Intertextuality In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Trilogy Brotherhood Of The Conch

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the elements of intertextuality with reference to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's trilogy, The Brotherhood of the Conch. The term "Intertextuality" refers to the presence in a text of two or more texts that are connected with each other. i.e similarity.

Unintentional references can sometimes happen, depending on how well the reader understands the text andits meanings. Intertextuality is a common thread connecting the novels The Conch Bearer (2007), The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming (2008), and Shadowland (2011), where the author draws inspiration from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, and The Hobbit. The protagonist of Divakaruni's trilogy is similar to the fictitious characters Harry and Bilbo Baggins. In the novel Harry Potter, Tom Riddle, who would later become Lord Voldemort, makes a similar allusion to the antagonist Surabhanu from Chitra Banerjee'sBrotherhood of the Conch. This article also discusses intertextuality from Julia Kristeva's point of view. Divakaruni's trilogy has had a significant influence on a text in which the characters and plot overlap with other works.

Keywords: Fantasy fiction, Intertextuality, Indian-writing, Iterability, Post-Modernism.

Introduction

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a well-known Indian born American writer, and novelist.

She has bagged numerous awards for her various fictional works. She is widely known for diasporicwriting which deals with feminism. In addition, she has also written fantasy novels.

Her Trilogy Brotherhood of the Conch is a series. The trilogy draws its inspiration from J.K.Rowling's Harry Potter. The titles of the three books are given as follows: The Conch Bearer (2007), The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming (2008), Shadowland (2011).

Intertextuality is an interdisciplinary concept with a dynamic path that includes elements from literature and other disciplines. It focuses more on readers and how and where they connect the text to their understanding of literary fictional works than just the text itself. The text and ideas are discussed by Julia Kristeva is credited with establishing the term. She writes that, "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text', in which 'several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Qtd.in. Allen). Therefore, creating one text has anindirect influence on other texts. The focus of text within text has a considerable impact on postmodernism, which is connected to intertextual studies. It re-examines the text in which the connection between two texts shows the fusion of interrelatedness between fictional characters and stories. The pattern and structure of a text can be analyzed through typologicalform.

Iterability refers to a text's capacity for repetition while making references to other works to clarify its meaning. Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian-French philosopher and literary critic, first used the term "intertextuality" in 1966 in French 'intertextualité'. The main objective of intertextuality is to let the reader understand how closely related the texts are to one another. The intertextual framework is present in pre-textual narrative works, and the idea ofborrowing is the standard intertextual method. For instance, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Brotherhood of Conch Series, which incorporates explicit or implicit allusions to earlier works, has an impact from other works. The main subject of study is the transfer of influence,absorption, and adaptation from one literary work to other literary and nonliterary works.

Julia Kristeva used the term in her seminal essays (1966) and especially in "The Unbound Text"(1967). She elaborates on intertextuality through the adaptation of literary works. i.e Adaptation. According to Kristeva, intertextuality means that each word in the text has a relationship to other texts or intertextual reading. Moreover, she continues, there is no distinction between literary and non-literary texts in the intertextual study. Intertext denotes that the text has several connectivity to other works which has similar context where the text is hidden within the text. So, the concept of intertextual reading relates to post modernism.

On the other hand, intertext has another concept of contextualization. It is the process of reusing the content in another text. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's trilogy is a production of text under the influence of Tolkien and Rowling's works.

In the trilogy, the main protagonist, Anand, who agrees to go on the adventure as the hero, makes a similar allusion to the characters Harry Potter and Bilbo Baggins. The protagonist in Divakaruni's trilogy battles numerous obstacles on his enigmatic journey.
When an individual work is determined to be intertextual, the creation of meaning exhibits a variety of signs of interpretation. According to Kristeva,

"In a text there is no original thought, no unique intended meaning created by a unified authorial consciousness and a unique meaning to be discovered and deciphered by the reader." (318)

This illustrates how the text conveys the interdependence of ideas. Intertextuality also flips the conventional notion of the writer and the work. In this case, the author is the creator; her concept transforms into text, which is an interpretation where the connotative and denotative meanings of the text lie behind it. From Kristeva point of view, "there is always a correlation between text and the social and cultural contexts out of which the text are produced" (322). The conventional method of text interpretation is replaced by intertextuality.

