



CREATIVE WRITING AND THE STYLE OF EXPRESSION

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ABSTRACT

Style is the manner of linguistic expression. It is how a speaker or writer says whatever he wants to say/convey. Needless to say the expression of thematic content and its effectiveness depends to a great extent on the manner in which it is written or said. That is why a discourse or a piece of prose or poetry, for instance, echoes years after we had heard or read it. It is the style of expression which makes us remark that William Shakespeare or EM Forster or Wordsworth left indelible marks on human mind through their writing. The present article thus attempts to analyze the role and place of 'the style of expression' in creative writing; for, it is through such a critical evaluation, we can assert as to how far a writer has been successful in conveying the message or entertaining the readers.

Key Words: Style, Expression, Narrative, Thought, Emotions

INTRODUCTION:-

The activities of writing down and performing our thoughts can serve to transform the intangibility of our emotions and experiences into something more substantial and long-lasting. These activities do certainly hail as a legitimate mean to make our feelings tangible and real. "Creative writing, a form of artistic expression, draws on the imagination to convey meaning through the use of imagery, narrative, and drama" (Online). This, of course, is in complete contrast to analytic or pragmatic forms of writing. The very genre includes poetry, fiction (i.e. novels, short stories), scripts, screenplays, and creative non-fiction, and one of the

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most significant attributes that imparts them the quality of permanence is the author's style of expression.

It is well said that 'style is the man'. No doubt that the act of nurturing and building a thought occupies a place paramount in creative writing, its effect depends entirely upon the way it is expressed. There might be numerous bygone episodes, which when narrated, do appear to be quite rejuvenating, the ones of very recent times; or even better as if they took place before our very eyes, and couldn't easily be darted away from those hazy veins of our memory.

Broadly speaking style can be analyzed by segmenting it in the components like the narrative technique a writer employs for his expression, and the kind of language he uses to make his linguistic vehicle move on. The narrative techniques may, for example, be the use of imagery, symbols, irony, myths, humour, satire or sarcasm, to name only a few; and the language part may be analyzed in terms of kind of sentences, diction (the choice and use of words and phrases), the word order, punctuation, and so on. In other words analysis of the language of a literary piece of work may broadly focus on its diction or characteristic choice of words; its sentence-structure and syntax; the patterns of its rhythm and of its components' sounds; and its rhetorical devices.

A fair distinction between the style and composition of a literary piece of work would not be out of place at this juncture. As we know 'style' and 'composition' are not the same. 'Composition' simply means the proper arrangement of words, sentences and paragraphs. In other words it is putting together of ideas in a correct orderly way, and is certainly one element of style, but only one of many. According to WH Hudson, "style is composed of roughly three elements", which he classifies as "intellectual, emotional and aesthetic." (Hudson 80) The intellectual element consists of what may be called the science of writing: precision in the use of words, their clarity of meaning when combined to form a sentence, economy in their use, and above all harmony between thought and expression which will prevent the author from expressing a trivial thought into a lofty language. The intellectual element of style thus deals with the precise and pertinent use of words and, the justification of their use while expressing some idea; and, therefore, can be termed as composition. It therefore hails to provide merely the outer ward trappings of the author's innermost thoughts. Going ahead it is the emotional element of the style, which clearly brings the thoughts conceived and nurtured by the author before the reader. Obviously; in it, lies his force; his power of suggestion; his capacity to move the reader by his writing, and to make him share his own state of mind at the time of writing. This means that now the style rises from a mere science (intellectual element), and becomes an art; it acquires a persuasive eloquence, which is beyond the power of composition alone. Furthermore, the aesthetic element comprises of the artistic graces of style: its musical quality, its polish, its picturesqueness, and its perfection of form. These features of style make it beautiful and charming, and render the

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reader with more immediate pleasure than that provided by first two elements i.e. intellectual and emotional. The works of an artist may have these elements varyingly; predominating one over the other. Talk about John Keats's, for example; and we get immediate response to his ability of imbibing the hue and colours that immediately respond not only to our intellect but to our ears and eyes as well that eventually rejuvenates us emotionally, and makes his poetry a true art. Let us have glance over a few lines from *Ode on a Grecian Urn* : "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on..." ; and then again "Bold Lover never never canst thou kiss/ Though winning near the goal – yet do not grieve... /...for ever though wilt thou love, and she be fair!" (online) stay to be one of the exquisite examples literary art.

