

Narrative Ethics and Moral Imagination in Indian Literature: Exploring Empathy and Human Values through Storytelling

Ravi Vaishnav¹ & Dr. Suman Devi²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India-303122. Email: ravivaishnav.literature@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Department of English, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India-303122. Email: suman.english@gmail.com

Corresponding author: Dr. Suman Devi, Email: suman.english@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

Francesca Orsini's *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* explores the transformation of Hindi into a powerful medium of literary, cultural, and political expression during a period of intense nationalist activity. Drawing on Habermas's concept of the "public sphere," Orsini examines how Hindi journals, literary associations, education, and print culture fostered debates on identity, language, and modernity. The work highlights how Hindi intellectuals sought to create a unified national culture through literature while simultaneously negotiating issues of class, gender, and linguistic hierarchy. Women's journals, nationalist writings, and popular literature offered new voices within this emerging sphere, even as exclusion and control persisted. The thesis reveals that the Hindi literary public sphere reflected both a democratic impulse and a conservative cultural order, embodying the contradictions of colonial modernity and nationalist reform. Ultimately, Orsini demonstrates that Hindi's rise as a national language was both an intellectual triumph and a site of enduring contestation.

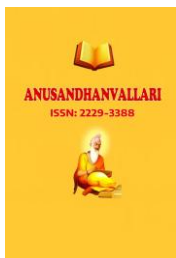
KEYWORDS: Hindi public sphere; nationalism; print culture; literary modernity; gender and language; Francesca Orsini.

1. Introduction

Narrative ethics examines the use of narrative in human decision making and moral reasoning. It also examines the use of stories to make the reader ponder on what is right and wrong using imagination and emotion. Ethical meaning has always been in the storytelling in Indian literature. Narrative is applied to empathy and moral life by both English writers and writers of the regions. The term *moral imagination* refers to the ability to understand others through imagined experience. Priyamvada Gopal notes that Indian English writers often create fiction that "challenges the teleologies of Partition, the assumption that what happened historically was inevitable" (Gopal 82). The connection between narrative and ethics demonstrates how literature turns into a moral field where the readers think about humanity and justice.

Being a literary and ethical feeling, empathy enables readers to experience the life of other people and broaden their perspective on life. Mieke Bal defines narrative as "a cultural phenomenon, one of the many cultural processes by which we live the conditions of possibility of those processes that constitute the interest of narrative analysis; there lies the cultural relevance" (Bal 30). An story is therefore not merely art but it is human life. The Mahabharata and The Ramayana as well as modern stories of Ruskin Bond show that empathy and morality are the elements of knowing how to be a human being. The theory of storytelling as a process of cultural development outlines how storytelling is used to create moral truth in the society as explained by Bal.

This research asks how Indian narratives create empathy and moral imagination through storytelling and how language shapes those meanings. Francesca Orsini explains that Hindi writers used literature to convey moral ideas, noting, "The conflict became sharper when the two aspects overlapped. As Nirala was painfully aware, it was virtually impossible that an English-educated man like Nehru would go to a Hindi literary gathering to learn



or listen to something” (Orsini 281). Her remark indicates that narration was moral conversation between the people and the elite. Writers blend emotion and morality by writing in English and local languages and thus literature has become a source of kindness and moral thinking.

Indian narration (storytelling) in terms of myth, folklore and realism, does not preach but reveals the aspect of human struggle. Pascale Casanova writes, “The notion of literariness makes it possible to consider the translation of dominated authors as an act of consecration that gives them access to literary visibility and existence” (Casanova 135). Indian stories translated are exposed to more audiences on issues of morality. Translation turns into an act of intercultural/interlingual sharing of humanity.

Mieke Bal’s narratology provides a framework for understanding moral meaning within stories. She explains that narrative is not only a series of events but a structure of ethical viewpoints, writing, “When there is text interference, narrator’s text and actor’s text are so closely related that a distinction into narrative levels can no longer be made” (Bal 78). This renders the process of reading an ethical one in which readers also participate in the feelings and judgments of the characters.

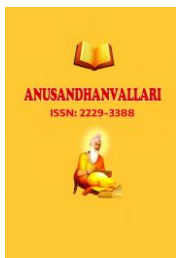
Priyamvada Gopal connects moral imagination to national identity, arguing that Indian writers challenge “the fundamentally colonial idea that communities have to be homogeneous in order to survive and that national boundaries should be determined by religious communities” (Gopal 82). The choice of writing in English is a moral one which communicates compassion to the lives of the common Indians and rejects inequality.

Francesca Orsini introduces a social aspect to it by presenting how Hindi literature was a morally based forum of the thinking masses. She writes, “The best language is one which common people can understand; everyone understands village speech” (Orsini 233). For her, literature educates society emotionally and ethically by connecting with the common reader.

