

Crafting Realities: Exploring Form and Technique in Das's Narrative Worlds

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ABSTRACT

Manoj Das's short stories, such as "The Concubine," "The Crocodile Lady," and "The Owl," are unique in their use of traditional folk narratives. These stories, rooted in the past but resonating with the present, showcase the lives of common people in rural Indian villages. Das's characters reflect simplicity, adherence to tradition, and a deep connection to rural environments. His stories explore the transitional phases of Indian society, addressing themes of violence and revolt. Thematic elements, such as the destruction of Bengal in 1942, highlight the resilience and true character of individuals in the face of adversity. The paper acknowledges research papers on Das's literature exploration of spiritual and psychic elements.

Keyword : Traditional Folk, Transitional Phases, Violence, Revolt

INTRODUCTION

The Paper explores the form and technique in Das's stories. Short story can be separated from other narrative fictions in its ordered and organization of component parts. Form and structure as a way of doing work are the most prominent genres of literature, but also differ from other writers in their formalism. Das specifies this, "Folklore was an intrinsic part of the rural atmosphere in my childhood. Their classic compendiums, the Pančatantra, the Jatakas and Kathāsaritasāgara continue to fascinate me." (The Bridge in Moonlit Night and Other Stories xv) He has followed the traditional method of folk narrative by using respective elements - rustic characters, settings, simple plots, colloquial languages, etc. He creates the rural environment and depicts the common people with the true lives. He set a foundation of both practical knowledge and traditional values for his stories. The basis of his stories pertains to past nation but it is ever alive in the hearts of the people. The stories are well constructed with the simple plot that is generally known as the event that relates to the constant life of the common people in folk literature.

In the story "The Concubine" Sati Dei presents her incongruous character as a concubine of late king as well as obedient and dutiful woman of raj family. She fulfills her duty carefully looking after the prince, as a matter of fact; Dei promises Rani's last moment of life that little prince would be under her lovely care. The story begins with introducing the small brick houses of the village and a royal mansion as well. The plot in this story is literally easy to understand every situation of the characters like late Raja, Rani, Sati Dei, etc. The protagonist of the narrative is a concubine of the royal family and a woman with humane qualities. The form of the story from beginning to middle, from middle to end is easy to understand by the readers or to interpret by the critics. The following lines define the apprehensible narrative sense of the author:

As the post- independence Sumanpur had shown an encouraging growth in the number of goats along with the population of goat-eaters, the affluent and patriotic butcher had shifted his workshop to a spacious accommodation and had allowed the ambitious youths of the town to use the old place for their proposed cultural revolution. (BMNOS 110) A great number of Manoj Das's stories such as "The Crocodile Lady," "The Misty Hour," "The Owl," "The Bridge in the Moonlit Night," "Miss Moberly's Targets," "The Gold Medal," etc deal with simple literary plot, rural environment and common characters from rural Indian villages which create a realistic world of folk literature for the readers. Devdas Chhotray, The Vice-Chancellor of Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha at a convocation, confers with Manoj Das as, "We have today Shri Manoj Das, author whose writings have enchanted a long range of readers, from the village boys to Graham Greene." (Chhotray)

In the relation of narrative form, the word character refers to particular person or combined group appear in novel, drama, short story, etc. The author of text uses the character in various forms and he faces much difficulty for it in selection and usage. The characters in the short stories of Manoj Das appear from such a traditional Indian society which has no complexity,

no artificiality, no modernity but they ever live in simple life. The author has depicted them in Indian spirit as well as with the varied profession of the village such as peasant, school teacher, cobbler, blacksmith, hawker, weaver etc. For example, in the story "The Naked," the common people at the village feel so guilt under the strange condition – to become undress before naked guests in a summer occasion. They receive hard order by an egoistic queen of the kingdom. In the story, the author depicts the characters in pitiable condition not to disgrace them but he interprets the cruel and unjust manners of queen to the common people. As a whole they have to compromise with their circumstances:

Naked was the infinite sky over his head and naked the sea beside him. The Lord too had gone naked. What did he care any more? Let the naked lot of ladies and the gentlemen come! He would receive them and without the slightest sign of shilly- Shally, throw his clothes to the wind. (BMNOS 13) Indeed, the circumstances are incongruous and inappropriate for the traditional people to become naked publically but on the other hand, they are completely helplessness before Rani, who is a ruler at present and one of the tyrannies in royal family. Such an event always creates some doubts in reader's mind that are the concepts of the text based on real life? Or does the author have imagination and effort for his creation? India is filled with full traditional values as well as its villages, its society, its people, etc; all are the great followers of myths and legends. The people, especially from rural India, thoroughly follow the old assumptions. They are simple and straightforward by all means. By nature the author is much acquainted with both rural environment and folk people. Several features of folk characters in his stories have been interpreted by the true nature of practical life, for example, Aunty Roopwati and Chinmoy Babu in "The Misty Hour," Bhanu Singh in "The Naked," Granny in "The Crocodile's Lady," Owl in "The Owl," General Valla in "The General," Babu Sahukar in "The Murderer," Prof. Ashok in "The Bridge in the Moonlit Night," Nirakar Das . "The Tree," Miss Moberly in Miss Moberly's Targets, child ghost in "Farewell to a Ghost," Tirthankar and Shivabrata in "Friends and Strangers," etc are the examples of the category.

In the story "The Crocodile's lady," Dr. Batstone, a distinguished sociologist becomes much astonished knowing a village lady Granny, who gets the shape of crocodile by reciting a mantra. He has been a keen desirous soul for rural India as well as its society, its tradition, its culture, its common people, etc. By dint of all these charms, he comes to a village after covering a long distance. Here, Dr. Batstone hears a crazy story of crocodile's lady narrated by some credulous people of the village as, "Years ago there lived an aged couple on the river- bank. They had a daughter who had been married at the age of three and had become a widow at four. She lived with her parents and, people say, grew up to be a beautiful damsel." (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories 18) In the story, it is most important to know that a person from abroad, who has been among the scholars living through all comfort things, now he comes to the village knowing about its tradition and culture. No writers as equal of Das have special skills depicting the characters in close bondage of foreigner with Indian people. Das selects his characters from equal way in both worlds, human and animal. The birds, jackals, Banyan trees, crocodiles, squirrels, tigers, horses, deer, fishes, owls, monkeys, camels, bulls, cats and so on are some depictions of non humane worlds. In this connection, "The crocodile's lady," "The Owl," "The Tree," "The Old Man and the Camel," "The Bull of Babulpur," "The Tiger of the Goddess," "The Tree is Dead," "Mystery of the Missing Cap," "Birds at Twilight," "Return of the Cat," "Of Man and Monkey," etc are some short stories in same category.

In the story "The Owl," Das presents the owl as human being with all traditional values and the villagers regard the owl as their patron in varied ways. It is quite natural that non-human category like owl has much importance as well as the great source of happiness for the people of rural India. They worship the cow, idol, banyan tree, etc; all are received as the humane existence with great tribute. The Indian village like Vishalpur has been filed with superstitions and traditional concepts. The owl in the story is not common creature for the villagers whereas; it has immense importance in their life in the sense of signalling (favourable hooting) for a great deal of cyclone, cholera, drought and inauspicious moments. About its importance among the villagers, it describes as "this was perhaps the owl commanding the most formidable

personality among all the owls of the eastern region of the country. And so far as Vishalpur was concerned, the owl was believed to be the senior-most resident of the village." (BMNOS 23). In another story "The Tree," the villagers are shown the most religious in their deeds as well as they are conspicuous in attachment for nonhuman object like banyan tree. The author gives equal status to both human and nonhuman in his stories. Here, with the same concept the banyan tree has been described in following manner.

