

AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH RHETORIC AND PROSODY

For Graduate and Post-Graduate
[English] Courses

Revised and Enlarged Edition

Dr. Kalyan Pandey

M.A. in English (Double) PGDTE. (CIEFL)
M.Phil. (Linguistics), Ph. D. (Literature)
M.A. (Linguistics), M.A. (Edu) ; M.A (Political Science)

in association with

Emily Pandey

M.A. (Gold Medalist), M. Phil. Ph.D (Scholar)
Lecturer in English
U.N. Post Graduate (auto)
College of Science and Technology
Adaspur, Cuttack, Odisha



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PREFACE

Rhetoric is a linguistic art, aiming at persuading and influencing people. In literature it is used to decorate language and to make it impressive and effective. It is concerned with the body of principles and theory having to do with the presentation of facts and ideas in clear, convincing and attractive language. Prosody is the grammar of versification. It deals with the rules of rhythm and rhyme in poetry. It may be designated as the mechanism of poetry. It examines and explains the technical aspects of versification. Rhetoric helps us express ideas effectively, and prosody enables us to understand poetry and explicate it critically. Students of literature ought to acquire sound knowledge of Rhetoric and Prosody in order to understand and enjoy literature.

The book has been carefully designed for students at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. It contains a detailed discussion on English rhetoric and prosody. The figures of speech and the prosodical features have been adequately defined and elaborately explained. The rules related to scansion have been analyzed and presented in very simple and lucid language so that students for whom it is intended may scan passages themselves. The methodical preparation of this treatise will enable them to explain the figures of speech and prosodical problems at ease. The book contains specimens of model answers on both *rhetoric* and *prosody* which have been appended to the end of each of the topic with the aim that students test their knowledge on the subject.

My humble effort to write this book owes its origin to my teachers Prof. M.N. Sinha of K.N. College, Berhampore, Prof. S.V. Parasher of Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, who was my M.Phil (Linguistics) research supervisor and Prof. G.S. Banerjee of North Bengal University, my Ph.D. (Literature) research supervisor.

I cannot deny my wife's spontaneous cooperation and valuable suggestions in making the manuscript of the volume ready for publication.

I record my indebtedness to many a scholar and teacher whose valuable suggestions have enriched this volume with elaborate discussion, adequate illustrations and easy but scholarly analysis of each of the topics related to English rhetoric and prosody.

Very greatly I am grateful to Sri Sandeep Nayak, the sole guardian of *Granthatirtha*, Kolkata, who continues to bring the series of my books out with perennial pleasure. Sujit Kumar Misra, Pulak Das and Bapi Dey who have neatly composed the manuscript and Sri Amit Saha, Kolkata, who has attractively designed the page setting of the book deserve great appreciation.

Dr. Kalyan Pandey
Emily Pandey

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RHETORIC

INTRODUCTION

The word '*rhetoric*', derived from the Greek word *rhetor* which means a public speaker is used to refer to the art of the orator or the art of persuasive public speaking. It aims at teaching one how to speak in a language designed to persuade or impress others. It comprehends the whole art of elegant and effective composition. Rhetorical figure is the figure or speech, which refers to '*a device for extending the semantic meaning of a word or a group of words to achieve a particular effect*'. Rhetoric can be defined as *the system and study of stylistic devices of formal speech*. It is synonymous with '*figurative language*', meaning the use of figure of speech to heighten the effect of a statement or description.

Rhetoric denotes the body of principles and theory, which has to do with the presentation of facts and ideas in clear, convincing and attractive language. The traditional aim of rhetoric, according to Corax, the actual founder of rhetoric, was to give effectiveness to public speech. In the opinion of Aristotle, rhetoric was a manner of effectively organizing material for the presentation of truth, for an appeal to the intellect through speech.

The rhetorical devices change the literal meaning of words to make the interpretation fresher and produce a stimulating effect, and widen extensively the reference of a word or expression. It also decorates the language that makes it more effective and impressive.

However, *rhetoric* is distinguished from *grammar*. Grammar refers to generalized statements of regularities and irregularities found in language. It attempts to provide universally valid rules to show how a language ought to be spoken or written and records actual usage and formulates the rules whereby sentence are generated, and understood. Rhetoric teaches how to beautify language and make it effective. It intends to enhance the effectiveness of language on the mind of those to whom it is addressed. It is rhetoric, which lays down the conditions essential for effective composition. *Grammar* aims at correctness and accuracy of language and, on the other hand, rhetoric aims at the beauty of language and effective presentation of ideas in much impressive language.