Pascale Casanova expands the discussion globally, observing that “All literary authors in small languages are therefore faced with the question of translation caught in a dramatic structural contradiction that forces them to choose between translation into a literary language... and retreat into a small language that condemns them to invisibility” (Casanova 257). Translation, therefore, becomes a moral bridge that spreads empathy beyond borders. These perspectives make this study consider Indian literature as a moral practice to establish empathy between cultures and languages. Storytelling is a moral and emotional process, it unites people, groups, and states via collective imaginations and sympathy.

2. Literature Review

Narrative ethics and empathy are central to understanding how literature shapes moral consciousness. These concepts examine how storytelling teaches readers to think emotionally and ethically about human experience. Mieke Bal explains that “Narratology is the ensemble of theories of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artifacts that ‘tell a story.’ Such a theory helps to understand, analyse, and evaluate narratives.” because it studies how stories are constructed and received (Bal 23). Her idea suggests that empathy arises not only from what is said in a story but from how it is told. Narrative ethics, therefore, considers storytelling an ethical practice that would help the reader put themselves in the lives of others with compassion and imagination. It is evident in the analysis of Bal that empathy is formed as a result of narrative form and participation of readers. Empathy in literature is established where the readers empathize with characters and associate imagination with moral self-reflection. Priyamvada Gopal states that Indian writers in English have created “With some notable exceptions then, the anglophone novel from and of India has liberated itself from a sense of address to the West and from ‘anxieties of Indian-ness,’ taking its place in the Indian literary landscape with confidence but without complacency... Its most important writers (themselves bi- or multilingual) are attentive to and remain troubled by the politics of linguistic faultlines and the skewed dynamics of working in a language accorded disproportionate cultural and economic privilege.” when they write about human life (Gopal 187). Her concept implies that empathy in Indian fiction develops both in regard to the social divisions and to the level of human emotion. Indian English fiction thus becomes a morality ground where love and justice co-exist.



The concept of Gopal reveals that the use of empathy adds social content to fiction by converting emotion into ethical insight. In Indian literature, empathy has long been tied to collective moral imagination. Francesca Orsini notes that writers used the literary sphere to “Hindi’s victory within the Sammelan was a paradoxical victory, one that would be repeated in the Constituent Assembly and that foreshadowed Hindi’s future position in independent India.” social values to readers (Orsini 238). This demonstrates that empathy in Indian writing is a collective conversation on morality rather than personal emotion. Reading is an involvement in a society of thinking concerning justice and compassion. Orsini sees empathy as an unifying factor that brings the readers on the moral consideration.

Globally, empathy travels through translation. Pascale Casanova writes that translation “The notion of literariness, which is to say the literary credit that attaches to a language independently of its strictly linguistic capital, makes it possible to consider the translation of dominated authors as an act of consecration that gives them access to literary visibility and existence.” (Casanova 135). Therefore, translation enables the emotions to be transferred between languages and provides a moral linkage between the cultures. This argument of Casanova pushes the empathy to a global moral conversation on various readers.

Mieke Bal further extends that this moral experience is constructed by narrative: “The structures can only be built on the basis of data. The relationship between the data and what is done with it is only convincing if made explicit. Such data can help to discover meanings in many difficult modern texts.” (Bal 236). Her theory shows that authors intentionally use structure and perspective to direct readers’ emotions. That is why empathy is created through the means of design and structure more than a product of luck.

The argument used by Bal reveals that empathy is an output of both artistic construction and good character. Priyamvada Gopal also connects empathy with language politics, writing that “Far from being ‘blithely democratic,’ English can be a source of extreme anxiety for its ‘have-nots,’ leading in some extreme cases to suicide.” (Gopal 189). This understanding is to say that empathy is a responsibility that is taken towards voices that have been left out by the linguistic privilege. The place of language becomes a moral arena of connection between emotion and identity, as well as equality.

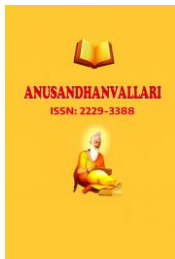
The statement by Gopal renders empathy an ethical action that is influenced by the consideration of language and authority. Francesca Orsini’s study of the Hindi public sphere shows that “Their faith in their own discourse and in the letter of the law prevented them to appreciate the structural weakness of Hindi (and the strengths of English).” (Orsini 237). Her opinion shows that literature became a way of establishing new ethical grounds of marginalized communities that empathy became a tool of transformation and integration. This concept proposed by Orsini defines empathy as a social transformation and moral involvement tool.

