



# INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

( Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal )

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.828 (SJIF 2022)

## A Discourse on Techniques used in the creations of Manoj Das

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DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.2022-62584511/IRJHIS2209006>

### **Abstract:**

*An attempt is made to trace out the unique quality of Manoj Das's narrative techniques in his fictional world. His art of story-telling has got a niche in the world of literature because of his speciality & uniqueness. His nature of rural life in close vicinity with the ravages of nature like flood, cyclone, rain, etc in his stories, novels, poems make the art of narration all-pervasive in nature. It is to be noted how he takes close look of societal changes from pre-Independent India to the modern time and at the same time effect of such changes on common life of the rural people are the subject-matters of his fictions. An account of the use of humour, pathos, criticism, mockery, etc in his writings is made here. Though in respect of the aspects, Manoj Das is compared to the remarkable Indian writers in English like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao but the narrative technique of Manoj Das is incomparable and need be assayed.*

**Keywords:** *Technique of narration, 1st person narration, double-standard, colloquial style, children narration*

### **Introduction:**

Since the day man could know the art of speech and articulation, man expresses his views, comments, sentiments, etc thus he has excelled in his literary ingenuity. He expresses these by writing novels, dramas, poetry, fiction stories, etc and among these stories are certainly new phenomena & have wide popularity among the readers world for its style of writing, requiring less time consumption and providing conclusive in a short period. Among the various characteristics for which the stories of a writer become gain wide popularity the technique of narration or narrative technique is of utmost importance. The choice of a topic for a story is not enough rather a writer

must choose how to convey the topic to the readers. Hence the writer chooses out of three types of narration like first person, second person and third person. Each serves its own purpose.

**Objectives:**

- To find out the use of narrative technique.
- To assess the impact of technique of narration.
- To know about the style of writing of Manoj Das.

**Description:**

Generally, we find two types of viewpoints in the writings of Manoj Das like the first person and the omniscient observer. Though Meenakshi Mukherjee views that "The most recurrent technique in Indo-Anglian Fiction has been that of the first-person narrative," C Venugopal, C.V.( The Indian Short story in English, Bareilly, Prakash Book Depot) but Manoj Das very aptly devises both the techniques in his creative writings which make these unique and remarkable. The stories in which the first-person narration has been used are Farewell to Ghost, The Submerged Valley, Mystery of the Missing Cap, A Letter from Last Spring, Trespassers, The Crocodile's Lady, The Murderer, Sita's Marriage, Encounters, The Man who Lifted the Mountain, Bhola-Grandpa, The Tiger, The Stupid Servant, The General, The Last I Heard of Them and others.

The stories that are observed by elderly persons and children as reminiscences of the past are amusing and bagreaders endearment & the names of such stories are "Mystery of the Missing Cap," Bhola-Grandpa and The Tiger", "The Submerged Valley" and "Farewell to Ghost". These are narrated as witness to the incidents occurring as if just before their eyes in simple and lucid manner. It can be seen in these stories, though the child witness narrates the incidents of stories but the does not play the role of main character. The child is seen to have involvement in such stories recording his observations and reactions. The stream of the consciousness comes into play in the child's case while the present incidents are closely related to such consciousness. To its effect, the readers' response, be it of praise, criticism, objective, or subjective view is depicted in the stories.

The example of the story "Mystery of the Missing Cap" can be cited here where the minor boy is found to be the first-person narrator being the witness of the tit-bit incidents of the story. Being the eye-witness of the mystery behind the missing cap, the child views the beginning, climax and denouncement or revelation of the mystery of the story focusing on the minute details of the incidents which exhibit humour and laughter with the development of the plot of the story. The mystery of the truth being told to Sri Maharana by the child is requested to keep secret which the child obeys and here the narrative technique of the author is really praiseworthy. "In Farewell to a Ghost", the story of ghost is narrated with that much lucidity and precision that the story is believed to be true to life and the art of narration of the author is laudable by the readers. There is tinge of realism at the beginning of the story" A Tiger at Twilight." We find the narration replete with the

local fervour, tradition and folk-talk. Even the description of natural disasters like flood, storm, rain in Cyclones, Tree, A Tiger at Twilight, Passing by Storm, Third Person are testimony of Manoj Das's artful narrative technique.

