

* Afshan Abbas

** Dr. Fauzia Janjua

Propositions and Sequence in “The Heer Ranjha”: An Application of Todorov’s Theory of Narratology

Abstract:

The present study aims at analyzing the propositions and sequences in the folk tale Heer Ranjha. For this Purpose, Todorov’s theory of narratology is employed with a focus on verbal and syntactic choices. The verbal and syntactic choices depict the themes of the folk tale. Todorov’s five stages of narrative theory: Equilibrium, Disruption of Equilibrium, Recognition of Disruption, an attempt to repair the damage, and New Equilibrium will be applied to the present text to analyze how by following five stages, the folk tale of ‘Heer Ranjha’ progresses and what fantastic elements could be found that make readers understand or take it as the folk literature. The linguistic choices are significant in terms of sequence and propositions. The study is also aims at providing the comprehensive view and application of the Todorov’s theory of narratology. The data comprises on the translation of ‘Heer Ranjha’ by Usborne (1973). The study focuses on the language of the folk tale, which helps the readers to understand the social and cultural norms of Punjab.

Key Words: *Propositions, sequences, Heer Ranjha, Todorov’s theory of narratology, verbal & Syntactic choices.*

Introduction:

Folktales offer a wonderful resource for highlighting traditional socio-cultural values. While, folktales have the capacity to enrich the past but their linkage with the present becomes more

rewarding to understand the societal behavior persistent to the norms. For instance, when Ranjha accepts the job he develops a social link with Heer family and the developing links with Heer family also highlights the socio-economic norms of the Punjab.

The terms and circumstances of his employment are dictated by Heer. The protagonist, Ranjha, accepts the shackles as a social norm. That depicts the gender roles which presents women as more dynamic than males. The socio-cultural frameworks justify the significant substance of this romantic folk tale. The main characters of Heer and Ranjha, are revolutionary characters to the conventional roles of the society. Through their numerous reproductions and retellings, folk tales such as Sassi-Punno, Laila Majnu, Shiren-Farhad to name only a few have become widely cherished in the Subcontinent where, the river Chenab (flowing through the soils of Punjab for centuries) it's furious waves narrate the songs of love and affection, and *Heer-Ranjha* is one of them. It is partly true and fictional. This story has many narrative versions, but the one that has remained most popular throughout the times is Waris Shah's poetic epic, which was written in 1766. This is the story of Heer and Ranjha, two legendary lovers. In which the main protagonist is Ranjha, who is forced to quit his ancestral home and village due to his envious sisters-in-law's cruel treatment, and how he falls in love with Heer.

The present study focuses on the Narratological Analysis of a short story “Heer Ranjha” through the Todorov's theory of Narratology. The narrative pattern proposed by Tzvetan Todorov is a way to understand the underlying meaning behind a story. Narratology is, etymologically, the science of narrative. Narratology focuses on the narrative which involves the narrative forms of representation. The present study highlights the semiotic and syntactic patterns of the selected folk tale. The main emphasis of the present study is on practical explorations of folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’ in the light of Todorov's theory.

Literature Review:

A number of writers and researchers have explored the theme of love and affection in the folk tales based on the particular patterns of the folk tales.

Butler (2007) employed the feminist study of folk tales which aimed at analyzing socio-cultural and political norms of the society for women while rejecting the traditional notions of feminism and gender. She opposes binary classifications such as men and women, defining gender as a variable attribute that shifts and changes depending on the roles one takes on. Gender difference, according to Tannen (1994), is an expository experience that enhances emotional connection. According to her findings, men are more indirect due to weakness or a lack of confidence, whereas women are more direct. Lazar (2007) conducted a critical discourse analysis, looking at gender, power, and ideology in discourse through the lens of inequality and how it exists in society.

Institutional, cultural, and geographic circumstances are all diverse. Aside from that, she regarded gender as a factor. Men and women are divided into two classes by an ideological structure that is centered on gender on the subject of dominance and subordination.

Bachtarzi (2010) examines human relationships in Lawrence's "Sons and Lovers" to document her findings by contextualizing each character in regard to the causes of failure in human relationships through the eyes of the Oedipus complex, with respect to the other characters. Foghel (2013) investigates the concept of love in Shakespeare's Hamlet, questioning how Shakespeare not only exemplified but also brilliantly replicated repeating patterns of love.

Language is an ideal medium and tool for the representation of love. Words cannot be considered decontextualized lexical elements, but they do give context for other lexical items. Assessing the worth of any text and attempting to grasp the truth established by language narratological analysis is

a significant tool. The linguistic choices, according to Mills (1995), are used to illustrate socio-cultural norms and ideology.

Narratological analysis unfolds the socio-cultural circumstances, and the relationship between implied reader and the narration which share the common assumptions. Thus, narratology has emerged as a critical tool for analyzing the verbal and syntactic patterns of the narration.

These works have tremendously aided in the development of this research, which aims to illuminate the narrative perspective in the folktale Heer Ranjha. Various researchers from throughout the world have been influenced by the folktale.