Pascale Casanova warns that “Translation therefore stands revealed as an ambiguous enterprise as well. a means of obtaining official entry to the republic of letters and a way of systematically imposing the categories of the center upon works from the periphery.” (Casanova 154). This conflict demonstrates that empathy has to strike a balance between authenticity and universality when Indian works are presented to international readers. This understanding of Casanova introduces the concept of empathy as a compromise between the local truth and world-wide access.

Western theories like Bal’s combine with Indian moral concepts such as *karuṇā* (compassion) and *dharma* (duty), revealing empathy as both aesthetic and ethical. Together, Bal, Gopal, Orsini, and Casanova demonstrate that empathy is not sentimentality, but a proactive moral discipline which brings together the imagination, equality and cultural comprehension in Indian writing. The synthesis of concepts of these philosophers proves the fact that empathy is an active ethical process that connects narrative, emotion and social cognition.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Narrative ethics in this study is grounded in Mieke Bal’s theory that stories create moral meaning through their internal structure. She defines narratology as “Narratology is a systematic account of narrative techniques and methods, and their transmission and reception, in which Bal distills years of study of the ways in which we



understand both literary and non-literary works.” that help readers interpret meaning in texts (Bal 3). This demonstrates that storytelling is not artistic only but also ethical: all narratives involve moral decisions relating to the manner in which individuals and events are portrayed. Literature is made then a moral act which determines the association between author, readers and world. Stories on duty, compassion, and human conflict are some of the moral construction elements found in Indian writing. The perception of narrative by Bal makes it a moral action that transforms the readers into moral actors instead of spectators.

Her concept of “focalization,” or point of view, explains how empathy is produced within narrative form. She writes, “The point of view from which the elements of the fabula are being presented is often of decisive importance for the meaning of the story.” (Bal 103). Through the perception of one of the characters, readers feel the connection with their inner world. This intimacy develops moral imagination because readers are given the decisions and miseries of another. The introspective narration tends to provoke the thinking of the readers in Indian fiction about justice and empathy. Focalization Focalization exhibits the way the narrative structure itself becomes the basis of moral empathy in narration.

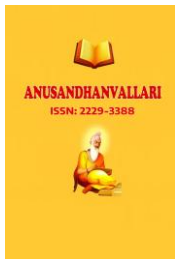
Bal further links description and narration to moral effect, stating, “To enable the arbitrary to pass for inevitable or even ‘natural,’ writers appeal to rhetoric. This is particularly the case for descriptions because their arbitrary motivation is in need of masking.” (Bal 69). Here she exposes the role of description in guiding the ethical emotion as it influences the way the readers understand the reality. In Indian realism, the focus on ordinary life turns the banal into moral sight, which makes it possible to empathize with the unknown or lowly. The combination of form and emotion that Bal incorporates into his work unites the art of story telling and the purpose of ethics.

Priyamvada Gopal’s postcolonial humanism extends narrative ethics to language and cultural identity. She writes, “That anglophone fiction was, from its inception, invested in the writing of prose history is evident from early English-language texts.” (Gopal 20). This indicates that Indian literature in English has formed its own sense of morality and history without trying to get the approval of the West. In the case of Gopal, fiction is a moral dialogue and a tool of empathy and equality through language. The English language is turned by Indian writers into a place where human dignity and common experience are manifested. Gopal links empathy and independence where English is a moral language of cultural equality.

She adds that moral imagination in Indian fiction grows from daily life, observing, “English is now, ‘for better or for worse, one of the Indian languages’ and needs to be studied as such. Its very influence and reach, as the ‘key professional language and certainly the main language of communication between the schooled sections of different linguistic regions,’ requires that it be situated historically and studied in its specificity as a literary and cultural phenomenon.” (Gopal 3). This demonstrates how literary makes language an act of morality. With the simplicity and equality, writers such as Ruskin Bond empathize by portraying Indian realities using the English language. Gopal in this argument demonstrates that linguistic inclusiveness and emotional humility will result in the development of moral imagination.

Francesca Orsini’s idea of the Hindi public sphere explains literature as moral dialogue within society. She states, “The notion of a pure (or purified) Hindi emerged out of a fractious debate with the advocates of Urdu.” (Orsini 238). This suggests that Hindi writing evolved through debates on language, culture, and ethics. The literary community was turned into an ethical school where empathy and awareness were taught with the help of reading and discussion. Literature was community life based moral education.

The idea of Orsini is connected by the author to empathetic literature and moral education in society. She also notes that “Arya Samaj’s advocacy of a Vedic, purified Hinduism jelled well with a purer Sanskritized Hindi.” (Orsini 238). It was through this linguistic space that women voiced their issues of emotion and justice that grew empathy beyond classes and sex. Literature had turned out to be a common ethical domain that depicted new identities and reformations. Orsini develops gender as an extension of moral imaginations into the collective empathy and social change.



