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# Memory in Desai's Fiction: A Study in the Light of Paul Ricoeur's Perspective on Time and Narrative

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper attempts to study memory as one of the important aspects of Anita Desai's fiction. Memory constitutes the foundation-conditions for the construction of the historical narrative. Along with this, it shapes and enriches the individual narratives of the characters that act as the supportive thread by making the main narrative more intensive and extensive. It may be mentioned that narrative and memory are both interdependent concepts. The impressions of events which perhaps exist in the remote land of consciousness in the form of memory. Find expression through narration Memory at times is structured at some other times is scattered. Thus narrative becomes linear or complicated. In other words, the nature of narrative is determined by the nature and function of memory. Here, the concept of memory is studied in the light of Paul Ricoeur's perspective on time and narrative, in order to analyze the trajectory of time and its leading role in framing memory as well as in the appropriation of the past in the present individual condition.

**KEY WORDS:** Memory, Paul Ricoeur's perspective, Time, Narrative, Individual Narratives.

## I.INTRODUCTION

The word 'narrative' is derived from the Latin word *narrare* (-to relate) and *gnarus* (knowing) and the Sanskrit root to know'). Thus, Narrative strictly means "to relate in order to know", It relates a sequence of events that happen in life. Life itself can be a narrative because in it a series of events occur chronologically. If the events of life are recorded it becomes the narrative! Artistic' creative recording of those events which makes it! Turns it into narrative [1].

As Roland Barthes emphasizes, "Narrative is present in every age, every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is or has been a people without narrative ... it is simply there, like life itself. Even the constitution of distinct individual character seems impossible without the power of such narration. Similarly, David Carr lays stress on "the narrative character of everyday experience" and the quality of narration being intertwined with the course of life ... [and] its role in constituting the sense of the action we are engaged in and the events we are living through, its role in organizing temporality and giving shape and coherence to the sequence of experiences we are having them. Narrative occupies a central role in Ricoeur's theory of memory, His philosophy of storytelling elucidates the need and nature of storytelling.

According to Ricoeur, events in our lives are not totally unstructured or 'discordant'-but they only carry a faint quality of sense that he calls "inchoate narratives," or "pre Configuration". Every life prefigures a initiative or is "a story not yet told," "We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need merit being narrated".

Ricoeur goes further in saying that, "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode. and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence." Regarding one of the most significant features of temporality, Ricoeur affirms it is exactly [2] the way in which everyday praxis orders the present of the future, the present of the past, and the present of the present [ ... J that constitutes the most elementary inductor of narrative".

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Here it is appropriate to mention that time becomes a criterion through which narrative is unfolded. Time is the modal structure through which a narrative is incarnated. As Philip in the words of Paul Ricoeur: Time is "that in which events take place. It is precisely this temporal structure that is levelled off by the ordinary representation of time". Ricoeur argues that Aristotle has ignored the temporal aspects of employment [3]. As he posits: "We are following therefore the destiny of a prefigured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time ... temporality is brought to language to the extent that language configures and refigures temporal experience. Ricoeur interrogates the present, past and future state of time. How time is one and many? How does time contribute to the narrative? Time is validated when it has some implication in human life. They are appropriated in the present.

The past in the form of memory and the future in foresight, influence the present action. The actual present seems to be the potential time for committing actions. That can be set as the narrative in the future. Even the ongoing events of the present sometime inspire the memory by relating the present with the condition of the past [4]. As Ricoeur muses, "The actual present of doing something bears witness to the potential present of the capacity to do something and is constituted as the present of the present".

Narrative as a literary form has to do with recounting, relating events in and through time. The backbone of narrative is events in time. Narrative stands testimony to the fact that anything which happens in life is successive. Narrative has to do with the representation of time. The purpose of narrative is to awaken the self. Narrative prose dramatizes as well as is characterized by enactment of time view that narrative as a literary form is an act of continuity. Narrative moves from Life to art. The first function of narrative is of a 'practical role'. Narrative is born not in life but in time. Narrative is the very way we exist in and experience time [5]. Every narrative work is a spatial enactment of the temporal character of human experience.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF MEMORY

The term memory is derived from the Latin word *memoria* and its lineage is from the Greek *memeros* and *merimena*. *Memeros* means "care for" and has a sense of being anxious. *Merimena* means "thought" or "solitude". The Sanskrit *smriti* which means "to remember" is more apparent in the Old French *morain*, I remain and that is, I stay after others have been removed or destroyed. Finally, the Old English word *muran* which means "sadness" or "anxiety", carries out the meaning of the Latin *mora* "delay" a meaning evident in memories, mortality as well as in the suggestive power of remember more apparent in the Old French *morain*, I remain, that is, I stay after others have been removed or destroyed. "

Memory functions to set every work of art: it does not matter whether the art is temporal or spatial in nature. Each and every human experience has its pervasive connection to the past. It always acts as a collective entity having the support of memory. In narrative, memory is an integral component of the consciousness of its characters.