Anand, the protagonist, is a tool to decipher the intertextuality of characters in The Conch Bearer, the first book of Divakaruni's trilogy. He shares similarities with Harry from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter television series, which is based on seven of Rowling's novels.

The implied message is that Anand and Harry experience hardship in pursuit of the same goal. For instance, Harry suffers in Rowling's books when the sinister Lord Voldemort tries to affect Harry's thoughts. Through Surabhanu, Divakaruni's character Anand experiences a similar scenario. The evil Surabhanu controls Anand's mind the narration about Anand's act is,
That's when he realizes that; he isn't dreaming. He's really standing there, his foot jangling with pain, a pillow in his hands, getting ready to kill a sleeping, defenseless man. That's how far the force has pushed him. The clever, insidious force that somehow wormed its way into him, that learned and used his secret longing to find a magical world to lure him this far.

(Bearer, 108)

The reader understands that the villainous force is pursuing the protagonist and tries to disrupt his mission. By manipulating Anand's thoughts, Surabhanu was able to discover his deep hidden desires. Additionally, he commands Anand to kill the wise old manwho serves as his brotherhood's conch helper.

Anand works at tea shop under his cruel master Haru where Anand suffers at the hands of his boss. Similarly, Harry lives in his abusive uncle's home who took his freedom and controls him. These two characters are longing for freedom and they wish a magic change intheir life. Both these characters face severe trauma in their early childhood days.

Both Anand and Harry choose the other world which is entirely different from the real world. Forinstance Anand states that,

"As he stacked the washed pots and tea glasses on the counter, Anand wished

— as he had done many times secretly in the past year – that someone would give him a magic apple like the one he had read about. And a magic telescope. (Divakaruni, 4)

This depicts the protagonist's struggle in the real world as well as his daily existence. Anand must overcome the conflicts that his family and he are forced to live under.

The plight of the characters can be comparable to that of Divakaruni's trilogy with Western Fantasy writers. In contrast to Harry Potter's Harry, Hermione Granger, and Ron Wesley, as well as The Hobbit's Frodo Baggins and Samvise Ganger, Anand and his friend Nisha share their quest voyage. These three sets of novels meet the same sector, resembling an intertextual analysis of characters having the same motif. In The Conch Bearer, Anand receives the call to adventure from the wise old man Abhaydatta, just as Harry received the call to Hogwarts School from the half-giant, half-human Rubeus Hagrid. Wise Old Man Gandalf summons Frodo and Bilbo Baggins from The Hobbit and The Lord ofthe Rings to embark on an adventure. As Abhaydatta points out the reason as, "'I don't expect you to do that. Even I, trained as I am, couldn't do it for my brother Healer, could I?
But I was called to you because of your belief in magic – and your desire to enter its secret domain'" (32).

As Divakaruni remarked in an interview, J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter served as the basis for her trilogy. So, the reader will find many connections between her writings and that of

Rowling. Even the magical components have connections to other works, not just the characters. The magical conch, for instance, possesses a special power. The magical ring also plays a significant role in the series Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings. The conch has its ownvoice in Divakaruni's trilogy. The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming, however, possesses a magical mirror. Each magical object has a voice in this place. When the protagonist is in a challenging circumstance, supernatural forces intervene and provide clues about how to getaway from the threatening evil. When Anand seeks to overthrow the Jinn in The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming, he has no idea of how to destroy the evil force. There, Anand seeks the conch for help, and the conch gives him the following advice:

"Hold me up and blow into me with all of your life‑breath. Keep blowing until I tell you to stop. Put your entire attention into the blowing. And no matter
what happens, this time, for the Great Power's sake, don't let go of me!."

(Ch.17, 272)

Good and evil always come together at a parallel point in a fairy tale. The major antagonist in these texts is fiercely interested in destroying both human and divine power. Surabhanu, the principal antagonist in The Brotherhood of the Conch, is an ultimate evil force, much like Lord Voldemort and Sauron in The Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter, respectively.

