

LANGUAGE IN INDIA
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Weekly Notes
April 1-7, 2011

Form and Function of Imagination in Creative Writing

Recently, Mr. N. Ram, Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu* newspaper said about a great modern Tamil writer R. Chudamani that she “remained reclusive and could not go out like other writers, Graham Greene, for instance, and pick up material for writing, [and] relied overwhelmingly on her imagination.” He further added, “In literature, the highest form of writing is that which comes out of the imagination. Creativity, philosophical ideas, progressive thoughts, shocking views and outrageous thoughts make great literature.”

What role does imagination play in creating great literature, readable and enjoyable literature? Will imagination by itself result in great literature? What other elements must be incorporated in writing fiction?

Indian Writing in English versus Indian Writing in Indian Languages

A well-known Tamil author, Indira Parthasarathy, had this to say about the remarks of Salman Rushdie and growing influence of Indian Writing in English: “Mr. Parthasarathy ... described as “arrogant” the observation of Salman Rushdie that “the writing of Indian writers working in English is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the eighteen recognized languages of India, the so-called vernacular languages.”

Mr. Parthasarathy declared further: “Indo-Anglian writers always keep in mind readers abroad and, in the process, miss the cultural and linguistic nuances. Their writing will not evolve as naturally as that of a vernacular writer.”

How does it feel to read a great novel both in its original version in an Indian language and in its translated version in English? Does not the reader’s background play a role in determining which version is better and for what reasons? For readers, even in India, who do not have any reading experience in Indian languages, Indian Writing in English is emerging as the only platform to enjoy good Indian writing. As for the quality of the products in Indian Writing in English, how do we ensure that Indian experience in all spheres of life and among all classes of people and creation is creatively and imaginatively incorporated in Indian Writing in English?

A Capital Idea!

Writing in Indian languages have several advantages. For example, we don’t have to use any capital letter at all. Perhaps even the notion of capital letters is a foreign notion for Indian languages. On the other hand, the other Indian language, English, depends heavily on the correct use of capital letters.

Students and teachers need to know the nuances of using capital letters, if we want our writing to be accepted.

Capitalize proper names and adjectives made from proper names.

Capitalize a title or rank before a proper name. Academic degrees should be capitalized.

Capitalize a family relationship only when it is part of a proper name or when it substitutes for a proper name.

Capitalize the names of religions, their deities, and their followers.

Capitalize proper names of places, regions, and geographic features. We need not capitalize north, south, etc. But when these are part of a proper name, these should be capitalized. South Kolkata, North Kolkata, South Chennai, etc.

Capitalize days of the week, months, and holidays, but not seasons or academic terms.

Capitalize historical events, periods, and documents.

Capitalize the names of schools, colleges, departments, and courses.

Capitalize the first, last, and main words in titles. Generally speaking all substantive words in titles may be capitalized. Do not capitalize articles, conjunctions, and prepositions. But you need to capitalize these if these occur as the first word in the title.

Capitalize the first letter of a quoted sentence.

There are other conventions as well. Look for these and use these conventions consistently.

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E-mail addresses

1. Avoid underscore in your e-mail address, because when an e-mail address is cited it is underlined and the underscore does not appear in the address clearly.
2. Choose an address that is easy for others to identify your name with your address.
3. Some use their father's or husband's name as their e-mail address. Some use their favorite expressions as their e-mail address. Some use their religious slogans part of their e-mail address. Some use political slogans as part of their e-mail address. Some add their year of birth in their e-mail address. Some follow numerology predictions. If easy and readable communication is your goal, it is better to have a simple e-mail address, using your own name. True, sometimes our names are already taken as e-mail address by someone else. Find a way to still keep your full name while adding additional elements to your address. It is your personal e-mail and so it should present direct and adequate descriptive identity.

Please make it a point to check your e-mails on a regular basis!