

Prose-Styles of Indian Eminent Autobiographers



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ABSTRACT

While taking into consideration the prose style of the Indian authors in autobiography writing, it is an essential part to understand the way they have exhibited in their writings. The prose style of the writers may vary from simple and lucid to narrative, argumantative, dramatic, informative and contemplative. In this paper three eminent figure have been choosen to discus the prose style adopted and used in their autobiography namely M. K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Nirad C. Chaudhury and the prose style and its impact on the reader's mind is discussed to make suitable understanding for readers and literary professionals.

Keywords : Subtler, Verse, Distinct, Rhythem, Syntactical, Informative, Contemplative, Persuade, Encyclopedia, Humour, Circumlocution, Euphony, Unfold

I. INTRODUCTION

Educati Prose is very popular and convenient form of reading and it is more difficult to study critically than poetry and to find a prose passage short enough to be studied in an hour. It is also obvious that prose looks easy and the form of poetry is more intense and subtler than prose. If we come to verse, it also makes a distinct meaning than prose. The difference between prose and verse can be concluded in the form of rhythm, the function of words, and the use of words in it. When we study a piece of prose, it makes us enable to talk about the choice of vocabulary, its rhythm, syntactical structure and suitability to the subject.

Prose may be divided and studied into various kinds based on its functions namely:

- Narrative
- Argumentative
- Dramatic
- Informative
- Contemplative

The Narrative form of prose comprises a story in an interesting way which gives immense pleasure to the reader as *pride and prejudice*. The Argumentative form persuades completely the reader to believe on something with all around, as *Locke's essay on human understanding*. The Dramatic prose is found in the drama where few characters play different role in dramatic way. It has to resemble ordinary conversation for us to accept it as an imitation and improvement of life, as R. B. Sheridan's *the School for Scandal*. The Informative form of prose communicates information through various sources; it includes text books, scientific books and encyclopedias. The Contemplative prose includes 'essays' which might be based on religious, social, political or cultural matters etc. In order to do this at all, it is necessary to make a very minute study of the prose style.

Style in writing is the method in which author determines for writing to his readers and it reveals his understanding towards his readers. A style exhibits many trends but especially its emphasis is on the personality and voice of the author. The author

chooses his own writing style and can change the overall meaning of the work. It might be done by him by changing figures of thought, through a syntactical structure, through adding diction or through changing the words.

A prose style is a form of writing that shows the objective of the author whether he wants to inform, persuade or entertain his readers through his writing. A prose-style includes both selection of the words and their arrangement to form a complete and meaningful sentence structure. The author should have a rich store of words and their clarity for use. A good prose style has many dimensions. It should not only exhibit meaning but also associative set of values and emotional expression of words. With grammatical correctness, eloquence, persuasive power, and other forces should be expressed in the proper arrangement of words that can be practiced through continuous reading.

Prose is a proper means for conveying facts and ideas of the author about a topic. It is generally tiresome and prosaic for the readers due to the lack of wit and humour. That is essential element of the great masters of prose style. In the case of Addison, we find the use of words having opposite meanings that create humour in his writing. A beautiful prose style needs labour of the writer and special attention of readers. If the writer has a rich vocabulary of varied subjects and fields, he can express his ideas clearly and effectively. It increases the interest of readers.

A good prose must have three main features – 1) clarity, 2) simplicity and 3) euphony. Out of these, **Clarity** is the most important characteristic of a good prose. The ideas of the author should be expressed so clearly that the readers may absorb them very easily. If they are not easily comprehensible, it creates difficulty for readers. The writer should express his views in a direct and straightforward manner. Brevity of expression is always better than verbosity.

Circumlocution is considered as unimpressive and defective prose style. A good prose writer tries to express his ideas directly and briefly. The use of foreign words and phrases, slangs and newly coined words etc should be avoided because, they become unintelligible to the readers.

Simplicity is another important feature of good prose style. The use of less familiar and pompous words should be strictly avoided because they discourage the readers. According to Edward Gibbon, “The style of an author should be the image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise”. So, the common style is reasonably simple. The use of ornamental style shows individual tendency of the writer. In fact, the function of the style should be the criterion of its fitness in place of a rich and rhetorical ornamentation. Some educated people have some maturity of the taste and they are liable to be trapped by a fashionable style, however, some of them call this style in some way ‘phoney’ or ‘pseudo’. In general, a simple individual style should always be lucid, beautiful and exciting. The use of figures of speech, however, can be made in the sentence judiciously and functionally. They must help the author to convey his message to the readers clearly and lucidly.

