

Narrative Metafiction in Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises*, Tanushree Podder's *Escape from Harem*, and Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key*

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the representations of metafiction in Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises*(2000), Tanushree Podder's *Escape from Harem* (2013), and Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key*(2012). More specifically, the article will tackle metafiction in these works from a narrative point of view. The study will generally deal with metafiction as self-reflexive genre dealing with narrative devices, including the work's comments on itself as a work of fiction. In this respect, the study is going to approach the narrative elements of the selected works to examine the effect of metafiction in the context of the selected works and how they provide the reader with their complex narrative fabric. Therefore, three main metafictional devices are going to be utilized in the study i.e., the self-reflective devices, the mimetic devices, and the narrative devices. These devices will be elaborated in the light of Patricia Waugh's metafictional arguments. Consequently, a narrative conceptual framework will be followed to analyze the selected works' plots.

INTRODUCTION

Fictional plots have several literary modes. Such modes are various according to the plots which they tell. They include the narrative (or novelistic plot), poetic plot, and dramatic plot. These plots convey the author's view of religion, history, society, culture, and tradition. This essay will specifically focus on the metafictional plot as a fictional mode. Therefore, it will examine Jaishree Misra's *Ancient Promises* (2000), Tanushree Podder's *Escape from Harem* (2013), and Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key* (2012) to explore the role of tradition, culture, and society in developing their metafictional plots.

Before drawing an outline for metafiction, I will introduce the metafictional genre in this section. The metafictional genre has literary roots in fictional works since the eighteenth century. The main characteristic of metafiction is the "self-consciousness" or "self-reflexivity" of the work of art as a "fictional work" (Booth 167). However, the second part of the twentieth century shifts away from traditional metafiction to an innovative metafictional genre in order to "understand why it is experimental and how it is experimental, we must adopt an appropriate view of the whole order of

fiction and its relation to the conditions of being in which we find ourselves" (Scholes 100).

Metafiction, therefore, is an "experimental" genre raising fundamental questions about the nature of literary texts. In addition, they convey the latent drives behind which the work of metafiction is written in such a genre since the early "beginnings of metafiction" (Wolf 448). Being so, metafiction focuses on the technical aspects of fictional works in favor of the thematic implications of the texts which embody the author's abstract style. In the long run, it corresponds to the feeling that fiction goes along with the inherent peculiarities of the text itself to introduce critical insights outside the text as "a deliberate meta-narrative celebration of the act of narration" (Fludernik 278). The following section is going to outline some relevant metafictional devices which will be used in this essay.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Published in 1984, Patricia Waugh's seminal book *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (1984) inaugurates the study of metafiction as an inde-

pendent literary genre which addresses the contemporary and the “present increased awareness of ‘meta’ levels of discourse and experience is partly a consequence of an increased social and cultural self-consciousness” (Waugh 3). Furthermore, Waugh tackles different metafictional devices in her book. For the focus of this essay, nevertheless, I will specify six of Waugh’s metafictional devices. These devices reflect upon the authors’ overarching objective of developing an “intrinsic” as opposed to “extrinsic” approach to literary studies. I will classify these devices into three categories i.e., Self-reflective devices, Mimetic Devices and Narrative Devices. Thus, the following are the six metafictional devices which I will specify in this study.

Self-reflective Devices

1.1 A story addressing the specific conventions of story, such as title, character conventions, paragraphing or plots.

1.2 A story that features itself; as a narrative or as a physical object.

These devices will be applied to identify the representations of tradition in Jaishree Misra’s *Ancient Promises* (2000).

Mimetic Devices

2.1 A story where the narrator intentionally exposes himself/herself as a character in the story.

2.2 A story containing some traditional names and characters.

The mimetic devices will be used to explore the depiction of Indian traditional culture in Tanushree Podder’s *Escape from Harem* (2013).