Pascale Casanova gives moral imagination a global scope by linking translation with recognition. She writes, “Languages of ancient culture and tradition, associated in the modern era with small countries must gradually acquire an international existence through translation.” (Casanova 154). Translation is an ethical practice that transports an empathy across the borders. The translation of Indian regional works enables the reader all over the world to experience the local experiences and moral truths. In translation, Casanova provides empathy with the world by a moral bridge.

She warns that “Translation therefore stands revealed as an ambiguous enterprise as well: on the one hand, it is a means of obtaining official entry to the republic of letters; and, on the other, it is a way of systematically imposing the categories of the center upon works from the periphery, even of unilaterally deciding the meaning of such works.” (Casanova 154). This implies that translation is a source of empowerment and restriction to small literatures. This becomes an ethical dilemma to India: to be empathetic in the world without going ethnic. According to Casanova, moral imagination in translation should not only take care of truth but also adopt universality.

Together, these theorists create a complete framework for understanding empathy and ethics in Indian literature. Bal gives narrative its moral structure, Gopal provides postcolonial humanism, Orsini connects literature to moral community, and Casanova brings global ethics through translation. All four show storytelling as an ethical act that unites structure, language, and culture in creating empathy. In this light, Indian literature can be regarded as an aesthetic and moral practice, which creates compassion, justice, and common humanity beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries. This synthesis brings together Bal, Gopal, Orsini and Casanova in one vision storytelling as moral action which defines the empathy between worlds.

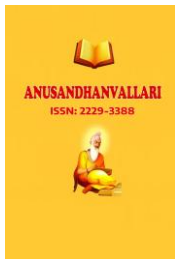
4. Narrative Ethics in Indian Storytelling

The Indian epics form the foundation of moral imagination, teaching empathy and justice through human emotion and conflict. Priyamvada Gopal observes that Indian fiction “has liberated itself from a sense of address to the West and from anxieties of Indian-ness” while remaining true to its ethical roots (Gopal). This lesson is what *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* are all about, in which morality is found through emotional conflict, not in rigid regulations. Such characters as Arjuna and Rama have to deal with the conflict of duty and compassion, and the readers can consider the choice ethics. Empathy is created as these conflicts are shared between the readers, making moral reasoning emotional, which then becomes understanding. The view of Gopal brings out the fact that the epics combined empathy and self-awareness, as well as cultural identity.

In *The Mahabharata*, moral imagination deepens through the tension between righteousness and compassion. Mieke Bal’s narratology helps explain this dynamic: “It is the conditions of possibility of those processes that constitute the interest of narrative analysis; there lies the cultural relevance” (Bal 30). The multiple-layered views and the opposing voices of the epic teach that moral truth should not be absolute, but enacted in the form of empathy and interpretation. The interpretation of narrative as a cultural practice provided by Bal demonstrates the way in which the form of the epic supports the moral imagination.

Likewise, *The Ramayana* teaches empathy through moral complexity. Francesca Orsini writes that “The Hindi-Hindustani controversy of the late 1930s came as a culmination of these various processes” (Orsini 239), referring to social and linguistic tensions that parallel the epic’s moral debates. Rama and Sita are a story of clashes between the justice and mercy, duty and emotion. Readers are encouraged to experience the agony of moral choices as opposed to just making judgments about them. The ethical conflicts in the epics are related by Orsini to the cultural issues of empathy and justice.

Pascale Casanova extends this universality, noting that translation “makes it possible to consider the translation of dominated authors as an act of consecration that gives them access to literary visibility and existence” (Casanova 135). The fact that these epics have been retold a thousand times in a variety of languages makes them continue to be as potent in their morality. The versions discover empathy anew and take the readers back to the



same moral center, which shows that moral imagination is cross-temporal and cross-cultural. The concept by Casanova shows how translation is changing the ancient Indian empathy into world moral heritage.

Vijaydan Detha's modern retellings of Rajasthani folklore turn oral stories into reflections on ethics and equality. Francesca Orsini notes, "In the end it was Hindi that could be said to have triumphed over Hindustani but it was a pyrrhic victory" (Orsini 239). The vision of Detha glorifies diversity and not dominance. His folklore is the voice of the poor and the marginalized and produces moral art that is based on everyday experience. The insight of Orsini reveals that the inclusion and reform of the folk culture is transformed into the moral imagination by Detha in his stories.

Mieke Bal's concept of focalization clarifies Detha's narrative method: "The point of view from which the elements of the fabula are being presented is often of decisive importance for the meaning of the story" (Bal 103). Detha employs a collective voice of narration together with the storyteller and the audience, making empathy a collective act. His stories introduce morality as a conversation in the society but not as a personal conflict. According to the theory formulated by Bal, Detha converts empathy to collective moral consciousness.