Different views exist, and the analysis of sequence and patterns of folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’ has not been done before. The study will highlight the most important notions of the Todorov’s theory, such as the narratological sequence of the folk tale. Narratological sequence build up a relationship between a text and context.

Method of the Research:

This research is basically a qualitative research, in which all the findings are depicted in the form of words and paragraphs instead of numbers. The primary source of the study is the folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’.

Research problem:

A critique of narratively constructed meaning has been a significant area of inquiry in modern research. The study has focused on the analysis of propositions and sequence in the folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’ through the Todorov’s theory of narratology. The analysis based on Todorov’s theory of narratology has sought to find out how propositions and sequence are utilized as discursive tools in terms of constructing meaning in the selected folk tale.

Research Question:

This present study is focused on answering the following question:

How has the notion of proposition and sequence suggested by Todorov in his theory of narratology been employed in the folk tale ‘ Heer Ranjha’ ?

Analysis:

Narratological analysis contribute to critical discourse analysis by assisting in the production of meaning in a text in a socio-cultural context in the following part, narratological patterns depicting the theme of love are examined along with lexical, syntactic, and discourse level choices, as indicated by Todorov’s in his theory of Narratology. In 1969, Todorov proposed a theory which he believed applied to all films. He believed that all films follow the same narrative pattern going through 5 stages. These are the Equilibrium: The equilibrium is the first stage of Todorov’s theory. This stage is found at the beginning of the film, where everything is as it should be and the characters’ lives are normal, disequilibrium: The second stage is the disruption stage. This is when the state of equilibrium is disturbed by an event occurring, Next, Todorov believes that the film has an acknowledgment stage, where there is recognition of the event that disturbed the equilibrium, solving: The solving stage is the part of the film where there is an attempt to repair the damage of the disruption that has been made and again the equilibrium: The final stage, is the equilibrium stage again. This is the part where there is a return or restoration of a new equilibrium as Five stages of Todorov’s narrative theory can be applied on the narrative pattern of the folk tale’ Heer Ranjha’. Todorov theory helps to arrive at a schematic version of what Genette calls a narrative sentence (1972). A narrative sentence is a single statement which expresses fundamental propositions of an entire narrative. The Proposition Skeleton of The Folk tale ‘ Heer Ranjha’ is given below:

Table 1. Application of Todorov (1969) set of Narrative categories

Equilibrium	Ranjha said to Raja Adil “Heer is a spotless mirror and a vast ocean of love for me and we both are true lovers.”
-------------	---

Disruption	At the time of Nikah, Heer talked to her father and Qazi, “My First nikah was already made with Ranjha in the presence of true Prophet himself and was blessed by God and witnessed by four Angles. When you know that My life to a stranger would be a wild plant then how can you dissolve my first nikah and marry me second time to a stranger.”
Recognition	When Ranjha heard the news of death of Heer, he says, “Love proved a destroyer to her that’s why I am going to deep sleep.”
Repair the Damage	Ranjha and Heer efforts to attain their Love and to break the shackles of the stereotypical structures.
Equilibrium Again,	It is spoken by Ranjha when he was going to kill himself to reach to Heer. For true lovers, permanent place to live is not this temporary world but Heaven. For true lovers there is no importance of worldly existence, as their sole purpose is to meet each other permanently. This is the purpose which is fulfilled by the true lovers Heer and Ranjha at the end of the folktale that portray the theme of love.

The Story also consists of ‘irreducible’ actions which act as the fundamental units of the narrative: In practice such a unit may appear as a series of related propositions e.g.

Related Propositions:

X and Y live together happily	Heer and Ranjha were happy with each other.
X Caught by the family of Heer	Ranjha caught by the family of Heer
X and Y established a new balance	Heer and Ranjha died in love of each other.

Propositions which are identified in the folk tale are in the form of structural repetition or inversions, to form a particular narrative pattern. In the analysis of 'Heer Ranjha', for example, it is evident how a particular sequence of propositions is employed to achieve a particular aesthetic effect. Todorov (1970) identifies

character attributes with the adjectival component of sentences, classifying them into three groups: by this schema a character could be said to comprise such 'exterior states' as name, sex and calling, and inter-related and, perhaps, conflicting traits suggesting a 'nature', which is inferred from moods and reactions described. In the folk tale 'Heer Ranjha' particular adjectives are used as a pre-modification to create the exterior and interior states of the characters e.g. Vast ocean, Spotless mirror, Wild plant etc. in the folk tale 'Heer Ranjha' verbal categories are very suggestive to highlight the theme of Love e.g. Precious pearls, Twine of Muni, Battlefield etc. The verbal aspect of the folk tale resides in the concrete sentences which constitutes the text. As Far as Syntactic categories are concerned in Heer Ranjha Declarative indicative sentences are used in a high frequency to highlight the theme of Love. The opening of the narration of Heer Ranjha intimate readers about the background of the family of Ranjha which consists of the hate towards him from the wives of Ranjha's brothers in the form of certain verbal choices by them. As their husbands worked hard all the day in the fields but Ranjha remains aloof. He was the favorite son of his father but after the death of his father, these women show their jealousy towards him. They were of the jealous and cunning nature and they only care for materialistic things rather than relations as they did conspiracy with the help of their husbands and gave bribe to Qazi for dividing the land. Relationship between men and women was based on the materialistic values. The theme of love and hate through the lens of socio-cultural norms has been highlighted in the state of Ranjha which shows the real cause of throwing him away from his brothers and giving him such barren land in his share. The patriarchal structures are depicted in the folk tale in terms of wealth, power and status. Narratological patterns in the folk tale also highlights the conflicting attitudes of the main characters. Each literary work consists of three dimensions, which are entangled but can be distinguished in this analysis.

