



STYLISTIC DEVICES USED IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S *THE WHITE TIGER: A STUDY*

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the artistic style of Aravind Adiga's debut novel *The White Tiger* which won him the Man Booker Prize. In the modern age, so many novelists have used different stylistic devices in their novels. As far as artistic style is concerned, Thomas Hardy, Philip Dormer Stanhope, Richard Eberhart, Robert Frost and Jonathan Swift have done a prominent role to highlight the style by using different expressions in modern age. They have their own significance in using the style which is different from novelist to novelist. This research article highlights the brilliant artistic style of Man Booker Prize winner Aravind Adiga in his novel *The White Tiger*. All through the text, he has used so many expressions and focused on figures of speech in order to give the clear picture about his objective to the readers. This novel is presented in the form of epistolary mode, a series of letters written over a period of seven nights, in which the protagonist Balram narrates his "rags to riches" to the Chinese Premier Wen Jaibo who is to visit Bangalore.

Keywords: Artistic Skill, stylistic devices, prominent, brilliant expressions, figures of speech, epistolary, protagonist.



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INTRODUCTION

Style is the way in which something is said, done, expressed, or performed. Style can be interpreted as figures that ornament discourse: broadly, as representing a manifestation of the person speaking or writing. All figures of speech fall within the domain of style.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As far as style is concerned, Thomas Hardy has his own view regarding the style of a novel "what

has been written cannot be blotted. Each new style must be the old with added ideas, not an ignoring and avoidance of the old".

Philip Dormer Stanhope opines that style is the dress of thoughts: "Style is the dress of thoughts; and let them be ever so just, if your style is homely, coarse, and vulgar, they will appear to as much disadvantage". Correspondingly, C.E.M Joad feels that a writer's style must be like his dress: "A man's style should be like his dress. It should be as



unobtrusive and should attract as little attention as possible”.

According to Richard Eberhart, style is point of view: ‘Style is the perfection of a point of view’.

Robert Frost feels that style indicates the mind of the writer:

“Style is that which indicates how the writer takes himself and what he is saying. It is the mind skating circles around it as it moves forward”.

According to Jonathan Swift “Proper words in proper places make the true definition of style”.

USAGE OF FIGURES OF SPEECH IN ARAVIND ADIGA'S THE WHITE TIGER

Aravind Adiga, a man Booker prize winner for his debut novel *The White Tiger* is a master in using stylistic devices.

He uses repetition in his novel often. Repetition is used in prose for emphasis or emotional effect. He describes the servants who clean the Teashop as follows:

“They are the human spiders that go crawling in between and under the tables with rags in their hands, crushed humans in crushed uniforms” (*The White Tiger*, 51).

The protagonist's pathetic ventures during his search for a job are depicted: “So I went looking, from house to house, house to house, house to house” (*The White Tiger*, 59). He went on depicting his condition by using different modifiers: “I was walking from house to house, knocking on gates and on front doors of the rich asking if anyone wanted a driver-a good driver-an experienced driver—for their car” (*The White Tiger*, 59).

Adiga uses the word “past” repeatedly in the following passage for making an effect:

“I drove through the greenery, through the bushes and the trees and the water buffaloes lazing in muddy ponds; past the creepers and the bushes; past the paddy fields; past the coconut palms; past the bananas; past the neems and the banyans; past the wild grass with the faces of water buffaloes peeping through”. (*The White Tiger*, 89)

He describes how the driver gets lost while driving:

“And all the roads look the same, all of them go around and around grassy circles in which men are sleeping or eating or playing cards, and then four roads shoot off from that grassy circle and then you go down one road, and you hit another grassy circle so you just keep getting lost and lost, and lost, and lost in Delhi”. (*The White Tiger*, 119)

When the servant was dressed up as a maharaja with a red turban and dark cooling glasses, Ashok's wife began to laugh.

“She laughed and laughed and laughed when she saw me in my costume, bowing low to her” (*The White Tiger*, 154).