Priyamvada Gopal supports this view of linguistic identity, observing, "English is now, 'for better or for worse, one of the Indian languages,' and needs to be studied as such" (Gopal 3). The fact that Detha chose to write in Rajasthani once again validates the ethical quality of indigenous language and feeling. In his stories, linguistic rootedness per se is sometimes an act of caring and understanding. The argument presented by Gopal points out that Detha writing in Rajasthan language is the moral resistance based on empathy.

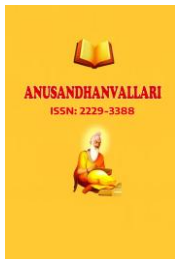
Pascale Casanova writes that "Translation therefore stands revealed as an ambiguous enterprise it is a means of obtaining official entry to the republic of letters... and a way of systematically imposing the categories of the center upon works from the periphery" (Casanova 154). This duality is reflected in the translations of Detha, who on the one hand would be introducing his stories into the world, and at the same time, he would risk corrupting them. But his tone is also naive and ethical and it is the case of genuine voices that cross borders. This argument by Casanova demonstrates how the folklore of Detha was an expression of regional morality and global compassion.

Ruskin Bond's realism builds moral imagination through simplicity and quiet empathy. Priyamvada Gopal writes that Indian English writers "are attentive to and remain troubled by the politics of linguistic faultlines and the skewed dynamics of working in a language accorded disproportionate cultural and economic privilege" (Gopal 187). With honest and passionate writing, Bond makes English a personal language of love. His emphasis on wholeness of life, children, workers, the untouched, reveals that good is simple. The moral realism of Bond is reflected in Gopal, empathy builds as a result of humble and sincere approach.

Mieke Bal notes, "To enable the arbitrary to pass for inevitable or even 'natural,' writers appeal to rhetoric... particularly the case for descriptions" (Bal 69). In Bond's work, descriptions of hills, rain, and silence reflect inner emotion. His nature world becomes a continuation of sympathy, and tells the reader to perceive beauty of morality in simple things. The theory of Bond by Bal explains the transformation in natural description to the moral expression.

Francesca Orsini writes that Indian literature often reflected "a conservative provincial cultural establishment, a disgruntled non-conformist intelligentsia and a kind of cultural and linguistic arrogance" (Orsini 239). Bond's humble tone resists this arrogance, replacing elitism with compassion. His realism is an expression of equality as an ethical statement. This commentary by Orsini puts the emotional narrative of Bond as an author within the moral literature of India.

Pascale Casanova observes, "All literary authors in small languages are therefore faced... with the question of translation caught in a dramatic structural contradiction." (Casanova 257). Bond writes in English, but his fiction has translated Indian emotion to universal ethics. His English turns into a culture bridging culture. The opinion of Casanova places the work of Bond as an Indian experience translated into the world consciousness, which is moral.



Across the epics, folklore, and modern fiction, Indian storytelling continually transforms empathy into moral imagination. From *The Mahabharata* to Bond's gentle realism, and from *The village of Detha* tells the modern novels, Indian literature is the literature that brings art and morality together -the compassion is the main beat of the creation vision.

5. Storytelling, Empathy, and Human Values in Contemporary Contexts

Modern literary theory understands empathy as both an intellectual and emotional process shaped by reading. Mieke Bal explains that "The reader first 'sees' the text, not the fabula. The fabula is really the result of the mental activity of reading, the interpretation by the reader, an interpretation influenced both by the initial encounter with the text and by the manipulations of the story." (Bal 30). This implies that moral feeling by a reader is reliant on the way in which narrative form guides comprehension. In Indian literature, reading is an ethical practice: when one tries to imagine the experience of another person, she is exercising compassion and a moral judgement. Storytelling, therefore, proves to be a place of empathy, which helps a reader to identify emotion and justice. The notion by Bal demonstrates that the structure of the narrative form constitutes empathy, and the process of reading is, in its turn, a moral one.

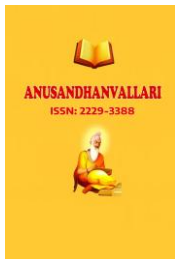
Priyamvada Gopal connects this moral process to social reality. She notes that Indian fiction "The efforts of pioneering publishing houses such as Katha, dedicated to bringing out translations across Indian languages, must be noted here." (Gopal 1). Her comment implies that empathy arises not only from story but also from linguistic and cultural exchange. Readers who experience the plural experience, which is produced by encountering other languages, tend to respect plural experience. Indian fiction is thus not only a civic act to read, but it educates the reader to act ethically towards inequality and difference. The argument by Gopal redefines empathy as a type of social responsibility that has been developed by understanding emotions.

