

On Writing 'n the Writers

By BS Murthy



In his savage state, mere sounds could have been man's communicative tools to vent out his raw feelings, limited to such as hunger and anger and pain and pleasure. However, in time, as he managed to civilize himself in communes, he would have needed some vocabulary to synchronize the habitation therein. And in that lies the seeds of the tongues, which, when whetted by the tenor of the times, could have yielded the fruits of languages. But it was the character of life, as it evolved in a given commune that would have shaped the nuances of the words, leading to the evolution of languages with their unique characteristics of expression in personal interactions and public communions. While at some point, while it was the script that gave substance to the tongue, it was the word of mouth that incentivized the flowering of the art of expression. However, it was the advent of the printed word that turned out to be a boon as well as the bane of man's art of arts.

Any writing, like speaking, has personal as well as impersonal character to it; whereas in letters, the personal tone acquires an emotive character, the impersonal tenor of stage plays, and such public endeavours, imbibes the force of opinion making. Inevitably, this innate ability of language to influence the listener / reader, besides catering to the vanity of the speaker / writer, makes it prone for abuse by man. Maybe, it's the inkling of the dangers of demagoguery that makes nature to ensure that the oratorical skills are in short supply for man. But in our 'media era', as the vanity of the rightly-connected gets fulfilled by way of seeing 'one's name in print', the writing became a victim. Needless to say, this premise makes it incumbent upon one to define what ought to be true writing.

What is true writing after all? In its basics, writing is either about voicing personal feelings in private missives or articulating individual perceptions in essays etc. Whereas in case of the former, true writing is about sharing one's genuine emotions with the recipient but not of faking feelings with an ulterior motive. As for essays and the like, the writing is a public means to convey one's rational thoughts but not to promote personal prejudices or cater to the prevalent biases. In either case, writing should spring from an urge to express and not be borne out of the desire to impress. Be that as it may, while the letter-writer is weary at the prospect of others purveying his outpour, save the celebrities, who may even write bearing in mind that their

private jottings would be in the public domain someday, the very nature of the involved writing makes a playwright, or an essayist, to crave for readership.

Then came the novel with its fascinating blend of all that is personal and impersonal to writing into a literary mould to elevate one's soul and, in the same vein, stimulate his intellect as well. Thus, it is no wonder that Jane Austen felt - in the novel, the greatest powers of the mind are displayed. Though the power of the mind is at play in the novel, it is the force of the feelings that operates the levers of its plot. And what is the force of feeling like? Well, it is akin to that youthful feeling of friendship when one, besides sharing his joys and sorrows with his buddies, would want them to experience the pleasures and pains he himself experiences. As for novel, it is only when written by one, who is gripped by the like urge to share with his readers that the it acquires its soul; but were it be borne out of a desire to exhibit, it becomes soulless, and worse, in that the writer's urge 'to be known' makes it a vacuous work. But it is the tragedy of life in that that during the course of growing up, man tends to divert himself from 'the path of sharing' to the 'road of display', which human tendency has come to afflict novel as well.

That's about writing in general and novel in particular; but what about the writers? Those who write to share, experience the joy of writing unique to itself, and, moreover, as Tolstoy put it, they get their reward in their work itself. Yet, though it is the urge to share that made them write, their craving to be read plagues them in the aftermath. As seldom, if ever, one gets to the frontier of readership, the writers are prone to suffer from the epilepsy of frustration, at any rate, an unwelcome situation to be in for any, and more so for those who ventured into the arena to share with others. Thus, it serves the writers to learn to treat their stint at writing like any other joy that life affords them that is besides realizing that a felt joy is all but transient and that memory too fails in the details for subsequent recollection.

And those who treat writing as a vehicle of visibility would be incapable of experiencing the joy of the journey. In the end though, were they to come into spotlight, they might well gloat in the limelight though without experiencing the real thrill of letters. Even in case such won' make it to the post; their pain cannot be intense for they wouldn't have felt the joy of writing either. If it were a mere case of the life and times of these writers, no analysis would have ever been warranted. But owing to the universal literacy and the 'creative' writing schools, these days, the emergent authors per mensem far outstrip the number of, say, all the nineteenth century writers put together. That these have begun to pile up their wordy chaff, as a sort of overburden on the literary grain in the written stack, has been hurting the literature itself.