A Narrative Stylistic Analysis to Amitav Ghosh's Fictional Narratives

U. Nageswara Rao[1], Prof. G, Chenna Reddy[2]

[1]Ph. D Research Scholar, Department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University
[2]Professor in English, Department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University

Abstract:

Narrative Stylistics is the most recently established idea and area in contemporary stylistics. William Labov (1972), Fowler (1977, 1996) and Bakhtin (1986) were major contributions to contemporary stylistics and narratology. Without a doubt, the story has gained a bigger place in the minds of stylists, analysts, and critics. The social, historical, and cultural foundations of story stylistics are the most important, where narrative and discourse stylistics collide. It gave the best scope to study Amitav Ghosh's historical fiction in *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* with narrative and cognitive stylistics. This paper focused on the study of narrative stylistics and deictic shift theory, and how they were employed in these two novels that resulted in the cognitive effect on readers' minds.

Keywords*: Narration, Voices, Stylistics, Deictic Shifts, Deictic Projections, Readers Responses.

Introduction:

Narrative Stylistics is the most recently established idea and area in contemporary stylistics, though first coined as Classical, and now being recognised as a contemporary significant advancement analysis. This field was pioneered and developed by sociolinguists such as William Labov (1972), Fowler (1977, 1996) and Bakhtin (1986) were major contributions to contemporary stylistics and narratology. The main aim of stylistics is to do analysis, description, and interpretation of the narrative fiction. Narrative discourse is defined by stylistic techniques that interrupt the narrative plot and its logical flow of chronology, such as flashbacks, prevision, and repetition. A stylish narrative discourse structural design was modelled by Paul Simpson. The study area for Narrative Stylistics has been expanded in Narratologies such as the morphology of folklore and modern narrative applications to schema theory in the narrative as a result of significant advances in recent times. The social, historical, and cultural foundations of story stylistics are the most important. This is where narrative and discourse stylistics collide. On the other hand, language-based 'conceptualisation' of narrative discourse and structure is one of the fundamental determinants of narrative stylistics. As a result, its most recent approaches and advances, which collide with cognitive stylistics, are ideological and philosophical.

Narratology:

Based on the discussion in the passage above that juxtaposes narrative stylistics with cognitive stylistics, it is highly plausible to link schematic methods with narrative and deictic shift theories to analyze Amitav Ghosh's historical fiction from *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*. The primary goal of this study is to recognize the stylistic viewpoints of Ghosh's narration in a text discourse and the

chronological order of the story which is to be presented. The study mainly focuses on Rimmon-Kenan's style of analysis of narration with three basic tools story, text and narration. Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* is fixed with three major places deixis from the 1st to 22nd chapters, parting into 3 sections of narrative styles as a land, river and sea. Based on these three styles of narratives the story was competitively and cognitively knit with its complex writing. Though the story's chronology is straight to the prolepsis most of the time, the richness of the cognitive stylistic writing was implied in his textual discourse presentation. The style of writing mostly shifts between prolepsis and analepsis in this *Sea of Poppies* novel. The journey of the characters starts from the land and travels through the river to reach or board the ship called Ibis in the sea. This journey demands the writer to present his text with a lot of stylistic viewpoints and cognitive narrations to paint the schematic power into the minds of the readers.

The story is set all about the First Opium War, in Calcutta and on the banks of the holy river Ganges. The story is set in the year 1838 when Britain was set on maintaining the opium trade between India and China to strengthen its economic, political and cultural position. It begins with twin strands of indentured labour from India moving to the African coast and the cultivation and trade of opium to China that set into motion the Opium Wars. *River of Smoke* in the same way presents between analysis and prolapses in the story narration but the historical events will play a crucial role in its story retro style.

There are a lot of differences between story presentation and text presentation. The story deals with the chronological order of the events which leads the story towards forward, but the text is focused mainly on the voice of the narrator or the character and how it is presented or else which point of view. Ghosh used different points of view or narrative voices while presenting text in a particular event or scene in these two novels *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*. Most of the time it is been presented in first person narrative voice, and the third person narrative voice. But in a few cases, an omniscient narrative voice appears as the authorial voice to comment or share opinions.

Leaving apart some sections in *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*, mostly the main narrative in each novel is in a linear mode of narration as Ghosh prefers not to distort the order of the story in the same manner as he has done in his earlier novels. Here he expands and contracts time using memory, flashback, etc. He aims to provide information to the readers without too many gaps and delays. In the novel *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh aims at historical retrieval but does not completely distort the chronology of the narrative. Moreover, he even does not contort the main storyline too much. In the novel with 512 pages, Ghosh narrates the period that started in 1838 when the Ibis (a vessel to carry indentured labourers) touched the Ganges in Calcutta. While looking at the duration of this novel, he uses a lot of descriptive pauses for the declaration of speed and Ellipsis in acceleration. And the frequency of Deeti's imaginary Shrine temple and visionary ship Ibis.