Francesca Orsini highlights that reading shaped moral awareness in India's print culture, where "The nationalist movement was both concerned with entering colonial institutions and also with autonomous activism, mobilising more and more popular groups, antagonizing the state and erecting a counter-authority." (Orsini 242). This historical wisdom shows that literature was moral dialogue between the common man. In modern times, this tradition has survived digitally and in translation, stories are shared across media and language and they foster shared empathy. Orsini associates reading with civic action, demonstrating that empathy is used as collective ethical emotion.

Globally, Pascale Casanova extends this argument: "The notion of literariness makes it possible to consider the translation of dominated authors as an act of consecration that gives them access to literary visibility and existence." (Casanova 135). Translating allows cross-cultural empathy. The appearance of Indian texts in other languages enables the readers all over the world to visualize the alternate moral worlds. Translators are the facilitators of sympathy, who share cultural knowledge with the help of narratives. Casanova considers translation as the ethical interlude between various human experiences.

Intercultural empathy means understanding other cultures while preserving their distinct emotions. Priyamvada Gopal writes that Indian writers use English to express Indian feeling even though "Far from being 'blithely democratic,' English can be a source of extreme anxiety for its 'have-nots,' leading in some extreme cases to suicide." (Gopal 186). This conflict demonstrates that empathy in Indian fiction arises out of the necessity to reconcile the world and the reality. Composing in English is a moral bargaining process: it transported Indian morality into the international community and retained the loyalty to indigenous sentiment. The concept of empathy as offered by Gopal represents the blend of international communication with cultural honesty.

Mieke Bal reminds us that "The study of narrative as a genre stretches far beyond literature in the narrow, aesthetic sense." (Bal 15). Imagination is therefore linked to moral thought through narrative. Modern Indian authors are constructed to prompt thinking, through the means of such devices as perspective shifts and interior monologue, to create moral awareness. The readers are not only than welcomed to feel but also think morally about experience.



According to the statement by Bal, storytelling is a framework that nurtures moral consciousness by way of empathy.

Francesca Orsini emphasizes how emotional writing historically created space for excluded voices, noting that “The exchange at Faizabad and the ‘insult’ in Banaras pertained to both representational and discursive aspects of the public sphere.” (Orsini 281). This understanding carries on to contemporary fiction that foreshadows women, employees and minorities. Literature empathizes as a form of justice by introducing their emotions and struggles and assists the reader of the book to see the shared humanity beyond the difference. The idea of empathy is connected to equality that is what Orsini argues about, and literature is a means to be emotionally free.

Pascale Casanova warns that “Translation therefore stands revealed as an ambiguous enterprise: on the one hand, it is a means of obtaining official entry to the republic of letters; and, on the other, it is a way of systematically imposing the categories of the center upon works from the periphery.” (Casanova 154). In the case of the Indian literature, this implies that as much as translation is a way of spreading empathy, it is also a way of distortion. There is a moral responsibility of writers and translators to preserve authenticity in the course of communication around the world. Victorious translation enables the use of moral imagination that does not result in the loss of truth. The argument presented by Casanova is empathetic because it is a creative and ethical act when the stories trespass borders.

Empathy and moral imagination together define Indian literary modernity. Mieke Bal states that “It is the conditions of possibility of those processes that constitute the interest of narrative analysis; there lies the cultural relevance.” (Bal 30). Her understanding illustrates the way in which narrating helps in perpetuating ethics and compassion in culture. All acts of narration are renewal of morals- an act of understanding that reinforces the humanity of all. Bal thought affirms that storytelling is a living cultural practice that makes empathy live.

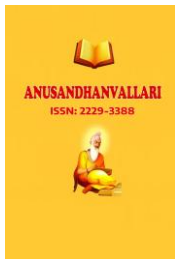
Priyamvada Gopal observes that Indian fiction maintains this moral continuity: “And so it was that the novel emerged in nineteenth-century India with a profound interest in the writing of history and, relatedly, in articulating a sense of nationhood... with a mainly European reader and interlocutor in mind.” (Gopal 20). This development indicates that Indian writing developed to be morally introspective and now it is confident. Empathy is being used today, by writers not only in English, but across all languages in their region to visualize unity in diversity. Their narrations make difference a dialogue, feeling a feeling and understanding an understanding. The statement by Gopal comes to the conclusion that the independence of the literary field makes empathy a universal moral language based on Indian morals.

