

AN EXPLORATION OF ANALEPSIS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR**Ms. Kayathri K**

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ABSTRACT

Flashback or analepsis is a Greek word meaning a 'recovery'. It is often used to recount the past events to the current point in a story to the readers of literature. It also used in television and movies. It spawns curiosity among the readers to know about the characters and events in the past. It also develops readers' imagination skill. It connects the major incidents of the past to present scenario. Usage of analepsis is not a new feat in the literary world. In Literature, the great story-tellers of the epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata and Odyssey use the flashback technique to give information about the characters in the tale. Different literary devices are used by writers in a piece of literary work so as to compose their works both effectively and significant. Among the many other literary devices, flashback technique plays a crucial role. This paper critically analyse flash back technique in Manju Kapur's novels of Difficult Daughters, Home and The Immigrant.

Keywords: narrator, reflector, flashback, memory, reality, Analepsis

Manju Kapur is one of the famous versatile geniuses and an outstanding writer. She was born on 25th October 1948 in the north Indian state of Punjab, Amritsar. She teaches English for fourteen years in Miranda House, a liberal arts and science college for women at Delhi University. Due to her passion for writing, she voluntarily takes time to write novels. Her novels depict a different color of both ancient and modern Indian life style. Significantly, her novels trace the various aspects of Indo-centric perspective with different stages of women's development. India is a versatile country with full of different types of customs and traditions. But it is designed by a patriarchal society where women, are not supposed to raise voice for their

rights. The publication of Kapur's first novel, *Difficult Daughters* in 1998 brought her a huge international acclaim along with the Common Wealth Writers Prize for the best first book for this book. Rest of her bestselling novels are *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Custody* (2011) and *Brothers* (2016). Her novels have been translated into many languages.

Kapur's female characters are extremely idiosyncratic and perceptive. Her characters never want to surrender but always react against it. She uses flashback technique in her novels to give a piece of information about the past events, when the novel starts at present. Her writings flourish with full of innovation which shows a constant urge for testing it linguistically. She is excellent in portraying the internal ferocities of women and their growing tone. Her novels show her use of several innovative techniques from the beginning to end.

There are two types of analepsis; internal analepsis and external analepsis. An earlier point in the narrative is called internal analepsis and the time before narrative is called external analepsis. It became very famous in the beginning of the 20th century. Without flashback technique, a writer can move the story forward in any desired way.

Flashback is a scene that interrupts the chronological order of the chief sequence of events to catch a reader back in the current time to the times of yore incidents in a character's life. It is a simple technique that connects the time, place and action to reveal the character of the story. This technique is also used by the author to expose the past characters in a story. It also creates a suspense to the formation by a story. In this technique various methods may be used by the author such as recollections of characters, narration by the characters, dream sequences and reveries.

Kapur's first and bestselling novel *Difficult Daughters* starts with the vow of Ida, a childless divorcee and daughter of Virmati.

“The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. Now she was gone and I stared at the fire that rose from her shriveled body, dry-eyed, leaden, half dead myself, while my relatives clustered around the pyre and wept.” (DD, 1)

The above lines build the readers to think as why Ida did not like to be her mother. It develops an imagination power and provokes curiosity to think as what happened in the past and it obliquely says that something happened in the characters life in the past. The story is set in the flashback technique when it begins with the death of Virmati, the protagonist of the novel. Ida

learns her mother's life story from her aunt. She exposes details about incidents that Ida does not know entirely about her mother. Kapur's use of flashback to intervene the chronological sequence of events right at the beginning undoubtedly arouses the reader's interest, thus making the text even more thrilling and alluring.

Difficult Daughters is the story of women belonging to three different generations; they are Kasthuri the mother of Virmati and Ida, daughter of Virmati. The passage is firmly connected the past with the present. Kapur again exploits the flashback technique immediately in the second chapter.

'I'm just going', protested Virmati finally. 'Why can't Indumati also take responsibility? Why does it always to be me' (DD, 6)

The above lines unfold the reader, a new world of the story even deeper and richer. In addition, it reveals and develops several themes of a text, background information of characters and events. The narrator of the novel informs the reader that what kind of person Virmati is. Readers may think negatively about her character in the beginning but when they read chapter by chapter. It makes them feel empathy and sadness towards her. Virmati belongs to an orthodox Punjab family, and wishes to lead a life according to her priorities. To liberate herself she joins Lahore College to pursue her F.A., and tastes independence like her cousin Shakuntala who admires Virmati abundantly.

