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Narrative And Semantic Dimensions In Nayyar Masood's Short Stories

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Abstract

In the eighth decade of the twentieth century, a notable addition to Urdu fiction was Nayyar Masood emerged as prominent Urdu fiction writer. a talented short story writer. Masood's narrative style, structure, and themes were influenced by the contemporary wave of modernism in literature, characterized by symbolism, stream of consciousness, surrealism, and abstraction. During this period, many short story writers adhered to critics' expectations. Nayyar Masood skilfully evaded such constraints and introduced innovative fictional techniques like essayistic narratives, mythical elements, magical realism, autobiographical elements, sketch writings and monologues in his stories. These unique techniques endowed Masood's short stories with distinctive narrative and semantic dimensions. This research article aims to elucidate the distinct traits of Nayyar Masood's short stories and his contributions towards Urdu Literature.

Keywords: Themes, fictional techniques, modernism, realism, surrealism, Autographical, Monologue, abstraction, contemporary, contribution, endowed, elucidate, semantic dimensions, consciousness, influenced, innovative, expectations, Influence, constraints, evaded, mythical elements, distinctive .

Introduction

Nayyar Masood holds a prominent position in the fields of short stories, drama, sketch writings, research, travelogues, translations and biographies.

He gave a new direction to various genres of Urdu literature especially short stories with his creativity and artistic insight. His short stories have been published in numerous literary journals, particularly in "Shab Khoon". The first collection, "Seemiya," was published in 1947. Other short story collections include "Etr-e-Kafoor", "Ta'oos Chaman Ki Maina", "Ganjafa" and "Dhool bun" which are the complete essence and soul of Nayyar Masood's entire life. Nayyar Masood has drawn raw material for his stories from postmodern short stories techniques by considering style, demeanor, and subject matter. The time in which he began to write short stories is an era of modernism, characterized by various artistic challenges such as symbolism, consciousness, surrealism, abstractionism and other such technical innovations that different critics had imposed on short story writers. A group of critics adamantly restricted writers from deviating from modern stylistic norms and themes, compelling authors willingly or unwillingly to produce the type of such stories favored by these critics. The pressure of various magazines was very high due to which the problem of publishing short stories was also faced. When Nayyar Masood wrote short stories under these circumstances, he deliberately moved away from modernist conventions and adopted postmodern short story techniques, including flashback, essayistic short stories, narrative style, magical realism, illusory realism, autobiographic techniques, sketch writings and monologue.

With respect to genre structure, traditional short story tends to maintain the story at the superficial level with a typical beginning, middle, and end. Characters are often identified by their actions associated with their names, and there are usually elements of suspense and mystery interwoven throughout. The setting of the time is clearly defined, yet these fundamental elements are notably absent in Nayyar Masood's stories domain. If present, they appear much later or in minimal form. Consequently, conventional frameworks prove insufficient for deciphering this narrative enigma, giving rise to terms like "Nayyarism." An author who does not fit into predefined molds and elucidates the reasons behind his unique perspective presents an extraordinary situation. Here, consider the perspective of Waris Alvi:

"Return confidently, but you will come back like the dumb man who ate jagged. This is the ascent of ambiguity." (1)

A notable feature of Nayyar Masood's short stories is the use of multi-toned and subtly revealing expressions skillfully. Basically, we are surprised to see this short story that what kind of is it? But this short story is a proof of rigorous efforts which depicts that short story can be written even on the basis of language and expression. Nayyar Masood draws inspiration for his stories from the overall ambiance of fable and Masnavi. This unique narrative approach by Nayyar