The leaves of the banyan tree chattered incessantly their familiar language of hope and courage. Its innumerable boughs spread out overhead had been the very symbol of protection for generations, affording shelter not only to those who bore love and regard for it, but even to those who had proved impudent towards it, of course, so far as the latter were concerned, only after humbling them to their knees. (Selected Fiction 57)

Das fills his stories with many worlds of child characters. The characters in his stories are much innocent and simple particularly, children in their early age. For example, in the story "A Letter from the Last Spring," a little girl Rina, who regularly glances from upper balcony of two-storied house here, she peeps like an infant bird that peers from the nest. The narrator depicts her beauty as a little angel, who is innocently waiting for returning her dead mother. She does not know the reality about her death and her sad eyes ever keep intense hope to her mother:

She waited for the postman, who appeared at the distant turning a little before noon. When he came closer to her house, she leaned as far as possible over the railing and, in a voice marked by hope and apprehension, asked, "Is there a letter for me? My name is Rina." The postman smiled and waved his hand, denoting "No". Yet Rina Continued looking on vacantly. Then she moved away slowly, I presume, with a sigh. (BMNOS 213)

Here, the postman does not deliver the letters only but he has a hope for a little girl in the sense of her mother's letter. The story becomes much popular by the innocent childhood of a little girl, who does not receive any letter from postman and identify the same postman repeatedly delivering the letters to the neighbours. As a matter of fact, the mother of little girl had been died of severe disease in a sanatorium long away from her house. Thus, the story shows the great attachment between mother and her little girl by divine love to each other. "Mystery of the Missing Cap," "Farewell to a Ghost," "The Submerged Valley," "Lakshmi's Adventure," "The Poison Girl," "Mystery of the Missing Toe," "Sita's Marriage," and "The Bride," etc, are some short stories of Manoj Das based on child depictions. The book title as Stories of Light and delight contains only nine stories which have the great influences of both Jatakas and Pancaitantra upon the author by and large. The form and technique of the book have traditional style at this time by the dint of the characters, e.g. an intelligent King, old minister and squirrel in "The King and the squirrel," honest and hardworking Raghu and dishonest Raju in "The Whisper," old trader and his disobedient son in "A Visit to a Strange Land," a fat, foolish King and sharp-witted minister in "The Royal Journey to Heaven," bandits and King in "The Boon of Boons," greedy man, lovely little girl and experienced King in "A Verbal Trade," a mendicant and his wife in "The Best Bridegroom of All," hardworking Kumar and his generous mother in "The Prince Who Changed His Destiny," priest, idol, Usha and Lalita in "Two Girls and a Lotus."

The exposition in the short stories of Manoj Das is purely rural setting of India where the villages are surrounded by the natural sights such as mud houses, ponds, green pastures, cows, and other domesticated animals. Exposition gets prominent place in his short stories by using it; the author fills his creation with rural or urban hegemony. Through it, Das specifies the rural Indian villages with various colours. In Indian context, the influence of this literary device helps the readers to understand the author's intension behind the words. Through theatrical performances, the audiences watch face to face the creation of the author on live screen and it is much difficult in reading for a common reader. In another way, exposition gives the suggestions about both time and location. It is one of the most prominent devices of the narratives that enable the readers in seeing the different types of the natural objects like; rising sun, rainbow of rainy season, cyclone, trees, pastures, etc.

As a great observer, Manoj Das beautifully presents the whole India in his creations with traditional, cultural and social values, all are particularly depictions of the rural villages in which Sankhari, his birth-place where he encounters many traumatic experiences of both cyclone and personal decays as his home looted two times by the cruel hands of dacoits. Manoj Das says, "The village in my childhood was not a fairytale world as would be evident from the accounts of human misery and collective tensions described in few chapters." (Chasing The Rainbow xvii- xviii) The author from his early age observes all traumatic experiences of surroundings and his whole life from beginning to last breath fill Indian literature with varied colours, as Das says, "All the experiences and impressions narrated were gathered between my fourth and fourteenth year of the age, except at a few places where I have related them to some happening or observation of a later period." (Chasing The Rainbow xviii). The short stories of Manoj Das such as "The Strategy," "A Crack of the Thunder," "The Owl," "The Candle," "The Concubine," "The Naked," "The Brothers," "The Irrational," "A Time for Style," "The Gold Medal," etc, all present Indian context in transition as the sign of decaying feudal system, partition, elopement, and democratic existence etc. Two Indian phases, pre and post independence have been explored with all burning social issues and unpredictable condition of the people.