The story of the *River of Smoke (2011)* by Ghosh, set in a year before the First Opium War in Canton, focuses on Eastern trade. It was the time when trade and industrial revolutions were newly underway in the West. This enterprise was played out mainly in China and dominated by England. It also involved a host of other countries and many migrants from all over the world. Here Ghosh shows his concerns and engagement with history, colonialism, migration, power politics, etc.—the issues that persist in the modern world. Ghosh gives precise dates of the main activities in Canton through Robin Chinnery's letters which also help in indicating the time deixis of the novel. From chronological hints, it is understood that the broad time deixis of the setting of the novel is before the second opium war in China between the British and China in 1838. Time and space manipulated in *River of Smoke* has a marked

parallel to *Sea of Poppies*, i.e., it is at once specific and broad. The novel begins in Mauritius a long time after Deeti's arrival on the land of Mauritius.

This ability to relate language to a deictic centre to an understanding of how point-of-view effects are achieved in fiction other than the reader is central. Deictic Shift Theory recommends that readers are exposed not just to a character's point of view when he or she exists as the deictic centre, but they change their awareness of the individual deictic centre from the real to the imagined world position in the story world, to 'take up' that particular point of view. In traditional novels the authorial voice regains to be supreme, having complete control over all the characters but in Ghosh's narratives the authorial voice is not heard as the dominant one, but as an uninvolved, unprejudiced and harmonious reviewer or commentator, equal with other narrators neither on high nor on low position but revelling equal status. In his novels, the third person unlimited omniscient narrator mostly narrates the story. His works are highly and diligently researched works, so the narrators in his narratives are mostly reliable. An omnipresent third-person unlimited narrator narrates more than what he experiences actually in comparison to a limited and reliable narrator and in Ghosh's narratives the omnipresent third-person unlimited narrator is on equal footing with the reliable narrator. Narrative voice, is an important aspect of narratology, with the help of different narrative strategies, Ghosh's fiction reveals the facts from unexpected characters and horizons. This establishes Ghosh's crafts of narration which provides credibility to all opposite viewpoints or ideologies equally. Cognitive effects in his writing style really achieved the purpose of narration and reached readers easily to own the story with Ghosh's mind style. With the presentation of multiple cognitive viewpoints and different representations of the lives of various characters through different kinds of narrators, Ghosh's readers are engrossed in different aspects of life and begin to feel the commonalities all human beings share.

The fact is that his characters are human beings who are full of flaws, not god-like creatures. But, despite all these flaws, all the characters are unique in themselves for their unique qualities of confidence and conscientiousness to understand the quintessence of life. In *Sea of Poppies*, a saga of human exploitation—presents the suppressed voices of indentured migrants like Deeti, Kalua and others on one side, and the thunderous and authoritative commands of those in dominant positions like British colonizers—the Captain, the Judge and Mr. Burnham as well as the locals like— Hukam Singh, Bhyro Singh and the Jamindars—on the other side. In *River of Smoke*, there are different voices that emerge on the issues of the opium war and the opium trade. In *River of Smoke*, there are British officials, Indian and Chinese traders on one side and on the other, there are King Charles, Commissioner Lin and the Chinese Emperor representing opposite voices on the issue of surrender of opium. These examples from different novels feature Ghosh's narrative strategies of using polyphony, different narrative voices and imparting proper time, space and freedom to each character to express his / her ideology and feelings.

Amitav Ghosh imparts sufficient time and space to female characters by using the techniques of point of view and polyphony as narrative strategies in his novels. Different voices of women characters are presented in the 'Narrative Voice'. This shows his innate sense of observation of characters which signifies his strong sense of gender awareness. This is an effort to give voice to marginal sections of society. Ghosh's fiction portrays women from all strata of society—housewives, working women, doctors, prostitutes, tantric, villagers, servants and slaves. Ghosh's novels reveal his characters' worldwide movements. He himself has a passion for travel and has visited and lived in various locations of the world. This has helped him to gain knowledge of various cultures and languages. His own

experience of travelling appears to have a direct impact on the representation of the experience of immigrants.