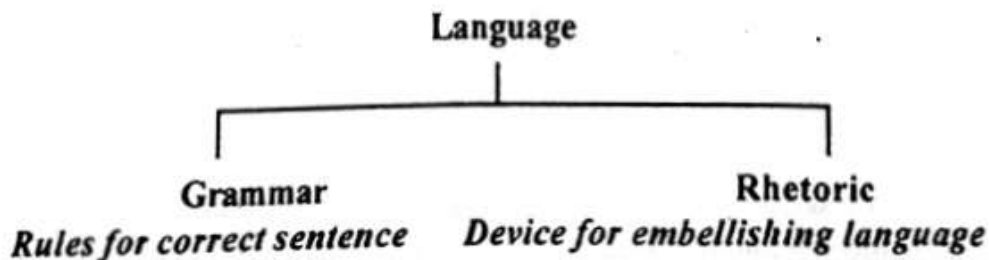
Rhetorical devices help a writer to decorate, beautify and polish his style as it lends charm to language, by making it more precise. It facilitates easy expression and deepens the significance of language. Poetic flow is achieved through rhetorical devices.

Rhetoric is an art, aiming at embellishing speaking and writing. It brings grace and elegance to style and polishes and sweetens the language. Locke defines rhetoric as the '*art of speaking with propriety, elegance and force*'. It has much to do with a good and graceful composition. We can describe rhetoric not only as the art of speaking and writing but also as the art of a graceful composition.

It has been pointed out at the beginning of this discussion, the distinctions between rhetoric and grammar. But, we should remember that both rhetoric and grammar are related to each other. They determine the rules of composition. Bain writes: '*The order of words belongs partly to grammar and partly to rhetoric*'. In the art of good and graceful composition, both are interdependent.

Rhetoric cannot function without grammar, for it is grammar that enables us to learn sentence construction, orthoepy (pronunciation), orthography (spelling), punctuation, etc., which are indispensable for correct writing of sentences. Grammar fails to add grace and elegance to language if we do not have sound knowledge of rhetoric. It is rhetoric that teaches us how to make our style impressive and attractive. It aims at enhancing the effect of literary composition by decorating it with felicitous and impressive expressions.

The rules of grammar obviously enable us to write sentences correctly and rhetorical devices to sweeten, polish and embellish them and also make them impressive and effective. When we say: '*She is a beautiful flower*', the idea about the beauty of the girl is made more impressive and attractive by the expression '*a beautiful flower*'. The *metaphoric* expression reveals the fact that the '*flower*' is the symbol of beauty and subsequently, the comparison of the girl's beauty with that of the '*flower*' idealizes the girl's beauty. Thus, we see that rhetoric decorates, language makes it impressive and attractive and also adds grace to language, and it embellishes style:



FIGURES OF SPEECH

The word *figure* is derived from the Latin word *figura* meaning the external form or shape of an object and its secondary meaning is something remarkable. A figure of speech is a remarkable way of saying something. It is a form of expression which intentionally deviates from the plain and

ordinary mode of speech for the sake of greater and more planning effect. Bain observes that "a figure of speech is a deviation from plain and ordinary way of speaking for the sake of greater effect." It is thus a deviation from the standard or literal meaning, usage and word order. Nichol expresses the identical view that figures imply words or phrases that "are used in a sense different from that which is generally assigned to them".

Deviation from the plain and straightforward statement is the basis of the figurative language. When we say that *Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee is the Royal Bengal Tiger*, we have the expression not in the literal sense but in the figurative sense of the "strong and masculine personality." We described life as "a walking shadow" to mean that life is unreal, and human life as "a tale told by an idiot" to mean the meaninglessness of life. When we say that "*Brutas is an honourable man*" we intend to convey a sense that he is a dishonourable man. Again we tend to invert the usual grammatical order of words in the sentences like *Much have I seen and known* to secure rhetorical effect. A figure of speech may thus be described as the rich and ornamental dress in which an idea is clothed for the sake making it gorgeous, impressive and remarkable.

It is the figure of speech which helps us to express our ideas in such a way as to sway the feelings and emotions of the hearers or readers. To present an ordinary idea in an impressive, attractive, and graceful way to others is possible only through a *figure of speech*. When we say that "*Chaucer is the father of English poetry*", it is a figurative language, and it means that as a father gives birth to a child, so Chaucer brings forth a new form of poetry in the English language and thereby creates in consonance with English poetic tradition, a new poetic horizon, which marks a deviation from the Anglo-Saxon and middle English poetic tradition. This is an instance of metaphoric expression, and the expression used here is figurative.

Figurative language refers to a style of employing *figures*, used to heighten the effect of a statement and also to decorate mundane languages. We use the figurative statement "*Time is gold*" to mean that time has great value in life. This metaphoric statement stresses the value of time. Figures of speech decorate the language and make ideas impressive, attractive and accurate. Besides, they stimulate the readers' mind by awakening fresh associations. They also lend charm and grace to the statement which would have been trite and monotonous without the rhetorical ornaments.