Euphony is also an important feature of good prose. The writer should be very aware of choosing the words for the sake of sound, for the purpose of the prose is to convey the ideas of the writer. Only the sound does not fulfill the criteria of good prose but it should include sweetness to enhance the quality of prose. There have been many writers of prose who have ignored the sense, so their prose does not fulfill the end of prose writing. It is necessary that sound and sense should be harmoniously blended to produce greater effect for the readers.

Apart from the aforesaid three main features, some more characteristics of a good prose style have also

been discussed here. Brevity is the soul of an article. A writer should not waste the time of readers by his writing through unwanted details. Communication of ideas is also necessary for an author in his writing to make it simpler and clearer to the readers. It is the best means of understanding the meaning conveyed by the author in his writing that inspires the reader to read and evaluate his work. The art of writing depends on putting the most suitable words at the most important places. So that it may emphasize the reader to reach the climax of reading. The writer should also adopt honesty in his writing.

An author is supposed to practice strictly what he writes! Otherwise, he cannot misguide all the readers all the time. Passions and control impart very significant role in the writing. There should be passion both in life and literature but with proper control, otherwise, leads to adverse effects at the end. Reading is another important component of a good prose style. He should study the classics of high ranks and learn to talk by hearing good talkers. Sound and Rhythm of English prose always matters for both writer and readers. It should be oriented towards intellect writing and readers should trust in the rules but not as to their ears.

When we are examining a piece of printed prose, we should take an interest in grammatical rules because they help to form good style and to avoid ambiguities. However, it is not impertinent to look for possible grammatical errors in the work of good writers. We should make a distinction between grammar and idioms. Grammar is a matter of rules and it can be codified in the textbooks but idiom is much harder to learn; it consists of a collection of verbal habits. An intelligent person can easily learn the rules of grammar and idioms and phrases.

A prose writer should adopt style of writing a book in short paragraphs so that it may be easier to read for the readers. It also provides a little rest to the readers

when he proceeds from one paragraph to other. Every paragraph has a small and individual group of thoughts which is a related part of the whole story. It is a small description in itself. It is very important to mark that last sentence of one paragraph and the first line of the next paragraph should be linked with the sense in some way so that the whole writing may be closely linked through these paragraphs.

Individual and Common Style is another distinction of a good prose style. For some purposes the common style is considered better than individual style. Text books, Newspaper, Journals, and Reports etc are generally written in common style. Individual style is harder to define and it is nearly impossible to write an individual style without being an individual.

On the grounds mentioned above regarding prose styles and its features an effort is made to present a brief but significant comparative study of the prose styles of the three great autobiographers, namely, M. K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Nirad C. Chaudhuri on the basis of their autobiographies.

M. K. Gandhi holds a renowned place in Indian-English literature. As a writer in English, he started his career as a journalist and undertook the act of writing autobiography at the suggestion of some of his closest followers Jeramdass and Swami Anand. Since, he originally wrote his autobiography in the Gujarati language to be published in the Navajivan. It was translated into English by Meade Desai and it appeared in Young India. The first edition of Gandhiji's autobiography appeared in 1927. The story of my experiments with Truth contains an account of many practical applications of the principles of Gandhiji. He is accepted as a very good writer. He did not adopt the common style but was more interested in the individual style of writing. His style of writing was clear, simple and precise, as he writes, "I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth, and as my life consists of nothing but

those experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography". He had a forceful and effective style. Most of the then British intellectuals also admitted that Gandhiji expressed himself in excellent English with appropriate words and associated values. His love for and careful reading of renowned English writers enabled him to make proper use of words. He studied widely and absorbed whatever passed through his mind.

"The Story of My Experiments with Truth" shows at many places forceful style of Gandhiji that was converted from Gujarati language to general people's language. The book is judged a good piece of literature by many scholars and critics. Gandhiji also translated Ashram Bhajnavali and some other remarkable poems when he was in jail. "The Story of My Experiments with Truth" unfolds the human personality of a world figures, about his parents, wife, friends and dramatic events. This sustained the very interest of readers. All his writings promoted truth and moral values. He used to write instructive and amusing letters to the children of the Ashram. He is accepted as a voluminous letter writer and could write nearly fifty letters in one day. He only wrote those things in his writing that can be practiced. The collection of letter numbering about one lakh forms an important part of his writing. In his views literature must have the quality of being helpful to man to rise upward.

Gandhiji's writing was mainly focused with ethical and moral standards of people. His writing exhibited his personality and character that were coined with realization of truth. For him truth was synonymous to the almighty that has created every living being. He used a new style of writing that was full of simplicity and devoid of complexity. According to S. Ahluwalia, "His writing reflects his life and is devoid of artificialities. His style is simple, precise and clear. He never used flowery and ornamental language. His utterances went straight into the hearts of the audience." It can be made much clear with illustration

made in Harijan. He writes in Harijan, "There is nothing in our society today which would conduce to self-control. Our very upbringing is against it. The primary concern of parents is to marry their children anyhow, so that they may breed like rabbits. If they are girls, they are married at as early an age as they conveniently can be, irrespective of their moral welfare. The marriage ceremony is one long drawn out agony of feasting and frivolity. The householder's life is in keeping with the past life. It is a prolongation of self-indulgence. Holidays and social enjoyments are so arranged, as to how one gets the greatest latitude for sensuous living. The literature that is almost thrust on one generally panders to the animal passion. The most modern literature almost teaches that indulgence in it is a duty, and total abstinence a sin."

"An Autobiography" was written by Jawaharlal Nehru depicts all the aspects, achievements, adventures, experiences, sufferings and visions of his personal life with the long journey of India's struggle for freedom. It ranks very high in Indian English literature and in the literature of the world as well. He was inevitably associated with the freedom struggle and got opportunity of becoming the first Prime Minister of India. He is called the founder, the builder and the architect of modern India. It is not only the life story of Nehru but also a classical literary work. It manifests the magnetic and charismatic personality of Nehru who had an artistic and rationalistic temperament.

In his prose writing, two significant styles play dominant role – poetic style and scholarly style. Nehru's scholarly style has two important features. The first one is classification and another is comprehensiveness. These are clearly shown in his writings. "An Autobiography" is one of his most popular books that had been written during his jail period. In his book, he describes about his visit among the farmers. He had used direct and simple expressions. In his autobiography, wondering among the Kisans, he tells about his visit in simple and direct

style, "I spend three days in the villages, came back to Allahabad, and went again. During these brief visits we wondered about a great deal from village to village, feeding with the peasants, living with them in their mud huts, talking to them for long hours, and often addressing meetings, big and small". The piece of his writing exhibits his prose style. He used right words and language and wherever he felt the need, he used apt phrases.

"Autobiography of an Unknown Indian" was written by Nirad C. Chaudhuri. He was of the intention that it may be regarded as a contribution to contemporary history. He paid his deep attention towards its honesty and accuracy, so none of its parts or descriptions is imaginary or artificial. Nirad C. Chaudhuri occupies a very dignified position among the Indian writers of non-fictional prose. It is difficult to keep aside his writings whether we agree with his views or not. We find a fine combination of provocative ideas and an abrasive style. His views on Indian history differ from other and deserve admiration. His autobiography includes Indian life and civilization. He himself admits that His autobiography is more of national importance than personal history. He had an intense love of the west and its culture. That is why, he has dedicated his book "To the memory of the British Empire in India which conferred the subjecthood on us but withheld citizenship".

Chaudhuri has used deliberate and strategic self-admission in his prose style that gives and raises the issue of complexity in his writing. He was one of the most successful writers of Indian origin, in English. He had been a fellow of the Royal Literary Society of England. He was highly critical of destruction of mosques and was highly distressed with the Bengali social life. He criticized class and caste distinction in West Bengal and was not happy with the orthodox of Bengali people.

His prose style was deeply influenced and attracted by Sanskrit and the traditional version of Bengali

language. He was a Bengali Babu who wrote like a Bengali Babu. He always tried to avoid the use of Arabic, Persian etc in his Bengali language. He used hardly about the people who belonged to lower classes and working class. His autobiography is full of passages that tell about his ethos rather than revealing his personality. Among all the Indo-Anglican prose writers, Chaudhuri is one of the best writers because he has presented clarity of style in his writing. He achieved global reputation and earned admiration by many contemporary prose writers. He himself has explained about his writing style. He says, "After writing a book, I go very carefully over it, examining the diction and vocabulary, and if, I find that I have used some fashionable words and jargon, I weed them out, unless there is some special reason to keep them".

At last, if we analyze the style on autobiographies of the three great writers M. K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Nirad C. Chaudhuri, we find the distinct style of all the three with some similarities. Gandhiji's prose style is clear, lucid, informative, idiomatic and completely transparent. To Gandhiji, language is a strong means of communication and it must communicate to the readers about the ideas. He tried to put varied issues at one place. Nehru's prose style is scholarly and poetic in nature and it has also the sensitivity and emotional equality with flowery style. At some places his style embraced poetic form due to his vivid knowledge on words and vocabulary. Chaudhuri's prose style is argumentative, dull and at some places has lack in simplicity and clarity.

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