Narrative Devices

3.1 A story about a writer who creates a story.

3.2 A story representing the function of language in constructing and maintaining our sense of everyday reality.

The essay will depend on the narrative devices to examine the portrayal of society in Ashwin Sanghi’s *The Krishna Key* (2012).

To sum up, Waugh argues that metafiction is “the ultimate and extreme representation of self-conscious fiction” (2). This fictional self-consciousness will be elaborated in the light of Waugh and Linda Hutcheon theoretical devices of metafiction.

SELF-REFLECTIVE DEVICES

In narratology, the term “reflexivity” refers to the “process by which texts, both literary and filmic, foreground their own production, their authorship, their intertextual influences, their reception, or their enunciation” (Stam xiii). As such, metafiction is a self-reflective genre foregrounding the relationship between fictional events and reality. By the same token, Waugh defines metafiction as a “fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the

relationship between fiction and reality” (2). Metafictional self-reflexivity incorporates many technical devices in approaching literary texts. However, I will focus on two metafictional reflective devices in this section.

A Story Addressing the Specific Conventions of Story

The first device is a story addressing the specific conventions of story, such as title, character conventions, paragraphing or plots. Metafictional works draw attention to their textual construction. Such construction lies in the structural elements of the story; such as the narrator, characters, plot and so forth. Works of art could not stand without these conventions. Traditionally, these conventions convey the ultimate meaning of the text. In metafiction, however, the ultimate aim of these conventions is to highlight the building of the text itself to “explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text” (Waugh 2).

A Story which Features Itself as a Narrative

The second self-reflective metafictional device is a story that features itself; as a narrative or as a physical object. Here the nominal paradigm for “story” refers to the story in the general sense of the word. That is, the story standing for the generic inclusion of all fictional narratives; ranging from a fable to the novel. As such, fictional works are distinguished by the kind of narrative they construct. Nevertheless, my focus will be specifically on the novel as a narrative or physical object.

MIMETIC DEVICES

In metafiction, mimetic devices are used to some extent as the “opposite” narrative “poles” when the actions are constructed by the authorial presence in fictional works or the inclusion of other works within the narrative events.

A Story where the Narrator Exposes Him/Herself as a Character in the Story

Waugh places a significant role of the author in mimetic metafictional devices. She argues that the author is the perceiver of the events in the fictional plots. Accordingly, the fictional events are initiated in the light of the author who knows all the narrative actions. Yet, the author enters the metafictional text by the authorial comments of his narrator. Thus, the author’s voice becomes the omniscient narrative persistence in the text. Consequently, the mimetic role of the omniscient narrator reflects the author’s literary perspective. Narrative omniscience is achieved by “the conflict of languages and voices which is apparently resolved in realistic fiction through their subordination to the dominant ‘voice’ of the omniscient, godlike author” (6).

A Story Containing some Traditional Names and Characters

Metafictional works include traditional names within their narrative structure. This inclusion could be adjusted either

by allusion or direct reference to the traditional culture they reflect. In the case of allusion, metafictional works refer to traditional names or works through mentioning or short description. The direct reference, however, acknowledges the titles, characters, or even plots of other works. Waugh calls the other works "traditional" since they are subject to metafictional sketching of their literary forms. Being so, metafictional works synthesize other literary forms authentic to other literary works; Waugh comments: "the use of names in traditional fiction is usually part of an aim to disguise the fact that there is no difference between the name and the thing named: to disguise this purely verbal existence. Metafiction, on the other hand, aims to focus attention precisely on the problem of reference" (93).

NARRATIVE DEVICES

The narrative aspects of metafictional texts are discussed in the stylistic presentations of the fictional events. Metafictional writings, accordingly, involve linguistic references of language constructions which accentuate the text or the author style of writing. Accordingly, the most distinctive component of narrative devices is the fictional language. Therefore, from a glance at the metafictional devices discussed in the previous sections, metafictional self-reflective features identify the author stylistic predilection to write "fiction about fiction." In this section, the main focus will be on the two narrative devices; a story about a writer who creates a story and a story representing the function of language in constructing and maintaining our sense of everyday reality.