Across all these thinkers—Bal, Gopal, Orsini, and Casanova—the connection between storytelling and morality remains clear. Reading, writing, and translating are not neutral acts but moral practices that awaken empathy across time, language, and class. The Indian literature of the present day carries on this dream, as it incorporates the aesthetic imagination with the purpose of the ethical. In the village stories or in the novels of the world, a story-telling still has the power to influence moral imagination--to remind the readers that compassion, equality, and understanding are the most valuable of all human life values.

6. Synthesis: Narrative as Moral Praxis

Narrative in Indian literature functions as a moral practice that joins emotion with ethical learning. Mieke Bal observes that “It is the conditions of possibility of those processes that constitute the interest of narrative analysis; there lies the cultural relevance.” (Bal 30). Her words show that stories are not just told for pleasure but to express moral understanding in everyday life. In narrative form, individuals get to understand how to be able to identify the emotions of others and how to react in a humane manner. This power of storytelling in Indian literature makes the moral values accessible to lived experience and empathy is transformed in Indian literature into an action that lives beyond the page. The concept Bal has is that, storytelling is directly related to the real life ethics, as narrative is represented as both culture and conscience.

Priyamvada Gopal states that the Indian English novel “And so it was that the novel emerged in nineteenth-century India with a profound interest in the writing of history and, relatedly, in articulating a sense of nationhood. This



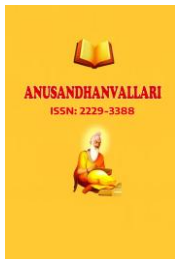
concern was particularly visible in the anglophone novel written, at the time, with a mainly European reader and interlocutor in mind.”(Gopal 20). The result of this independence is that narrative is a moral act of self-expression and not imitation. Authors resort to empathy to reveal Indian realities and human feelings with their own words. Storytelling turns into the process according to which the ethical thought is developed not based on some external approval but on the local truth. Even the process of writing becomes moral praxis the process of attempting to recover equality, justice, and human feeling by means of language. As described by Gopal, moral praxis consists of writing confidently and with purposefulness about culture.

Francesca Orsini explains that Hindi writers used literature as “They reacted defensively to the attempted take-over these were possibly the first statements by nationalist-minded Hindi literati decrying national leaders.” (Orsini 235). Her observation reveals that story telling generates moral knowledge in a shared space. Telling of stories of care, justice, or courage teaches readers to adopt them in their lives. Moral imagination is fostered in the public sphere of literature, which is the classroom of empathy. This is a legacy that is still held by Indian writing as it still educates using the emotion and mutual understanding of man. This perspective of Orsini shows that storytelling is education in empathy that builds social and ethical awareness.

Pascale Casanova reminds us that “Languages of ancient culture and tradition, associated in the modern era with small countries must gradually acquire an international existence through translation.” (Casanova 256). This implies that narrative ethics is also achievable via culture exchange. There are moral messages in the works of the Indians, and when they are translated to the rest of the world, they are heard. Translation turns into an ethical process as it propagates the empathy and common values on a global scale. It is through storytelling, therefore, that global moral praxis is carried out by connecting remote readers, in the act of compassion. It demonstrates that moral imagination is able to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries retaining its earnestness intact. The argument that is put forward by Casanova analyzes translation as a moral act that embodies empathy between cultures. When these ideas are brought together, they show that narrative ethics in Indian literature operates at many levels—personal, social, and global. Mieke Bal gives structure to moral feeling through narrative form, Priyamvada Gopal links it to postcolonial equality, Francesca Orsini connects it to social reform, and Pascale Casanova expands it to global circulation. Both of them collaborate to demonstrate that moral imagination in storytelling is not an abstract idea but a daily ethical activity. Reading, writing, telling stories are all activities that create empathy and human values across differences. The integrated theories show that Indian story telling is a unification of ethical intent and expressive emotion as an active moral practice.

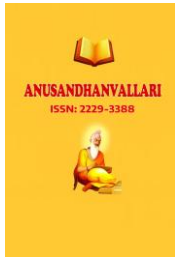
7. Conclusion

The Indian literature proves that narration is an art of morality and empathy is a necessary aspect of human living. Reading and telling stories enable people to perceive the world in the feelings of others thus making literature become a process of ethical reflection. The Indian writer did not merely entertain through stories, but made them to make people compassionate, just, and understand humanity. Narrative makes the reader emotionally and intellectually involved in the moral decisions where he learns to appreciate empathy as a life principle. Fiction is a way of moral awareness, based upon social reality, and is used by Indian English writers as well as those of the regions. In their works, the authors demonstrate that empathy is not sentimentality but strength of another kind that fosters humility, cultural association, and mutual accountability. Literature turns into a moral communication in which the communities start contemplating justice, equality, and concern towards others. This empathy is further extended to languages through translation, and so the Indian literature establishes a moral linkage around the world, which is a universal trade of understanding between the readers. Storytelling has its origins in the epics up to the modern fiction; it brings growth to moral imagination and human values. It also teaches that imagining the life of the other is the truest thing that we can give and that empathy is the continual basis of the Indian literary and moral tradition.



