Multiperspectivity in the Movies *Badla and Evaru*

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Abstract

Films, which arethe visual forms of storytelling, capture and hold the attention of the audience who watch them, with the aid of a lot of factors that go into their making. The narrative technique adapted in the film is one of the key aspects which makes it engaging and interesting. In a film, the narrative style plays an important role in how the tale is passed on from the scriptwriter or the director to the audience. The concept of multiperspective narration comes into play when more than one person recount about the same event or incident, and perhaps, contribute to the unfolding of the plot withmultiple versions of their own. This paper analyses how the directors of the Hindi movie, Badla, and the Telugu movie, Evaru, effectively handle the narrative style of multiperspectivity while bringing out the different versions of the incident that the suspects fabricate to cover up the crime committed by them and the countering techniques used by the investigators to expose the truth behind the seemingly genuine acts of defense.

Keywords: *multiperspectivity, movies, perspective, non-linear narration,rashomon effect*

> Narration seems to be a relevant factor in filmmaking … and without doubt it has clear consequences for the film's psychological impact on the spectator. (Peter Wuss, 4)

Introduction

Stories are powerful and effective sources that have been used down the ages to communicate ideas, thoughts, views, values, emotions and so on and so forth and have been part of the literary culture of all societies. Films, which are the visual forms of storytelling, gain and retain the interest of the people who watch them, with the aid of a lot of factors that go into their making. Among them, the narrative technique adapted in the film is one of the key factors which makes it engaging and interesting. Peter Wuss, in his book titled *Cinematic Narration and its Psychological Impact: Functions of Cognition, Emotion and Play*, rightly says, "Filmmakers and theorists have known for a long time that the principle of narration is responsible for the connections between the events shown on the screen" (3-4). The narrative style that a storyteller adapts to reveal the story has a significant role in the whole process of unfolding the story. There are various styles of narrating a story. When non-linear narration is opted by some storytellers to make their stories interesting and intriguing, some storytellers use multiperspectivity as a tool to bring in more than one version of the same event, thereby complicating the story and the whole process of narration and eventually making it all the more enthralling and exciting.

This paper analyses how the directors of the Hindi movie, *Badla*, and the Telugu movie, *Evaru*, effectively handle the narrative style of multiperspectivity while bringing out the different versions of the incident that the suspects fabricate to cover up the crime committed by them and the countering techniques used by the investigators to expose the truth behind the seemingly genuine acts of defense. This paper also aims to bring out the efficacy with which both the directors handle multiperspectivity to complicate the story all through and then to disentangle all the complications towards the close of it and to trace how skillfully both of them use this rarely explored narrative tool to remind the movie goers of the 'rashomon effect', a multiperspective narrative technique which is essentially a style of narration to bring about the unreliability of the descriptions of the events that was brought to the limelight through the Japanese movie *Rashomon* (1950), and the convenience it offers to accomodate multiple vantage points.

Multiperspectivity

"Narratives are communications … easily envisaged as the movement of arrows from left to right, from author to audience," says Seymour Chatman in his book, *Story and*

Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film(31). He affirms that "the structure of narrative, the elements of storytelling, their combination and articulation" are among the very important concepts of the very notion of narration of a story (13). The narrative style has a major role in the manner in which the story passes on from the scriptwriter or the director to the audience of a film. Multiperspectivityis a distinct way of telling the story or representing events in such a manner that the reader or the audience is let known of multiple perspectives of the same event. This is also known as polyperspectivity. The term multiperspectivityis most commonly attached with those stories or movies that employ many narrators, sometimes in opposition to one another, or to illustrate different aspects or versions of a storyline, thereby, resulting in what is known as a multiple narrative. This is used as a narrative technique when the storyteller intends to have heterogeneous viewpoints in the story. About the various purposes of employing multiperspectivityin stories, Marcus Hartner in his article titled "Multiperspectivity", writes, the perspectival arrangements in multiperspective narratives may fulfil a variety of different functions; mostly, however, they highlight the perceptually, epistemologically or ideologically restricted nature of individual perspectives and/or draw attention to various kinds of differences and similarities between the points of view presented therein. In this way, multiperspectivity frequently serves to portray the relative character of personal viewpoints or perspectivity in general. (353)

The narrative technique, multiperspectivity, gives the freedom to the storyteller to bring in a clash between the fictional and the factual narrations within the film, which, by and large, is a fictional work.

The Multiple Perspectives in *Badla* and *Evaru*
The Hindi movie, *Badla* (2019), directed by Sujoy Ghosh, closely shadows the Spanish movie, *The Invisible Guest*(2017),but for reversal of the gender of the suspect and the parent of the victim who comes to uncover the truth behind the mystery attached with the disappearance of their son, under the guise of the legal advisor. The story of *Badla*gets told in the form an apparent client preparation by the legal advisor. Naina Sethi, a successful business person and the recipient of the Focus Business Person of the Year Award, is accused of murdering Arjun Joseph, her lover. He was found murdered in a room of Glen Mohr Hotel which was booked under Naina's name, when she was there along with him. Naina pleads innocent and states that she was the victim of a plot. Badal Gupta pitches in as the legal advisor recommended by Naina's lawyer, Jimmy Punjabi, as the former is an expert in preparing the client and the witnesses. His strength is that he had not "lost a case so far" (8:36 – 8:37). Badal Gupta asks Naina to tell him "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but truth", so that he could seal all the loopholes in the case and defend her and there starts her version of Arjun's death (8:40 -8:47).She ends up her narration saying, "The entire crime scene was planned to frame me. So the police would think that I wanted to break up with Arjun and I offered him money to keep our affair a secret. But when he refused, I killed him" (15:48 – 16:04).In Venkat Ramji's *Evaru*, which is a Telugu adaptation of *The Invisible Guest*, Sameera Maha, wife of Rahul Maha, a businessman, gets arrested for murdering her rapist, DSP Ashok Krishnaof Hyderabad Circle, in Valley View Resort, Coonoor, where she was staying for her Ayurvedic treatment. Understanding that the prosecution has appointed the famous criminal lawyer, Ratnakar Chetty, who "has never lost a single case for the past twenty years", Sameera's lawyer, Banerjee, takes the help of Vikram Vasudev, the investigating officer of the case by bribing him to get the inside information (9:18 – 9:21). Vikram meets Sameera and insists her to reveal the truth to him (15:58 – 15:59). Sameera tells Vikram her version of the rape and Ashok's death. At the later part of the stories, the audience understands that the narrations about the murders by the suspects in both the movies are their speciousattempts to showcase their innocence.