A Story about a Writer Who Creates a Story

Waugh's critical insights reflect upon "self-reflective" fiction within the metaphorical characteristic of metafiction which "pursues such questions through its formal self-exploration, drawing on the traditional metaphor of the world as book, but often recasting it in the terms of contemporary philosophical, linguistic or literary theory" (3). So, the linguistic dimension of metafictional writings forms an integral part of narrative studies. Consequently, the latent concern of linguistics metafictional elements does not introduce the text and its narrative structure without the author's stylistic creation of his/her work.

A Story Representing the Function of Language in Constructing and Maintaining our Sense of Everyday Reality

The previous section discussed the position of the author in the text. This position is forged in order to invoke the sense of reality outside the text. Accordingly, the position of the author in self-reflective texts is introduced by linguistic structures. The most functional structure of linguistic elements in the fictional work "dictates both formal effects and meaning" (Waugh 48). Being so, the linguistic construction of literary works introduces the role of the author in representing everyday reality. In my analysis section, I will explain these devices and refer to some examples from the selected texts.

THE REPRESENTATION OF TRADITION IN JAISHREE'S *ANCIENT PROMISES*

Fictional literary conventions develop through the contexts of literary works. They follow a specific manner by which they lead to the ultimate construction of the story. Through constructing a certain plot, for example, the actions develop and reach the climax where these actions fall into the final narrative point. On the other hand, metafiction swerves into a different sequence in narrating the events. The reason behind this narrative kind is theoretical. The authorial sense of "uncertainty" renders their works to trace innovative narrative consequences in constructing the fictional plot. This is because "over the last twenty years, novelists have tended to become much more aware of the theoretical issues involved in constructing fictions. In consequence, their novels have tended to embody dimensions of self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty" (Waugh 2). In *Ancient Promises*, the narrative plots are about marriage. This marriage is the conspicuous aspect of traditions and norms. It provides some narrative features like characterization, plot, and setting. These features are about the traditional conceptualization of marriage.

The theoretical dimension of metafiction represents the abstract façade of self-reflective fiction. Waugh, true to the spirit of metafiction, argues that the theoretical insights of metafiction could be delineated by the authorial "deliberate" discovery of fictional critiques through practice. Just so, the metafictional work creates interplay between the self-reflective text and "the reader who is given a description of the work the author. The reader would, in effect, be offering a brief description of the basic concerns and characteristics of the fiction" (Waugh 2). Taking this into consideration, self-reflective writings are pertinent to the structural construction of narratives. In the light of this argumentation, *Ancient Promises* offers a metafictional appropriation of tradition in a literary sense. The literary sense of marriage critiques the real fake traditions. To illustrate, marriage is depicted as fake and deceptive in the novel. However, the novel critiques this fakeness by using metafictional devices about the characters of Ma and other characters.

Another feature concerning the story posing questions about the nature of self-reflective fiction is the metaphorical depiction of the world in a "novel." Characters building and recasting their relative characterization provides fine examples of real characters or events in the "world." In a sense, the reader recognizes the roles which these characters play in the text "if, as individuals, we now occupy 'roles' rather than 'selves', then the study of the characters may provide a useful model for understanding the construction of subjectivity in the world outside novels" (Waugh 3). In *Ancient Promises*, the tradition of marriage is corresponded with the novel's omniscient narration. The narration tells the reader of Jai's emotional pain: "Jai loped off, muttering. Already the world seemed to be conspiring against our love and I felt a sudden rush of tenderness towards the figure sitting in front of me, now offering me the last of the nimbu pani in his flask" (33).