Masood is something we don't often encounter in traditional short stories. Nayyar Masood's skill lies in it and he uses fable and Masnavi's atmosphere along with modern techniques, marking a truly pioneering achievement. His techniques are seamlessly woven into his prose. As we delve into his stories, we immerse ourselves in a captivating realm filled with mysteries and enchantments, characterized by corridors, arches, palaces, carvings on the walls of the palace, depictions of diverse animals—all these factors contribute to create an enchanting atmosphere. Furthermore, when a short story of one tale subtly emerges within another tale, it gives off an *Alif Laila* vibe, being presented across different episodes. The short stories such as "Sultan Mustafa ka waaqiya Navees", "Ta'oos Chaman Ki Maina", "Marasla", "Waq'fa", and "Sassan Punjam" intricately lead us step by step into a world of wonder, unfolding a rich narrative environment before us. On one hand, it is clear that his narratives are predominantly influenced by the traditional Masnavi and short stories but the hue is not exactly as seen in the typical Fable and Masnavi. He presents such narrative that subconsciously takes us into the ambiance of short story and Masnavi. Ahsan Ayyubi, while discussing this particular hue in Nayyar Masood's narrative in an article, also hints at the distinction that he has established with respect to fable and Masnavi.

"If we were to articulate the distinctive qualities of Nayyar Masood's short story narratives in a more colloquial manner, it would be imperative to highlight all the specific elements that contribute to the essence of these short stories. For instance, there is a deep fusion of wonder and unease that runs through all his short stories, yet it deviates from traditional fables. The distinguishing element between these two is completely contrasting. In traditional tales, details of ghosts, fairies, thunderous voices, and supernatural forces that evoke fear and wonder are portrayed vividly, whereas in Nayyar Masood's stories, a sense of fear emerges from the subtleties of silence. The narrative in fables may seem dubious, but in Nayyar Masood's stories, the narrator's every statement is based on reality and its authenticity cannot be dismissed." (2)

When we delve into "Ta'oos Chaman Ki Maina", the description of the garden here appears to us just like it would be narrated within a story. The names of different birds, the dancing peacocks—these elements imbue the atmosphere of this tale with a distinctly narrative quality. Similarly, in "Dast-e-Shifa" and "Illachabaig", numerous characters appear to embark on adventures, presenting a narrative that seems to be inspired by classic literature. Consider an example from "Seemiya":

"Now different shapes invaded. A falcon spread out its wings on one side was striding forward a few steps away from me, moving in a way that made it uncertain from which direction he was approaching me. Behind him, at certain height, hippopotamus had started to open its mouth. Right alongside it was a draped saddle being dragged by a few desert mice. All of this was coming towards me and behind all of this the blackest of all, a six legged animal whose four legs were shorter and two long. Its mouth was downward and its back raised from it considerably four times." (3)

"Sultan Muzaffar ka waqia Navees" is another example of Nayyar Masood's captivating narrative technique.

"At that moment, I witnessed a woman rushing towards the sultan. He swiftly pulled her behind him and leaned back to grab a dagger. Abruptly, the flapping of wings resonated loudly and a bird swooped down towards the sultan and the woman. I was sure that he would hit with the wall and tumble down but instead, he vigorously flapped his wings and vanished in the sky." (4)

Nayyar Masood employed various techniques to produce his narratives including the power of prose, avoidance of non-poetic language, restraint from similes and metaphors, non-emotional prose, specific words, simple elements, and non-figurative language. In other words, the language is free from the burden of ornamentation and embellishment and this simplicity lies in his short stories which are just like illusion. In the intrication of prose, the reader encounters various meanings which is not just a one-time reading experience but can be fruitful with subsequent readings. Nayyar Masood was a Persian scholar and this language is more significant than Urdu fiction. This is why he has made very little use of the tradition of Urdu short stories that begins with Prem Chand and extends to Manto, Krishan Chander, Bedi, Asmat Chughtai and Intizar Hussain. In his short stories, the ambiance of dialogues, characters and expressions exudes a purely Eastern essence. Yet, intertwined with this Eastern flavor, his unique artistic expression bears the imprint of Western literary luminaries including Kafka, Dostoevsky, Edgar Allan Poe, Borges, Carl Jung, Freud and Milan Kundera. The brilliance of all these elements is conveyed with great clarity in Nayyar Masood's narrative. Imitation of his short story has not been possible until today.

