
Analyses of Narratological features present in the *Shiva Trilogy*

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Abstract:

Fictional writers of India have revolutionized English writing to introduce Indian readers to their ancient past, primarily through the 2000s. These writers have used various narrative techniques to create a memorable impression on readers. In *The Shiva Trilogy*, Amish Tripathi draws upon specific narrative structures to restate the tale of Lord Shiva. The present paper has analyzed the book series, i.e., *The Shiva Trilogy*, using narratological features proposed by Gerard Genette, especially-Focalization, Narrative Mode/Mood, Time/Order, and Narrator/Voice. The analysis shows that the novel's perspective is based on internal focalization. Its depiction of settings and of the characters are very well structured, and hence, it follows the Mimesis narrative mode. The novel flows in a Prolepsis manner, consisting of an extra-digetic narrator throughout.

Keywords: Fiction; Retelling of myth; Narrative Technique; Amish Tripathi

Introduction

Amish Tripathi is an alumnus of IIM, Kolkata. He is passionate about history and mythology. His writing career started with philosophical discussions inspired by the fascinating knowledge found in television programs, such as Amar Chitra Katha. Tripathi has chosen a myth associated with the Hindu God Shiva. He blended the myth of Shiva with the historical facts of the ancient Indus Valley. In the novel, Shiva is an ordinary man, bestowed with the attributes of Lord Shiva.

The Immortals of Meluha, the first book of the *Shiva Trilogy*, was published in 2010. Actions for the restoration of Shiva take place in the kingdom of Meluha, whose actions expand into the protagonist's appearance, helping the Meluhans withstand the forces of evil. The novel begins with a growing tension between the Suryavanshi clan and the Chandravanshi clan in Swadweepa. Suryavanshis used an elixir called Somras, which prolonged their life. Somehow, the production of the Somras from the Saraswati River was hampered, and they held the Chandravanshi

clan responsible for it. As the story unfolds and reaches the end, it is found to be the Naga's fault.

The second book, i.e., *The Secret of Nagas*, was published in 2011, followed by the third and final book of the series, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, published in 2013. The second book describes the secret home of physically malformed Nagas. It is discovered through the novel's plot that the excess usage of the Somras causes their physical deformity and the decreasing level of the Saraswati River. In the last book of the series, all the feuds and clashes between good and evil get resolved.

The book series acquired tremendous success. It needed to be reprinted several times to meet the demand. The *Shiva Trilogy* became the best-selling book series for an Indian publishing house, with a volume of 2.5 million copies and a turnover of over \$600,000. Tripathi's success as a writer is probably based on his ability to design a plot and the unique characters he has put into the novel series. The portrayal of characters and story design are considered pivotal elements of narrative theory; however, other less apparent factors help make literature worthy.

Narratology deals with any written text's narrative structures, functions, topics, conventions, and symbols. Narratology, dominated by structuralist methods, has evolved into various theorems, conceptual ideas, and analytical functions. Its principles and frameworks are often used as heuristic methods, and its descriptive principle plays a crucial role in investigating and modeling our capacity to construct and interpret narratives in various formats, media, environments, and modes of communication. Simultaneously, amid the "centrifugal tendency" (Peter Barry, 1990), narrative science has shown its unity as a method of scientific practice for more than 40 years.

Todorov (1969) introduced the French term narratology, proposing a change of emphasis from the base level of text-based narration to the general logical and conceptual storytelling attributes as univers de représentations. As a result, Todorov advocated for a modern generalizing principle that could be generalized to all problems. Todorov's innovation is often viewed as a groundbreaking act. On the other hand, the assertion of a clear connection between the tradition of the philosophy and the tradition of the field is deceptive: none of the significant contributions to earlier narratology directly identified themselves with the term "narratology" by title. (See, for example, 'A Grammar of Stories: An Introduction' Prince 1973; 'Logique du récit' Bremond 1973; 'Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film' Chatman 1978; 'Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method' Genette [1972] 1980; 'Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature' Culler 1975). According to the Interdisciplinary Center for Narratology (ICN), the theory was first used as a theoretical and methodological attribute in French, Dutch, German, and English publications and journals after Bal's *Narratologie* appeared in 1977. Ryan wrote 'Linguistic Models in Narratology: from Structuralism to Generative Semantics' (1979). He was the first to use the word in an English version, and Schmidt

was the first to use it in a German version, i.e., 'Érzählen ohne Geschichte. F. Mayrocker oder ein Exempel einer konstruktivistischen Narratologie' (1989).