Throughout the Conch series, the author stresses the importance of morality and human values. The fantasy novels by J.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling have similar factors. In these novels, the hero is put to a moral test. As Anand rescues the conch and arrives in the Silver Valley, the brotherhood deliberately puts his loyalty to the test. He encounters the test as:

'I can't choose just one. The three virtues are connected – one can't exist fully without the other. Without one, the others lose their flavor. Honesty without compassion is too harsh to do any good. Compassion without loyalty lacks power, so you can't help the people you care for. Loyalty without honesty may make you follow the wrong person, or the wrong cause.' He paused, but there was no response from the mountain. How could he explain his thoughts better?. (Ch.16, 203)

From this the reader can understand how human values have supremacy in Indian traditional roots. The protagonist in this tale opts for both choices, thereby mirroring the cultural context where virtues are valued highly.

Similar to Frodo Baggins in Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings, the protagonist of this trilogy is ready to accept the call for adventure. As a result, the two protagonists alternate between the real and fantastical worlds. Anand, who is enthusiastic about his magical

mission, responds to the old man by stating, "'Yes!' Anand said, clasping his hands. His entire face shone with excitement and delight. 'Oh, yes!' It seemed to him that the old man's offer was what he had been longing for all time (33). This statement demonstrates how desperately Anand believes in supernatural power in his life.

Strength of spells is another aspect of the fantasy genres. In The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming, the sequel to The Conch Bearer, the protagonist of the Brotherhood of the Conch series learns magical spells. In the brotherhood, the healers are the masters who instruct apprentices on how to cast spells. Among the many professors who teach Anand is Giridatta, an expert in controlling painful emotions. Mohandatta is a master at foretelling past lives.

Anand's companions acquire magical knowledge. As Anand makes an attempt but fails and feels ashamed, Master Giridatta counsels him in the following words:

"You mustn't focus on the pain. By doing so, you give it additional power. Don't blame yourself for what you couldn't do. It takes practice to be able to see what is invisible to the physical eye. The other boys have been working on their skills for many weeks now, and it's only your first day." (Dreaming, 7)

Philosophically, it is evident from the passage above that nobody is flawless without making mistakes. As Anand feels ashamed of his very first attempt and feels bad about his failure, can relate to the classic quote by Alexander Pope, "To Err is Human."

Master Ayurdatta, an herbalist and Nisha's tutor, is the other influential character.

Master Vayudatta is an expert at recognizing wind-watchers. The artificial staircase and tree tower are important elements in The Mirror of Fire and Dreaming and this is similar to the scene from Harry Potter. Harry Potter's main character from J.K. Rowling has a lot in common with the protagonist of Divakaruni and his journey. Here, Harry, a character from the fictional "Hogwarts School," studies magic from his professors Snape, Mc Gonagal, and Dumbledore. Anand learns spells from Masters Vayudatta, Abhaydatta, and Gridatta in the same

manner as in Divakaruni's trilogy. The protagonist of Divakaruni's series is a part of 'The Brotherhood' as Harry belongs to Hogwarts.

The author depicts the evil force as powerful as with virtue in the final book of the trilogy, Shadowland. For instance, the evil force joins together as an army under the control of Dr. X whereas in The Lord of the Rings, that evil army gathers to destroy the good force where they are under the control of evil Sauron. Goblins and Wargs are two examples of antagonistic characters that fight against the protagonist's goals in The Hobbit. The Jinn, Kasim, Surabhanu, and Dr. X are the antagonists in Divakaruni's trilogy who set out to prevent the protagonist from obtaining the magical conch and mirror.

The other important factor is 'Spell'. The use of spells is common in fantasy literature. How the magicians cast spells in the Shadowland throughout the hero's voyage. In the mysterious journey Anand instructs Nisha as, "'Move around it,' he said to Nisha. 'No matter what it says, don't reply. It can't touch us.' He focused his eyes on the bell and his mind on the protection spell, weaving its unraved parts again" (74). This scene finds an echo in Rowling's Harry potter.

From the above discussions and explorations the reader understands that the intertextual reading of characters and scenes are mixed. The idea of "influence" between the works is widely discussed. In intertextual reading Ulrich Weinstein states, "the imitation is conscious influence, whereas influence is unconscious imitation" (21). The trilogy by Divakaruni here is related to the notion of thematic resemblance, i.e., either borrowing the words or ideas entirely. The intertextual reading of a text occurs not just when the text is produced, but also when the writer reads the work in the reader's perspective.

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