implication to the unheard voice of Surpankha. She reshapes her position from that of an ugly, adulterous, disfigured ogress, in Valmiki's meta narrative the *Ramayana* to that of an assertive, bold and a strong woman with a clear voice who has survived hatred, loss and has faced rejection, only to rise up again and fight."

Satyavati's image is also subverted by the author in "The Fisher Queen Dynasty" [5]. It could be tempting to point out that Satyavati is "more sinned against than sinning." In Vyasa's the *Mahabharata,* she is just shown as a callous woman who forces Devavrat to swear celibacy so that her son might rule Hastinapur in the future. Her thoughts and feelings are never revealed. Shashi Deshpande in the afterword to "The Stone Women" asserts, "...the basic problem is that not only myths have originated with men, their interpretation has also been in male hands." Male authors' writings are primarily cantered on men and their stories. As a result, female authors like Kané bravely reveal the unwritten tales from a woman's heart. Kané highlights the injustices that have affected Satyavati's life and shaped her behaviour. Kané's Satyavati is a feminist who speaks out against the injustice and fights for her sexual, gender and political identities. Kané sheds light on her self awareness and self-exploration i.e. her quest for identity.

Ahalya's Awakening [6] is not simply about the rishi who turned his wife into a stone or about a lady who regained her human form after gaining the blessings of Lord Ram. Rather, it is about both of these people and more. This book " traces the paradox of its eponymous protagonist, who deemed promiscuous, and yet , is seen as a symbol of chastity". The author herself says the following about Ahalya: " She is an enigma almost a silent woman, known essentially for her seduction by Indra, her husband Rishi Gautam's curse against her infidelity, and her liberation from that curse by Ram."

Use of Hindi words is another special feature of Kané's narrative style. To give the novels mythological touch and Indian flavour, she deliberately uses some Hindi words. Her works are heavily loaded with Hindi vocabulary. This technique really aims to attract the interest of those readers who love mythology. She is able to authentically reproduce an Indian mood by employing Hindi terms. This method accurately captures the Indian ambience in her works. Hindi words such as 'kavach','kundal', 'anuloma' 'pratiloma', 'dushta', 'chathushtayam', 'dhura-abhimanam', 'ekvastra', 'niyoga', 'mantras', 'kshetraja', 'vyabhicharodhava', 'ichamaran', 'maharathi', 'annadanam' etc. are dispersed throughout "Karna's Wife". Words like 'mahurat', 'uttar Falguni nakshatra', 'yagna', 'agnihotra puja', 'Mangal dosh', 'yagnakunda' are seen in "Sita's Sister". Menaka's Choice is heavily loaded with such words as 'angavastra', 'prathvilok', 'pashupatastra', 'agnisastra', 'vayuastra', 'santapanastra', 'tapas', 'brahmabal', 'rajasbala', 'tapabal', 'chakshushi', 'yagna', 'pratishtisti', 'siddhi', 'swarams and shlokas', 'pranik nadi', 'chakra', 'vidya', 'atman', 'aum', 'kamandalam', 'shakuns'(Prologue) etc. Hindi words such as 'Angavastra', 'yakshini', 'triumvirate', 'patalok', 'viman', 'laghima', 'tapas', 'yagna' are found in "Lanka's Princess". Hindi terms as 'angavastra', 'antariya', 'anvikshiki', 'shastras', 'viman', 'shravan', 'uttariya', 'kamarbandh', 'Daseyi', 'niyog' and so on are employed in "The Fisher Queen Dynasty" to create Indian background. Last but not the least "Ahalya's Awakening" is also replete with Hindi words such as 'shishya', 'Madhu vidhya', 'samyami', 'pradakshina', 'parikrama', 'divya soundarya murti', 'akhanda', 'manas', 'param shivabhakt', 'aadarsh daapatyam', 'devlok', 'tapas shakti', 'agnipariksha' etc.

 CONCLUSION:

While concluding it can aptly be said that the author has deftly employed various techniques to narrate the old mythological tales in a new vibrant colour. She has beautifully attempted to communicate the actual substance of her works using different techniques of narration. She has done justice to her narration. Her simple, colloquial yet graceful style is really remarkable. Her narrative strategy gives the genre of mythofiction a new vitality and depth.

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