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THE PROSE STYLE OF SAMLAN RUSHDIE

Sanjit Mandal

M. A. in English
(Tezpur University)
08473915117

INTRODUCTION

We read for pleasure and from various writings we derive that pleasure. Not just one kind of writing can provide us all the enjoyment that readers want to have from the reading exercise. Readers get pleasure from different genres of writing like poetry, prose, fiction, drama and media. Prose is one of the most important areas of writing which is distinguished from poetry in the sense that it is not rhythmic like poetry. The word "prose" first appears in English in the 14th century. It is derived from the Old French prose, which in turn originates in the Latin expression *prosa oratio* (literally, straightforward or direct speech). There are critical debates on the construction of prose. Prose in its simplicity and loosely defined structure is broadly adaptable to spoken dialogue, factual discourse, and topical and fictional writing. It is systematically produced and published within literature, journalism (including newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting), film, history, philosophy, law, and in almost all forms and processes requiring human communications. And writers are the ones who make such communications through writing using their distinct style of prose that has many types such as, nonfictional prose, heroic prose, prose poem, polyphonic prose, alliterative prose, prose fiction.

Salman Rushdie is a master of prose writing of the 21st century; a postcolonial writer originating from India. His prose works have brought revolutionary changes to the scenario of postcolonial writings. He follows the postmodernist prose style of mixing facts with fiction. And this is evident in most his prose works; "Midnight's Children", "Shame", "Imaginary Homelands", are some of the burning examples. "His texts are rich with ambivalences, contradictions, and sometimes bizarre juxtapositions of present day life", writes Joanne P. Sharp in "Locating Imaginary Homelands: Literature, Geography, and Salman Rushdie." The literary mode that Rushdie employs is also revealing. He has written the majority of his work as novels (Prose). Thus, Rushdie has chosen a very specific literary device, associated with a particular period of Western history, that of modern nation-state building. But he has not been faithful to this convention of writing. He rather creates hybridity for his characters subverting the novelistic style. From his works we can find out that the structure of the text mirrors the structure of the world that Rushdie has created. And in this paper we will discuss this prose structure and the unique style of writing prose that Rushdie has created.

PROSE STYLE IN

"GRIMUS"

Salman Rushdie made his debut of writing through the novel *Grimus* published in 1975. It is a fantasy and science fiction novel. The story revolves around the main character, Flapping Eagle, a young Indian who receives the gift of immortality after drinking a magic fluid. He wanders around the world for 777 years 7 months and 7 days, hoping to find his immortal sister and exploring various identities before falling through a hole in the Mediterranean Sea. He arrives in a parallel dimension at the mystical Calf Island where those immortals who are tired of the world but are reluctant to give up their immortality exist in a static community under a subtle and sinister authority. It's a surreal saga based on a 12th century sufi poem. There can be found mythic and literary allusions in the prose of this narrative. The language is simple and direct because as already mentioned, it is a fantasy kind of work. Rushdie had in mind young readers who could understand his prose which is well balanced through the whole narrative with punctuations. Rushdie is very careful about each sentence and that is manifested in his prose of this novel. In this case we can use a paragraph from the novel"

"The Mediterranean was calm, dark and calm. No wind. A clear sky. Stars. Flapping Eagle dozed for a moment. When he awoke, it was to feel a gale rushing at his face, a cloud rushing over his head, a crackle of electricity in the air. He was standing erect now, fighting to keep his craft from breaking

under the force of the holocaust, when quite unaccountably dizziness swept over him and he fell from his yacht, Deggle's yacht, into the angry sea. The last thing he heard was a loud drumming noise ... like the beating of mighty wings."

From this very paragraph we can justify how tersely Rushdie is using the punctuations; and in each comma we have a meaning. Even a sentence like "No wind" makes sense in this case. The reader is provided the exact images of the place that the author is describing. Here in this paragraph we find the author describing the Mediterranean and the sky, the stars, the birds. The prose of the passage is constructed in such a way that we are amused; we are fascinated to imagine the situation of the character. There is no ambiguity or obscurity in this passage. The author is direct in giving us the details of the situation where a storm is raising in the sea. He writes that electricity (a crackle of electricity) is seen in the sky, the gale (gale rushing) is flying fast. The situation is named as a 'holocaust' (the force of the holocaust) as the sea is found to be quite angry. Rushdie emphasizes such words in his prose to draw the attention of the reader who when reading him is kept spell bound in the narrative. That is what we have found in this small paragraph of his first novel. And his mastery of prose writing has already come out in his first novel.