Badal Gupta, in *Badla*, channels the conversation in such a way that Naina admits tohave caused the accident in which Sunny Singh Toor, the son of Nirmal Singh Toor and Rani Kaur, died. She narrates her version of the incident and blames Arjun for all the decisions made immediately after the accident. In *Evaru*, Vikram does the same thing and makes Sameera admit to causing the accident in which their car hitthe victim, Vinay Varma's car and both parties had a wordy quarrel. The mysterious disappearance of Vinay is yet another narration that

Vikram leads Sameera into. Although the audience is made to accept the protagonists' version, the directors bring in twists to the whole story whenthe listeners of their stories need to know the reality.

In *Badla*, Badal Gupta says, "Maybe everything happened the way you said it did. But then again, it's you who said it" (1:30:32 – 1:30:33). Badal himself comes forward with the hypothetical explanation of Rani's ulterior motive of revenge leading her to devise a plot to murder Arjun and frame Naina for the same. This piques Naina's interestand she starts narrating a different perspective in which she affirmed his suspicions of Rani being Arjun's killer and that she had seen Rani at the crime spot but wanted the same to be elicited from Badal himself to see if he can seal the loopholes in her version of the story proving himself to be trustworthy and efficient enough to free her from the clutches of an impending jail sentence. Badal attempts to get closer to the truth by theorizing another version that there might have been a reversal of roles wherein Arjun wanted to inform the police about the accident and Naina being the one to stop him. Naina, after entangling and disentangling the events with various perspectives and trusting Badal to free her from the case by any means, finally admits to have killed Arjun to prevent him from admitting to Sunny's parents about the mishap. Meanwhile, she also reveals the spot of disposal of Sunny's car after declaring that it was she who had actually murdered Sunny by pushing the car into a lake with Sunny in it even after she knew that the latter was still very much alive, much to Badal's shock.

In the movie *Evaru*, the concept of multiperspectivity comes into play when attempts are made by Vikram to uncover the truth behind Vinay Varma's seemingly mysterious disappearance and Ashok's murder, which was projected as an act of self-defense. Vikram kindles Sameera's interest by apparently having a conversation with a colleague regarding the perplexing disappearance of a person one year back which coincidentally happened to be Vinay Varma. This paves way for accommodating the differing perceptions that get told as part of Vikram's attempts to make Sameera confess to her crime and the latter's attempts to evade them. Vikram lets her know about Vinay's son, Adarsh Varma,who was battling cancer and also fighting tooth and nail to find out the cause of his father's sudden disappearance. This makes Sameera open up about the duo's latest encounter with Vinay, his acquaintance to her fiancée Rahul's parents, his threatening words of caution to Sameera to end her illicit affair with Ashok and the resultant manhandling of Vinay. In her version of the story, she presents Ashok as the culprit behind Vinay's murder and disposal of the corpse and says about the subsequent black mailing calls they had received from an anonymous person which made them decide on confessing to the crime together. But the events take a turn at the resort where Ashok wanted to finish off Sameera to save himself and she, left without a choice, had killed him as an act of self-defense. Vikram wilfully and skilfully traps Sameera into admitting to her crimes by provoking her as he senses that there were a lot of inconsistencies in her version of the storywhich makes him affirm that she is the real culpritbehind the two murders. The multiperspective narrative technique employed efficiently in the film enables the director to make all the twists and turns in the story fall in place as the story which starts with all deceptive and distorted versions of the events eventually gets straightenedin bits and pieces as the story slowly progresses.

Towards the close of the movie *Badla*, Naina comes in for a rude shock when she finds out that the person in the guise of Badal Gupta was none other than Nirmal Singh who comes up againsther as he desperately wanted to know the real murderer of his son and the spot where his body was ditched. The same twist is seen in *Evaru* as well, when Sameera gets a shock of her life when she understands that she was having the conversation with Adarsh Varma himself, whose motive was to pin her as the murderer of his father and to know where his father had been buried. Both the movies are well-knit murder mysteries and with the deft handling of multiperspective narrative techniqueboth the stories get recounted in a gripping and mystifying manner from the start to the finish.

Conclusion

Both the movies, *Badla* and *Evaru*, defy the stereotypes of female lead roles with such intriguing plot lines and portray them to take up the challenges which turn out as the outcome of their misdoings. The divergent stances that the directors make the suspects and the investigators take,

have created ample space to carve out the narration in a completely different way and to effectively unravel the mystery attached with the murders in both the stories. Both the directors loom the narration in such a way to give space for a lot of speculations and assumptions, and thereby make the audience a little puzzled about the whole sequence of the events. Both the directors have handled the multiperspective narrative technique with adept precision as the keys characters have their own motivations which make them reveal their versions of the incidents. They have, thereby, grabbed the opportunity to showcase the possible functions of this narrative technique.

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