The prevalence of similar and more common definitions and alternate science ideologies dealing with storytelling was one of the causes for the scientific group's reluctant adoption of the term "narratology." The words Erzähltheorie and Erzählforschung, in Germany, were already established and have been in practice since the mid-1950s (*Bauformen des Erzählens*' Lämmert 1955), which may justify why Ihwe's [*On the Foundation of a General Theory of Narrative Structure* (1972)] effort to incorporate the word "narrativics" (Narrativik) was unsuccessful. Amongst the Russian avant-garde, where poetry reigned literature, the request for "theory of prose" corresponds to a request for re-evaluation of other hemispheres. At the same time, critical American contributions, such as Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) or Chatman's *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978), criticism and new rhetoric come from tradition. Then, French scholars of narrative theory were rooted in the categories of structural linguistics and semiotics [Greimas' *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* (1966)], in logic [Bremond's *Logique du récit* (1973)] or rhetoric and traditional grammar [Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1972)].

Theories

Studying narratives is a wide field of theory. Also, various schools and theoreticians sometimes follow different paths in their research. So, a choice has to be made to limit the amount of theoretical knowledge to those that fit this type of essay. Key elements and thoughts related to theories of narration were introduced in ancient Greece, while others emerged in the 19th century, particularly about hermeneutic characterizations of literature.

Gerard Genette, a renowned critic of literary and structural theories, profoundly influenced the development of narrative sciences. He has debated for the "autonomous nature of the literary text " (Nayar, 2006). His work on Narratology, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay of Methods* (1980), is believed to be the best known in the English language.

The five key terms that Genette uses in his work are primarily used to teach narrative phrases and not mere interpretations;

Order: In several works of literature, the order in which events are connected differs from the chronological order in the text. On the contrary, there is the use of flashbacks or flashbacks. It may be divided into two parts based on the real-time event and the representation of the incident in the story: Prolepsis- when an incident has not yet occurred and is only anticipated by the storyline (flashforward); and Analepsis-when an incident may have occurred prior to the narration (flashback).

Duration: Generally, determining the length of an action in a narrative is challenging. Genette determines the relative length of an occurrence based on the number of pages on which the event was reported and the event's recording period

(e.g., two pages per minute). By examining similar times and incidents, you will understand the speed of history and the events of relative significance.

Frequency: A unique story has a one-time event. Another alternative is to replicate what has already occurred. Another way is to discuss what has already occurred many times. This former alternative is more syntax-centered rather than informative. It is highlighted or described in depth as if the Narrator might recap a recurring occurrence (a recurring tale) by repeating the incident with the same expression.

Voice: It all comes down to who is voicing and from where. Is the narration coming from elsewhere, like from the outside of the novel, or is the speaker a character in the novel? That is the one telling the tale, but it might differ depending on whether the person is narrating the tale in his voice. As per Genette, there are five types of Narrator: Heterodiegetic Narrator, where the Narrator outlines the character's incidents and experiences in the plot, and where he does not participate. Homodiegetic Narrator- where the plot is revealed by somebody who appears in the story as a character. Intradiegetic Narrator- when the narration occurs within the narrative setting, the Narrator recites stories within stories. Extradiegetic Narrator- when an individual tells a story from the fictional text. Autodiegetic Narrator- the one who is also the story's main character.

Mode: As per Genette, the narrative mode is determined by the Narrator's "distance" and "viewpoint" and has a dominating pattern. It could be classified into four categories based on distance and the connection of the narrative to what it narrates (Diegetic mode of narration- the portions of the story that are portrayed in a condensed or summarizing manner. The aim is to provide deep insights as quickly and efficiently as possible, as well as the Mimesis mode of narration- the portions of the story that are portrayed in a picturesque manner with a specific setting. It induces the sensation as we see or experience something for ourselves.) Moreover, the degree under which the writer encourages us to enter the character or the event (Paralipsis mode of narration- when the writer attempts to conceal or impose what he wants to reveal or enforce and Paralepse mode of narration- when the writer provides facts to the audience based on the current focus, the reader does not get.