In the story "The Brothers," two brothers Bhuvan Mishra and Saroj Mishra present the good images of brotherhood as love and caring to each other and they show their traditional life in joint Indian family. Bhuvan has been arrested many times due to a participant of nation revolution and has revolted gallantly against British rule. In this case, Bhuvan's father was never happy to his elder son because of his act as a social reformer. He suggests him, "To endanger his position will amount to a massacre of his family. And must I tell you that it is sheer madness to believe that the British- over whose empire the sun finds no chance to set- will abandon India for the fear of a few gangs of crackpots?" (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories 184) His father's all concerns are for Bhuvan's benevolence and he also worries for his younger son Saroj Mishra. Time was totally unpredictable not for Mishra Family but everywhere, a fear of violence and revolt situation could be seen in both pre and post Indian contexts. Bhuvan's father advises him not to participate in any kind of revolution that it would be harmful and harassment invitation for the Mishras' family. On the other hand, Father's suggestive tone does not effect to Bhuvan, who makes him busy to serve his nation. He proudly replies that no one knows own future and the time changes but I know the changes only for better, better for our country, better for us. On this, the father angrily says, "don't speak like Alexander the Great. Twist your ears, I say! he blurted out with great difficulty. This was almost the last weapon the venerable history teacher had learnt to wield." (BMNOS 184)

Most of Manoj Das's stories expose a wonderful scenic setting of Indian villages with its existent spirit. These stories are; "The Misty Hour," "The Crocodile's Lady," "The Owl," "The General," "The Bridge in Moonlight Night," "The Tree," "The Submerged Valley," "Bhola Grandpa and the Tiger," "Farewell to a Ghost," "Friends and Strangers," "The Crooked Staff," "Creatures of Conscience," "The Love Letter," "Return of the Native," "A Village by the Sea," "An Evening with Woo," "The Cyclone," "Two Nights to Remember," "The World Beyond the River," etc. In his book Chasing The Rainbow: Growing up in an Indian Village, Das says: My first knowledge of the phenomenon was inextricably mixed up with moonlight and wispy darkish clouds, a pond guarded by a lonely tree amidst a swamp, and the ritual howling of a skulk of jackals mildly visible between two bushes, bracketed by spells of silence. (Das 01). The story "A Village by the Sea" exists in Sankhari, a charming village of the author. It is a memoir of the rural village in Orissa endowed with highly natural surroundings. The exposition of this story is the pleasantries along with streams of the river beside the turbulent sea. The story supports a natural surrounding of landscapes and the evergreen meadows in which the cattle can easily be seen with herdsman. The village in the story is dotted with a row of different palm trees existed between the sea and the fields of different farming. The narrator all the time used to get the thrilling experiences by gazing some domestic animals that returned everyday from southward and he did never find the pet inside the home. Author's home has well structured with brick building and it locates in tranquillity by a row of the houses in the village. The

depiction of other natural objects as giant sand- dunes, storm surge, delicious berries on the trees and auspicious full moon, all make the village a wonderful place to live.