"Virmati, looking at her glamorous cousin, marvelous at the change Lahore had wrought in her. What did it matter that Shakuntala's features were not good? She looked better than merely pretty. She looked vibrant and intelligent. Her dress too had changed from her Amritsar days." (DD, 16)

Kapur again uses the technique of analepsis to give a bit of information about Shakuntala's past and present through the character of Virmati. The reminiscence of Virmati constructs the novel more pragmatic. It shows Kapur's skill as a born raconteur. The eccentric plot of Difficult Daughters spheres in time and space, together within and between chapters, shifting to the past from present and back again. Like several writers, Kapur also use flashbacks in her works for various reasons to construct the story. Through flashback, Kapur adds past events effortlessly during the present time of narration.

Writers sometimes use flashbacks to present readers, their needed backdrop information of characters so to ease anxiety or disparity. With the help of flashback a reader can also realize

certain motifs. It shatters the current action of the story. Flashback technique's contribution to literature is incredibly valuable for its special objectives that are connected to the writer's intention. Implementing a flashback in the novel is when the narrator informs another character about past happenings. It assists to understand the relationship among the characters from the past to present and motive of the characters.

“Besides in train travelling to homes they never seen, fear in their hearts. Years ago, Kasthuri had done it”. (DD, 203)

The above incident undoubtedly uses the device of flashback to reveal what had happened to Kasturi at the time when she tied knot with Suraj Prakash. Kapur here compares Kasturi's situation with that of Virmati.

“Now Kasturi's daughter was undertaking a journey to a similar destination in a train that chugged over the flat North Indian plain towards Amritsar”. (DD, 206)

Through this flashback, Kapur pays attention to a few cultural portions like the marriage ritual of Indians. Kapur also uses different techniques and style to portray her experiences. She presents her characters in her novels as realistic human characters from India.

A physical structure of the building which is used to dwell or accommodate is called a house. A house transforms into a home when it is filled with full of love, care, support, protection and mutually nurture one another. Kapur's third novel, Home, parallels the flashback technique, when the novel starts, in about a three generations' life sphere. The first one is of Lala Banwari Lal who is the father of Yashpal, Sunita and Pyare Lal. The latter is the next generation and the last are is Ajay, Vijay, Raju, Vicky and Nisha.

“Mrs Sona Lal and Mrs Rupa Gupta, sisters both, were childless.” (Home, 1)

This is the opening line of Kapur's “Home”. The above mentioned line highlights the two major characters in the novel and furthermore Kapur applies analepsis technique to present additional information about those two characters from their past life. The word childless makes clear that they are sisters and is married but do not have a baby. Kapur then continues that they are married to different families and lead their life in different ways. Rupa frequently comments to her sister Sona, when they spend this day that,

“We are cursed, Didi, what to do? It is our fate” (Home, 1)

The information that the above sentence highlights the earlier marital problems of Rupa and Sona.

“Sona first entered the Banwari Lal Cloth Shop on a hot morning during the marriage season in May 1965. She was seventeen, in her last year of school, and had come from Meerut with her mother and sister to attend an uncle’s wedding such occasions”. (Home, 2)

The above incident describes the actions that had already happened in the past but in the current scenario which is important to know about the characters and their relationship to the readers. It gives the background message about the first meeting of Banwari Lal’s and Sona’s family. It is the first pace between two families and this important scene inculcates one of the unwritten norms of Indian people’s life style before marriage. The scene builds the novels’ future happenings.

“First they were sent to a camp in Amritsar, then Delhi, to finally arrive in Karol Bagh. The jewellery was sold, a house bought, and a shop rented within walking distance on Ajmal Khan Road”. (Home, 4)

Kapur inspires the readers’ curiosity to go ahead with the above information. Furthermore she talks about the family of Banwari Lal and that what happened in his past,

“his seven-year-old son, two-year-old daughter, pregnant wife and wife’s jewellery”. (Home, 4)

Banwari Lal’s marital life in the initial stage is with full of miseries and troubles. He overcomes all the life’s troubles with his hard work and settles. He never wants to waste money because which he did not even buy a cycle in the early days. He puts all his profits again and again into his business. His family also never takes any holidays to celebrate. This information discloses the bitter life of Banwari Lal and his family during the earlier stage that when he opens his shop. Without the flashback technique, readers would be aware of the early life of Banwari Lal for he is only known as one of the richest business men in Karol Bagh. In addition, this technique also helps the readers to compare and picture the past and present life of Banwari Lal and his family.