Needless to emphasize, a single passage may not necessarily comprise all the artistic graces, but a passage like that from *The Ancient Mariner*, may aptly be quoted to be noteworthy for its appeal to beauty and charm. Furthermore, the devices like the alliteration, the internal rhyme, the apt use of vowels and consonants for instance, are some of the tools often employed by a writer (more aptly by a poet) that do account for the charm and novelty of a poem/passage.

The inter-relation of the stylistic elements matters a lot for its critical evaluation. The more closely they are related to their thought-content, the more perfect the style becomes. As already said, style is the expression of one's thought in the best possible way. One of its characteristic features would thus be its affinity with the thought it expresses; that eventually provides it a unique 'identity'. It means the very thought must suffer materially if expressed in any other way. Expressing the importance of this identity i.e. compatibility of 'thought' and its 'style of expression' B. Prasad observes:

"it (the style) should fit the author's thought as the skin fits the body, and when this is achieved, there is, to use Chaucer's favourite expression, 'no more to seyn' (i.e. to say), for what needed to be said has been said perfectly, and in the most fitting manner: nothing can be added to it and nothing taken away" (Prasad 272).

It thus goes without saying that the style of a piece of literary work would surely be subjected to various factors: the personality of the author, the age in which he writes, the school of writing he belongs to, and the kind of art-form he adopts – to name only a few. Furthermore there obviously is something in the way each author writes – in his choice of words, his turn of phrases, and his construction of a sentence, which marks the passage as his, and no one else's. Just as we can recognize our friends merely by their pitch/tone of speaking or walking; exactly in the same way we can recognize a great author merely by his writing; and that is how about a passage quoted anonymously in a magazine or a newspaper, we promptly say: 'It

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must be Bacon' or 'it must be Lamb!' Needless to emphasize where there is a style, there is a man behind it with all the myriad facets of his personality. A fine example is Milton's description of Samson's blindness in *Samson Agonistes* wherein it acquires the full force of a personally-felt misfortune. Had Milton not been deprived of his eyesight, he could have perhaps never written so movingly; nor is there any English poet except Milton who depicts blindness with such a feeling; say, for example in 'When I Consider How My Light is Spent'; and that is how a man's personal life may affect his style. Similarly Indian writing in English, say in fiction, has been enriched widely and variedly with the writing of famous novelists like VS Naipaul, Khuswant Singh, RK Narayan, MR Anand, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Anita Desai; and almost each one of them do owns a different style of expression for his/her creative art. Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Nissim Ezekiel and Sri Aurobindo had, by their unparalleled style of writing, earned global reputation in the field of poetry. Indian folk themes have duly been elevated to their due place by these writers.

Each age, school, and art-form tends to have in its main features; a style of its own, which is not without its influence on the writer. It thus needs to change as per time to suit the tenor and temperament of its men and civilizations. The taste and intellect of Elizabethans, for example, cannot be the same as that of Victorians. The testing parameters too thus need to commensurate the contemporary taste/milestones. To quote again B. Prasad: "each manifestation of style must be judged by its own laws, and it happens very often that a style which in its own age is highly esteemed and widely employed is, in the next, as violently repudiated" (Prasad 275). Since style is intimately connected with the life and mode of thinking of a given civilization at any given time; it, in no case, can adhere to a fixed form. In other words, it must change with times so as to cope-up with situational demands.

"The grand style", according to Mathew Arnold, "arises when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject."¹ Milton's style in *The Paradise Lost* may again be termed as the grand one; its outstanding characteristics are: imagination in the highest degree, severity, restraint, association of ideas, and lofty expression as well as tone - a medley of elements that compels the reader's attention so perfectly that illustration is rarely wanted. It suggests more than it says, impressing the reader by its austerity rather than by its decoration; it is thus greatness here, made vocal at ease. The greatness, therefore, may be termed as the essential quality of the grand style; it however, is more easily found in the practice of the masters than in the definition of the critics.

Style in a work is, therefore, of utmost significance; without style it is the hardest thing in the world to write clearly and concisely and to make our meaning clear to the reader. The need for a fair evaluation of the style of a writer is, therefore, beyond debate in order to judge his/her mind and art. It is, thus, a useful and legitimate exercise to look for the writer behind the writing; to trace in it the influence of his background, his surroundings, his education, his

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literary tastes; to seek to understand his emotional and mental set-up, his likes and dislikes, and so on.

Foot Notes:

1. *On Translating Homer*, published in January 1861, was a printed version of the series of public lectures given by Matthew Arnold as a Professor of Poetry at Oxford from 3 November 1860 to 18 December 1860.

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