The verbal aspect is divided into two domains: the utterance and its performance. For instance, the climax of the folk tale commence with the arrival of Heer to the yard with her girl companions and discovered Ranjha asleep on her couch, the most beautiful, proud, and spoiled daughter of a feudal chief, was not expecting anyone to even touch her bed. So, she yelled at Ranjha as she was narrated so proud of her status that she warned Ranjha. Her lines have power because she belongs to a renowned caste. She tried to beat Ranjha when he was asleep on her couch because she was Chuchak Sial's spoiled daughter, but he awoke and whispered these lines to her.

“Be gentle with me, sweetheart. This world is a dream. Even you, proud lady, will have to die. You should not be unkind to strangers or treat poor men with haughtiness. Take back your couch and quilt and I will depart hence and be no more seen.”

She was a proud lady who found it difficult to listen to the words of others, but Ranjha's comments had an impact on her. Most notably, there are facts regarding men and women's relationships in the lines, as males were very courteous, as Ranjha is in the discussion, while ladies from prestigious families, particularly Heer, were arrogant. Women from illustrious households wielded power over men at the period. Ranjha addressed her nicely and informed her that human love is founded on humility and service to others, not on beautiful looks and attractiveness.

“Daughters who are disobedient to their parents are not daughters but prostitutes. You bad girl, you should be drowned in the deep stream for causing such a scandal. Grown up daughters who venture outside their father's house should be thrown down the wells. Why have you cut off the nose of the family.”

These remarks are self-explanatory, as they were spoken to Heer by her mother when she first learned about Ranjha's love for her daughter. It was not possible because she belonged to a higher caste. Expected of her because women at the period lacked the authority and power to love anyone and marry that individual.

The syntactic and verbal categories are suggestive to the theme of the folk tale. According to Todorov (1969) discovered that narratives moved forward in a chronological order with one action following after another. In other words, they have a clear beginning, middle and end.

Thus, Propositional and sequential analysis of the selected sections of the folk tale reveals how the theme of love is depicted in the linguistic choices made by the author. The folk tale has a sequence and it can be reduced to propositions which proved Todorov’s notion of narratology as a science. It is noticeable that there are some universal semantics in the selected folk tale which is involved in creating the literary themes of the story. In short, Todorov’s theory can be applied successfully on the narrative patterns of the folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’.

Application of the Todorov’s theory on the folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’ reveals how the emotion of love is embedded in the linguistic choices made by the author. The propositions in form of verbal and syntactic categories are emotionally charged colorful ornaments supporting the theme of love construed in the folktale under analysis. Further, the analysis of the above text of the folk tale at three different levels including lexical, syntactical and discourse level will explain how the choices have been selected and employed by the writer in a particular context of folk tale. In addition, the fact that there is only one point of view (external focalization) open to tell the story limits the scope of the reader.

Conclusion:

Todorov’s theory has provided a framework to look through the surface expressions to underlie syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures of the selected folk tale and relating these to the underlying meanings of it in terms of the plot, theme and character. The research question required an analysis of propositions and sequence in the folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’ as suggested by Todorov. The analysis in the present study revealed that the selected folk tale depicts a set of propositions and sequence of the five stages. The analysis also focused on the aspects of selected folk tale in terms of

verbal, syntactic and semantic elements. These categories permit precise, unambiguous and relatively impersonal discussion of literary effects. The study of Todorov’s narratology proves that the narrative sequences in the selected story have covered the five stages of narrative development, namely equilibrium, disruption, realization, repair, and new equilibrium. However, the results of the study prove that the pattern of the narratological development of the folk tale ‘Heer Ranjha’ is not circular but linear. This study is notable in that it opens up new avenues for analysis in the realm of folk stories and lexical categories in discourse studies.

References

* PhD Scholar, Internation Islamic University Islamabad

** Associate Professor, Internation Islamic University Islamabad

1. Bachtarzi, A. (2010). Men’s Relationships in D.H. Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers. [Master’s thesis] Mentouri University Constantine
2. Butler, J. (2007). Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. Routledge.
3. Hogan, P.C. (2011). Affective narratology: The structure of stories. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
4. Prince, G. (2003). A dictionary of narratology (Rev ed.). Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
5. Todorov, T. (1971). The Two Principles of Narratives. *Diacritics* 1(1), pp. 37-44
6. Lazar, M. M. (2007). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis1. *Critical Discourse Studies* 4 (2):141-164.
7. Osborne, C.F. (1973). The Adventures of Heer Ranjha. A British Commonwealth, London: Owen. 203S. UNESCO.