The story “The Cyclone” depicts natural calamity as well as an account of all destructions of nearby areas of Bengal in October 1942. It re-collects the real images of numberless dead people and leftovers in struggling to survive. Manoj Das evokes the real happenings of fierce nature and human in pitiable tone in this story. It is one of the most popular stories or memoirs of Das with varied collective tensions. He illustrates the cyclone that how it begins one morning as the sign of ominous and violent rain with heavy winds blows the houses of the villagers. Men and women were much busy to take shelter and they witnessed their downfall as smashing of all houses. A spacious verandah of the narrator’s house fills with a great number of helpless people, birds and domestic animals. Dozens of palm trees one after another struggle for their existence and at last, they fall badly on the land against heavy winds. Two pairs of banana trees have been scattered over the land around the village. Many people are too vulnerable under the influence of unbearable gusts of heavy rain and they hurriedly get the entrance into the houses in concern to save their life. So, the effect of cyclone creates the feeling of awe not only to the humans but the birds and animals as well. This is the scene- setting of the story in which the actual incident of the cyclone and people’s pitiable condition have been shown. The narrator draws the images of shivering men and women in naked bodies wearing insufficient clothes. The writer’s elder brother comes to home just before the cyclone. During the crisis, he involves himself all times in the work for the refugees. Das expresses his experiences in these lines: Some men and women who had been in the vast meadow in front of the village and had been obliged to pass the night in the open because their efforts to return had been thwarted by the strong wind, had strange tales to tell. As the demand for the tales increased, the narrative tended to grow more and more amazing. An average version of one such tale was that the sea rose in several solid columns and grew high into the dark sky. (Chasing The Rainbow 13)

In the relation of thematic approach to narrative formalism, the thematic approach considers that theme discusses overall concepts of author or what are the main ideas of narrative? The scholars think about the theme as three dimensions including literature, author, and issue. Thus, it provides us a deep knowledge about the world of human. It divides into two sections; syntagmatic and paradigmatic. Syntagmatic covers single text or a body of close association with another text that should be meaningful by fair means. In order to understand more for above concern, the book Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory reveals that:

According to Ryan, “in assigning a motif to a narrative theme we determine the motif’s precise narrative meaning in a plot. Narrative themes may be organized hierarchically, moving from single ones to thematic sequences and, ultimately, to plot schemata. Moreover, they have at least three functions. At the elementary level, narrative themes enable readers to link motifs (such as *events and incidents) to more general and abstract categories of meaning.” (Ryan 597- 598)

Themes in the short stories of Manoj Das discuss many issues of Indian society. They cover several aspects including indianness, helplessness, snobbishness, transition, transcendence, humanism, and perversion of values etc. The theme of Indianness gives us knowledge of tradition and culture of India. The book My Little India conveys an actual account upon the culture and tradition in insightful observations. The research papers focus on Manoj Das’s literature with many areas published in June 2012 issue of Rock Pebbles including respectively, “Manoj Das with Varied Tones” by Dr. Gangalaxmi Pattnaik, “Satire and Humour in the works of Manoj Das” by Dr. Sarbeswar Samal, “Human Relationship in the Stories of Manoj Das: A Brief Study” by Dr. Bijay Ketan Pattanayak, “Theme of Indianness in the Stories of Manoj Das” by Dr. Sukanti Mohapatra, “Magical Realism and The Theme of Regression: Study of Manoj Das’s A Tiger at Twilight” by Dr. D. Gnanasekaran, “The Love Letter as a story of Man-Woman Relationship: Manoj Das’s Rising above Stereo-type Thinking” by Dr. Pradip Kumar Patra, “Indian Life in Transition: A Study of A Tiger At Twilight” by Dr. Nishamani Kar, and some others. In this queue, Dr. Sukanti Mohapatra is one of the researchers and associates of Manoj Das. She has done her doctorate on theresearch area “The Spiritual and Psychic Elements in the Stories of Manoj Das” from Utkal University under the great

supervision of the eminent poet and critic Prof. Sarbeswar Samal in the year 2011. At present she is an assistant professor of English in the Higher Education Department, Govt. of Odisha in district of Balasore - the same graceful place of Manoj Das and as a versatile writer, Dr. Sukanti Mohapatra writes her creation in a bilingual literary genius, (i.e. Odia and English).

