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Prof. Vishnu Kumar Sharma
Dean , Yagyavalkya Institute of Technology, Jaipur
Rajasthan
India.
vk_english75@yahoo.in

Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga Towards Innovative Summum Bonum

ABSTRACT

The present paper “Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga Towards Innovative Summum Bonum” deals with the study of the amazing, innovative artistic skills with which the reader is spellbound and can't help saying a wow. Their words and structures are not merely stylish ones, but are well connected to some demands or purposes. Here it is tried to find out how they have managed the innovative style, the meeting ground of language and literature to show the emotive meaning; how they say things with linguistics variations or innovations to start a stir in the minds. Thus a detailed study reveals that the true nature of their style is elusive armed with subtler net to catch and ransack the roots of ordeals. The focus has been on how they have managed to choose an innovative artistic presentation to reveal the moral divorced socio-governmental workings which choked and putrefied the buoyant quality of marginalized life.

Key words: hegemonic, innovate, marginalized, system, typographic

Matthew Arnold's prophesy that the *future of poetry is immense*¹ (Arnold *Study of Poetry* 11) has proved one hundred per cent true for Indian writing in English in the 21st century. Indian writing in English has gone through many phases in becoming what it is today. A general view reveals that there are both similarities and differences in what it used to be in the early years and what it is today. Basically, it was a presentation of Indian culture in English, and it is the same even today. The difference is in the way of the saying and presenting the things in earlier writings and that of present writings. Now, Indian literature has taken hegemonic qualities, nationally and internationally. No doubt the Muses have been of moving moods for finding their new virtuous shelters i.e. from Greek to Italy to Britain to India. They are providing their virtuous Indian sons and daughters with *pencil* and *golden keys*.² (Briggs,

(ed.) *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Keats* 25) The artistic hegemonic skills for word painting and stylistic innovations that Britain had enjoyed for a long time, is now that of India. Some Indian sons and daughters as Salman Rushdie (who is called *an authoritative literary father worthy of affiliation*³) and his foster children as Arundhati Roy, Indra Sinha, Aravind Adiga, etc. have defeated the British, and in their own game at that. The exciting example is *Midnight's Children* that won three series of the Booker prize, viz the Booker prize, the Booker's Booker prize and the Best of the Booker prize. It is more than clear that the Indian intelligentsia is the best all over the globe. One of the main features of recent Indian writing in English is innovative use of language and way of delineation. When a reader goes through the texts of *The White Tiger* and *The God of Small Things*, it seems that both Adiga and Roy have written *What oft was thought but never so well expressed*.⁴ (Chickera, eds. *English Critical Texts* 118)

In a competition to innovate, a new age of young, enthusiastic writers has rapidly arisen in India's literary horizon. Who like the Sun piercing the prolonged darkness enlightened the Indian literary scene with their sparking brilliant rays of lustrous innovative artistic skills. Both the authors proved harbinger of Indian writing blossom by not only escaping from the mire of stale style but evolving new artistic styles, which have strengthened the staggering movement of the Indian writing in English. Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga, the kings of innovative use of language and artistic skills, in many respects the pride of India, made published the pride of Indian literature: *The God of Small Things* and *The White Tiger* and these earned for them the prestigious Booker prize respectively.

At present, scores of Indian writers have made their presence felt for some reason or other. These writers explore novel themes with innovative language and presentation. The common themes of all these writers are colonialism, nationalism, modernity, globalization, issues of Diaspora, search for identity, marginality, communalism, the lives of women etc. These diverse themes appear and reappear in the works of many a writer. The novelists as Mulk Raj Anand, Perumal Murugan, Neela Padmanaban, Yuma Vasuki, Arundhati Roy, Arvind Adiga etc have artistically depicted the very sensitive issue of untouchables and marginalized sections. The chief characters of the writers are from the marginalized section of society. Anand's Bakha in *Untouchable* is *Bhangi*, the untouchable. Roy's Velutha in *The God of Small Things* belongs to an untouchable caste called the *Paravan*. Perumal Murugan's Shortie in *Seasons of the Palm* is from the *Chakkilis*, the lowest rung of the hierarchal untouchable order. Neela Padmanaban's Kuttalam of *The Generations*, Thambi of Yuma Vasuki's *Blood*

Ties and Balram of Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* are from the lower caste. Throughout the novel the good nature of these protagonists, creates a hope of change in the dehumanized society for the betterment of the generations to come.

Arunthati Roy *the princess of prose*⁵ and Aravind Adiga *the Charles Dickens of the call-centre generation*⁶ are the most prominent writers of Post- Independence India. Armed with exceptional intelligence, innovative skills and linguistic competence, they can afford to assert whatever they want to. They embellished the Indian writing in English with their immense multiple contributions as innovative use of language, various artistic devices, new themes, real characterization, use of various language varieties – British, American, Indian English including mother tongue, resourceful art of showing things instead of stating. And what sets them apart from the lot is that they never uses these terms in a limited or defensive manner.