“Two years passed. Sona still wasn’t pregnant, though twenty and old enough. ‘Enjoying, enjoying’ muttered the mother darkly, imagining the use of birth control”. (Home, 11)

Kapur apparently portrays that each and every Indian family’s mind set surrounds a baby and how they wield marriage as a tool to get a baby. Yashpal’s mother never accepts his changes

after marriage. In addition, she does not agree with Sona's family status which she thinks that not equal to Yashpal's family. She corners Sona whenever she gets the chance. The readers can easily understand the character of Yashpal's mother through the technique of flashback and in so doing. Kapur challenges the reader's ability to analyse her characters. Kapur also brings out how time and position eventually changes many women in India, from Mother to Mother in law, through Yashpal's mother.

“Eight years earlier, Ananda had been a practicing dentist in small town Dehradun. Unlike many of his friends he had never dreamt of leaving India. His ambitions were simple. He wanted to make enough money to look after his parents and repay them for the time, love and hope they had invested in him”. (TI, 12).

The Immigrant, another novel by Kapur, exploits the technique of analepsis from India to Canada. She chooses India and Canada as the background for the novel. Kapur portrays the character of Ananda as resident of Halifax, Canada. Through the device of flashback, the scene entirely shift from Nina who is in India to Ananda, a dentist by profession stays away from his family and friends. As such Kapur crafts the readers' artistic ability by hinting that he could be Nina's husband. Thus, Kapur's artistic skill is exposed to the readers.

During his time of dental practicing, Ananda thinks that he will never go anywhere without his family after completing the practice of dentistry. But time changes everything. When the novel opens, Ananda is in Canada. Reading the above passage urges the readers to think as that why he is in Canada at that time. Along with this question readers mind is put to a state of confusion with the use of flashback technique the readers can connect the incidents happened in the earlier period to present time.

One day during the dinner time, Nina and Ananda talk to each other about Maha Kumbh Mela which is celebrated 12 years once in Allahabad, India. Ananda asks her how she knows about it. She replies that she heard about it over the BBC and it made her understand how special the occasion was.

“Unlike Nina, Ananda knew firsthand how special it was, because he had gone there as a pilgrim when small. ‘Once my mother insisted on going,’ he offered, willing to share a memory, something he rarely did if it was set in India” (TI, 173)

The following passage goes to Ananda's childhood days with his family when he talks with Dr. Sharma. He had enjoyed a lot with his sister and parents in India during his childhood days. This flashback scene makes Ananda to reminiscence his precious time with his family. Kapur employs the flashback device to make the character in the novel remember their good time with lovable people.

“Twenty years ago there was no India club. I am one of the founding members. I realized that if I forgot everything of mine, then who was I? When the children came, it became even more important to keep in touch.” (TI, 28)

Dr. Sharma explains Ananda the above passage when Ananda says that he would have preferred not to know that when Holi and Diwali came. In his childhood days in India, Ananda had also celebrated these festivals, eaten special food and prayed God. But after his parents' death, he never wanted to celebrate. Kapur shows the typical Indian mind set from the above passage even though he is an immigrant. She thus uses reminiscence to exert a recollection of all happy moments from the past in present much like a story to share with others.

Kapur intensely depicts Nina's mental position. She engraves,

“Rage fills her, why were people so silent about the humiliations they faced in the west? She was a teacher at a university yet this woman, probably school pass, can imprison her in a cell like room, scare her and condemn her. Though she was addressed as ma'am, no respect is conveyed.”(TI, 106)

Nina fights to get acquainted with people and in order to mingle with the ambiance she starts to wear jeans and t-shirt. This act of her is her way of compromising finding a conclusion for her secluded feeling of living in Canada. Even though, she is not comfortable with the western costume, she never wants to give up. She faces many problems in the new atmosphere which makes her reminiscence her homeland memories often. Kapur as such explains the immigrants' problems through the device of analepsis.

Repeatedly Nina thinks and compares her past life with present one. She once was a lecturer and everyone respected her. But then everything has changed in the name of marriage. The life style of immigrant people and their crisis for being accepted in a new nation is visibly depicted with the technique of flashback in this novel by Kapur.

Manju Kapur has established her place as a writer in Indian English literature eternally. She proves her efficiency in all her novels. She is renowned for her writing style. Her themes

covered several topics like loss of identity, feminism, problem of cultural dislocation, infertility, and struggle for existence. Her writing style also differ from other Indian women novelists. Along with flashback technique she delightfully imbibes these themes in her novels of Difficult Daughters, Home and The Immigrant. Her arrangement of flashback technique in all scenes in the select novels is both abundant and different. Flashback device gives the characters in the each novel self-confidence, emotional balance and a power to survive wherever and whenever. It makes the characters reconstruct themselves with full of hope. Her works always have a unique style. Through the analepsis technique, she realistically presents the nostalgic images of the past with that of the present incidents. The device also helps to enable the characters to lead their present life with full of patience, tolerance and faith in God as well.

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