Focalization is also the point of view through which a storyline has been depicted. There are two kinds of focalization: external focalization, when the readers are exposed to things visible to the naked eye, and zero focalization, which means that the Narrator has more knowledge than the characters in the narrative and speaks more than the character's knowledge. Internal focalization is when we are informed of information that would be unknown to us even though we were present.

Aims and Methodology

This paper aims to examine the novel's narratological construction and critically analyze features like Focalization, Narrative Mode/Mood, Time/Order, and

Narrator/Voice. The analyses will provide a comprehensive view of the novel's composition.

To attain this goal, the probing steps of narratological analyses by Gerard Genette in his *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method* form the basic structure of novel analysis.

Being quite broad, the novel series is impossible to dig deep into. Also, it would be quite a task to look out for every aspect of the narrative theory contained in the story. Hence, this paper makes a general assessment of the narratological elements of the novel as a whole. The paper studies the focalization, narrative mode, time/order, and the Narrator. First, the focalization is analyzed, whether it is External or Internal. Second, the narrative mode is studied, including whether the novel follows diegetic mode, mimesis mode, paralipses mode, or paralipsis mode. Thirdly, time/order is studied, including whether the novel flows in an analepsis or prolepsis order. Fourthly, the type of Narrator will be studied, including whether it is heterodiegetic, homodiegetic, intradiegetic, extra-diegetic, or autodiegetic. A comprehensive analysis is done on each of the three books of the *Shiva Trilogy*.

Analysis

Every storytelling requires the presence of a narrator, a personality that reveals the events of a story. Tripathi has devised a traditional heterodiegetic narrator for all of his three books for an extraordinary literary work. As mentioned above, this type of Narrator is aware of every character's thoughts and emotions, but he is a foreign voice that is not part of the tale. The Narrator of the *Shiva Trilogy* is not emotionally connected to the characters being referred to and is very much tied up in giving the details of the story in a very classical way to its readers, who are entirely mindful of the mythical nature of the story and like it in that manner.

Even though the *Shiva Trilogy* is a work of fiction, the narrative has traces of mythology, yet does not begin with "Once upon a time." Instead, the reader is plunged into what appears to be the midst of an unfolding series of events. The tale sounds like everything that is happening has already happened. Being a reader, one can depict that this story could have evolved from a forgotten past and has now been written for everyone to read. This attribute of the narrative could be seen from the very first page of the tale, where the author has notified his readers about the time and place where his written story had begun, i.e., "1900 BC, Mansarovar Lake (at the foot of Mount Kailash, Tibet)"- (Tripathi 01, book I). It is sometimes apparent how much time has gone between two events, and the writer gives precise details regarding days, weeks, months, years, etc. In the *Trilogy*, the Narrator does not depict the time between the events, but it is not difficult to discern. The chapters are divided into several sections, which follow one after another without deviating from the plotline and time events. The awareness of time is not at all blurred while reading the *Trilogy*.

The plot of the novel is historically very well designed. Tripathi has used the names of actual cities and places in India as the setting of his novel, like Nandi—the Meluhan Army captain was from the capital of Kashmir, Srinagar. The description of

the roaring Jhelum River in the mountains makes the novel's setting seem original, hence making the narrative seem to have a real-life account of the past.

The plot of the Trilogy is continuous and follows a proper chronological order with a few episodes of Analepsis, like when Shiva is welcomed to Meluha and gets told by Nandi that he (Shiva) holds a critical status among his fellow Meluhians. Then, suddenly, "The memory of another desperate plea from a distraught woman years ago returned to haunt Shiva as he was stunned into silence. – *your destiny is much larger than these massive mountains*" (Tripathi 27, book I). There are many occasions in the Trilogy where Shiv is haunted by this prophecy that his uncle made in the past. The section – *Before the beginning*, before the first chapter of the book II, is entirely based on an analeptic episode. The section depicts a nightmare Shiva experienced when he was only a child. In that particular episode, Shiva's mother is shown alive and can be seen comforting Shiva, who just happened to have a nightmare. "*The mother held his arms down again, pulling him towards her.*"(Tripathi 02, book II) This episode also holds great significance in the Trilogy as it depicts the first memories of Nagas in Shiva's mind, as they were Nagas who haunted young Shiva in his dreams. The book III also begins with an Analeptic episode, depicting when Shiva's uncle, Manobhu, was killed by the Pakrati clan. This episode can be considered the foremost event of the Trilogy, where Shiva was recently appointed as the chief of the Gunas clan after the death of his uncle.

Another critical component of the narrative is focalization. The Trilogy adopts internal focalization, where the Narrator expresses whatever the character thinks, giving the narrative a "feel." Events and ideas are conveyed through a focused perspective. This element could be seen in book III, where Shiva encounters Brahaspati, his sworn brother. An account of Shiva's thoughts has been stated in the novel – "*Brahaspati created the illusion of his death. He allied with the Nagas. He destroyed his life's purposes, the great Mount Mandar. He was the Suryavanshi mole! My brother lied to me!*" (Tripathi 04, book III) All three books of the Trilogy are filled with the thoughts and feelings of the characters and have been written in italics for a clear depiction of the perspectives.

The main rhythm of the Shiva Trilogy could be categorized into 'mimesis', which means that the parts of the story are presented in scenic ways, where illusions are created, giving us real-life-like experiences. Tripathi has followed mimetic narrative mode religiously. He has given his readers ample details of everything – characters, situations, and places. The details are so realistic that it feels like watching those things while present. The opening lines of book I begin with mimetic mode, where physical attributes of Shiva are depicted – "*He squatted and perched his lithe, muscular body on the narrow ledge extending over the lake. The numerous battle-scars on his skin gleamed in the shimmering reflected light of the waters.*" (Tripathi 01, book I) Tripathi has done a fantastic job of depicting his characters. Every character in the Trilogy has received brilliant treatment regarding his/her characterization. The readers can paint a picture of the characters in their minds. Say,

Nandi, who is a Meluhan army chief, somebody who is not among the leading character group, has been portrayed so well – "*The Meluhan's massive proportions appeared even more enormous as he sprawled on the floor in his stupor, his immense belly jiggling with every breath. Despite being obese, his skin was taut and toned. His child-like face looked even more innocent as he slept with his mouth half open.*" (Tripathi 04, book I) In terms of depicting the places, Tripathi has left no stone unturned. The roads of the Meluha have been depicted so well – "*The roads of the camp were just like those of Srinagar. They were laid out in a neat north-south and east-west grid. The carefully paved footpaths contrasted sharply with dirt tracks in Shiva's land.*" (Tripathi 12, book I) When depicting the situations or events, the reader feels he is witnessing the action live with his own eyes: "*The Naga came to the same realization as well. As he neared the wall, he pirouetted on his heels, hands reaching his sides, drawing out two swords. The sword in his right hand was a traditional long sword, glinting in the evening sun. The one on his left was a short sword with a strange double blade mounted on a central pivot at the hilt. Shiva pulled his shield forward as he neared the Naga. Sati attacked the Naga from his right*" (Tripathi 06, book II). All three novels of the Trilogy have been written and presented in highly detailed descriptions.

Conclusion

The Narrator plays a significant role in the narrative, as we saw at the beginning of this analysis. The Narrator's voice and external audience are clear and completely cut off from the story itself. Tripathi has constructed internal focalization and has built a narrative with the novel's all-knowing figure. It is then easy to return to the idea that the author himself is a narrator. The Narrator knows the thoughts and emotions of the characters. The whole story has been told in the past, reinforcing the feeling that the story happened long ago, and the speaker is repeating it in an old tradition or his memory.

The narrative contains several analeptic episodes, making it easier to determine the cause of the later events. It is written in the mimetic narrative mode, with elaborate details of the characters, events, and setting and shorter diegetic episodes where nobody says anything.

Amish Tripathi, through his Shiva Trilogy, has set the bar high for upcoming popular fiction. By applying Genette's narrative schemes, readers can better understand the novel's complex design and use it as an analysis tool.

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