Figurative language is generally used by orators and powerful writers whose aim is to impress people or sway their opinions. They often do it deliberately and are often branded as pompous orators and speakers, as the art of speaking or writing inflated language is not in vogue today. A figure of speech is the result of the writer's deliberate departure from usual usage to gain strength and freshness of expressions. These lines from D.G. Rossetti are an illustration.

**Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.**

The figurative language sometimes proves to be difficult, complicated and obscure. Ordinary readers often fail to understand it. The use of the figurative language or rhetorical devices makes an ordinary statement or idea complicated and obscure, but it cannot be denied that the use of the figures of speech make our ideas clear, exact, impressive and attractive. The effect that a writer or a speaker aims at producing upon the readers or the hearers can alone be achieved through the figurative language.

CLASSIFICATION OF FIGURES OF SPEECH

Figures of speech which serve to embellish the language and make the ideas impressive and attractive are classified in the following way.

- (i) Figures based on similarity,
(1) *Simile*, (2) *Metaphor*, (3) *Fable*, (4) *Allegory*, (5) *Parable*
- (ii) Figures based on Association,
(1) *Metonymy*, (2) *Synecdoche*, (3) *Transferred Epithet or Hypallage*, (4) *Allusion*
- (iii) Figures based on Difference or contrast,
(1) *Antithesis*, (2) *Epigram*, (3) *Oxymoron*, (4) *Paradox*, (5) *Climax*, (6) *Anti-Climax*, (7) *Condensed Sentence*
- (iv) Figures based on Imagination,
(1) *Personification*, (2) *Personal Metaphor*, (3) *Pathetic Falacy*, (4) *Hyperbole*, (5) *Apostrophe*, (6) *Vision*
- (v) Figures based on Indirectness,
(1) *Innuendo*, (2) *Irony*, (3) *Sarcasm*, (4) *Periphrasis or Circumlocution*, (5) *Euphemism*, (6) *Meiosis or Understatement*, (7) *Litotes*
- (vi) Figures based on Sound,
(1) *Pun*, (2) *Alliteration*, (3) *Onomatopoeia*
- (vii) Figures based on Construction,
(1) *Zeugma*, (2) *Chiasmus*, (3) *Hendiadys*, (4) *Hyperbaton or Inversion*, (5) *Exclamation*, (6) *Interrogation*, (7) *Asyndeton*, (8) *Polysyndeton*, (9) *Epistrophe or Antistrophe*, (11) *Palilogy*, (12) *Paraleipsis*, (13) *Tautology*, (14) *Aposiopesis*, (15) *Anacoluthon*, (16) *Pleonasm*, (17) *Prolepsis* (18) *Syllepsis* (19) *Ellipsis*, (20) *Epanadiplosis*, (21) *Epanados*, (22) *Epanalepsis*, (23) *Epanorthosis*, (24) *Catachresis*, (25) *Synesis* (26) *Ornamental Epithet*, (27) *Enallage*.

Figurative language is based on figures of speech. It is the result of the writer's deliberate departure from usual word usage to gain strength and freshness of expression. The classes of figures are used by the writer to decorate the language and to makes his ideas impressive and attractive and to produce desired effect upon the readers.

CHAPTER - I

FIGURES BASED ON SIMILARITY

Similarity is the basis of comparison. We tend to compare one thing to another of different natures or with another of the same nature when we find likeness between them. This idea may be illustrated by the following example: *The tree looks like a mango tree*. This is a comparison between the two trees. This comparison is literal and not figurative because the two things which have been compared on the basis of likeness belong to the same species. Since our point of discussion is the figurative comparison, we must compare two things or objects of different natures or classes in order to bring out the similarity or likeness between them. This comparison between two different things or ideas, which is based on similarity, analogy, agreement or likeness. Thus the figurative comparison is distinguished from the literal comparison. In the figurative comparison between two things of the different classes or species are compared while in the literal comparison two things of the same class or species are involved.

Figures based on similarity aim at making a statement impressive and attractive by way of a comparison between two different things or objects in order to bring out the point of similarity between them. Thus in the example "*The child is as meek as the lamb*", an impressive and effective statement, is made by an explicit comparison between *child* and *lamb*, which are two different things, to reveal meekness which is the point of similarity between them. The unreality of life is brought out by an explicit comparison between *life* and *dream* in the statement, *Life is a dream*. Here *life* and *dream* are two dissimilar objects.

This distinction between the two types of comparison is illustrated below:
(i) *Rabindranath is as great as Shakespeare*. This is an example of the literal comparison because the comparison between Rabindranath and Shakespeare is literal as they belong to the same species. (ii) *The women looks like a witch*. This is a figurative comparison. The comparison is between *Woman* and *witch* which are two unallied things or objects. This comparison conforms to the definition of the *figurative comparison*. Similarly, the expression *Aristotle is the storehouse of knowledge* contains a perfectly figurative comparison between two unallied objects. *Aristotle* is a person while *storehouse* is an inanimate object. The comparison is here made between two objects which are different from each other. Thus we