To produce the effect in the selected *The White Tiger* novel, Adiga uses the hyperbole. One could find unrestrained hyperbole in Adiga's writing. Through exaggeration, he conveys a sense of energy and delight. Adiga uses hyperbole in an interesting way. When Balram Halwai, as a boy was allowed to meet the rich man, he dived straight at his feet. “As soon as the gate was open, I dived straight at Stork's feet No Olympic runner could have gone in as fast as I did through those gates” (*The White Tiger* 61). Adiga has used again this hyperbole to highlight the mental condition of the servants: “Just because drivers and cooks in Delhi are reading Murder weekly, it doesn't mean that they are all about to slit their master's necks. Of course, they'd like to. Of course, a billion servants are secretly fantasizing about strangling their bosses”. (*The White Tiger* 125)

Apart from repetition and hyperbole, Adiga uses Personification “I rammed the bottle down. The glass ate his bone” (*The White Tiger* 61). Here, in the above sentence, glass has been considered to be a man or a beast. The quality of human being has been attributed to inanimate object.

Aravind Adiga portrays Humour in an artistic way. Kishan brought a gunny sack which contained huge pile of coals. He asked Balram to break the coal against the brick. He asked, “You hate the idea of having to break coals, don't you?” Balram said nothing. Kishan took the largest piece of coal in his hand and squeezed it. “Imagine that each coal is my skull. They will get much easier to break”. (*The White Tiger* 38) Kishan's idea as given by the writer is really



humorous. After killing his Master, Balram threw the stickers of the goddess on Mr.Ashok's body, hoping that they would help his soul go to heaven. Adiga writes humorously here "I pulled out all the stickers of the goddess, and threw them on Mr.Ashok's body just in case they'd help his soul go to heaven" (*The White Tiger* 286). While Balram was driving the car, his master tapped him on the shoulder. Then he could understand what the master wanted to say as the dogs understand their masters. It is a humorous statement: "Mr.Ashok tapped me on the shoulder. From the start, sir, there was a way in which I could understand what he wanted to say, the way dogs understand their masters" (*The White Tiger* 112).

When talking about the mosquito threat, he combines personification and humour in his writing: "You sleep in the car, and the mosquitoes eat you alive. If they're malaria mosquitoes it's all right, you'll just be raving for a couple of weeks, but if it's dengue mosquitoes, then you're in deep shit, and you'll die for sure". (*The White Tiger* 124)

While talking about the state of pollution in Delhi, Adiga writes that the men on scooters look like bank robbers "The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces- each time you stop at a red light, you see a row of men with black glasses and masks on their faces, as if the whole city were out on a bank heist that morning". (*The White Tiger*, 133)

Marjorie Boulton says that surprise ending is a technique used in the art of writing. He says: "We are waiting for the end of a sentence and it is not what we expected; this may emphasize the point" (*The White Tiger*, 169).

Adiga uses surprise ending at the end of this paragraph. While writing about seeing his own poster on the wall, he ends it with a surprise ending: "That large piece of paper on the wall was a police poster-my police poster. It had already arrived here. I looked at it with a smile of pride" (*The White Tiger* 293). Adiga ends with a surprise ending. Balram Halwai sports a smile of pride which was not expected from him at that time. Adiga often amplifies modifiers in thesaurus fashion: "Tell him you heard this wild, extravagant, impossible story from some driver" (*The White Tiger* 169).

The death has been stated as a permanent cure in Adiga's writing. Aravind Adiga has used sarcasm in his writing interestingly. Sarcasm is a sharp, bitter, or cutting expression or remark. When talking about businessmen, Adiga makes sarcastic remarks: "He's into coal, then. Probably here to bribe ministers. It's a rotten business, coal". He yawned again. 'I used to drive a man who sold coal. But my current boss is into steel, and he makes the coal men look like saints, where does he live?' (*The White Tiger* 126) When Balram Halwai brought a dosa for the Mongoose, he removed the potatoes, flinging them and the tracks. He gave the dosa to the Mongoose. Adiga makes sarcastic remark on the Mongoose. "He chomped on the dosa in his seat; down below on the tracks, a mouse nibbled on the discarded potatoes" (*The White Tiger* 191).