In *Phaedo*, Plato presents the discussion between Socrates and his friends on the day of Socrates' death. During this discussion, a reference is made to 'recollection'. "Knowledge is recollection of what we had once known and had forgotten when the soul took on the body". This regaining of knowledge, according to Socrates, is a kind of recovery of what we already possess and this process of recovery would be termed as 'reminiscence'.

In "Philebus" memory is defined as "the preservation of consciousness and recollection is the soul's power of recovering some feeling once experienced". Memory here is not Plato's observation as a scientific concept rather it is that recollection of consciousness already experienced. Aristotle goes a step further. He brings about a difference between memory and reminiscence. His assertion is that memory functions unconsciously and instinctively, while reminiscence is a deliberate and intentional process. He affirms that voluntary and involuntary memories are the two broad divisions of memory. Voluntary memory is an acquired learning while involuntary memory is spontaneous learning.

Our present concerns come into the framework of the past and transform our memories of past events. The picture of a person or event constantly advances in our memory because we identify our past in the light of the present. Our perception of the world undergoes change depending on our growth. For example, from childhood to adulthood, from adulthood to old age, and things like that.

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The first part of Memory, History, Forgetting - On Memory" and Recollection, deals with phenomenological discussion of memory, The second part, history, Epistemology, offers an epistemological study of history. The third part of the book The Historical Condition highlights-the hermeneutics of the historical condition. The problematic of the representation of the past is discussed in detail throughout the book.

Memory, for Ricoeur, is attached to reflexivity and lordliness, It shows that in remembering something, one remembers oneself: one remembers seeing, experiencing, learning and things like that On the other side while remembering oneself, 'one recalls the state of affairs in the world in which one has perceived, experienced and, learned which in Ricoeur's words is nothing but worldliness, These circumstances entail one's own body and the bodies of others, lived room, and, finally, the sphere of the world and worlds, within which something has occurred.

Paul Ricoeur makes an analysis of the works of Augustine. Locke, Husserl and Maurice Halbwachs. Augustine is considered as the inventor of the ritual of inwardness. His preliminary point is the inner man remembering himself. What he suggests by this is that the memory of things is always entangled with the memory of the self In order to illustrate this Augustine uses the metaphors of the "spacious place" and "storehouse". In this manner, he presents memory as being a close place where things are stored. In other words, these "things" are not restricted to images of rational impressions and "passions of the soul: the memory is, in fact, capable of recalling joy without being joyful, and sadness without being sad".

Narrative fiction as we know depicts the nature and the value of memory in human life. Despite our desire and willingness to remember, forgetting insidiously erodes memory. We cannot remember everything or even something forever. In view of the threat of forgetting and oblivion, there is a sacred halo about memory.

Memory does not necessarily belong to an individual alone, rather it has a strong connection with the collective domain and it is a part of this domain. It is known as cultural memory, where the role of memory is related to a collective sphere. Our perceptions of the past are always influenced by the present. Memory in a certain sense is connected to tangible and physical locations: sometimes it goes beyond these by making it more flexible. Moreover, the influence of memory becomes obvious in the manner in which the past is experienced in the present conditions.

Ricoeur writes "On the one hand, the simple memory arises in the manner of affection, while recollection consists in an active search. On the one hand, the simple memory is under the domain of the agent of the imprint. .. have their principles in us ... time indeed remains the factor common to memory as passion and to recollection as action. Based on these premises I will study Anita Desai's Baumgartner's Bombay and Clear Light of Day.

### III. A STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF PAUL RICOEUR'S PERSPECTIVE ON TIME AND NARRATIVE

Memory as an unseen but vibrant force, helps to narrate the past events, that have a subtle relationship with the present time. In addition, it makes the present effective. "The act of remembering (mnemonellien) is produced when time has elapsed (prin khronisthenai). And it is this interval of time, between the initial impression and its return, that recollection traverses. In this sense, time indeed remains the factor common to memory as passion and to recollection as action".

In Anita Desai's novels, memory in relation to time plays a crucial role in shaping her narrative structure and vision. It is the memory of the cultural past, which continues to haunt the characters, by prodding them to search for their cultural identity. Apart from all these important elements, the memories of the childhood of the protagonists act as benevolent-benign forces in assimilating, evaluating and enriching their present from which they gather experiences. "To put it bluntly, we have nothing better than memory to signify something has taken place, has occurred, has happened before we declare that we remember if".

