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Jonathan Swift and His Prose with Reference

To The First Book of Gulliver's Travels

Abstract

Jonathan Swift - a prose writer of the 18th century has been charged with the title of a misanthrope. Indeed Gulliver's 1st book is satire on the smallness of man and his attitude in soothing prose. It is full of irony, sarcasm, invectives and humour. Swift's prose has a rhythmical force. It begins in a realistic manner. The tallest man in Lilliput is 6" of height but his ego touches the height of the sky Different Critics have put their views in different ways.

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Gulliver's Travels has been the recipient of several designations : from Menippean Satire to a Children's Story, from Proto-Science Fiction to a Forerunner of the Modern novel. Published seven years after Daniel Defoe's widely successful Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels may be read as a systematic rebuttal of Defoe's optimistic account of Human Capability. Warren Montag' argues that Swift was concerned to refute the notion that the individual precedes society, as Defoe's novel seems to suggest. Swift regarded such thought as a dangerous endorsement of Thomas Hobbes' radical political philosophy and for this reason Gulliver repeatedly encounters established societies rather than desolate islands. The Captain who invites Gulliver to serve as a surgeon aboard his ship on the disastrous third voyage is named Robinson.

Key Words: (1) Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, (2) Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, (3) Rebuttal of Defoe's optimistic account. (4) Thomas Hobbes, (5) Critic's Views, (6) Eighteenth century, (7) Nineteenth century, (8) Twentieth century, (9) Charged with the title of misanthrope, (10) A bitter Satire (11) In soothing language, (12) Instruments of Satire, (13) Irony Sarcasm invectives and humour (14) Swift's Prose having a rhythmical force, (15) Beginning in a realistic manner, (16) A device in itself, (17) The tallest man, (18) 6" of height, (19) Narrative and descriptive art, (20) Combination of ideas and satire, (21) Relevance with contemporary societies of the world.

No doubt, Jonathan Swift remains one of the most popular and well read writers equally with children as well as grown up men. Swift's satires, particularly Gulliver's Travels has gone down deeper to the extent that he has been declared time and again a hater of man. The Purpose of a satirist indeed is to correct the society in which he lives. Swift's purpose also was the same. In fact Gulliver's Travels suggests that something of the contemporary situation was there in the mind of Swift, and visionary as he was, he did not fail in hitting or attacking bitterly about man's nature, which, he found is full of exaggeration and hyper-boles. Needless to say-for this brilliant work he was given the title of 'a misanthrope'.

Critics have gone on to say that his works were a curious compensation of bitterness and compassion, as though his misanthropy were based on frustrated love. For, Swift sought a position of power and influence which he never attained, and, which after 1714, there was no likelihood of his attaining. Between 1710 and 1714 when he was a power in Tory Politics and intimate with the most influential politicians and writers of the day, he indulged in a kind of literary high spirits that he was not to show again. That the argument that Swift, when in power was a positive man and with the loss of power and love (with Stella) he became a broken man, and, therefore, developed the attitude of a misanthrope doesn't seem trust-worthy.

Jonathan Swift's works were received well by his contemporaries. Everyone was dazzled by its style and learning, but, as it is said, the Dignitaries of the Church developed a prejudice against Swift because he had made fun of Christian belief. Gulliver's Travels was read by everyone from the court to the nursery and was admired by all alike. Addison called him 'the greatest genius of the age, but there were many who were unsympathetic to Swift. The condemnation

of Swift started in the 19th century. The critics were shocked by the picture of 'the Yahoos' and the condemnation of human race. Some said that this misanthrope was himself 'a Yahoo.' Other said that Swift had written the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels in a fit of madness. Sir Walter Scot thought that the 'horrible outline of mankind degraded to bestial state' was a result of 'mental disease' Thackeray suggested that 'the fourth book should not be read at all because it was filthy in words, filthy in thought, furious, raging and obscene.' Psychologists started studying Swift's works to determine in what state of mind they were written, and they started explaining in supposed madness in their own terms.

In the 20th century, writers like Aldous Huxley and T.S. Eliot seem to be sympathetic towards Swift, but they also could not appreciate fully the fourth book. Huxley pointed out that Swift's greatness lies in the intensity of sane violence of that hatred of Bowels" which is the 'essence of fit misanthrope and which underlines the whole of his work. Quite contrary to all these, T.S. Eliot praised the fourth book but regarded the work as one of cynicism of loathing. It may be because of such views or objective approach of the critics that for the last fifty years a list of eminent critics have made a very sympathetic study of Swift's life and work. They have tried to make an objective study of the background of his life and time and have tried to place the satire in the correct perspective.

The purpose of this paper is to keep confined only to the study of the first book of Gulliver's Travels in order to study the high quality of humour, sarcasm and wonderful prose which Swift has presented while depicting the Lilliputian king and his surroundings.