In Nayyar Masood's narratives, the non-emotional aspect of the language is a remarkable artistic skill where no matter what event occurs, the character neither speaks intensely under the burden of grief or displays excessive jubilation in moments of happiness.

There is a lot of maintenance in the use of language. A couple of words are used in such a way that events are expressed. There is no anxiety and noise at the level of language and expression. Consider example from "Waq'fa":

"My father didn't live long. In his final days, he remained mostly silent, only for sometimes he groaned. Despite my persistent inquiries, he never told me what was hurting him. Once, when I asked insistently and expressed frustration at his silence, he simply responded, 'nothing is known.'" (5)

To bring uniqueness and meaning to his narrative, Nayyar Masood divides the short stories into different fragments and later intersects them together in a manner that suggests he has meticulously numbered and dispersed these pieces. His short stories are exactly in accordance with a structuralist perspective that contains a multitude of symbolic significances. For example, at many levels there are symbolic remarks. We all know that the certainty of any symbol is not absolute, as different symbols are used for different purposes in different nations. In fact, this plethora of symbolic meanings strengthens the semantic system. Consider some examples:

"Finally, I stood up, I gestured to my partner to start walking." (6)

"Holding his hand, I pulled him towards me and gestured to woman with the other hand to flee." (7)

"He put a finger on his lips and silenced me." (8)

"Yousaf wanted to say something, but Laalchand silenced him with a gesture. " (9)

Many of his characters seem to be constantly silent for the sake of enhancing the semantic dimensions of short stories. Many characters seem to lose their mental balance. Some characters appear to be afflicted with a mysterious illness. All these elements allow the reader's intervention within the story. These characters are all victims of societal diseases and trauma but they do not reveal their afflictions instead, they hide them due to which the reader does not suffer from finality but he becomes curious.

The uniqueness of his stories lies in the ability to fictionalize many historical figures. When these historical characters become part of the short stories, they don't merely remain confined to the realm of spot history rather they become part of literary history, therefore enhancing many short stories even more beautiful and accessible than before. Look at the character of Kale Khan in "Ta'oos Chaman Ki Maina" or Hakeem Syed Fazal Ali Rizvi in "Dast-e-Shifa." These are all historical events that Nayyar Masood has incorporated into the plots of his stories. Due to an interconnected narrative system within the text, one story feels intricately linked to another, creating a sense of continuity where elements from one story seamlessly blend into others, enriching the overall reading experience.

Nayyar Masood's observational perspective reaches at high level of sophistication when it comes to delving into the depth of any subject. Many of his short stories are exemplary in symbolism, imagery, and creativity. The avoidance of open incision is also a criterion that enhances the expression of symbolism. Discussing characters in hidden words or presenting them with subtly suggested mannerisms, where there is no intensity of certainty or expression in their dialogues, all contribute to form a narrative known as non-emotional prose. It is also important to mention that do Nayyar Masood's characters not have emotions? Do they not express any desires in any way? Not at all. Nayyar Masood has introduced a unique narrative style where specific words are used to convey different types of emotions through characters in a very subtle manner. Indeed, this is the beauty of prose that he has introduced for the clear identification of his narrative. Consider Shafi Qadwai's opinion:

"Nayyar Masood avoids to express avowed, so he often rely on gestures However, the subject of the story can be deduced from somewhat undefined gesture". (10)

Conclusion

Nayyar Masood introduces a twist in short story, left it incomplete and taking its thematic essence into another story. The characters are not pre-planned or outlined; instead, they emerge spontaneously and abruptly. Even the projects planned for the characters remain incomplete. This method differs significantly from the traditional approach. Nayyar Masood's short story is a unique, symbolic, enchanting and mysterious that distinctly identifies with contemporary narrative. It also carries a subtle inclination towards historical revival employing various techniques, language and themes.

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