With the help of memory, Desai uses her literary craft to shape and mould her characters. Memory is used as a tool to travel through the landscape of past. It helps to achieve a combination of the presence of the past into our changing present and the possibilities of the future. '>Memory opens magic casements on the lost worlds through which Desai's characters search for light as they suffer, feeling inadequate and impoverished internally as well as externally. "In this regard memory can be treated as discrete forms with more or less discernable borders, set off against what could be called a memorial backdrop, which can be a source of pleasant occupation in states of anamnesis

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This is quite symbolic to the "dark doorways" of the building in which he dwells. Through the image of 'the silk boy slumped across the table', he is led to his past. An image of "marvelous sharpness" suddenly blurs the dazzling colors of his known landscape. Baumgartner's memory of his past is turbulent. As Desai writes:

"Baumgartner was running. Beginning with a march, as ordered, left-right, left-rightleft, he broke and ran- or would have, had he not been dumped into and shoved aside and hindered. The crowd opposed him, opposed his escape, but protected him too, covered up for him as well. He blundered through it, without seeing it anymore. Colaba Causeway, its crowds and smell and noise, all drew back into a morning shadow. A grey and hazy sea rose and obliterated them, draining them of colour and substances. Out of the grey wash, other images immersed"

This is evocative of a lively consciousness caught between movement and stasis, loneliness and the crowd, seeing and unseeing, creation and destruction etc. Baumgartner's childhood is filled with a series of failures. As the novel progresses, we see this getting intense. Baum's remembrance "consists in making the past live again by evoking it together with others, each helping the other to remember shared events or knowledge, the memory of one person serving as a reminder for the memory of the other".

In the beginning, Baum's life, especially in his childhood, starts with a pleasing note as he walks the streets of Berlin with his father. As Ricoeur puts it: "'...memory' - that of being faithful to the past" (Ricoeur, 21), The thread of memory presents a vivid description of his father and his physical and mental set up Here are the relevant lines:

"His father, When he walked, there was no obstacle, no hesitation. He strode, he paraded-his head held high, his hat gleaming like the wing of airborne beetle. His waistcoat gleamed too, now black, now green, like a bottle of dried ink, and the spats on his shoes were like the ears of a soft animal laid close against the leather. His walking stick with ivory knob tapped the Berlin streets with authority-pleasantly, light-heartedly on a Sunday afternoon, but still with authority"

Baumgartner's isolation is reflected in the following lines. In the vein of memory Desai writes this:

"The habits of an only child, of an isolated youth in an increasingly unsafe and threatening land and then of a solitary foreigner in India had made Baumgartner hold to himself the fears he had about his mother, about what was happening in Germany, allowing it to become a dark, monotonous block. Of course the same fears were known to the other internees but on them it had the effect of making them seek company, pour out their anxieties and obsessions into willing ears, and then even forget them in the pleasure of society. while Baumgartner watched and marveled at this gift for passing on or even shedding whatever was burdensome: it seemed to him he shed nothing, that- like a mournful turtle- he carried everything with him; perhaps it was the only way he knew to remain himself"

#### Clear Light of the Day

Clear Light of the Day can be taken as another work of Desai where memory, more than just being a matter of technique. Becomes a mode of expression. It becomes the very fast and energy for the writer's imagination

As the story opens. we find Tara visiting her parents' house in old Delhi after her marriage, finding no change there while moving across the lawn of the ancestral house. "In other words, one does not remember alone ... Childhood memories ... take place in socially marked places: the garden, the house, the basement, and SO on.

She transposes herself to her childhood. During that time, she accompanies her mother to the garden. Her mother following the doctor's advice strolls up and down the rose walk. Usually instead of taking exercise, her mother sits at the cart table and sleeps on her bed with a face with suffering largely writ in it, "tilted upward in warning so that Tara did not dare approach" (Clear Light of the Day). Tara remembers and at a certain level re-lives the old pain, when her mother continues to maintain a distance from her.

Tara's remembrance of days and things past, especially her youth, makes her happy and she dances in the lawn. Though a grown up woman, she starts dancing with joy at the sight of a snail. "In this regard, adult memories do not differ from childhood memories. They make us travel from one group to group, from framework to framework, in both a spatial and temporal sense".



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#### IV. CONCLUSION

In this novel, Desai has made an attempt to explore the inner psyche of Baumgartner by plunging into his past with the help of memory. She tries to explore a meaningful pattern out of the apparently chaotic situations of life. Memory as we see in most parts of Desai's fiction has been used as a technique to project the characters in a deeper way. It has been used as an internal measure to evaluate the individuals' relationship with their past and present. It is immanent in human consciousness.

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