



ASSIMILATING LEXIS AND SYNTAX THROUGH SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT



Language plays a vital role in expressing the thoughts, feelings, emotions of the author. The effect of any text depends entirely on the style of language. Different writers use different styles of language to the target readers. Native writers of English use advanced language style than the non-native writers of English. We find different vocabulary, syntax, phrases, metaphors, similes etc in literary works. It mainly depends upon the writer's attitude towards the subject. Every writer adopts a perspective tone to develop the story, describe and design his narratives. In other words, the writer's attitude is reflected through the character's personality. As a whole, the central theme or the idea entirely depends on attitude, tone which is in turn decided by the choice of words and style of language. The present article tries to analyze Khushwant Singh's select short story *The Mark of Vishnu*- identifying the writer's attitude and tone, his choice of words and style.

Keywords: Language, Lexis, Syntax, Short Stories.



Language is creative when we use it metaphorically. The metaphorical creation of new words and concepts lead to the possibility of creation of new usage of language. It represents a new style/ form of words. The words extended through metaphors, idiom and phrases, use of collocations and so on are dealt with in literature. Khushwant Singh the prominent scholar, journalist and author was born in Hadali. His writings are known for fine humour laced with wit and sarcasm. He fights relentlessly against the social injustice, violence and all kinds of fanaticism. His expression are clear, simple and has an in depth moral standards which the country is missing. Realism is an important element in his writings. He tries to explore the hidden realities giving priority to the human being and their suffering during the catastrophic disasters. His characters depict the social realities. He gives a pragmatic approach towards the problem faced by the Indians during his time. His endeavour to transcend noble thoughts, putting behind the superstitious, illusionary world can be seen in the short story *The Mark of Vishnu*.

The writer has used Basic English blended with narrative and descriptive passages in dialogues. The whole story revolves around Gunga Ram and the boys, the gap between the two horizons- the illiterate's superstitious belief and the educated scientific belief. The title of the story highlights the belief of Hindu people on the deity Vishnu where the writer mocks at the superstitious belief of a common Indian. Vishnu is considered as one among trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva – the creator, preserver and the destroyer. Vishnu believed as the preserver; Kala Nag believed to be the symbol of deity Vishnu is also considered as the preserver by Gunga Ram. The story opens with Gunga Ram words

“This is for the Kala Nag”, pouring the milk into the saucer. Gunga Ram the pious person who doesn't harm any of God's creation and believes that every creature has the right to live on this earth. The mark of V on his forehead in sandalwood to honour the god is marked as irony with the mark created by Kala Nag at the end of the

lesson. “Underneath the V mark where the Kala Nag had dug his teeth.”

In this story a contradictory mindset of two different people living under the same roof is felt. The boys with their new fangled ideas and the Brahmin with old ideas and superstitious belief is well brought out by the writer through the use of adjectives like tough, pious, stupid old Brahmin, more devoted Gunga Ram, more dangerous and so on. The writer has depicted the casual attitude of the common people in the society which connects the reader to the writer. His choice of words is very simple in describing the nature and the creatures in the story. “The monsoon had burst with all their fury” “The earth.....crowded with life” “The muddy ground was covered with crawling worms, centipedes and velvety lady-birds” “Banana leaves glistened bright and shiny green” “Shiny black hood glistened in the sunlight” The writer has used good adjectives that pictures the realistic image before the eyes of the readers.

The change in the climate is linked up with the change in the attitude of the creatures. The withering heat of the summer- the monsoon, the deserted place, dry earth- is filled with unsolicited visitors on the earth that enjoy the nature. It is also linked up with the change in human mind to destruct the nature is beautifully brought out by the writer.

Simile provides a deeper meaning of the word that creates interest to the readers and to perceive a new usage, new comparison and new use of language. The writer's use of similes in this story may be to make his writings more vivid and entertaining for his readers. Simile is employed in the statement uttered by the boys about the way in which a snake normally eats: “We saw a grass snake which had just swallowed a frog. It *stuck like a lump in its throat.....*” “When he saw us his eyes turned as red as fire and he hissed and spat on all sides.” “His eyes burnt like red-hot coals and his hood was tight and undamaged.” The phrase *eyes are red as fire, eyes burnt like red-hot coals*, is the comparison made by the writer to show the angry, danger, violent nature of King cobra.

The use of adjectives helps the reader to visualize or appreciate the writer's view. His idea is to



present a precise image which can be felt through these words. In the sentence "There was *an absolute storm* as it went round and round in the glass tearing the decayed viper into little pieces." "Then like *lightning Kala Nag* started towards the banana trees." The words *absolute storm*, *lightning Kala Nag* have been used to emphasize the noun. "Absolute" means complete, total, entire whereas "lightning" means very quick. The noun "storm" means a tumultuous reaction, an uproar or controversy. The writer has used the adjective absolute to highlight the agonistic behaviour of the two snakes. The quick speed of Kala Nag is being said by using the adjective lightning. The writer used simple adjectives and at the same time he was very caution in selecting the terminology to create a clear picture to his readers.

"They were constantly *making him look small* with their new-fangled ideas." In the phrase *making him look small* means to be humiliated or insulted in front of the others. The writer has used conditional clauses in the story. Conditional clause in a sentence describes the hypothetical situation like an event or an action and the result of that action. The writer used zero conditional clauses to express the general truth or situation in which one action always causes the other action to happen. "If you kill it all the eggs will become cobras." "We will kill your Kala Nag if we see him." The writer has also used second conditional clause where the happenings of the event or situation is unlikely to happen in the future. "If you could love them, instead of killing them, you proved your point."

The language is used in conversational tone where many imperative sentences are used by the writer. The writer has incorporated it in order to give a clear and straightforward instructions, commands, or to express displeasure, fondness, likeness and love in their writings. An imperative sentence is the sentence where we have no surface subject, only the occasional use of *you* or *your* in the statements. "You must have laid the eggs yourself." "Must be Gunga Ram's eggs" "Don't damage the hood." "You go to bed." "You never put any sugar in it." The writer used

imperative sentences to discuss the idea pertaining with the domain of the argument which he wants to focus on.

The use of the term *Phannyar*, and highlighting it in italics, the use of synonym Kala Nag, King Cobra in English – may be the writer wants to stress the use of the common language by the illiterate and the language used by the educated one.

Khushwant Singh has used simple language in the story. His choice of words expresses his thoughts and feelings. The selection of sentence structures, simile, tone, attitude and imagery helps the writer in expressing his art beautifully. His ideology is successful induced with right expression and heart touching description of situations. The use of varied form of sentences especially the imperative sentences, conditional clauses and past and perfect forms of sentences to describe the events in a sequential order without digression is appreciable. The writer's attempt in describing the attitude of the illiterate and the educated, synchronizing it with the change in the climate gives a hint to predict the impending danger. Khushwant Singh is a versatile writer who touches the heart of the reader through his choice of words which speaks his mind.

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