The first- person narration suggests author's personal involvement with 1st person pronouns, i.e. i, we, me, us, my, our. About this, a renowned Indian litterateur Meenakshi Mukherjee, says, "the most recurrent technique in Indo- Anglian Fiction has been that of the first person narrative." (31) There are some stories of Manoj Das narrated in first person, "The Last I Heard of Them," "The Concubine," "The Murderer," "The Crocodile's Lady," "Mystery of the Missing Cap," "The Stupid Servant," "The Man who lifted the Mountain," "The Submerged Valley," "Sita's Marriage," "Farewell to a Ghost," "The General," "Encounter," "Trespassers," "Old Folks of Northern Valley," "A Letter from Last Spring," "Bhola Grandpa and the tiger," and so on.

"The Submerged Valley" is one of the first- person narratives of Manoj Das. It is a mode of storytelling in which the storytellers narrate their personal experiences by using the suggested terms of first person i.e. i, we, my, our, etc. It begins with first- person narrators as the children of lower primary school. The headmaster of the school asks them to write an essay on village. The first person narrator narrates his past experiences when he was only five years old and moved to the city with his family. His father was a reputed engineer and by the hard work in his profession he got name and fame. The narrator's village had become a nebulous shadow to him. Rustic people like the villagers regard their land as their mother. The natural objects, the trees, evergreen pastures, the river banks, the Shiva temple, and the hill areas, all have lovely feelings for everyone whereas, the narrator feels a shortage of them in town life. He recalls all past memories about his village which have traditional variations as a lame crow is unable to walk a long distance, many people sit near the river bank in free time and some cows continuously produce some sounds in an ominous way. Some houses of lower-caste people can be seen outside the village and their labour in the fields of landlords. The trees at the village that stand beside the spacious ground of narrator's school and they still appear like the tall humans and wandering bull of Lord Shiva. All these impressions of the village life immensely attach to the narrator's childhood. The narrator portrays not only his childhood images like a painter who fills his emotions in the creation, but he also relates them with real Indian village life. An interesting remembrance from it includes insane woman living on the hillock behind the religious temple. She likes pets (a mad dog and a mad cat). In her family, only a crazy son is alive and the villagers pay no attention to them. They say, "Whatever be the slandered applied to measure the states of mind of the woman and her dog, it was intriguing how our people had been sure of the lunacy of the cat." (BMNOS 71-72) They suggest us about the perversion of traditional values. The narrator avoids the materialistic world and he spends all time with jackals and ravens. From his early childhood, he learns that both animals and birds talk to him. He becomes so sad when he knows that a proposed large dam would be constructed on fertile lands. In the opening of the story "The Crocodile's Lady" the first-person narrator performs acrobatics and other cultural activities on the arrival of Dr. Batstone at the village. He translates the native language into English making him understand. He says, "I translated the question. The villagers exchanged glances, but kept quite, looking intrigued. But the professor had his own interpretation of their silence. 'Obviously, they are sceptical', he observed." (The Bridge in the Moonlit Night and Other Stories 16) In this story, the first person narrator is a child depiction of author and on the other hand, Dr. Batstone is an English experienced man who as a whole has the most wonderful experiences about Indian tradition. In same sequence, another story "Mystery of the Missing Cap" begins with first- person narrator addressing admirable Moharana or honourable administrative officer of Fisheries and Fine Arts of the State. The narrator revives the old memories when he was a student of lower primary school and sang a welcome song in chorus:

O mighty minister, tell us, O tell us,
How do you nurture this long and broad universe! (02)

The melodious song was echoed again and again by the best effort of school children. The narrator enjoyed and experienced all moments of the occasion on the presence of minister. Das depicts school children as first person narrators, but many times they appear like experienced men. He uses the first- person pronouns such as 'i and we' as the main narrators of the text. All school children are the rustics and observe the minister's activity in respective manner, how does he behave? What does he see? What does he drink or eat? The narrator shared his personal account about the minister who was much excited over all cultural programmes of school children and he humbly behaved to other people. His involvement in whole narrative kept many unique influences on the readers. The Story with realistic images of rural Indian village has perfectly been presented by the author. About Indian context, Manoj Das evokes that:

Came Independence. As is well known, the ancient land of India has had four major castes from time immemorial. But during the days immediately preceding independence a new caste was emerging all over the country- that of the patriots. The 15th of August 1947 gave a big boost to their growth. In almost every village, besides the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras a couple of patriots came into being. (Mystery of the Missing Cap and Other Stories 01)

A modern litterateur and critic Bijay Kumar Das comments on Manoj Das's story- telling as, "Indian English short story has developed considerably in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Ruskin Bond, Manoj Das, and the great trio, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan have enriched this genre by making innovations in the field of themes as well as techniques. It meets the challenges posed by both the Bhasa writers and postcolonial writers." (Postmodern Indian English Literature 149). In Observing author: point of view, author records his experienced journey and re- creates them by his insightful writing. For example, the book Chasing The Rainbow: Growing up in an Indian Village is based on Manoj Das's observation about an Indian village (Sankhari). A short introduction of this book is written by the author: Chasing the Rainbow is an account of the childhood experiences of Manoj Das who, in the words of Ruskin Bond, is one of the few good storytellers left in the world today. Imbued with a spontaneous sense of wonder, the work leads us to a quiet and serene village by the sea and the enchanting worlds of a few other rural spots: where a dreaded butcher turns out to be a messenger from a goddess while a princely exterior hides a hapless vagrant. Even the ghosts are not frightening here and a voyage to the alien horizon across the river is filled with the promise of romance and surprises. (Das). Some stories of this book include, "A Village by the Sea," "An Evening with Woo," "The Cyclone," "Two Nights to Remember," "A Twilight Encounter," "The Forgotten Fragrance," "Flames Without and Flames Within," "Meeting a Crown Prince," "Mystery of the Missing Toes," "The Repentant Deity," "The World beyond the River," "The Calcutta Adventure," "Love Stories," "The Red Red Signature," and so on, all are frightening experiences of the author.

In "The Red Red Signature" the author observed the 1940s India which was in the taste of annihilation. India suffered from uncertainties and unpredictable situations due to the partition. The cyclone was another disaster for coastal India. No one had much time thinking about own relatives. The author has witnessed the Hindu- Muslim massacres and he has used the most ominous signs of this category in his writings. Many Muslim people had been killed in the riots and few of them had lost their relatives. For revenge, they also killed Hindus. A revolutionary from Hindu community kills pious Karim Kaka. In his last breaths he asks about Bablu, a servant of him like a son. Manoj Das in last lines of the story says that this revengeful act of Hindus (deliberately killing of Karim Kaka) is not a revenge but abolition of humanism.

"The Cyclone" is another story based on traumatic experiences of the author. It gives the sad impressions of the past India. Das shares the true depiction of native people after the destructive cyclone. He says, "This was the setting from which emerged a stream of bewildered- looking and shivering men and women in tattered clothes and they poured into our home". (Chasing The Rainbow 12-13). In true sense, the cyclone is not merely an incident to narrate but it is whole life of the author who specifies the real facts about the victims of cyclone. The author takes it not as an influential source for others but he provides the absolute literature which has true account of past India.