Human nature is the fount from where Adiga's as well as Roy's writings spring. They have delved deeply into the realms of Indian cultures, socio-governmental systems and socio-economic ethos, they eyed personally, realized individually, reflected impartially and what is the result, is their writings. Thus when they describe anything *you more than see it, you feel it too*⁷ like Shakespearian writing. (Chickera, eds. *English Critical Texts* 88) After reading the texts reader feels the peculiar relief that comes not so much from understanding as from being understood that *s/he knows all about me, you feel s/he wrote this specially me! It is as though you could hear a voice speaking to you.*⁸ (Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* 12) Definitely the reader feels a friendly Indian voice, with no humbug in it, no artificiality, nearly an implicit assumption that marginalized are all alike – destined to doom. Both the writers have shown the everyday facts and everyday emotions. They are willing to mention the inane squalid facts of everyday life with new style. To both Adiga and Roy *creative art is born of the right choice of words*⁹ and they *Load every rift of their subjects with ore.*¹⁰ Thus, in their cases, both Roy and Adiga have set almost the whole world talking about them. By creating their own special way of saying and presenting things they have created a world of their own and have not only shaken the Indian reader, but also the western readers can't help uttering a wow. Even one finds their language and presentation refreshing and innovative. To quote from a book review in *The New York Times*. *The quality of Ms. Roy's narration is so extraordinary-at once so morally strenuous and so imaginatively supple-that the reader remains enthralled all the way through.*¹¹ (Sanga *South Asian Novelists in English: An A-to-Z Guide* 221)

Similarly the following quote about Adiga's writing is worth quoting.

His narration is like a picture made out of words and from the greed and corruption among the India's newly rich. It has a quality of worth serious attention; in it there is a certain dream-like quality like 'magic realism'; 'automatic writing' like 'surrealism' and cut-up techniques like 'beat movement'. At times, the reading leaves an impression of 'polyphonic prose'.¹²

At ev'ry word a reputation dies.¹³ (Kaul, ed. Alexander Pope: *The Rape of the Lock*) So they adroitly embellished their diction superb. Theirs is the diction that reflects the word pictures on the camera obscura of the readers' mind. One as he goes through the novels finds the word painting as a *machine drawing with an instruction manual that told him what to do.*¹⁴ (Roy *The God of Small Things* 271) With their amazing innovative word painting skills both Adiga and Roy have shown, as Shashi Tharoor says, ... *we can share the world with the English on equal terms...*¹⁵ (Tharoor, *Bookless in Baghdad* 52) This is what Indian writers want – equality with the natives. Aravind Adiga, as well as Arundhati Roy, stay-at-home writer, has done the same with innovative artistic skills and with the way of life's presentation. A good writing is produced with the best words in the best order and situation. When proper words prevail ambiguity flees away so they have endeavoured a lot to achieve immaculateness. Above all they *admit to let the meaning choose the word*¹⁶ and let the situation to choose the way of presentation. Today they do not have any tags, colonial or post-colonial, to their names, but have the prestigious Booker prize – an (Indian) identity to their names. This is true Indianness: victory via competition. Identity follows naturally; there is no need to clamour for it at seminars. Because.

A style clad in good uniform of thoughts must work sooner or later... . The ignorance of the choice of words is not innocence but sin that only ruins one's corpus.¹⁷ (Sharma, *Nissim Ezekiel; Mechanics of Poetry* 19)

Both of them have become the role models for Indian English writing. With them verdant vernal breeze of innovation bursts into the Eden of Indian English writing to sweep the long existed cobwebs away. Their corpus is boundless, endless and sublime; the real image of modern India. Their novels are the most precious pearls culled from Indian cultural tributaries; unsurpassed to date. Style and thought are two cardinal virtues of their writings; the sinews of fame, as well as of eternity. *The White Tiger* as well as *The God of Small Things* has attacked the moot roots of marginalization and proved as torchbearer for amelioration blossom.

Reflection through graphology

In literary writings it often happens that the written medium possesses features that are part of the literary meaning. Just as alliteration, metonymy, transferred epithet, symbol and other schemes and tropes contribute to the effect of the text, so the written medium conveys similar effect based on the design in the visual field. The typographic design is used *when an author wishes to make a particular point*.¹⁸ (Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia English Language* 271)

The text on page no 48 in *The White Tiger* about a sign of a hospital is made bold and capital plus first letter of each content word is made big in size by increasing the font size of letters which conveys the layers of meaning. The big font size of the first letter of each word conveys that the politicians only show the big thought during the inauguration like the first big letter while all the other things as in the hospital are fully corroded like the other small size letters due to the corruption. The dangerous details of corroded inhuman governmental health system prove that to cherish any hope for treatment is only a whim; *there is no hospital in Laxmangarh, although there are three different foundation stones for a hospital, laid by three different politicians before three different elections* (Adiga, *The White Tiger* 28). The *three different foundation stones for a hospital* proves what G. Orwell states; *In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible.... Politics itself is a mess of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia Political speech is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind*.¹⁹(Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* 153-157)