Balram describes how he killed his master. His master's blood blinded his eye. But he became a free man. Here, Adiga uses paradox: "Just as I pierced his neck and his life hood spurted into my eyes. I was blind. I was a free man" (*The White Tiger* 286). Adiga also uses paradox when talking about the country where black money is deposited but it has white people as citizens

"The great socialist himself is said to have embezzled one billion rupees from the Darkness, and transferred that money into a bank account in a small, beautiful country in Europe full of white people and black money". (*The White Tiger* 98)

"I stood still, like a schoolboy caught out by his teacher" (*The White Tiger* 284). He compares young girls to watermelons: Adiga uses simile in many situations. When Balram's cheek touched his master's face, the stubble on his master's face reminded him of the shaving brush: "Our bodies passed each other so close that the stubble on his face scraped my cheeks like the shaving brush that I use every morning" (*The White Tiger* 112). When describing the action of the drivers rushing to receive the magazine "Murder Weekly", he compares them to the dogs: After showing it to me, Vitiligo-Lips closed the magazine and threw it into the circle where the other drivers were sitting; they made a



grab for it, like a bunch of dogs rushing after a bone. (*The White Tiger* 126)

When comparing the red drops of blood on the palm of Balram, Adiga compares them to a row of ladybirds on a leaf: "There was still some blood on my palm: Three small red drops had formed on my flesh, like a row of ladybirds on a leaf. Sucking my palm like a boy, I went to sleep" (*The White Tiger* 273). When describing Balram's trembling hand, Adiga compares it to the action of a lizard's tail that has fallen off "I kept my hand on Dharam's head the whole time- he must have thought it was out of affection, but it was only to stop my hand from trembling – it had been shaking all morning like a lizard's tail that has fallen off". (*The Tiger* 274) Aravind Adiga makes a passing remark about the vendor who sells helmets on the road. The pyramid of motorbike helmets appeared to be a pile of severed heads: "Outside on the road, a street side vendor was sitting next to a pyramid of motorbike helmets that were wrapped in plastic and looked like a pile of severed heads" (*The White Tiger* 268). Balram was sitting patiently waiting for his master's call. His sitting posture has been compared to that of Buddha: "I don't know how long I sat like the Buddha, but it lasted until one of the servants shouted out that I was wanted at the front door" (*The White Tiger* 280). Balram has been compared to a pig in an amusing manner:

"For every hour I spent in the car, he made me spend two or three under it- I was made a free repair mechanic for all the taxis in the stand; late every evening, I emerged from under a taxi like a pig from sewage, my face black with grease, my hands shiny with engine oil. I dipped into Ganga of black –and came out a driver". (*The White Tiger* 57).

He calls human beings by names of animals such as mongoose, stork, buffalo, etc. "The stork and his sons could count on my loyalty" (*The White Tiger* 67). "The Buffalo did not believe him and got four of his hired gunmen to torture the servant" (*The White Tiger* 67). "Mukesh Sir was small, and dark, and ugly, and very shrewd. We would have called him 'the Mongoose' back at home" (*The White Tiger* 75). "The

wild Boar came to have lunch with Mr Ashok and Pinky Madam" (*The White Tiger* 82).

CONCLUSION

According to Boulton, climax refers to a figure of speech in which words, phrases or clauses are arranged in an order of increasing importance. It has been depicted in *The White Tiger* appropriately. Balram Halwai and his master went from bank to bank, and the weight of the red bag grew. Balram reflects on the amount as follows: "seven hundred thousand rupees. It was enough for a house. A motorbike. And a small shop. A new life. My seven hundred thousand rupees" (*The White Tiger* 281). In an interesting way, Balram concludes that his master's money is his own money.

Balram was worried of being caught by a stranger after looking at his police poster. But the stranger identified it to be his own poster. Adiga concludes by saying that it resembles half the men in India thereby providing climax:

"He was peering again at the photo in the poster. Suddenly he put his hand on my shoulder. "You know who this fellow" in the poster looks like?" "Who?" I asked. He grinned. "Me" I looked at his face, and at the photo. "It's true", I said, slapping him on the back. I told you: it could be the face of half the men in India". (*The White Tiger* 295)

Balram Halwai murdered his own master. But, even if Ashok's family tortured Balram in different ways, he would not reveal the truth. Even if they hanged him, he would not accept that he killed his master. But he felt that it was worthwhile to realize that he was no more a servant:

"Yet even if all my chandeliers come crashing down to the floor – even if they throw me in Jail and have all the other prisoners dip their beaks into me-even if they make me walk the wooden stairs to the hangman's noose- I'll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master's throat. I'll say it was all worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant". (*The White Tiger* 321)



In the last sentence by using the similar sentence structure repeatedly, Adiga highlights the emotional freedom enjoyed by Balram Halwai appropriately. By saying that it was worthwhile to feel that he ceased to be a servant, he brings in the climax or the crescendo in his writing.

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