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THE NARRATIVE MODE IN SANTHA RAMA RAU'S REMEMBER THE HOUSE

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ABSTRACT

Santha Rama Rau narrates her story that strongly attracts the reader's attention. She often passes from the role of a spectator of the events to almost a participant in the fascinating situation. Sometimes she arouses the reader's curiosity, holds him/her in great suspense, and keeps up him/her interest by narrating the related events in the manner of reminiscences. At times she manipulates the threads of the past and the present simultaneously. It seems that something in the present reminds her of the past, and, therefore, she keeps skipping between the present and the past. For this purpose, she uses the flashback technique to make the story dramatic and exciting. Though not a profound novelist, Santha Rama Rau is a writer of remarkable success. As a novelist, she enjoys immense popularity. Her novels carry a peculiar contemporary appeal. A lack of depth and profundity characterizes her fiction. On the artistic side, there is a lack of conscious craftsmanship and intricate maneuverings in her novels. Yet narration is a remarkable element of her novels. She is satisfied with telling the story as if the story were the only element in a novel. Even in this field, she is a traditionalist. She has not carried out any experiment with the narrative mode. Her narration of stories is functional and straightforward. In her novels *Remember the House* (1956) and *The Adventuress* (1971), there is some originality in how the narrative is handled.

Keywords: Narrative, Mode, Past, Present, Traditional, Reminiscence, Contemporary.

Though a socially committed writer, Santha Rama Rau is essentially an artist in the true sense of the world. Her position as a socialist artist is not an external role enacted by her but the result of a genuine inner compulsion. She deals with a variety of themes in her novels, but this element of thought never subdues the emotional essence of her characters. A successful piece of art is formed only through the combination of good content and good form. As achieved content is the criterion of successful art, the thought of technique becomes essential in such a study. It is significant to study her artistic achievement by analyzing her use of narrative mode.

Remember the House is a simple and straightforward story of a young character Baba who is the chief character of the novel. The story of the novel moves slowly. The plot is simple and realistic. Rama Rau deploys the autobiographical, retrospective, and subjective narrative mode. It is a first-person novel in which Baba, the female protagonist, narrates the story of her past. The same narrative strategy has been adopted in her second novel, *The Adventuress*, in which the central female protagonist Kay narrates her life story. In *Remember the House*, Baba describes her way of life, which she spent in England. She does not live the Indian way of life and always wants to lead a westernized lifestyle.

On the other hand, all the family members, including her servants in India, believe in the traditional way of life. Since the novel uses the first-person narrative put in the mouth of a western-educated girl, the point is that of a female protagonist. The narrative puts before readers responses and concerns typical of a western educated woman recounting her life. The focus is consistently maintained on Baba's reactions to various situations. Therefore, her point of view is the point of view that finally emerges from the novel.

Santha Rama Rau's is often praised for her truthful presentation of the upper-middle class in Indian society. Almost all her notable characters belong to this class, and her novels deal with their hopes and frustrations. Her little Jhalanbad is a prototype of the world at large. Human nature in various colors finds a vivid projection on her creative canvas. Rama Rau presents her characters with a peculiar synthesis of detachment and good-humored acceptance of life in which evil exists along with good. Because of this comprehensive point of view, Rama Rau does not portray her women only in one color. They do not strike us as deliberate abstractions but live figures equally human in their virtues as in their oddities or eccentricities.

Though Rama Rau does not file her characters on two sides, she skillfully uses the principle of contrast in her delineation, for example, Baba and her grandmother in *Remember the House*, Kay and Madame Dona Luisa in *The Adventuress*. These characters, who are presented in contrast, react in different ways to the same situation. There is no attempt to categorize them as good or bad. They not only represent their class but also their individual selves. Through these acting and reacting responses, Rama Rau weaves the complex pattern of the human mind.

