

Sir Franchise Bacon: A study of his writing style

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Abstract- The present study evaluates Bacon's place in English literature, his presentation of moral principles, use of aphoristic style and his inductive approach in the essays. Francis Bacon was the most distinctive essayist of the Elizabethan era. He occupies a distinguished position in English literature as an essayist and a pioneer of modern science. His essays are treasure house of worldly wisdom. We find strategies, optimism, truth, practicality, explanation, allusions, straightforward morality and didacticism in his essays. He wrote widely on politics, philosophy and science. They portray his intellect and practical wisdom. They have gripping plots and hidden truth of practical life. They are loaded with the ripest wisdom of experience and observation conveyed through short, compact and terse sentences. The essays have become classics of English language because of their inevitable style and fine literary touch. Consequently his influence upon the readers is still prevailing in the modern era. At the modern spiritual sterility, his essays can show us the right path to live a simple and successful life. His writings show the way to improve and develop in all aspects of life. Especially, he deals with the lifestyle of the youth which keeps a deep impact on the modern youth at present. Some of the essays are concerned with the external behavior of human being. Some are discussed internally. Some essays are concerned with eternal human passions like love, ambition, revenge, envy and anger. The researcher in order to fulfill the objective of the study took the help of different critical books composed by S C Sinha and David Silvester. Moreover, the different literary web sites of internet, literary articles, and critical compositions were also helpful in this regard. The finding of the study will be very much beneficial for the readers and writers belong all generations.

Key Words: Eternal elegance, treasure house, practical wisdom, moral principles, aphoristic style, inductive approach, vocabulary, quotation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), was a versatile genius, attorney, philosopher, historian, champion of modern science and a top government official. He used to write a terse, epigrammatic, utilitarian prose which is well-structured and prescriptive, logical and illustrative. Bacon's prose was permeated with practical wisdom, and he addressed his readers in an oracular voice. In his essays Bacon has made use of prose style that has been variously estimated as Addison praises his grace, Sainsbury admires his dazzling power of rhetoric and Hume calls him rather stiff and rigid (Sinha, 2006). He was the wisest because of his worldly wisdom, he was brightest owing to his powerful intellect and the art of writing terse essays, and he was meanest due to his treacherous character. He was a man of multi-talents. His thirst for infinite knowledge and versatility was astonishing. He possessed the intellect of the highest order. He was proficient in Greek, Latin, English, Science, Philosophy, Classics and other fields of

knowledge. He is regarded as the creator of the modern school of experimental research. He says, “Man is the servant and interpreter of nature”. The essays are loaded with the ripest wisdom of experience and observation conveyed through short, compact and terse sentences. Bacon was indeed an eloquent prophet of new era and the pioneer of modern science(Sultan, 1984).His essays have become the classics of English language due to their inevitable style and fine literary touch (Fred, 1989).

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF STYLE IN WRITING AN ESSAY

Before we discuss Bacon’s style in the essays we should know how much importance should be given to style while writing an essay. Style or expression or the formal element in literature is most important in dealing with the personality of the writer, for the choice of the words, the turn of the phrases, the sentences are all charged with the individuality of the man. Style is not simply “the dress of thought” Pope said but the very personality of the writer. In simple we can say it is the product of sincere self-expression. Style is the living product of the author’s personality. If it is carefully studied , analyzed , it will tell us much of the education of the man, the influence of work, the thought structure , his outlook on man , the direct play of the author’s mind and character upon his subject and incidentally towards life at large , the evolution and development of his thought and his personality of life (Henry,2002) . By having a thorough study of Bacon’s essay we can know the very personality of his literary giant. It is not because of their subject matter but because of his inimitable style and their literary flavor.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF BACONIAN STYLE

Bacon’s is noted for his wit and aphorism and that is his style. Again there is lot to be understood about his style in respect to the Elizabethan and Jacobean prose writers. One thing we can deduce from our study of the three essays above is that a number of lines of Bacon’s essay have become like proverbs:

Suspicion among thoughts are like bats among birds. (Of Suspicion)

The ways to enrich are many and most of them foul. (Of Riches)

It is a strange desire to seek power and lose liberty: or to seek power over others and lose power over a man’s self. (Of Great Place)

Such lines also ooze of practical sense on the part of the essayist. Thoughts are so condensed that reading of Bacon essays should be at such a pace wherein we can sip in the treasure. His style of writing has changed from time to time. By reading his essays we remarked that his style of writing was continually becoming richer and softer. There are some certainly marked differences of style in three editions of the essays.

The first edition is compressed, bold, and full of condensed thought, but utterly devoid of ornament. In second edition we can see the use of occasional ornate, its sentence run more smoothly and continuously; but force and precision are its main characteristics throughout. This edition he wrote the essay “Of adversity” this is more ornate than the essay, Of Studies. In the latest edition the ornate work becomes much more frequent (Franchise, 1879). The long sustained passages of essay eloquence and sentences, of singular and unaffected beauty. The fact seems to be

that Bacon had at all times almost any style of command that varies his style with the occasion. Becoming all things in term so as to ensure getting a hearing, trying one experiment after another and giving prove of mastery in each. Bacon moves from style to style with a deliberate and tremendous control.

4. ELEMENTS OF BACON'S STYLE

In the field of essay writing Bacon is a man of style. It is his scientific approach towards human life which makes him a outstanding and an unique essayist. Certain elements of style are there, which supplemented Bacon to maintain a harmonious and sweet equilibrium between his scientific approach and his way of writing. Those are mainly vocabulary,quotations,sentences, paragraph and figure of speech.

