Meaning and Method in Salman Rushdie's The Enchantress of Florence

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Abstract: The way in which, the concept of postcolonialism is understood depends to a greater extent colonialism on the particular narrative or explanatory scheme such as cultural, or theoretical and the various techniques employed by Rushdie to execute them. Narration is always an act of power as the narrator defines the narration to his will - simultaneously the act of narration is crucial to the narrator's identity because it is also the process of creating the process of becoming. These act of narration is crucial structural and thematic of the novel The Enchantress of Florence. Here the non-linear narrative is the main element, because it is a disjointed or disrupted narrative, out of chronological order is portrayed and the human memory is recalled by using the power of language.

Key Words: Deconstruct, Non-linear narrative, Disjointed, Disjointed or Disrupted narrative, fact and fiction

Postcolonial writers have influenced the critical and the creative aspects of Indian English fiction. The post 1980 generation of Indian writers' concept is to cover a larger canvas of emotional, political, cultural, geographical and historical issues. There is an enthusiasm of imagination, life, desire and confidence, developing rich, mischievous language, funny, comic and humorous stories that satisfactorily approach that rein their writings. There has been an awareness of national and international growth reflected in themes woven around the displaced, marginalised modern man and uninhibited modifications in the variety. These works are advance in theme, use of language, especially English, style and technique.

Rushdie uses magical realism to connect the reality with the fantasy. The narrative is non linear, in which there is a deviation from the normal way of storytelling. Rushdie uses language to construct a world according to the given cultural and socio-historical context, instead of representing or expressing stable reality. The construction language is used to deconstruct and destabilize the established systems of understanding.

The way in which, the concept of postcolonialism is understood depends to a greater extent colonialism on the particular narrative or explanatory scheme such as cultural, or theoretical and the various techniques employed by Rushdie to execute them. Narration is always an act of power as the narrator defines the narration to his will - simultaneously the act of narration is crucial to the narrator's identity because it is also the process of creating the process of becoming. These act of narration is crucial structural and thematic of the novel The Enchantress of Florence. Here the non-linear narrative is the main element, because it is a disjointed or disrupted narrative, out of chronological order is portrayed and the human memory is recalled by using the power of language.

A melange of reality and fantasy, the novel The Enchantress of Florence can be viewed as containing more magic than realism for “magic was all around and would not be denied” (318). It considers the essential harmony between the real and the fantastic, contending that the two sixteenth-century civilisations, the Florentine and the Mughal, dwelt in a magical world as passionately as they inhabited the material world. Jodha, Akbar’s favourite consort is a figment of his imagination summoned into reality in the text. “The passion and power of Tansen’s song scorches his own body as it lights up the lamps in the neighborhood” (195). Water prophecies come to pass. For instance, Anup Talao the private pool of the emperor, the life-giving lake of Fatehpur Sikri reputed to herald a warning when the kingdom is in trouble, dries up driving the monarch away from his beloved city. A glimpse of the Emperor Akbar at his window and being glimpsed by him in turn to miraculous cures like this, “Glimpsing transferred the emperor’s potency to the Glimpsed” (318). A glimpse of the Emperor Akbar at his window and being glimpsed by him in turn lead to miraculous cures.

As Rushdie indulges in the events of past time and mythical time, he is also conscious of the spatio-temporal aspects of the present time. The Enchantress of Florence is not from traditional epic rather from the history of the Mughal Empire. He traces the unending storytelling and multiple histories of the East and the West. The timeless past events haunt the forgotten character/figure of Mughal namely Qara Koz. Rushdie views the time in the fantasy world. The actual world is considered as phantom. The mirage nature of time is brought out in the entire novel.

The novel is a historical account of the visit of a stranger with multiple names Uccello or Mogor or Vespucci to the Mughal Emperor Akbar’s court. He claims to be a distant relative of Akbar, born of an exiled princess and Italian from Florence. The novel discloses as well as reflected the mutual mystery, suspicion and mistrust between the East and the West. It offers interesting versions of different historical events, individuals and societies of different spacio-temporality. On the other hand, he takes a forgotten character of Mughal Empire, namely Qara Koz to build up his own historical world setting time of Akbar and Niccolo Machiavelli. The time frame does not match strictly because the life time of Niccolo Machiavelli is from 1469 to 1527 and the life time of Mughal Emperor
Akbar is from 1542 to 1605. The time period of both Akbar and Machiavelli cannot have been in contact with one another. However, the narrator of the novel spins through story within story, thereby brings their lives, ideas into one context.

The novel has three parts: the first is about Mogor dell’ Amore’s venture to tell stories to Akbar; the second relates to the story of three friends in Florence, Italy; and the third is about the mysterious tales of Qara Koz, a forgotten Mughal princess whose beauty enchant all who see her. As the narrative develops, the fusion of fact and fiction, imaginary and real, time and timeless haunts the entire novel. This imaginary or fictional world meets both the facts and real life personages such as Amerigo Vespucci, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Botticelli.