In *Remember the House*, there is a clash of cultures among the characters. The cultural conflicts are between two systems of values, of the traditional value and the westernized values. Based on Santha Rama Rau's own problem of identity, and her own dilemma as a western-educated Indian girl, her novel explores the cultural conflicts in many of its dimensions. It is the story of Baba Goray, who has returned to India after all her schooling in

England, encountering in herself the conflict between East and West, between two sets of values. The novel shows how the protagonist is caught between the two opposing cultures. The adolescent protagonist, Baba Goray, who spends her childhood in her grandparents' house in a typical Indian town Jalnabad, takes her roots in a traditional Indian household. Her life in Jalnabad house becomes the operating emotional factor. As a contrast to this, she spends her formative phase of life in England, where she does her schooling. This growing phase in an alien culture molds Baba as a Western individual externally as well as internally. Her life in Jalnabad becomes the operating emotional factor. As contrast, she spends her formative phase of life in England. This phase molds Baba as a western-educated girl externally as well as internally. The western-educated smart girl Baba returns to India without any goal or purpose. She likes the company of a rich and westernized family in Bombay. In this connection, she says:

"I too was caught up these days with all my fine friends who had learned in wicked foreign lands these habits of drinking and dancing all night. . . ." (Rau 28)

Western habits tend to damage her relationship with the traditional members of her family. On the other hand, Baba's sister-in-law Shalini is a perfect Indian girl. Baba refuses the concept of a 'Hindu wife.' But her sister-in-law Shalini believes in this concept. Shalini finds that Baba is very westernized. Shalini's Indian dressing, her 'determined dutifulness' in paying respects to the elders, including the way she manages at home with the servants, and her Indian remedies for treating some minor illnesses make Baba revolt against Indian customs. Shalini and Baba do not get along well with each other because of their contradictory cultural habits. Shalini finds the Indian 'Sari' dignified, whereas Baba is comfortable with Western slacks and shorts. With nothing on her mind, finding new ways to avoid boredom, she leads a dizzy social life with get-togethers, Christmas and New Year's Eve parties, beach parties, swimming, yachting, dancing, and garden parties. Her responses are undecided, and she is carried away by neither the Western nor the Eastern life.

Baba's ideas of marriage and family are undoubtedly western. In this novel, Hari is a traditional man, and everybody assumes that Baba is going to married to Hari, but she refuses the concept of marriage. She Says:

"Why should we get married? . . . surely there should be something else?... I don't really know you. I don't ... I still think there should be more to life than just settling down. I wish I knew how to explain". (Rau 128)

The beach party incident is the climax of the novel because the protagonist, from then on, reveals a lot of changes in her personality. The problem of choice and quests for identity come to the fore. We find her oscillating between the East and the West as she constantly recollects her childhood spent in her grandmother's house at Jalnabad, which amply justifies the title of the novel.

On the whole, Santha Rama Rau's novels are notable for their cultural conflict. The theme is the clash of cultures and the strain towards reconciliation. The novelist very deftly juxtaposes the internalized conflict between the East and the West in the mind of the protagonist. Baba makes friends with Alix and Nicky as she finds certain vitality, joy, and discovery in life. She likes Alix for her frankness about herself, the openness of her demands, and her grasping for the experience. Baba, who considers it a healthy appetite, later realizes it as a grip for greed. However, much is she Westernized in her looks, thoughts, and deeds; deep down in her psyche, her Indian roots are strong. Baba comes to feel that the west cannot easily mix with the East, and she sees too that traditional cultures have the hidden innate strength to stand shocks from the outside. His marriage with Hari, a steadfast unassuming old friend, approved by the family, trumpets the victory of traditional eastern values over the Western concepts of love, infatuation, and enjoyment.

In conclusion, it may be said that the overall impression of the narrative mode of *Remember the House* is that of its smoothness, ease, simplicity, and brilliant effectiveness. Narration is not repetitive and meandering. The story has been told effectively. There is respect for the chronology of events in the narrative.

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