Editorial: The Joy of Words

Sudarshana Jha*

ABSTRACT

Spoken or written words have tremendous power. They influence peoples and civilizations in most significant manner. Words can enable people to come closer or do tricks forcing them to lock horns. Words help us look around the world and form meanings while the meanings help the words to have their strength. This article is based on the reflections of the author about the art of the spoken and written words in shaping human lives across civilizations and ages. Words in any form have given human beings an edge over other species on the earth. The article revolves around the eclectic relationship between the author and the words and brings out the nuances of writing as an art form as well as a unique means of expressions.

Keywords: spoken or written words, purpose of writing, writing as an art form, words as means of expression

"Words are mirrors of the society, displaying the emotions of those who dare to pen their thoughts"

Writing is one of the most archaic and beautiful forms of art. Humans have been engraving their mark on the canvas of history since the beginning of time. From cave paintings to the most complicated of research papers, the drive to write has always been embedded in our species. One may wonder the reason for writing, is it the euphoria of knowing that one can create worlds out of thin air, or perhaps it is the desire to immortalise oneself on paper? This mysterious desire to pen one’s thoughts, this desire to communicate words the pages on which history is written. An individual has a cosmos inside their minds, a universe filled with hopes, fears and experiences. Writing gives these microcosms a physical form. Some write for solace, to gain comfort from their own words, some write for fame, to gain recognition in worlds beyond, some write for others, to throw light on issues which the world is blind towards.

Whatever may be the purpose, but it is undeniable that writing propels one’s thoughts into the realm of the living.

*Free Lance Writer based in New Delhi E-mail: sudarshanajha@gmail.com
The words fly out of the minds of writers onto the paper, making an ecosystem of wondrous thoughts. Writing is the most powerful of weapons; one can silence the voice of the masses, the mind cannot be quelled. The mind desires to be expressed; writing is an instrument through which people from divergent walks of life come together; writing is an art which enables the brain to express itself. The writing evokes emotion, and writing empowers the common man. This noble art is available to all those who seek it. The scripts tell us a story- a story from the past, a reminiscence of the present and plea of those who were pushed beneath the foot of power-hungry.

Words on paper, stone or even leaf display a tale of glorious past of kings and queens, they show a warfront filled with voiceless individuals who were slain for the greatness of those kings and queens. Writings about the beautiful lives of aristocracy empower the common man to read between the lines of history about the plight of the poor. These ancient texts have the power to convey the emotion which was in the mind of one who was writing. One can close one’s eyes and open one's minds to the vision of authors and writers of the past. Words are not merely physical manifestations of thought on paper. Words are powerful ‘mantras’ which evoke emotions, feelings and minds of those reading. This unassumingly powerful weapon is seldom utilised by the masses.

It is undeniable that this sword can be wielded by any person who dares to. This sword can be used to protect or to pounder. This weapon can be a saviour or a destroyer. A writer can create worlds or be the cause of the destruction of one. Authors give themselves too little credit. Writing is simply not limited to books and paper; words of a powerful creator can etch themselves on the minds of the masses. Writing is an instrument which can dampen rage of people or amplify the fire in the hearts of people.

For many, writing is a form of therapy. During times of peril, many find solace in the blankness of paper. Writing helps a person create a safe place of their own. Writing gives many an outlet for all their bottled emotions. The mind and its thoughts are a stream of feelings which cascade onto paper. Writing rejuvenates a battered mind and clears the ‘emotional gunk’ out of the brain, ensuring a free flow of emotion and thought. Writing can be a path towards self-discovery for people.

Writing is perhaps the only way for many souls to continue living in this world of the living, even after passing away. A stranger’s tale can be close to the heart of many. Writing connects us as a species. Writing binds our loosely defined world. It does not have any boundaries, words recognise no lines on the map, nor are they hindered by language barriers. Words are potent manifestations of thought which exist in and around us. The realm of written words is a strange one. A single word can hold as much power as an ancient, lengthy text. A small phrase can energise the masses, lead revolutions and free nations. ‘Ahimsa’ is a single word; however, its significance is worlds beyond our imagination.
Writing tells the author a story, a story about their self, a tale of what they see, a map of the society and their soul. Some write for others; some feel pleasure in evoking emotion in others. Some feel great satisfaction in creating an otherworldly experience for those who read their works. My mind is etched with words of great people who lived before me; my mind is a vessel for knowledge that writers wish to fill.

I write for no one. I let my words write for me. I let my subconscious hold onto the reigns of my mind. My words are nor mine, but are merely an instrument for my mind; my words give form to my incoherent thoughts. I am a selfish person, for my words are just for me. I write for everyone, for I know that I am connected to every being on this planet, I am a part of their subconscious as they are of mine, and I understand that the need to separate myself from others no longer exists. I open my mind’s eye to look beyond what is reality and write about what I see in the universe. I write about worlds which live in my mind; I write to quell my fears, I write for my world, both physical and emotional. My words are never mine; my words belong to the universe; I am merely borrowing them. I try to speak the language of the wind. I write for authors, singers, peddlers, criminals. I write for all those who care enough to read my words. I write for those who are invisible. I write to show the beauty of the mind.

For me, writing is an escape from my mind. I write to rid myself of thoughts which plague my conscience. Albeit I am not that great at it and have a long way to go; writing is my art. My words are my songs. Although sometimes I am terrible at it, writing is a passion of mine. I love the feeling of words flying out of my brain onto the paper when my words paint the blank paper into a thousand colours. I paint my world with words filled with emotion and thought. I write for the world of living and dead.

An unfortunate incident which displays the power of words is the one which occurred during the Second World War. ‘Mokusatsu’, said the man. Little did he know at that time that his words were going to modify the course world by its catastrophic outcome. It was July of 1945. The second world war was going on full swing. Leaders from the US, the United Kingdom, Russia and China had given an ultimatum to Japan that would end the Second World War. They said that should Japan negatively respond; the result would be ‘prompt and utter destruction’. According to the US National Security Administration (NSA), reporters asked Japan’s prime minister at the time, Kantaro Suzuki, how he intended to respond, which he replied in Japanese, mokusatsu. The word mokusatsu is composed of two different characters. Moku symbolises ‘silent’ and satsu is ‘kill’. The prime minister had used that word many times previously and intended it to mean “no comment” However; foreign media interpreted it as ‘treat with silent contempt’ or ‘take into account’ (to ignore), as the categorical rejection by the Prime Minister. The Americans were annoyed by the
apparently arrogant tone in the Japanese prime minister’s translated response. International news agencies reported to the world that in the eyes of the Japanese government, the ultimatum was ‘not worthy of comment.’ The atomic bomb was launched on Hiroshima 10 days later. We all know the delirious aftermath.

The beautiful phrase ‘Inqilab Zindabad’ or ‘long live the revolution’, was coined by Urdu poet and freedom fighter Hasrat Mohani in 1921, and it transformed itself into the principal slogan of millions who marched under Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership to demand the end to colonial rule. Books and newspapers such as ‘Kesari’ enabled authors and freedom fighters to spread their word and ideology pan India. It was the words and writings of authors which enabled out the nation to orchestrate the freedom struggle.

‘A Madman’s Diary’ by Lu Hsun (also written as Lu Xun) is a wondrous example of how our words impact the world. It was one of the few short stories in China doing the rounds almost a hundred years ago in 1919. The powerful narrative affected the whole population of China. It triggered a gush of morality and people stopped the age-old custom of having human flesh. Thus, the course of Chinese history changed forever under the influence of words which no force could have accomplished.