Linda Hutcheon posits the self-reflective feature of metafiction. She calls self-reflexivity a "narracistic" narrative. She argues that narracistic narrative is a kind of

“narratorial” structure which creates “self-awareness” of its narrative. Narracistic fiction, says Hutcheon, is an “allegorical thematization” of the actions and events in the story. Hutcheon, like Waugh, theorizes the metaphorical function of self-reflective narrative. She posits metafiction “in its most overt form the self-consciousness of a text often takes the shape of an explicit thematization-through plot allegory, narrative metaphor, or even narratorial commentary” (Hutcheon 23). This self-reflexive narration is similar to the exposition of fake marriage in *Ancient Promises*. The destination of fake marriage is presented in a tragic mode. This mode stands for the cultural tradition of marriage portrayed in the novel.

Hutcheon, moreover, accentuates the parodic aspects of metafiction. Parody, according to Hutcheon, could prevail self-reflective texts which synthesize an “attempt” outpace the traditional metafictional forms, and simultaneously affirming “new” literary forms. Being so, the development of “narcissistic” narrative is synthetically structured since “metafiction parodies and imitates as a way to a new form which is just as serious and valid, as a synthesis, as the form it dialectically attempts to surpass” (25). The novel that features itself as a fictional work is all about real stories. *Ancient Promises*, for example, is about real stories in society. The stories of marriage failure are presented through the protagonist’s marriage which is destined to failure and fake promises. Here, the story hinges on itself when it both tells the protagonist’s tragic story and the negative tradition of fake marriage.

In metafiction, fictional works refer to their status as fictional writings through the technical structure of their contexts. Waugh discusses this attribute in terms of the “novel conventions” which determine the formal body of literary works. In this manner, “metafiction may concern itself, then, with particular conventions of the novel, to display the process of their construction” (4). According to Waugh, fictional writings “display” their literary structures to perform their essential metafictional features. By the same token, *Ancient Promises* refers to its technical and narrative status through metafiction. This is achieved through prolepsis where the events are told after a period of time. Some events are told after one or more years. For example, the narrator skips on the narrative line and tells the story after the passage of five years: “a year had passed, very slowly and inexorably in the Maraar household, and it was now clear to me that, however hard I tried I wasn’t to be one of them” (109). Skipping the line of narrative by using prolepsis is an element of a story which features itself as a physical object. Here, Misra uses this metafictional technique to comment on the traditions prevailing society.

THE EXEMPLIFICATION OF CULTURE IN PODDER’S *ESCAPE FROM HAREM*

An obvious characteristic of mimetic device is the author’s revelation of his/her “identity” as the creator of the work. In the course of events, the author appears on the narrative level. The author appearance is manifested in the discourse initiated by the fictional characters he/she creates. In addition,

he/she uses his own works implicitly through the characters’ discourse and interlocations. In this way, the mimetic device reveals the authorial identity as the writer of the story where “the author attempts desperately to hang on to his or her ‘real’ identity as creator of the text we are reading. What happens, however, when he or she enters it is that his or her own reality is also called into question. The ‘author’ discovers that the language of the text produces him or her as much as he or she produces the language of the text” (Waugh 133). In *Escape from Harem*, the author refers to himself as the creator of the text through Jahangirof view: Jahangir (a major character in the novel) has long experience with one of the women. He loved her but could not attain her for long time. When he manages to marry her, her father and brother are given distinctive ranks in the royal family: “*the entire city was agog with excitement. Jahangir was marrying the woman he had been pursuing for the past four years. In his excitement he promised the sun and the moon to his bride. her father, Mirza Ghias Baig, the Itmad-ud-Daula, was given a praise in rank and her brother Asaf Khan was elevated to an important position in the royal court (italics in original)*” (29).