Ghosh, like Rushdie who decolonized the English language by domesticating, has done a lot of experimentation to decolonize the English language to express the cultural distinctiveness of different historical periods in India and other places. The language used in different novels of Ghosh draws much attention from the reader who has to put extra effort while grasping different meanings from different languages, jargon, argot, pidgin, etc. Ghosh has coined new words and new symbols taken from local cultural traditions to reflect indigenous socio-cultural practices. The open-endedness is another essential and noticeable feature of Ghosh's novel. Using polyphony, heteroglossia and open-mindedness most of his novels do not reach a finalizing point, however, there remains a big question mark in the mind of the reader as the ideological tensions of life are left unanswered by leaving the gaps, delays, and absentees for the readers to construe the narrative in the manner they Wish.

Deictic Shift Theory

The narrative style focuses on the style of the story presentation, this Deictic Shift Theory aims at text analysis which connects the reader's previous knowledge with the textual narrations or schematic impacts based on the context knowledge. A group of researchers from the State University of New York at Buffalo developed the Deictic shift theory which is called DST in short (Duchan, 1995). This approach is multi-disciplinary from a variety of backgrounds, including Computer Science, Education, Linguistics and Psychology to text processing, focusing in detail on narrative in fiction. DST leads readers to understand story-world happenings from a particular point of view, and how shifts to this position can be brought about as a story unfolds. Context knowledge is required to interpret deictic expressions related to spatial, temporal and social elements to a particular speaker in a particular situation. Hence, readers feel as though they are 'taking up' that position within the story world. Segal calls this whole process taking a "cognitive stance." (1995) Deixis is important in this fiction to find out the style of narration in a context. Galbraith (1995) explains that deixis is 'a psycholinguistic term for those aspects of meaning associated with self-world orientation', and focuses primarily on a place, time and person deixis in her outlining of DST. Some other types of deixis have also been noticed; those are *Social deixis* (Levinson, 1983) is also essential to an understanding of how effects of point-of-view are brought about in prose fiction. *Place Deixis* concerns the location of the deictic centre and relates objects and entities present in the surroundings of that position. The adverbs *here* and *there* are examples of place deixis, the demonstrative determiners or pronouns *this* and *that*, and the verbs *come* and *go*.

In *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh used 165 adverbs, *here*. Out of these 165 adverbs, only 21 refer to the proximal place deixis "It was here, while the Ibis waited to take on a pilot" (10) about the Bay of Bengal. "They will be here soon after sunset." (46) It tells Elokeshi. "this was a jungle here". (49), "I'll let you get back in here." (52), "Iddhar, here, this is a good spot" (56), "Jodu knew that one of their boats would pull up here sooner or later", (63) "If she remained here, Kabutri would be little more than a servant" (159) and etc. and Distal adverb *that* is used in this novel 615 times, out figure only 10 distal adverbs are representing the place deixis. It challenges the reader's contextual understanding of the fiction where this novel spreads across 512 pages. The adverb *this* mentioned 852 times but only limited to 30 of place addresses in this novel, like this room (248), this corner (249), this island (254), this world. (274), this jail (289), this place (364), this river port, (376) and the flora of this forest (380). Coming to the distal adverb *that*, it is mentioned in this novel 2666 times but only 11 represent the distal place deixis.

The proximal time deixis is *now* used 437 times, the *day before* is used 2 times, *that day* 14 times, and *the following day* is not used in this novel. Coming to distal adverb*s are* used 318 times, and other terms which represent time deixis such as *yesterday* used in 4 times, *today* come in this novel 30 times, and *tomorrow* used in this fiction 116 times. Ghosh shows his reality and he wishes to give life to this fictional storytelling in these two novels. In this novel for his rich cognitive style of deictic presentation to bring the real experience to readers while reading this novel, deictic centre 'left', used 74 and out of that 17 deictic projections are written to his highest capacity to glorify this fiction. Another deictic projection representative word 'right', was 122 times used and out of that 14 times conveyed the deictic protectional directional centre. Further deictic protection term 'forwards' is used 45 times, out of that 15 times represent the deictic directional centre. Finally, the reality is portrayed with words in this novel another deictic protection direction 'backwards' 8 times and out of 8 all the time Ghosh used this for conveying the speaker's decitic projection in this novel.