Midnight's Children and Rushdie's Prose

Salman Rushdie came into prominence with the publication of his second novel "Midnight's Children", published in 1981. It uses creative, nonlinear storytelling, humour, and the supernatural to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of providing a personal story that also tells the story of India (and Pakistan and Bangladesh). In this narrative we can have Rushdie's adjective heavy prose and the nonlinear structure. Accounts of past events are interrupted by the narrator's present life at regular intervals and the accounts do not always come in chronological order. The prose, at least, is a delight, making up for the plot's lack of coherence. The important features of the prose in this narrative are like-long sentences, use of similes and metaphors extensively, literary allusions, and indirectness. Even the title of the book itself is a metaphor for the newly born India. After independence this country had to face a lot of trouble. There are the evidences of partition story in this book and the author has illustrated that in an original, meandering prose drawing on the long tradition of storytelling and narration. With a uniquely Indian perspective on the English language, Midnight's Children is an eclectic mix of styles, echoing the rhythm and slang of colloquial spoken English in India. Familiar English words get combined in new and unusual ways, and long, unbroken sentences run on freely, sometimes spanning a page or more. This is what the strength of Rushdie. He indianizes the English words. For example we can mention Reverend Mother's use of "whatsitsname". There is no word in English but Rushdie uses such words creating a prose of his own. He also makes use of Hindi, Urdu, and Hindustani words, phrases and expressions in this masterpiece. Such words, phrases and expressions form a long list, including 'ekdum' (at once), 'angrez' (Englishman), 'phut-aphut' (in no time), 'nasbandi' (sterilization), 'dhoban' (washerwoman), 'feringee' (the same as 'angrez'), 'baba' (grandfather), 'garam masala' (hot spices), 'rakshasas' (demons), 'fauz' (army), 'badmaas' (badmen), 'jailkhana' (prison), 'baap-re-baap' (o, my father), 'hai hai' (exclamatory expression), 'sab kuch' (all things), 'bas' (enough is enough), 'chi-chi' (an expression of contempt), 'yaar' (friend), 'gora' (white skinned one), 'pyar kiya to darna kya' (why to fear in love), 'goondas' (musclemen), 'hubshee' (demon), 'ooper nichey' (up and down), 'sarpanch' (head of a village), 'kahin' (said), 'bhai-bhai' (brother-brother), 'it' (end), 'zenana' (harlem), 'crorepatis' (a man of crores), 'ayah' (nurse), 'nimbu-pani' (lemon-juice), 'paan' (betel), 'khichri' (mixed food), 'gur' (a molasses), 'rasgullas' (a kind of sweet), 'gulabjamuns' (another sweet), 'jalebis' (a variety of sweet), 'barfi' (a sweet), 'bhel-puri' (a sort of tasty snack) 6, and many others. (O. P. Dwivedi in "Transnational Literature"). The use of such expressions provides an amount of authenticity and credibility to the novel.

Wikipedia on the other hand says about the style of this novel, "Rushdie's innovative use of magical realism allowed him to employ the nation-as-family allegory and at the same time confound it with an impossible telepathy among a multitude of children from a multitude of languages, cultures, regions and religions. No one genre dominates the entire novel, however. It encompasses the comic and the tragic, the real, the surreal, and the mythic."

And this mastery of Rushdie's prose continues throughout other works of fiction also. We can mention his later works, "The Satanic Verses", "Shame", "Haroun and the Sea of Stories", "The Ground Beneath her Feet", "The enchantress of Florence", "The Moor's Last Sigh" and "Luka and the Fire of Life" etc. but each of them have their own style.

The Prose in Salman Rushdie's Non-fictional Works

Although Rushdie writes fiction basically, he has a good number of non-fictions in his name. They are mainly recordings of his real life experiences. He writes in them how he always had to struggle for his identity. And the prose in these works (*The Jaguar Smile*, *Imaginary Homelands*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Joseph Anton*) is strong enough to show his feelings, attitude, opinion, judgment as a subject of the third world country. He manages to defend himself as a writer of the world literature irrespective of the national identity. In his conspicuous essay "Commonwealth Literature Doesn't Exist", he takes the position of a writer from the East and protests against the 'ghetto mentality' of the west. The prose in this essay is terse and compact. He uses the metaphor of a 'beast' in place of the discourse of 'commonwealth literature'. We can say that his prose is imbued with strong metaphors that can easily attract the attention of the reader. Like the one he uses in the same essay (mentioned already), the metaphor of 'chimera', that is used in place of the idea of 'commonwealth literature.' Because Rushdie believes that there is nothing like commonwealth literature as thought by the West. It is an imaginary thing.

Step Across This Line (1992-2002) is a collection of some of the most remarkable essays. Hermione Lee reviewing this collection of essays in 'The Guardian' calls them "Home thoughts from abroad." This is what the real nature of this collection of prose. The prose is written in a way to give vent to the themes and beliefs, the value of leaving home and crossing frontiers (linguistic, intellectual, imaginative, racial, and geographic). The essays have degrees of impressiveness. There are a few composites such as: "I recently asked Vaclav Havel..." or "I supported the Nato operation in Kosovo"; a few self-indulgences, like his own praise of Richard Avedon's photo-portrait of him showing his "resistance and endurance." And this type continues in many of his prose works. Some of his prose works are paradoxical. Like the one from "Imaginary Homelands" where he talks about the fallible memory of Saleem Sinai who remembers his past in fragments. They are called broken mirrors but here comes the paradox, as the broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed. That is why it is paradoxical to compare fragments of memory with the pieces of broken mirror. There are gaps in his memory. And these gaps are also used by Rushdie in his prose to make the readers think about the matter. For example we can cite a sentence from *Imaginary Homelands*, "Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions;.....it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality."

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Rushdie's numerous experiments with the English language have created a unique prose style for him. Now he is well established as a writer and one can easily identify his prose style if one has read a couple of his prose works. He is undoubtedly wordy and rhetorical in his writings. And in most of the cases he tends to be lengthy, witty, humorous, and complex. His prose style has attracted readers and reviewers the world over, and have placed Indian English writing on a sound footing in the present-day highly competitive literary scene. He has well managed to uphold the status of the 'Other' through his works. According to him subalterns have their own voices too. They are not like the ones thought by the West. And his prose works justify that clearly and show his potency of critical writing. There is aesthetic postmodernity in his prose works and the language that he uses is quite ludic.

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