Another remark on the narrative feature of mimetic devices is the author as a mediator between fiction and reality. Hutcheon contends that the author’s role in metafictional works is vital because it imitates the “figurative” aspects of the story which is conveyed to the reader by the work’s “spatial” or “temporal” forms. Accordingly, “the presence of an authorial narrating figure served as mediator, and the act of narration oriented the reader temporally and spatially in the fictive universe” (Waugh 44). Yet the presence of the author could not be accomplished without introducing him/herself in the narrative level. The intersection of the author in the text is relevant to *Escape from Harem*. The author intentionally refers to the Indian traditional culture and how people live their everyday life. For example, Jahangir’s bigamy embodies the negative sequences of marrying many wives and exploiting them for domestic purposes.

Including traditional names in metafictional works explicitly functions as a metaphorical medium of the author’s critical perspective. Allusions made by the author prompt the reader to recognize the “world outside the fictional text.” The reader, therefore, perceives reality in a metaphorical way. But the most apparent competent of literary allusion is the intertextual elements in the story. Additionally, the “mythical allusion” carries out the fictional universe in which “one way of reinforcing the notion of literary fiction as an alternative world is the use of literary and mythical allusion which reminds the reader of the existence of this world outside every day time and space, of its thoroughgoing textuality and intertextuality” (Waugh 112). Indian traditional names are used conspicuously in *Escape from Harem*. Jahanara, Shahjahan, Mirza Ghias Baig and many others are traditional names reflecting the inherited cultures depicted by Podder.

Metafictional traditional names are also preoccupied with the fictive illusion because “mimetic art involves the creation of a fictive illusion which only simulates a reality” (Hutcheon 40). Fictive illusion is the experimental strategy

utilized by the author in order to manipulate his/her work's forms. The manipulation of the characters, for example, relies on the same characters' names taken from previous literary works and manipulated in an avant-garde experimentation, or as Waugh argues, "some metafictional novels present characters who are explicitly artist figures.... Some involve characters who manipulate others explicitly" (117). This manipulation is made by the author when he/she takes a name of a character from the national culture and changes it in his/her own story. In *Escape from Harem*, Jahanara stands for the Indian traditional name. Additionally, he incarnates the cultural aspect of traditional Indian communities where marrying many women was common: "As for Jahanara, she was entrusted with the duties of running the harem and supervising all the work. It was a job generally assigned to dowagers, or the chief queen. From dawn to dusk, the girl dealt with different kinds of problems. Shahjahan depended on her sagacity and consulted her on many state matters. At an age when she should have led a carefree life, she was burdened with enormous responsibilities" (163).

THE PORTRAYAL OF SOCIETY IN SANGHI'S *THE KRISHNA KEY*

The role of the author is pertinent to the textual construction. In this narrative process, the author constructs the work according to a specific literary manner which identifies the generic mode of the work. While metafiction writings deal with the "self-reflective" techniques, the author uses certain contextual cues in the text to refer to his/her self-reflectivity." Such self-reflectivity incarnates the author's critical perspective on the contemporary "cultural" issues which might "the genre establish an identity and validity within a culture apparently hostile to its printed, linear narrative and conventional assumptions about 'plot,' 'character,' 'authority' and 'representation'" (Waugh 10). In *The Krishna Key*, the author constructs a narrative mode to tell a plot about some social issues, such as modernity and historical subjects: "Modern man prides himself on having discovered nuclear power. Little does he realise that far greater powers were available to society and civilizations during the Vedic age and the Mahabharata!" said Mataji triumphantly as she stepped closer to her operative, her right hand mechanically counting her prayer beads" (9).

The new experimental strategy used by metafictional writers questions the proper fictionality of self-reflective texts. This fictionality is the core conceptual meaning of metafiction because the literary writings in general incorporate fictional elements in traditional construction of literary texts. So, the narrative metafictional devices "reject the traditional figure of the author as a transcendental imagination" (Waugh 16). This is because the author refers to him/herself as the author of his/her novel in the context. This is achieved the characters reference to the author or by the authorial comments in the literary context. Here, the linguistic techniques are vital for the author to be introduced into the fictional context; Waugh claims: "although linguistic messages can operate outside their immediate referential contexts, meta-language (reference to the codes of language themselves) is

needed for this to be successful" (37). The author provides a personal self-reflexive element in *The Krishna Key*. These elements represent the democratic society depicted in the novel: "Mathura. Krishna was a Yadava and his clan was quite possibly the first democratic society ever. They were a federation of eighteen tribes and each tribe had their own chieftain—like Ugrasena of Mathura—but all of them jointly elected one single Yadava leader as their supreme governor" (33).