In the same way, *River of Smoke* holds proximal 1336 adverbs *here* and out of this number, only 19 are centred in the place deixis to create strong cognitive settings. Whereas there are distal adverbs *there* 764 times, out of them only 21 tell the address of a place in this novel. In *River of Smoke*, the adverb *This* 1142 times, out of only 22 times represents the place deixis like, "This rocky veranda" (7), "this is our memory-temple" (26), "this island" (174), and etc. The distal adverb *That* used in this novel 3239 times but only 6 are talking about place deixis. Time deixis, designated by McIntyre indicating, "metaphorical proximity and distance from the speaker in relation to the point in time at which the speaker makes their utterance" (2007). The adverbs *now* and *then* are therefore examples of time deictics since they indicate proximity and distance from the deictic centre. Similarly, as Short (1996) points out the terms *yesterday*, *today* and *tomorrow* can be seen to be proximal deictic terms, with the day *before*, *that day* and *the following day* being the distal counterparts.

In *River of Smoke*, the proximal time deixis *now* used 911 times, the *day before* used 6 times, *that day* 8 times used, and *the following day* 1 time exceptional to *Sea of Poppies* zero times. Coming to distal adverb *was then* used 383 times, and other terms which represent time deixis such as *yesterday* used 7 times, *today* come in this novel 40 times, and *tomorrow* used in this fiction only 20 times. Deictic Projection is another important deictic centre in this context world of cognition in this fictional writing style. It helps the reader to be familiar with how real-world situations from this position as the deictic centre, and this is reflected linguistically in the speech. In some contexts, the reader is done to evade confusion or to compensate for changes in the background knowledge or experience of the discourse participant or participants. Bühler (1982) clarifies this by describing himself standing in front of a group of gymnasts, and using terms such as 'left', 'right', 'forwards' and 'backwards' in relation to their position, rather than to his own deictic centre.

In *River of Smoke*, Ghosh shows his reality which he wishes to give life to this fictional storytelling in these two novels. In this novel for his rich cognitive style of deictic presentation to bring the real experience to readers while reading this novel, the deictic centre 'left', used 64 and out of that 8 deictic projections are written to his highest capacity to glorify this fiction. Another deictic projection representative word 'right', was 176 times used and out of that 8 times convey the deictic protectional directional centre. Further deictic protectional term 'forwards' was used 16 times, out that 6 times representing the deictic directional centre. And finally, the reality is portrayed with words in this novel another deictic protection direction 'backwards' 3 times and out of 3 all the time Ghosh used this for conveying the speaker's deictic projection in this novel.

Conclusion:

The narrative style of the story is a linear mode of narration in Ghosh's novels *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke,* their textual discourses travel from analepsis to prolepsis and prolepsis to analepsis. The complexity is created among the readers' understanding while presenting his narrative styles in the text narration with narrative voices and deictic shifts. The narrative voices keep on changing based on the character and place deixis. Because of journeys and historical involvements in the novels, deictic shifts and projections are changed along with typical focalised voice shifts. Though its complexity in narration challenges the readers understanding levels in narrative stylistic voices, the proximity with the story and text with deictic styles create a mental image in the minds of the readers as they own everything to feel great in reading.

References:

1. Bakhtin, M. "The problems of speech genres." In *Speech genres and other late essays*. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1986, pp. 60-102.
2. Bühler, K. "The deictic field of language and deictic words." Edited by R. Jarvella & W. Klein. *Speech, place and action: Studies in deixis and related topics.* Wiley, New York, 1982, pp. 9-30.
3. Duchan, J. F., Bruder, G. A. & Hewitt, L. E. Eds. *Deixis in narrative: A cognitive science perspective.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 1995.
4. Fowler, R. *Linguistic criticism* 2nd ed, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.
5. Fowler, R. *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 1996.
6. Fowler, R. *Linguistic criticism.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986.
7. Fowler, R. *Linguistics and the novel*. Methuen, London, 1977.
8. Galbraith, M. "Deictic shift theory and the poetics of involvement in narrative." Edited by J. F. Duchan, G. A. Bruder, & L. E. Hewitt. *Deixis in narrative: A cognitive science perspective.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 1995.
9. Ghosh, Amitav. *River of Smoke.* India: Hamish Hamilton, 2011. Print.
10. Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2008, Print.
11. Levinson, S. *Pragmatics.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.
12. Segal, E.M. "A cognitive-phenomenological theory of fictional narrative." Edited by J. F. Duchan, G.A. Bruder & L. E.Hewitt. *Deixis in narrative: A cognitive science perspective.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 1995, pp. 61-78.
13. Segal, E.M. "Narrative comprehension and the role of deictic shift theory." Edited by J. F. Duchan, G.A. Bruder & L. E.Hewitt. *Deixis in narrative: A cognitive science perspective.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 1995, pp. 3-17.
14. Short, M. *Understanding the language of poems, plays and prose.* Longman, London, 1996.
15. William Labov, *Sociolinguistic patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1972.