### **Realism behind Mystery:**

Manoj Das brings out the realism behind any mystery he develops in his stories which is envisaged through his narrative technique. Behind the narration, the characters involved are living beings and do not follow the way of exaggeration or become escapists rather present the details portraying the distortions, humorous act, true feelings in the course of action of the stories. The leaders, ministers, common men including rich and poor are often found characters under different circumstances in Das's writings where the blend of mystery and realism enrich the depth of these. The account of the pre-independent India situation ushering in the free and modern India where the reality of difference can be marked obviously by the readers. In "The Mystery of the Missing Cap" Das has made the distinct presentation of the Indian political scenario in comparison with the pre-Independence India soon after the Independence. The experiences of the narrator in the story are autobiographical in nature.

The narrators appear with different traits in the stories involving themselves in different situations with the characters presenting narrative information. The narrators express their views, observations in colloquial style of the rustic villagers. They present their perception of childhood, adolescence, youth that is seen to mature in course of time. His prowess in literary art lies in depicting the actions using narrative technique. In his own words, he says this about his technique in an interview made by Sachidananda Mohanty published in "The Hindu": "I have not felt drawn towards specific elements of style or technique. I have employed them when a situation or character demanded them, as the great masters of our tradition like Vishnu Sharma of the Panchatantra or Somdeva of the Kathasaritasagara did."

The blend of phantasy and realism is well-depicted in Manoj Das's "The Crocodile's Lady." Here the narrator is addressed 'Baboo' by the innocent villagers. The village and the usual behaviour of the villagers are realistically presented in the story. The portrayal of the character of the Crocodile's Lady, the description of the past which is made by the Lady is recorded realistically and in spite of disbelief from the narrator, the Professor Dr. Bastine visits the spot to get first-hand knowledge of the thought to be fact.

The novels of Manoj Das depict the character of the social personalities among us. The narrator in "The Cyclones" though the third person becomes the protagonist narrator, he or she is found to be first person narrator in "A Tiger at Twilight" and "The Escapist". The narration of offbeat incidents in the "Third Person" is proof of appropriate and successful art of narration from the artist's point of view. The narrator describes the happenings being an impartial eye witness. Mr.

Das includes a lot variety of themes and techniques in his stories mingling both native and foreign sources. The plots and sub-plots of his stories help in developing action of these as the narration progresses. The element of nature like tree in the “The Tree” gets the vital attention of the characters and is given a human-like trait and thus it finds place in Manoj Das's writings which is an indispensable part of rural life of the people of Odisha . We also find radical changes in the mind of the local people when the effect of urbanization and modernization bring in mental and behavioural change in them.

### **Characterization:**

In the art of narration, Manoj Das's characterization lends realism. In his fictional world, the characters which he portrays, bear comic as well as sober temperament and are very akin to the realistic world and are true to life. He chooses such characters from the both rural and urban backgrounds and at the same time they represent the common & character-type who seem to be living among us. The normal, abnormal, comic and absurd actions and utterances of his characters are the testimony of Das's narrative technique. The character of Abolkara in "The Submerged Valley" as found in the regional folk-tales of the state is portrayed as simpleton, disobedient with funny dress and appearance though the role plays throughout the story is unique and unparalleled so far as characterization is concerned & the narrative technique used by the narrator makes the characters life-like.