Rushdie has extensively dealt with the concept of time. The novel presents story within a story like a mirror image in the novel, which interweaves, moves back and forth across time and space. It forms a platform for the fictionalised Akbar the Great, to ponder over the deep questions of humanity, individual, group, art, religion, culture, politics and time. He is both politically powerful and intellectually great. The novelist explores the concept of time and the imagination or metaphysical reality through the fictional character. Akbar the Great and the city in which he has ruled appear imaginary. The real things which are related to space – time seem as fantasy, “Sikri would always look like a mirage” (33). Both the countries cross “the border between sanity and delirium, between what was fanciful and what was real” (33). Rushdie has made the imaginary things happen more real than the real ones.

The narration of the stories is progressing between times and places. As far as India is concerned, the time is the Mughal emperor’s grandfather Babar and Akbar’s own time. In the case of Europe, especially Italy, Florence and the “New World,” this is the time of Machiavelli. The novel presents the parallel time to that of Akbar’s reign when three Jesuits are sent to Akbar’s palace in 1580. This serves an example of timelessness by mixing up various spacio-temporalities. The sense of time deceives the narrator; Niccolo Vespucci believes to be what he is not, Akbar’s uncle, “Niccolo Vespucci, who was raised to believe that he was born of a princess was the child of a mirror’s child” (442-43). On the contrary, this belief enables him to tell Akbar, his fantastic story, which integrates among other events, Machiavelli’s and Akbar’s time. The novel portrays a significant combination of culture and cultural history by mirroring places and times which are different at the same time as similar as in the words of Akbar, “The curse of the human race is not that we are so different from one another, but that we are so alike” (392). The novel portrays a significant combination of cultures and cultural history by mirroring places and times which are different at the same time as similar as in the words of Akbar.

The narrative has different narrations from dissimilar parts of the world, such as Italy and India. They do not travel across space, but also across time, generations. These stories show the relationship between one continent to another continent. They establish continuities. Moreover, Rushdie traces through the travelling stories “the genesis and the history of the forces of globalization and the problems’ that they bring in their wake. Though the novel is fully set in historical past time, it exhibits the present time as a result of the East and the West comes face to face with each other in the novel. According to Dersiewicz, “Salman Rushdie’s The Enchantress of Florence” avers as “the purest expression in a faraway time, the 1500s, and dividing its pages between two storied lands. Rushdie is working here with the twinned powers of erotic charm and artistic imagination. Men enslave women and are enslaved by in turn” (2). Though the novel is fully set in historical past time, it exhibits the present time as a result of the East and the West which come face to face with each other.

All the selected novels deal with contemporary time from the perception of past time in order to visualize the future time better. Rushdie hopes to usher that the socio - political phenomenon of human suffering in the real world is victimised with fantasy. Rushdie gives life to Akbar who speaks of the contemporary issues in his time which are relevant today. He believes in religion in public, but doubts in private. Rushdie’s novels function of the interplay between real and unreal. They blur the distinction between the historical narrative and historical fictional narrative. This is exhibited in The Enchantress of Florence, which blends history and fiction in its own words, “the visionary, revelatory dream–poetry of the quotations not yet has been crushed by blinkered, prosy fact” (12). In Rushdie’s novels there is an interplay between the historical narrative and historical fictional narrative.

The psychological exploration of the character Akbar reveals his longing for religious tolerance. Through the character Akbar, the novel expresses certain hope in religion where there is always difference and violence. On the other hand, the religious faith can be sorted out without violence. The novel seems to exhibit Rushdie’s interest in monolithism and storytelling. Akbar experiments with faith. The characters are imagined, yet given “space” and relationship. As noted above, painters disappear into their own paintings. Accordingly a magical twist is made in the novel. The real fact of difference and violence is always present everywhere. To rectify it, the values of the religious faith can be followed without violence.

Rushdie probably longs for the international recognition of Indian literatures. This strikes a vantage point where translation is focused. Translation within regional languages into English and will perhaps make the rich imaginative, powerful works of regional literatures to the international gaze. Rushdie can easily be refuted by citing examples from each vernacular language from every state of India. The works of regional languages exhibit profound human quality as well as everlasting quality.

The place and its association with the persons make a mode of survival, which gives the person a sense of belonging to the place. An awareness of tradition, culture, history and society provides the persons with a root and an identity through which they see the world and their own place in the world. Rushdie has generously offered the history of India and other Asian countries along with the people and their culture and language in a personalized manner. He is a specialist in presenting the parallel between the events in the history of the nation and the life of an individual. Disregarding the cause and effect order towards a logical conclusion his novels move forward and backward with everlasting deviation from sub narratives. This skillful interweaving of the past, the present and the future with an identical mixture is a conscious approach for embedding tales within tales.

Works Cited