4.1 Vocabulary

Bacon's stock of words is exceptionally rich, being hardly inferior to that of any English writer except Shakespeare. His reading was,however, limited principally to the classical Latin authors, the bible and medieval philosopher. Though he uses many Latinism, his vocabulary is not mainly classical like Milton. On the contrary, Teutonic Saxon, elements preponderates though he does not studiously affect short or monosyllabic words and is ready to use big words where he finds them more suitable or expressive. Nor he does avoid his acquaintance with the older English writers such as Chaucer, Wickliffe was extremely limited.

4.2 Quotation

Bacon is one of the much quotedessayists of English literature. He is very fond of using quotation. His quotations are so numerous that they may be said to be quite a feature of his style. His quotations are mainly drawn from biblical subject matter and Latin Literature. His quotations show the range of his readings, as it was his habit to jot down any expression and turn of thought that had struck his fancy. His essays as we have studied "Of studies", "Of Death", "Of Revenge", "Of Diversity" are filled with Quotations. In the essay of studies he writes "some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested". He again says, "To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar."(Spark Note, 2013)

In the essay "of truth" he writes,"A mixture of falsehood is like alloy in the coin of gold and silver. In the essay "of adversity" he writes "Prosperity is blessing of the Old Testament and Adversity is blessing of New Testament.

4.3 Sentence

Bacon's sentences are more modern in their structure then those of other Elizabethan prose writers being more pointed and less involved. Even his more intricate sentences are so carefully constructed, and so free from inversion that the meaning is not difficult to catch. The essay s, in particular for balance and point as might naturally be expected from their aphoristic style. His sentences are often loosely constructed, but they are generally clear and intelligible. He is also well known for his concise and epigrammatic use in his sentence writing.

4.4 Paragraph

Bacon's essays are peculiar kind of essays, where we don't find any introduction of his subject matter. We know that in Bacon's age little attention was given to the logical division of a subject into paragraphs. It was often left to the printer to throw sentences in to paragraph as he found convenient. In Bacon's essay proper attention is given in the logical sequence of paragraph. Bacon has the special ability of opening of his essay dramatically (Banchan, 1894).

4.5 Figure of Speech

We cannot compare any English essayist with Bacon in regard to the use of figure of speech. He is so rich and familiar in that, it came spontaneously to his mind. Mostly he uses two figure of speeches i.e. simile and metaphor. His metaphor is mainly drawn from natural, scientific and physical aspects. For example in the essay *Of Studies* he writes "Natural abilities like natural plants that needs pruning by studies. Beside metaphor Bacon uses antithesis and balance to give point to his observation (Landry, 2010).

5. BACON'S UNIQUENESS IN HIS STYLE

5.1 Simplicity

His writing is simple only in the sense of being free from all affectation, from any studied elegance in the choice of words, in structure of sentences. Though his subject matter have the character of simplicity, yet replete with a sense of completion.

5.2 Brevity

Indeed the secret of Bacon's essay strength lies in his conciseness. Hardly any writer, ancient and modern has succeeded in compromising so much meaning with in so short compass.

5.3 Strength

It has been observed by a critic the quality of strength in Bacon's style is intellectual rather than emotional. That is, he has little taste for any energetic display of feeling. But that the truth he has to impart might make the greatest possible impression upon the mind of the reader.

5.4 Clearness

The secret of clearness of his style is the clearness of his thought. Though deep yet clear.

5.5 Biblical, Historical and Latin Reference

Bacon essays are replete with biblical, Historical and Latin references. These references supported Bacon more to present his views and ideas more rationally. By the use of this weapon he makes his essays richer which provides the readers a media to rectify them or to judge their self by a rational comparison (Whitney, 1986).

5.6 Utilitarianism

“Utilitarianism is the doctrine that actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority- the doctrine that an action is right in so far as it promotes happiness, and that the greatest happiness of the greatest number should be the guiding principle of conduct. Utilitarianism is a theory in normative ethics holding that the proper course of action is the one that maximizes utility, specifically defined as maximizing happiness and reducing suffering.

Bacon’s philosophy is known as utilitarian philosophy. His philosophy is never based upon fancy or imagination. He is very realistic in his approach. Utilitarianism is the dominating voice in almost all the essays of Bacon. The theme or the idea of his essays are practical and can be applicable in day today human affairs for the betterment of human civilization. Although he is an artist of the Elizabethan era but his philosophy and his essays don’t have a connection with time. They are the literary monuments of all time (Choudhury, 2013).

6. CONCLUSION

At last we can say through his style of writing he dazzles , stimulates ,provokes , much more than he proves , edifies , instructs , satisfy to all the reader is perfectly true and his greatness lies in giving a universal appeal to his writing . Of all the essaying of his times and even of the later time his essays alone have a grip on the reader and their success is partly due to their style (Jerry, 19985).

Bacon’s rich vocabulary, numerous quotations, modern sentences, wonderful paragraphs, marvelous use of figures of speech, strength, clarity, precision and so on make his style the most effective. Buffon says, “Style is the man himself”. Longinus says, “Evaluation of style is the echo of great soul”. All these statements show his essentially mean and benefit seeking attitude, even in the matters of heart. In short, Bacon's essays are a "hand book" of practical wisdom enriched with maxims which are very helpful for worldly wisdom and success.

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