Indeed, Gulliver's Travels is a tremendous work- the prose of which has to give a rhythmical force not only to the work itself but also has been successful in exposing the darker aspects of human nature throughout the world. The qualities of Swift's Prose are extraordinary quite fitting into the qualities of satires in totality. It is never hard, never clanking, never bitter in language, but the effect is quite effective. The description of the memoir begins, in a very realistic and authentic manner as if it were a real story. This in itself is an artistic device of Jonathan Swift. 'Gulliver's' father had a small Estate in Nottinghamshire and he was the third of five sons". The whole passage runs in the descriptive and realistic manner. The description of Lilliput and Lilliputians tells about man's smallness, and, the smaller is he, the greater his ego prevails. Gulliver in the first chapter is ship wrecked, and swims for his life, gets safe on shore in the country of Lilliput, and is made a prisoner, and carried up to the country.

The rhythm of prose starts with the 1st book of Gulliver's Travels and continues throughout the book. The Emperor of Lilliput, surprisingly the tallest man of that place is six inch in height, but it is highly ironic that the smaller he is, the air of arrogance in his talk is higher not to be understood by any sane person. He is surrounded and attended by several of the courtiers. The king himself went to see this tremendous creature, and afterwards, appoints scholars to teach him the language of the Lilliputians. Not only they were small in size but also in their thought and views as they apprehended that 'Gulliver's diet' would be very expensive, and might cause a famine. The prose satie and human nature move together, and the rhythm of the prose moves with the ideas conveyed because sometimes they do determine to starve Gulliver or to shoot him in the face and hands' with poisoned arrows, which would soon dispatch him'. This is not only about their wickedness, but also about their

cunningness, which perhaps, is in the very nature of man to think about his own safety, 'while doing harms to others, therefore, they considered that the stench of so large 'carcass might produce a plague in the metropolis, and spread through the whole kingdom.

The smallness of the Lilliputians has become an element of satire, and Swift's prose gives it a satiric height. The king of Lilliputians employs every citizen to inquire about this unusual person who had reached their kingdom. It is because of their smallness of size Gulliver puts them in his hand as they were to submit their report about the 'man mountain' to the emperor himself, and the description which the narrator gives presents not only excellent prose but the hidden satire about man's smallness and confusion about so many things which he claims to know.

After the strictest search we found only one great piece of coarse cloth large enough to be a foot-cloth for your Majesty's chief Room of state. In the left pocket, we saw a huge silver chest, which we, the searchers, were not able to lift. In his right waist coat pocket. there was a prodigious bundle of white thin substance,...In the left there was a sort of engine, from the back of which were extended twenty long poles, resembling the palisades before your Majesty's court, wherewith we conjecture the 'Man Mountain combs his Head'.

The satire here is brilliant, pungent as well as vicious attacking the knowledge of human beings who have not even ordinary knowledge about ordinary things. They are, in fact, Lilliputians having their claim too high whereas in ordinary sense of the term are foolish to misunderstand one thing for the other. Not only this, Swift has very intelligently made mimicry of the lofty concept of the Lilliputians about themselves. The following passage reflects the very character of the Lilliputians, the tallest of whom is only 6" of height:

"Golbasto Momaren Evlame Gurdillo Shefin Mully Ully Gue most Mighty Emperor of Lilliput. Delight and terror of the Universe, whose dominions extend Thousand Blustrugs (about twelve miles in circumference) to the extremities of the Globe, Monarch of all

Monarchs. Taller than the sons of Men; Whose feet press down to the Center and Whose Head strikes against the Sun. At Whose Nod The Princes of the Earth shake their knees, pleasant as spring, comfortable as the summer, fruitful as autumn, dreadful as winter'.

The above passage reflects Swift's art of writing prose where he appears to include different prosodies at a time, which perhaps is the rarest in the art of writing prose. The description, of Lilliputian king with full of 'high-landing' adjectives makes him only smaller and a laughing stock.

Swift in the first book of Gulliver's Travels, is critical of the crime, "justice, social life, and many other important things of the society. These things are relevant in cases of the majority of nations of today. It is the quality of Swift's Prose that with the help of irony, humour and satire, he tells great things. He points out about the corruption that was so rampant in the society that great posts were offered to those who were not at all fit for. 'They were given to those who could please the king by dancing on the Ropes, or Badges of Favour and Distinction by 'leaping over sticks, and creeping under them'.

In summing up it may be said that the relevance of Swift's many of the passages in the first book of Gulliver's Travels has got the relevance in the societies of today in many parts of the world. The passages mark swift's love and command over language which have not only rhythmical flows, but also mark the hidden hatred for the follies of making who think themselves the master of all wisdom and imagination. Perhaps, "Gulliver's style approximates an ideal of

Seventeenth century scientists: "The marriage of words and things."² Thomas sprat also puts it in a famous passage of "So many things almost in, an equal number of words,". Swift in parodying the life style that finds its only meaning in things, that lives entirely in the particularity of externals, without being able to discriminate among them. There is no doubt about the fact that Gulliver's style is a marvellous instrument for narration, building easily and

with increasing fluidity the substantially of his words.'" Gulliver, in fact, succeeds in the novelists great task of creating the illusion of reality' 15 but it must be remembered that he is not a novelist. The reality he creates is one of externals only. He does not create a sense of reality about himself - or rather, to step now outside the framework of the travels, Swift does not create a sense of reality about Gulliver. Gulliver is not a character in the sense that Tom Jones is a character" 16 He has the most minimal subjective life; even his passion at the end is hardly rooted in personality. He is, in fact 'an abstraction, manipulated in the serine of satire".

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