Furthermore, Waugh speculations about the author are relative to metafictional texts because they address "new" literary conventions which have been present in contemporary texts. The existence of the author in the text is a literary "fashion" circulating around the representation of reality. Thus, metafictional writings "show not only that the 'author' is a concept produced through previous and existing literary and social texts but that what is generally taken to be 'reality' is also constructed and mediated in a similar fashion. 'Reality' is to this extent 'fictional' and can be understood through an appropriate 'reading' process" (16). Thus, the fictional plot exemplifies reality outside the text in *The Krishna Key*. This reality is about society and its pertinent issues. These issues involve the historical civilizations roots in the society: "It also explained the hundreds of stone anchors that had been discovered by the team. It was evident that the people of Dwarka would have been seafarers and that vast ships would have docked here. The island layout of the city-state of Dwarka had disappeared in modern times but the ancient layout would have justified the Sanskrit name of Dwarawati—the city of many doors" (43).

The fictionality of metafictional works "is textually reinforced through a variety of techniques. The dialogue, for example, is submerged in the main narrative to suggest the ways in which our individual interpretations are always parts of larger ones" (Waugh 50). The dialogic relations in the characters speeches convey the implicit meaning of the authorial critical perspectives. Therefore, the fictional dialogue "foregrounds the provisional status within the overall discourse of any character's or narrator's speech act" (Waugh 50). The fictional dialogue, according to Waugh, is the linguistic means of the authors' discourse. Such fictional dialogue is initiated between Priya and Saini in *The Krishna Key*. They discuss some detrimental issues like murder:

"Two more killings? Who will be killed?" asked Priya.

"Think about it. Anil Varshney had one of the seals—the one that he planned to return to Nikhil Bhojaraj. He was murdered and the seal stolen. The second seal was with me and I too would have been killed had it not been for the fact that I was arrested and the seal in my possession taken over as evidence by the police. The killer thought that Nikhil Bhojaraj had the third seal. He too was killed. I know that Anil was planning to send the third and fourth seals to Professor Rajaram Kurkude who has his research laboratories in Jodhpur and Devendra Chhedhi—a life sciences researcher," said Saini.

He paused. "What this means is that the killer knows that there are four seals and he plans to go after the people who have them," he blurted out. "But what is so special about

these seals?’ asked Priya. ‘What could be so significant that it causes someone to consider taking four lives?’ ‘I believe that the answer lies in Dwarka—or possibly in Somnath,’ said Saini. (51)

The fictional means for the authorial voice in metafictional texts is the characters. These characters do not appear on the narrative level because they are absent (Abu Jwied 536). The absence of the characters is caused by the linguistic structures in the text. In this way, the characters become the “linguistic signs” which render the author presence in the fictional plot. Waugh ascribes this absence to the “moral” defective sufficiency; “characters are absent because they are linguistic signs, and because they are morally deficient” (56). The fictional names and characters are real documentation of reality in *The Krishna Key*. Such names as Haihayas, Chedis, Vidarbhas, Satvatas, Andhakas, Kukuras, Bhojas, Vrishnis, Shainyas, Dasarhas, Madhus, Arbudas refer to the traditional impression of society in the novel:

‘Precisely. Once Krishna’s Yadava clans—the Haihayas, Chedis, Vidarbhas, Satvatas, Andhakas, Kukuras, Bhojas, Vrishnis, Shainyas, Dasarhas, Madhus, Arbudas and others—had reached the higher altitudes of Prabhas, they began celebrating and became intoxicated. This led to a brawl in which they killed one another. Krishna and his brother Balarama had to flee for their own lives into the jungles of Prabhas. Balarama gave up his life through yoga while Krishna sat under a tree in meditation. A hunter—Jara—saw Krishna’s left foot moving, mistook it for the twitching ear of a deer and shot an arrow in its direction, wounding him fatally,’ explained Saini. (52)

Yet the absence of the fictional characters is not only proposed by the linguistic signs, but also by the author’s individual perception of reality (Al-Ogaili 168). To clarify, the fictional –or unreal- characters are created by the real author who accommodates his/her authorial position in the text through the characters language –or the characters fictional discourse. The author’s voice, thereupon, is linguistically carried out since “the problem of ‘absence’ is here an extension of the notion that a fictional world is created by a real author through a series of choices about the deployment of linguistic units, but nevertheless in some sense constitutes a version of the everyday world. The sign as sign is still, to a large extent, “self-effacing in such fiction” (Waugh 58). In *The Krishna Key*, Priya, for example, is an indication of using yoga in the spiritual aspects of society. She does not mention other characters. She only tells the blessings of practicing yoga. This is the indication of metafictional devices in the novel: “Priya smiled. ‘I spent several years learning meditation and yoga in school. It’s a part of my life that I usually do not discuss,’ she said dismissively. There was an uncomfortable silence for a few seconds” (60).

Hutcheon also accentuates the function if linguistic structures in the metafictional works. She refers to metafiction as “self-reflective” which requires certain attention by the reader who participates in the “imaginative” creation of the story; “contemporary self-reflexive novels,” says Hutcheon, “demand that the reader participate in the fictional process as

imaginative co-creator” (i). Hutcheon contends that the contemporary novel or the “novel of today” as the postmodern novel containing technical modes processed linguistically. The linguistic dimension of such a kind of novels projects reality into its text; “the novel of today is intensely aware of its own existence, continuously drawing attention to its own storytelling processes and linguistic structures” (i). This reflexivity could be found in *The Krishna Key* to tell the reader about the nature of historical society. For example, some symbols explain the inherent meanings of social rites, like birth, murder and so forth:

‘Ah, Vishnu may hold four symbols in his hands but his fifth symbol—the snake touches his feet. The serpent Sheshnag—the one who took birth as Balarama, the brother of Krishna—lies at Vishnu a black masked commando carrying a sheis Saini and Radhika’s feet,’ proclaimed Sir Khan. ‘Five at the centre of a magic square; five sides of a pentagon; five Pandavas at the core of the Mahabharata war; five children of Draupadi; five sons of Yayati and five obstacles to be eliminated. Saini is the last one, Priya.’ (157)

CONCLUSION

This essay has examined the metafictional narrative in Misra’s *Ancient Promises*, Podder’s *Escape from Harem*, and Sanghi’s *The Krishna Key*. The main focus has been on the self-reflexive, mimetic, and narrative devices in these novels. My analysis specifically concentrated on the metafictional qualities in the plots of novels to explore the indications of reality outside their contexts. Using metafiction, the analysis has revealed that the novels carry on some metafictional techniques to argue the role of the plot to expose tradition, culture, and society. They reflect the real impression of the selected texts about cultural traditions and social roots.

In *Ancient Promises*, the representation of traditions has been examined in the light of self-reflective devices in order to study the author’s implicit intersection in the novel’s narrative fabric. *Escape from Harem* has been studied in the light of mimetic devices to explore the incarnation of culture in the text. Culture is studied through the use of traditional names and characters which are depicted in plot. In *The Krishna Key*, the narrative devices are used to identify the position of society in the text. The fictional position of the text has been studied as real documentation of society. Thus, studying the three novels from a metafictional perspective provides the readers with the author’s intended messages about tradition, culture, and society in a fictional manner.

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