References

- [1.] Bailey, Olivia. "Empathy with Vicious Perspectives? A Puzzle about the Moral Limits of Empathetic Imagination." *Synthese*, vol. 199, no. 3, 2021, pp. 9621-47, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-021-03219-z>.
- [2.] Chakrabarti, Arindam, and Sibaji Bandyopadhyay, editors. *Mahabharata Now: Narration, Aesthetics, Ethics*. Routledge, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315662114>.
- [3.] Dias, Dany. "By Way of the Heart: Cultivating Empathy through Narrative Imagination." *LEARNing Landscapes*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2023, pp. 113-29.
- [4.] Fernández-Quintanilla, Carolina. "Textual and Reader Factors in Narrative Empathy: An Empirical Reader Response Study Using Focus Groups." *Language and Literature: International Journal of Stylistics*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2020, pp. 124-46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947020927134>.
- [5.] Fernández-Quintanilla, Carolina, and Fransina Stradling. "Introduction: Stylistic Approaches to Narrative Empathy." *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2023, pp. 103-21, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jls-2023-2008>.
- [6.] Govind, Nikhil. *The Moral Imagination of the Mahabharata*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.
- [7.] Jami, Parvaneh Yaghoubi, et al. "Interaction of Empathy and Culture: A Review." *Current Psychology*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2023, pp. 2965-80, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04422-6>.
- [8.] Kaur, Kamalpreet, and Meenu Aggarwal Gupta. "Indian Ethics: Essence, Theory and Praxis." *Tattva: Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2022, pp. 73-95, <https://doi.org/10.12726/tjp.28.5>.
- [9.] Keen, Suzanne. "Narrative Empathy: A Universal Response to Fiction?" *Literary Universals Project*, vol. 7, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110316469.521>.
- [10.] Koopman, Eva Maria, and Frank Hakemulder. "Effects of Literature on Empathy and Self-Reflection: A Theoretical-Empirical Framework." *Journal of Literary Theory*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2015, pp. 79-111, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jlt-2015-0005>.
- [11.] Lebel, Aline. "The Limits of Empathy in Literature? The Case of Arundhati Roy's Work." *Hybrid – Revue Interdisciplinaire*, no. 10, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.4000/hybrid.3330>.
- [12.] Lindhé, Anna. "Processes of Empathy and Othering in Literature: Towards a New Ethics of Reading." *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.696>.
- [13.] Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna. *Partial Recall: Essays on Literature and Literary History*. Permanent Black, 2012.
- [14.] Monaco, Angelo. "Narrative Empathy, Vulnerability and Ethics of Care in William Trevor's Fiction." *Enthymema*, no. 25, 2020, pp. 280-94, <https://doi.org/10.13130/2037-2426/11869>.
- [15.] Mouda, Maruti B. "The Role of Literature in Nurturing Moral Values: An Exploration through Indian English Short Stories." *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2023, pp. 447-52, <http://www.ijrar.org/papers/IJRAR23C2556.pdf>.
- [16.] Nussbaum, Martha C. "By Way of the Heart: Cultivating Empathy through Narrative Imagination." *Educational Journal*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2021, pp. 87-105, <https://doi.org/10.4236/ej.2021.66106>.
- [17.] Phelan, James. "Narrative Ethics." *Handbook of Narratology*, edited by Peter Hühn et al., De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 531-46, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110316469.531>.
- [18.] Sagar, Priyank, et al. "Designing Empathetic Service Experiences Using Storytelling Approach: A Case Study." *Strategic Design Research Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1-12, <https://doi.org/10.4013/sdrj.2023.161.01>.
- [19.] Utell, Janine. "Narrative, Ethics, and Empathy." *Engagements with Narrative*, Routledge, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315779058-5>.
- [20.] Venediktova, Tatyana. "Literature and Moral Feeling: A Cognitive Poetics of Ethics, Narrative, and Empathy." *Journal of Literary Criticism*, vol. 12, 2023, pp. 426-32.



-
- [21.] Werner, Christiana, et al. "Empathy's Role in Different Levels of Understanding Literature: Empirical and Philosophical Perspectives." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 79, no. 2, 2021, pp. 239-44, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaac/kpab019>.
- [22.] Yadav, Ranjeetkumar Bajirao. "Narrative Strategies in Indian Epics: A Stylistic Analysis of the Mahabharata and Ramayana." Zenodo, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15912433>.