“A” before “*HOLY PROOF*” is used in derogatory sense, and with the small size at that. It connotes that the promises are holy proof on only paper or in talk in practice it is corruption that works all around and has belittled the man’s social development. The phrase ‘FREE HOSPITAL’ and ‘HOLY PROOF’ are full of satire. It also focuses on the advertising style which is the focus on the main words besides it is eye catchy:

A sign on the gate said:

LOHIA UNIVERSAL FREE HOSPITAL

PROUDLY INAUGURATED BY THE GREAT SOCIALIST

A HOLY PROOF THAT HE KEEPS HIS PROMISES²⁰

(Adiga *The White Tiger* 48)

In the following quote Adiga chooses the bold style plus he allows the last three words of the sentence in superscript style that heightens that command is of the gods and gods are above all so the last three words are above the other words. With this innovative style Adiga

connotes the marginalized system where the privileged men are only gods and the marginalized have to respect the devastating commands that is all.

*‘Respect for the law is the first command of the gods.’ (Adiga *The White Tiger* 248)*

In the following quote Adiga uses bold style and capitalization of the text to show the high-pitched voice of Mr. Turban when he calls for Balram:

*It was the call from the microphone at the gate of the hotel. Mr. Turban was at the microphone—speaking in the most pompous, stern voice possible: ‘DRIVER BALRAM REPORT AT ONCE TO THE DOOR. NO DELAY. YOUR MASTER WANTS YOU.’ (Adiga *The White Tiger* 203)*

So far as the connotative situational meaning by typographic design is concerned Roy is second to none.

The red sign on the red and white arm said STOP in white.

“POTS”. Rahel said.

A yellow hoarding said BE INDIAN, BUY INDIAN in red.

But Estha reads it

*“NAIDNI YUB, NAIDNI EB,” (Roy *The God of Small Things* 58)*

Estha sees another sign put up by a big agency, the Indian Railways: *To Stop Train Pull Chain, it said in green.* But Estha reads it

*“OT POTS NIART LLUP NIAHC,” it said in green. (Roy *The God of Small Things* 324)*

But the interesting part of the above examples is the reverse thoughts that both Estha and Rahel have about them. Perhaps indicating that these sign/rules are meaningless as what actually happens is the opposite. This also suggests the moral divorced democratic workings and *Crawling Backwards Days*. (Roy *The God of Small Things* 67) Therefore, for the first one Rahel says ‘POST’, and for the second and third Estha says: “NAINDINI YUB, NAIDINI EB.’ and “OT POTS NIART LLUP NIAHC.”

Again, on page 313, when the twins are called to the police station to coax-testify to an innocent man’s crime, which he had not committed and the testifiers knew about it but the family-police nexus proved too much for them. So as soon as Estha and Rahel see the signboard:

Politeness

Obedience

Loyalty

Intelligence

Courtesy

Efficiency

They start reading it backwards as “*ssenetiloP, ecneidebO, ytlayoL, ecnegilletnI, ysetruoC, ycneiciffE.*” (Roy *The God of Small Things* 313) And both read this aloud. This only shows that what they stand for on paper is one hundred and eighty degrees opposite to what they are in practice. And the bold capital initial letters show what they were meant for at the time of the police force’s establishment. The movement from upper case to lower case shows how they have stooped so low from their principles. Now, police have degraded as moral-less, senseless, duty-less, meaningless and many more –lesses.

The Upper-lower case combination suggests the shrinking of personality – something becoming small and going into a shell. This distinction between big and small gets established when Roy uses *Man* and *man*;

Big Man the Lantern. Small man the Tallow-stick. (Roy *The God of Small Things* 89)

Thus the marginalized are suppressed all around by the anti-social, moral divorced workings of the democratic governments because *on the one side are its theoretical enemies, the apologists of totalitarianism, and the other side its immediate practical enemies monopoly and bureaucracy.*²¹ (Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* 14) in our time to a politician a marginalized *man’s death could be more profitable than his life had ever been.* (Roy *The God of Small Thing* 269)

Thus, so far as the upliftment of underdogs is concerned, in prevailing systems it seems that the *unquestionable dogma of Monday may become the damnable heresy of Tuesday and so on.*¹

So with these innovative enchanting artistic styles perhaps both the writers want to show that people refuse to accept that they are in slumber; they have become so used to all these corrupt systems that they do not even notice such wrongs anymore. So to kick-start their sensitivity, both the writers had no option but to go from the usual to the unusual. Just as normal ignition

¹ Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* 33.

does not start a vehicle that has been immobile for a very long period of time, and it has to be pushed into gear, so there seems to be an attempt by Roy as well as Adiga to jolt the society out of its slumber and gear its members towards action. Perhaps typographic design works better for that purpose as;

*But design taken beyond the basics of writing and punctuation can leap directly into a relationship with situational meaning, without referring to the aspect of form.*²² (Simmons *The Language of Literature* 78) And both the writers have shown the innovative summum bonum state so far as the breaking of slumber towards corruption is concerned.

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