Using Narrative Study for Affective Understanding of Text in Ruskin Bond’s *The Thief*

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Introduction

Narrative can be defined in a very simple terms as a widespread and often unconsciously spoken language activity, which is inevitably associated with our lives. "The Thief "which follows first person narration is one of the heart rendering story authored by Ruskin bond but here my main focus will lie to probe into how and why this style of narration is incorporated by the author in his story and what significance does it have to cast an impact on the readers.

Analysing short story linguistically means depiction of literary characters consciousness through his utterances and dialogues. It is one of the very useful tools known as deixis which means to the feature of language which fastens utterances temporally or spatially like; “here” “now”. It is a kind of indicator that indicates once consciousness presentation. It may also be presented by orthographic markers used in the story or parenthetical or brackets indicating that what speaker is thinking or saying like”she said, I thought.” Many writers including bond generally uses this markers to indicate the characters emotion and to identify linguistically the features of a character.

I would like to introduce this paper by analysing those narratives and linguistic features that marks the consciousness of the chief protagonist who is a Thief in the story and narrator as well. The orthographic details used by the authors helps to discover the emotions and consciousness of characters by readers that makes it look realistic. There are many feelings that narrator reports about his characters which the narrator is aware of and plenty of such details are also reported to readers about which characters or other characters are not aware of.

Dietic words or deixis words are those words or phrase used by the author in that clearly points out the place, time, situation in which the speaker is placed. It may be understood as a way of personal pronoun or demonstrative like I You we. For this it is important to study both a characters directs and indirects speeches to know the underline mean and perspective of a character mind. Here i would like to take the introductory extract of the story that clearly depicts his character consciousness.

Passage: ‘I was still a thief when I met Romi And though I was only fifteen years old. I was an experienced and fairly successful hand.Romi was watching a wrestling match when i approached him. He was about twenty-five and he looked easy going and simple enough for mu pourpose. I was sure I would be able to win the young man’s confidence’.
This is introductory extract of the thief, though we cannot actually see or hear the narrator but we can get many indications about presence of a narrator as he introduce himself by I that clearly projects the presence of a narrator’s voice. The passage clearly reveals how old he is and he is smart enough than his age. The narrator describes about his first meeting with the second main actor Romy. This passage shows that narrator is describing his past experience with the reader. This use of first person narration employed by bond is one of his smart moves to win the trust and interest of the reader which is required for such a fictional story. Narrator depicts the second actor whom he is meeting for the first time accidentally. Romy is a 25 year old young easy going, kind and simply and a right choice of pray as desired by the narrator. A reader can thus hear the textual voice with his mind’s ear. Thus the story presents very distinct narrative voice. It may be termed as narrative discourse, the term used by Gerard Genette as his title of one of the basic narratological text produced by him. Other than this there are many indicators that distinguishes a voice in any given text may be called as “voice markers”

1. according to content-sounding happy or sad or comic or tragic according to the subject of the text

2. According to his expressions that indicates his belief or ideology or education Like “I was sure I would be able to win the young man’s confidence”. It shows a young and smart, tricky persona of the narrator.

3. According to various pragmatic expressions that signal that the narrator is aware of his reader attentions towards him.

this distinctness about the narrators presence and also be termed as overt narration, as narrator is quite clearly determinable by the audience and one don’t have to put efforts to distinguish him from the text background which is contrary to a covert narrator in which narrator voice is indistinct and indeterminable.

What is the strategy behind the use of overt narrator by Bond?

Definitely because he doesn’t want to draw any attention of readers towards narrators but want them to how this openness of narrator will make the story further more interesting. Narrator evidently passes many reflective comments on himself like: I thought that over for a minute: perhaps I had misjudged my man. Can you feed me? I asked.

**Fabula of the Thief:** To understand fibula of The Thief by Ruskin Bond it is important to understand what is fabula? A Fabula is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused and experienced by the actors of any story.

So how it is different from a Story and a Narrative text?

A story is the raw content of the text or we can understand it as what it is? But a fabula is how it is. A narrative text is different from both the terms because A Narrative text is a Text which an agent conveys to the readers or an addressee. Coming back to the context of The Thief, the story is as follows:
There is a thief who is 15 year old and searching his new quarry of his next robs. He comes across Romi a 25 years old guy. He tries to impress him to win his trust. Romi agrees to take him. One day while his stay thief gets an opportunity to steal money from Romi. He lifts money silently and runs away to Railway station. But then change of heart occurs to thief and finally he returns to Romi.

Order of the fabula in the story

A story is as follow:

1. Accidental meeting of thief with Romy.
2. Thief tries to wins Romy’s trust.
3. Romy get ready to feed him if he could cook but won’t pay anything.
4. Thief happily cooks and cleans for Romy for over one month.
5. Thief gets chance to steal big money one day from Romy.
6. Thief is in dilemma to do or not as he is emotionally connected to Romi.
7. Finally he steals money silently while Romy was asleep and runs away to the station to catch a train.
8. Epiphany takes place followed by his change of heart and feeling of guilt.
9. He returns back to his only trustworthy friend who treated him with love and equality (Romy)

The story is narrated by the thief in complete flashback mode.