In Third- Person Narration, a narrative which is progressed by the third person pronouns (i.e., he, she, they, it) or the author has no personal involvement. This narrative technique is also known as the omniscient point of view. It is the most common device in narration and the author has been using this for a long time. He selects some characters and gives them specific identity (i.e., Sudhir, Granny, Ashok, Bhola Grandpa, Bhanu Singh) etc, all from the stories of Manoj Das). Sometimes the text has more characters and creates some difficulties for readers to understand it however; the short story is limited by its forms and characters. Das is highly influenced by classical compendiums and he follows them especially as the forms and techniques for his short stories. The short stories of Manoj Das in third- person narration include; "The Owl," "The Love Letter," "The Kite," "The Sensitive Plant," "Friends and Strangers," "The Bridge in the Moonlit Night," "A Song for Sunday," "The Old Man and the Camel," "Operation Bride," "The Vengeance," "The Dusky Hour," "The Time for a Style," "Creatures of Conscience," "Birds in the Twilight," "The Turtle from the Sky," "A Night in the life of the Mayor," "The Tree," "Prithviraj's Horse," and so on.

In the story "The Bridge in the Moonlit Night" Manoj Das depicts the societal characters (i.e., Ashok, Sudhir and Meena). This story has the prestigious honour published in New Orleans Review by its main concept of romantic relationship between a college professor and his student (Meena). One evening Ashok was strolling on balcony of his house by gazing the moon that seemed to be close to him. He had crossed eighty years of his life with much experience as a professor in the college. He revives his old memories when he was a star of the college and had some romantic feelings for Meena. But he could not reveal them to her due to his prestige. Sudhir was one of most close students of Ashok and he delivered his love letters to Meena. Now both indulge in her lovely memories and recall them as, "You remember her, don't you? Meena, my distant cousin, two or three years older than I, the beautiful Meena! Wasn't she a student when you were the star of our college – a young lecturer?" (BMNOS 43) Sudhir also reminds old professor of private letters to Meena. The mysterious nature about the letters is revealed as follows:

The passage explores various stories by Manoj Das, shedding light on his narrative techniques and thematic intricacies. It begins by quoting a character expressing sentiments of being used and fattened for a specific purpose, setting the tone for the thematic exploration that follows. The analysis delves into "The Third Person," where Das skillfully connects first-person and third-person narrations. The story unfolds on a stormy night with a vivid portrayal of a folk couple seeking shelter. The narrator, seemingly an observer of his own authored tale, reflects on the incongruity in a quarrel between an innkeeper and tenant. "Friends and Strangers" introduces Tirthankara and Shivabrata, two friends experiencing an illusory hallucination in a moonlit night. The narrative unfolds with a sense of horror, leading to the revelation of Pramath's death, showcasing Das's adept use of third-person narration. Das's storytelling extends beyond human characters, incorporating nonhuman elements like the revered banyan tree in "The Tree." The passage explores the mystical tale of the crocodile's lady, highlighting the blend of traditional values and the supernatural in Das's stories.

"Farewell to a Ghost" narrates the intense love of a boy for a ghostly girl in a deserted villa. Das weaves a poignant tale, reflecting on the risks of love and the dangerous allure of supernatural connections. The passage touches on Das's ability to blend personal experiences with storytelling, evident in "Two Nights to Remember." It recounts the narrator's encounter with ruthless dacoits during a cyclone, providing a vivid portrayal of the challenges faced by the villagers. Das's connection to his birthplace, Balasore, is explored in "An Evening with Woo." The sensuous imagery of watermelon cultivation and childhood games with Kuma highlights the author's deep connection to nature and his roots. The analysis concludes with "A Village by the Sea," where Das explores the theme of death through a child's perspective during a summer vacation. The passage reflects on Das's childhood experiences, emphasizing the influence of his early years on his storytelling. In summary, the passage provides a comprehensive exploration of Manoj Das's storytelling, showcasing his narrative diversity, thematic richness, and deep connection to his cultural and natural surroundings.

Conclusion

Manoj Das is a master storyteller known for his formalism, simplicity, and understanding of rural Indian culture. His stories, like "The Owl," "The Tree," and "The Cyclone," blend human and nonhuman worlds, showcasing his keen observation and personal experiences. His diverse range of short stories addresses social issues, such as indianness and humanism. Das uses first-person and third-person narration, allowing for nuanced exploration of characters and themes. His contributions to Indian English short stories have influenced the genre's evolution in the 20th century.

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