Manoj Das's artistry in manoeuvring narrative techniques is exquisite and unique. The nostalgic presentation, adhering to the present is never to be found overlapping or confusing rather it brings clarity to the actions of the plot. The narrator's part that intervenes in the action of the story helps in effective narration of the stories. Most of the stories end with surprise ending which is called “O’ Henry twist” that lends peculiarity to his technique. Though the author is found to be part of the stories but he is presented as mouthpiece and he can be recognised as the author in disguise. Use of proper diction, epigram, Odia-English words, etc. are found fit for Manoj Das's short fictions. Because of his touch of realism with sense of humour, his fictional world seems to be authentic. His stories on ghosts though related to the world of fiction and imagination turn to be trustworthy. His narrative technique appropriately collocates reality with imagination. The attractive feature of his fictions is presentation of the regional scenario to the audience of the globe. The memory of the past is the base of his writings while presentation at present with observation is the landmark of his creativity. Introducing story with eye-catching beginning and coming to the crux of matter are part of Manoj Das's successful narrative technique.

### **Adherence to culture in consideration of tradition vs modernity:**

In Manoj Das's fictional world, the reference to Indian tradition, culture and folklore is part of technique of his narration. He derives sources from the culture, tradition, mythology, history of India

and different regions and blends with the situation and portrayal of characters. Though geographical difference is only for recognition but for Manoj Das it is universal in its application so far as entire humanity is concerned. His presentation of modernity is never devoid of tradition. The characters from the rural background in his stories are often to be surprised at the advent of modernity. They sometimes accept modernity with mysterious belief having suspense whether they can be able to adapt to the change are not. They adhere to Nature which sometimes poses serious havoc in the shape of natural calamities like flood, cyclone, famine, etc. though modernity tries to bring them out of their tradition.

### **Colloquial style:**

The colloquial or conversational style which Manoj Das employs in his stories and novels lends vivacity to his narrative technique. His colloquial style using foreign or English language while narrating the regional stories makes it reader-friendly. In this way, he tries to portray the passions, emotions and flaws of common human beings even their so-called leaders & political leaders in amusing and realistic manner using various literary devices like fantasy, satire, humour, pathos, irony, etc. The narrative prowess of the author brings life to the characters and so they remain alive before us and this is because of his simple and lucid style. He tries his best to lend authentic portrayal to his characters at every situation in his fictions. The pastoral settings in rural atmosphere find place in his writings which is very akin to the characters of humble background. The characters, their emotions and aspirations are found closely related to the natural environment. Thus, his colloquial style interestingly portrays the relationship between human beings and the nature. In his fictions, children-narrators narrate their experiences having matured standpoint.

### **Conclusion:**

Manoj Das's artistic craft rests on his narrative technique. The technique of his narration is replete with humour, satire, irony, realism, fantasy & symbolism. He depicts ordinary life with such reality that it touches the heart of millions of common people. He gives place to the peculiarities of humans in his fiction that we somewhere do experience in our day-to-day life. Though his characters have bred from socio-cultural background but they are tried on the altar of modernity. The roles played by a boy, father, mother, leader, minister are appropriately portrayed & thus become living beings rather than types. The conflicts between rural people and urban people in respect to their beliefs are genuinely pictured in his stories. His references to the folklore are regularly seen in his creations that sometimes differentiate moral from immoral.

In portraying his characters Manoj Das uses criticism as well as sensitivity. As the ups and downs of life are recorded in his fictions, the harsh realities are not left out. Being an inhabitant of coastal Odisha where he witnessed the human sufferings during flood, cyclone, storm, rain etc, his fictions depict the real picture of these recording basic reactions of common people as is found in his

"Tree", "The Submerged Valley, etc. The transition of society from traditional to modern with urbanisation and modernization that has brought change in the thinking and behaviour of the rural people, has found place in his stories. Though humour and pathos are part of his narrative technique, realism is the testimony which he never leaves aside. Though sometimes western elements are found in his writings but it is certainly a part of the then scenario. Thus, his sense of humanism has found mixture of eastern and western sense of consciousness. Though his characters come from humble background but they carry human values. It is found the case of the engineer father in "The Submerged Valley" who realizes the reality later for the sake of villagers and Abolkara or in the absence of human feeling of Mrs. Mitty for Shyamlal in "The Trip to the Jungle." The study is confined to narrative technique of Manoj Das only though the other aspects need be studied.

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