Narrative situation of the story:

Voice: (narration)

The story opens up with the telling of a past experience narrated by a thief who is only fifteen year old and how he met Romy a twenty five year old smart, kind, easygoing kind of guy with whom he made friendship and stayed along for about one month and finally robbed him away on getting opportunity. Although the plot used by Bond is quiet simple but the moves created by the narration is good enough to keep the excitement of reader.

To enquire more into the narratological aspects of the story I will go through different narrative situation which will be identified by:

1. Voice (narration): From beginning to end story runs in narrative past tense. Tense are employed by Author according to the current point in time of the narrators speech act.

All the events taking place are acts of past and it is more like sharing of an experience:
“He took me to his room over the Delhi sweet shop and told me i could sleep on the balcony”. (narrative past tense).

This employed narration is in mode of past tense and stretches long in all of the text.

Later, he said never mind, he will teach me to cook”.

Finally thief succeed in getting Romy’s companionship which was necessary part of his game to win over his trust so that he can stay long till he rob him when getting the right opportunity.

The voice we experience in the extract is first person pronoun refers to narrator’s voice and not of the authors. The narrator himself is the protagonist as well as witness of the all events that took place because it’s all part of his experience.

The only drawback in first person narration is that the focalization becomes limited to the site of an ordinary man as he himself did not knew what shall come in the future. The narrator is for that very moment limited to his place of action, time and circumstances he is surrounded by .This limitedness of narrator is very helpful in maintaining the suspense of what will happen next in the story.

Focalization:

It may be understood as by whose point of view are we seeing the occurrence is known as focalisation or the person responsible for this is focaliser. Here the focalizer is narrator who is our agent around whose point of view the text orients.

All the information, events and state of affairs are coming to the readers from focalizer’s point of view. This point of view remains fixed in the whole story and does not transfers to any other character. This kind of focalisation is termed as fixed focalisation which is adhered to a single character. The narrator passes many of his thoughts and reflective comments from his own point of view about other character (Romy) in the story. Because this focalisation is directly anchored to the thief. Like:

“I was grateful”. (these utterances lead readers in consciousness of the speaker)

“He wrote for Delhi and Bombay magazine: a strange way to make a living.”

The way thief convinced himself in the presence of readers before stealing money for which he was in great dilemma. He uttered the reasons to rob Romi because:

-He’s out of practice of thieving

-If he doesn’t take the money Romi will spend it on someone else

-He deserves because he doesn’t get paid

These are the free indirect discourses uttered by the narrator that gives us his inside. May be a mindful reader who has a different degree of view regarding the situation in the story. But
this is what a focalizer does. It constitutes and influences a readers thought and perception either real or fictional. The focalisation may follow a different pattern other than fixed:

- Variable focalization-presenting different episodes or scenes through different focalizers.e.g The narrative events of Mrs. Dalloway
- The multiple internal focalization of Patrick White’s The solid Mandala.

**Climax of the story:**

*Epiphany:* The stories mainline are finally given a twist and turn by employing the elements of epiphany by the author. *Epiphany*, this term originally came from Greek word denoting manifestation or appearance of a divine quality and power to confront. The protagonist thief in the end has an epiphany when he suddenly realises that he has a feeling of guilt and his heart changes. He had seven hundred fifty rupees in hand that he had stolen from Romi. A big amount of money he had ever stolen with which he can live a king size life for many days. But he was not happy at all. He himself was confused at his own state of mind. The kind of friendly love, happiness, companionship, equality faith and trust he received from Romy, the stolen money can never give. As he narrates in the end.

“When the train had gone, I found myself standing alone on the deserted platform. I had no idea where to spend the night. I had no friends, believing that friends were more trouble than help. The only person I knew really was the man I had robbed”.

The universal message that Bond’s stories generally convey is importance of love, compassion, friendship and importance of relationship in one’s life which is well depicted from narrators thought expressed in his moment of crises, mentioned above.

*But I knew that Romy’s face when he discovered the theft would show only the touch of sadness not for the loss of money, but for the loss of trust.*

Thief’s moment of truth or epiphany is his realisation that what trust can do money can never do. And just because he had never tasted the food of friendship and respect in life being a thief his heart was in dilemma. He had never realized how it felt to be treated equally as a friend in spite of committing so many mistakes like cooking bad, lying to Romi or stealing money.

**Conclusion:**

The following study of the Narrative techniques of The Thief by Ruskin Bond definitely depicts his finer sense of keen observation. The use of past tense in narration seems to have a great role in making the story more real and believable for the readers. The main focus was maintained on his two characters that of a thief and second actor Romi was good enough to keep the story intact and tight narration to keep the orient towards the deeper sense of good relations with friends and companions. The use of free indirect discourse was an attempt to give the inner picture of the narrator, his internal debates and crisis he was going through. The major role of these free indirect discourses I found was to make us more intimate towards the characters consciousness so it was more like a stream of experience.
Works Cited:

