INTRODUCTION
The world of proverbs is a vast and magnificent one and makes one pause for breath. There is nothing in the literature of the ages quite like it. Language grows limp as one attempts to do justice to the erudition and the versatility demanded to body out this teeming microcosm; to the intellect that marshalled all this material and firmly commanded it, of once in its entirety and in its intricacy, to the powers of expression that never fell short of the most diverse and severe demands; to the imaginative resources equal to the innumerable feats demanded by the whole design. The unknown makers of the proverbs had undoubted gifts for observation and insight into character, for parody and satire, for shining poetry and robust comedy, for hewing out a colossus and carving a cherrystone.

As Isaac A'lgarell says, "originating in various these memorials of manners, of events, and of modes of thinking, for historical as well as for moral purposes, still retain a strong hold on our attention. The collected knowledge of successive ages, and of different people, must always enter into some part of our own! Truth and nature can never be obsolete.

Proverbs embrace the wide sphere of human existence, they take all the colours of life, they are often exquisite strokes of genius, they delight by their airy sarcasm
or their caustic satire, the luxuriance of their humour, the
playfulness of their turn, and even by the elegance of their
imagery, and the tenderness of their sentiment. They give
a deep insight into domestic life, and open for us the heart
of man, in all the various states which he may occupy — 1.

It is strange but true — that despite their universality, proverbs have not always been popular. Lord
Chesterfield (1694-1773) observed, "a man of fashion never
has recourse to proverbs and vulgar aphorisms". Lord
Chesterfield, however, seems to be ignorant of the fact that
'man of fashion' in the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I and
Charles II were great collectors of proverbs and used them
not only in their conversation but also in their diplomatic
and administrative correspondence. These 'fragments of
wisdom' found full currency in fashionable, high society
circles.

Most of the proverbs that the men of fashion used
with grace had lowly origins. They were composed by people
long forgotten — sunk into oblivion. The composers of
proverbs were rude forefathers who died unwept, unhonoured
and unsung. The process of creating proverbs was not a
conscious one — they sprang on the spur of the moment and
gained a wide currency. They remained in the mouth of the
people because they were suited to their capacities and their
humour. They are easily remembered and easily applied.
They reflected the philosophy of the common people. The
proverbs of the market and the street are true to nature

1. Isaac D'Israeli - *Curiosities of Literature* ed. Everett
and provide a valuable clue to the understanding of people. The proverbs of various nations also show similarities. As we survey mankind from China to Peru through the telescope of proverbs we discover that the people in Athens and in Rome were not really and essentially different from the people in London and in Paris.

It has been estimated that there are about twenty thousand proverbs among the nations of Europe. The study of English proverbs is interconnected with the study of proverbs amongst other European nations. We find that proverbs came before the existence of books. The Spaniards date the origin of their proverbs from the sayings of old women by the fireside - they are in crude, common idiom. Many proverbs are found in early Scandinavian religious songs in honour of Odin. It is certain that in ancient days proverbs served as a repository of religious lessons. They were the unwritten language of morality. They were handed down from age to age - from generation to generation. The name of the originator of the saying would be forgotten - but the idea itself was enshrined in the hearts of the people and would take the shape of a proverb by which men learnt to think and speak. They gained a certain authority which no man might negate. They began to be used extensively. In Greece and Rome the proverbs often served as a vehicle of dramatic criticism. Collections of proverbs saw the light of the day. A collection was compiled as early as the days of Emperor Hadrian 117-138 AD.
sometimes, they were overused. When Sancho Panza began a tale, Don Quixote said, "Leave off your proverbs, go on with your story" Sancho replied, "All tales must begin in this way". So this retorted Don Quixote, "The whole race of Fanzas came into the world with their palanques - stuffed with proverbs". Although, Don Quixote appears to be critical of Sancho, yet he concedes, "I believe there is no proverb but what is true; they are all so many sentences and maxims drawn from experience, the universal mother of sciences; for instance that saying, "That where one door shuts, another opens". Thus, fortune, that last night deceived us with the false prospect of an adventure, this morning offers us a real one to make us amends; ...". There are historical reasons why Cervantes' Don Quixote is full of proverbs. Walton says, "The humanistic dream of a self-sufficient world looked backwards towards a mythical 'Golden Age' and was accompanied by an admiration for the spontaneous and the primitive. It was elaborated by Rousseau in his conception of the 'noble savage' and still haunts the minds of men today. Erasmus had called attention to the importance of human wisdom enshrined in popular proverbs, and to the fact that Christ had used the proverb as his favourite method of ethical teaching. It is a characteristic feature of the Spanish Renaissance that the proverb should play so large a part in Don Quixote.

As Beatrice K. White says, 'Of the national groups the Spanish is perhaps the most remarkable. In Spain almost everything has its proverb. Many as they are numerous, these proverbs are full of keen sense and knowledge of human nature and rich in grave, dry Spanish humour. The Spaniard is no doubt naturally sententious, but the rich, sonorous castilian should not be overlooked and among them must be reckoned its wealth in rhymes. The Basque proverbs from which several of the Spanish are obviously derived are of much the same character and in both the resemblance to the proverbs of the east is very distinct. The Italian proverbs are more remarkable for wit than for humour; in the French, on the other hand, there is little or none of that brilliant wit and epigrammatic neatness of expression which distinguish French literature. But this is only what might be expected. French wit is the product of French culture, and proverbs are natural productions. In Europe, next to Spain, the region the watered by lower Elbe is probably the richest in proverbs. Compared with other European groups the Celtic proverbs appear scanty. Among the oriental proverbs the Arabic hold the first place in respect of quality and perhaps of quantity, but the Persian and Indian are also excellent, and in the Turkish, together with abundant worldly shrewdness, there is sometimes a vein of poetry that is very striking. The Turkish 'God makes a nest for the blind bird' is a close rival to the English 'God tempests the wind to the shorn lamb'.

Proverbs from other nations throw light on many an English proverb. Hence it is necessary to have knowledge of foreign proverbs to understand many English proverbs. Often an English proverb may find its equivalent in other languages. In Europe this may result from the international currency of Latin proverbs in the Middle Ages. An example here is the proverb known in English as "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush". This originated in medieval Latin, plus valet in manibus avis unica fronde dusbus. Variants of it are found in Romanian, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, German and Icelandic. Many biblical proverbs have parallels in ancient Greece. 'A soft answer turneth away wrath' (Prov. xiv. 1) was known to Aeschylus as well as to Solomon and 'Physician, heal thyself' (Luke, iv. 23) was also known to the Greeks. The well-known proverb, 'To carry coals to New Castle' appears to be local but is actually borrowed. Among the Persian: in the Bosan of Sadi we get 'To carry pepper to Hindustan'; and among the Hebrews, 'To carry oil to the City of Olives'.

Disraeli says, "The resemblance of certain proverbs in different nations, must, however, be often ascribed to the identity of human nature; similar situations and similar objects have unquestionably made men think and act and express themselves alike. All nations are parallels of each other! Hence, all paronomasiographers, or collector of proverbs, complain of the difficulty of separating their own national proverbs from those which had crept into the language from others, particularly when nations have held much intercourse.
together. We have a copious collection of Scottish proverbs by selly, but this learned man was fortified at discovering that many which he had long believed to have been genuinely Scottish, were not only English, but French, Italian, Spanish, Latin and Greek ones; many of his Scottish proverbs are almost literally expressed among the fragments of remote antiquity. It would have surprised him further had he been aware that his creed originals were themselves but copies 1.

We have now to consider the rise of the popularity of proverbs and their subsequent decline. The zenith of popularity was reached in the Elizabethan age in England. Proverbs were used by men of fashion, writers and common people alike. Proverbs were like arrows in the quivers of scholars and happy was the man who had his mind full of them. The whirligig of time ushered in a decline which continued till the present day—though there is some evidence that the popularity graph is showing a rise.

Proverbs sprang from the hearts of unknown persons and as a part of practical wisdom were spread from mouth to mouth and from generation to generation. There was a spurt in their use with the spread of education. An eighth century letter preserved in England shows that proverbs were used in those days. The writer uses an Anglo-Saxon proverb which can be translated thus, 'A coward after misses glory in some high enterprise; therefore he dies alone'. In modern parlance this will be equivalent to 'Delays are dangerous'.

1. Isaac D'Irseaeli op. cit., pp. 266-7.
Proverbs in embryonic form can be found in some early Anglo-Saxon verse. These proverbs enshrined a lot of common sense and practical wisdom. Later texts such as Ancreion (thirteenth century) taught moral lessons through proverbs. A lot of proverbs also came with the writings of the Greeks and Romans. These writings were assiduously studied in the monasteries of England. Literary writings of other countries were also translated and their proverbs also became popular.

The development of the art of rhetoric stimulated the study of proverbs and several early collections appeared. Proverbs were used to point a moral and adorn a tale. They were also used as a part of the teaching curriculum.

By the middle of the fourteenth century the level of learning had risen high and a lot of proverbs filtered in. The works of Chaucer, Gower, Langland and so on contain a lot of proverbs, maxims, proverbial expressions. For example, Chaucer in his tale of Felibeus promises his listeners 'a moral tale virtuous', with 'more of proverbs that you had heard before'. Some of the sayings of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate and others acquired the status of a proverb. For example, A man shall win us best by flattery (Chaucer); Pride is the cause of all woe (Gower); Love is more than great riches (Lydgate).

Throughout the fifteenth century the number of proverbs went on increasing, the contributors being mainly the prophets of Greece, Rome, France, Germany and the wise men...
of England herself. A collection of proverbs, *Lytten and Paynge of the Philosopherr*, translated from the French, appeared as the first dated book from the printing press of William Caxton. People became proverb loving and proverb conscious. The trend continued in the next century. People began to use on a large scale not only what was given to them in literature but also made practical maxims of their daily life. As we have seen, the makers of the proverbs were most unknown. Proverbs frequently found a place in the morality plays of those times and in the dramas of the Tudor age. With the spread of education, many a Latin proverb became part of the mental equipment of the scholars. An increasing number of men completed their education by travel on the Continent. They brought with them a large number of proverbs which found ready acceptance and wide circulation. Grammar and phrase books were made by foreign settlers who also made translations of their native works into English. In 1545, a *Dialogue Containing Proverbs* was published by John Heywood. It was an immediate success and ran through six editions by 1598. Books on the art of rhetoric also appeared by this time. They also used proverbs and sayings of the people, and the expression used by writers were so often repeated by the people that they rose to the status of proverbs.

By the time, Queen Elizabeth came on the throne, the proverbs had come into universal use. Scholars, with courtiers, authors, men of fashion - all began to speak and write in proverbs. Many new proverbs were invented. Many of them are
still used — many of them must have been long forgotten.

Lyly and his fellow metaphysicians gave a fillip to the creation and use of proverbs. Ever, proverb collection contains some proverb created by Lyly, for example, *trust on the dead and not in gay speaking*. There were others also who contributed to proverb creation.

The age of Elizabeth is called the golden age of English history. It unleashed a great deal of creative energy in practically all fields including literature. G.M. Trevelyan says, "after the economic and religious unrest of the middle Tudor period, followed by the golden age of England, golden ages are not all of gold, and they never last long. But Shakespeare chanced upon the best time and country in which to live, in order to exercise with least distraction and most encouragement, the highest faculties of man. The forest, the field and the city were there in perfection, and all three are needed to perfect the poet. His countrymen, not yet cramped to the service of machines, were craftsmen and creators of will ... the Elizabethan English were in love with life, not with some theoretic shadow of life. Large classes freed as never before from poverty, felt the upspring of the spirit and expressed it in wit, music and song. The English language had touched its moment of fullest beauty and power. Peace and order at last prevailed in the land, ... The Renaissance, that had known its spring time long ago in its native Italy, where biting winters now nipped it, came late to its glorious summer in this northern
In the days of Erasmus, the *renaissance in England had been confined to scholars and to the King's Court. In Shakespeare's day it had in some sort reached the people*.

Proverbs were freely in use then, and many authors made full use of them. The members of the public were not averse to using them. In 1601, as ... Dr. Thomas Jones delivered a speech thus:

"It is now my chance to speak something, and that without naming or saving. I think this law is a good law; even reckoning makes long friends; as far goes the Penny as the Penny's Pester ... Pay the reckoning over eight, and you shall not be troubled in the morning. If ready money be hensured Public, let every man cut his coat according to his cloth. When his old suit is in the Ward, let him stay till that his money bring a new suit in the increase. Therefore, I think the law to be good, and I wish it a good Passage."

Michael Drayton (1563-1631) wrote a poem *Love's Proverbs*, in proverbs. It contains proverbs such as, "in love there is no lack", "fair words make fools; fortune assists the boldest", "Tasty men never wanted Woe", "Labour is light where love both pay" and so on. Other men of letters were not averse to making copious use of proverbs. Common men

---

were also fond of collecting proverbs and keeping them in their note books. Proverbs were quoted as they were, but they were sometimes clothed in more orate language to give emphasis to the argument. Proverbs were also used sometimes as book titles, for example, Measure for Measure, East Indi. Many of the characters of Shakespeare make use of proverbs that seem to be a part of their background. The language of Shakespeare's characters reflects the language prevalent at that time. Shakespeare was, however, not only using proverbs - he was also making proverbs. Any collection of proverbs will have to include many Shakespearean expressions that have entered the English language and have become an integral part of it. Shakespeare has become the most quotable author of the English language.

Some pronouncements of Ben Jonson also received the status of proverbs after some time, for example, taught that delight is sin, better be dust than superstitious, what excellent fools religion makes of men, and so on. However, he hints that in speech proverbs must not be used indiscriminately. In every man in his humour, downright is shown as having "not so much as a good phrase in his belly, but all old iron and rusty proverbs". Jonson thought that a man of standing should not have much to do with proverbs. It is obvious that the 'rare Ben Jonson' was pointing to the shape of things to come. With the advent of the eighteenth century the use of proverbs as a literary fashion passed out. Proverbs and allied expressions remained as a part of
language, however, though their use was restricted, people had reached a higher level of learning and began to make more use of speculative instruments. A richer language pursued higher levels of thought and so flashing quotations and wisdom in a nutshell lost much of their appeal. The new wave of thought is represented by Rotherwell in his introduction to 'understand: English proverbs'. He says,

"A man whose mind has been enlarged by education, and who has a complete mastery over the riches of his own language, expresses his ideas in his own words; and when he refers to anything beyond the matter under his view, glances towards an abstract principle. A vulgar man, on the other hand, uses those proverbial forms which tradition and daily use have made familiar to him; and when he makes a remark which needs confirmation, he cloaks it by a proverb".

Macaulay in his essay on Milton remarked, "As civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines". We may not fully agree with Macaulay but there is a core of truth in the statement if we put 'proverb' in place of poetry. The use of proverbs declined steeply in the first half of the eighteenth century. In order to save the proverbs from falling a prey to utter forgetfulness, many collections of proverbs appeared. Despite this activity, the contemporary literary style tended to eschew their use. They began to be regarded as common places to be displayed in the drawing room conversation. To repeat a proverb began to be considered an act of folly, vide, The wise make proverbs and fools repeat them;
and proverbs lie on the lip of fools. We have already seen how the noble Lord Chesterfield castigated them. Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) was another severe critic. He says,

The reader must learn by all means to distinguish between proverbs and those polite speeches which beautify conversation; for, as to the former, I utterly reject them out of all ingenious discourse. I acknowledge, indeed, that there may possibly be found in this treatise a few sayings, among so great a number of smart turn of wit and humour as I have produced, which have a proverbial air; however, I hope it will be considered that even these were not originally proverbs, but the genuine productions of superior wits, to embellish and support conversation; whence, with great impropriety as well as plagiarism (if you will forgive a hard word), they have most injuriously been transferred into proverbial maxims; and therefore, in justice, ought to be resumed out of vulgar hands, to adorn the drawing-rooms of princes both male and female, the levees of great ministers, as well as the toilet and tea-table of the ladies. ¹

(Declamations and ingenious conversation).

Thomas Fuller (1608–1691) had earlier warned that proverbs are to be accounted only as a sauce to relish the meat with and that to apply them wrongly is 'abominably foppish, ridiculous and nauseous'. This was also the eighteenth century view.

Later experience, however, shows that carping critics were merely tilting at windmills. Proverbs managed to survive and though not as frequently used as before, continued to grow in number. New coinages were made and some old ones rejuvened. Proverbs had become parts of the national heritage. They had grown roots in literature and traditional speech. It was difficult even for the sophisticated to steer clear of them. People often used them as they saved mental effort. It is easy to use a proverb as an abridgment to thought. They were universally understood so whenever people have a fit of laziness or are in a hurry, they can have recourse to their encapsulated wisdom.

The state of the proverbs in the nineteenth century is described by Janet Neselton as follows:

"In the nineteenth century, proverbs still occurred frequently in novels and in the writings of the Victorian novelists. Scott used them on principle, because he believed they were too good to be lost, and indeed this is true of many Scottish ones. Trollope used them in what we might call good journeyman fashion. He wrote quickly and his output was large. He did not turn aside to find more uncommon ways of expressing himself when there were clusters of good proverbs to his hand. But his proverbs are always pointed and relevant ... if we like Trollope now part of his charm goes if we deny him his proverbs ... . . The moralists used proverbs with all the sententiousness of the Middle Ages and none of their vividness. It was unfortunate that the pithy counsel of
the early preachers should later be made an excuse for so much long-windedness.

The proverbs attracted the attention of poets also. Keats is credited with the statement, 'A proverb is no proverb to you till life has illustrated it.' To him a proverb is meaningless unless tested on the touchstone of reality. It was Wordsworth who said 'The child is the father of the man' — a statement which is now a part of the galaxy of proverbs. He was no doubt thinking of Milton's lines,

'The childhood shoos the man, is morning shoos the day,'

— Paradise Regained IV, 220.

Proverbs are still being used in the present day by all sections of people. Modern writers do realize that a proverb has the power of illuminating a bare truth by a brilliant image. However, the writers do not use proverbs on the scale of Cervantes, Rabelais and Montaigne. Somerset Maugham in Of Human Bondage (1915, Vintage Books 1956) uses the following proverbs,

'A rolling stone gathers no moss' (p. 313)

'it's no good crying over spilt milk' (p. 412)

'I am a fish out of water' (p. 503)

Procrastination in the Thief of Time (p. 525)

... before you can say Jack Robinson (p. 733)

Again, in Christmas holiday (stranger in series), (M.Y. 
stanton Books, 1964), Heman uses the following proverbs,

- Absence makes the heart grow fonder (p. 28)
- Bouting about the bush (p. 85)
- Eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (p. 112)
- Building castles in the sand (p. 113)
- Mad as a hatter (p. 203)
- Please as much (p. 213)
- Accident will happen in the best regulated families (p. 214)

P.V.odehouse in Service with a Smile (Harmondsworth Penguin 
books, 1966 r.p.t) has the following:

- To leave no stone unturned (p. 16)
- Whose word is his bond (p. 33)
- The labourer is worthy of his hire (p. 74)
- Hell has no fury like a woman scorned (p. 75)
- A snake in the grass (p. 85)
- No fool like an old fool (p. 117)

George Bernard Shaw in Apple Cart (Harmondsworth, Penguin 
books, 1960 r.p.t) has the following among others:

- Punctuality is the politeness of kings (p. 49)
- Don't let us swap horses when crossing a stream (p. 53)
- Hit the nail on the head (p. 64)
- Vicar of Bray (p. 114)
Many other authors have similarly used a number of proverbs. Some have used proverbs as book titles, for example,

All is girt - (by G.K. Chesterton)

The prestigious magazine Readers' Digest includes a number of proverbs called from various nations in its pages. Examples are given below:

- Money is a good servant but a bad master
  (French Proverb, 1.1. January 1991)

- Marriage hath teeth, and his bite very hot
  (Jamaican Proverb, 1.2. February 1991)

- Sorey often gives a small thing a big shadow
  (Swedish Proverb, 1.3. March 1991)

- Two great walkers will not travel far together

All this indicates that there is renewed interest in proverbs in recent times. A considerable number of Dictionaries of Proverbs has appeared recently. Critical articles about them have also appeared. Though in these days of 'simple' English the use of proverbs is at a discount, yet there is a vital force in proverbs which 'ostenity will not willingly let die'.
The organization of this opening chapter may at first glance appear to be odd. The oddity arises from the fact that a section on stylistics has been tagged on to the section of definition and origin of proverbs. They may appear to be, as Dr. Johnson says about metaphysical poetry, 'the most heterogeneous ideas ... yoked by violence together. Further cogitation may, however, reveal a method in this 'madness'. Linguistics and its offshoot stylistics are comparative newcomers to the family of disciplines. Their acceptance in the fields of literary analysis and literary criticism is of a very recent origin. The long Cinderella like treatment meted out to stylistics has not made it very familiar to the discerning critics. Our aim therefore is to become acquainted with the general principles of stylistics before they are applied to the study of proverbs.
Section 1

on Stylistics

The concept of style is as old as the beginnings of literary thought in Europe and elsewhere. In Europe the concept appeared in connection with rhetorics rather than with poetics because style was regarded as a part of the technique of persuasion and oration. Ancient rhetoricians distinguished between ceremonial, political and forensic oratories and prescribed an appropriate occasion and an appropriate repertory of devices to each of them depending upon the nature of effect to be brought about. Aristotle in Greece and Quintilian in Rome and other ancient rhetoricians prescribed proper vocabulary, the right kind of syntax and the appropriate figures of speech to produce the particular kind of effect. Even Longinus, who essentially occupied himself with the moral and spiritual sources of the sublime is not free from the prescriptive tone of ancient rhetoricians. However, ancient rhetoric in its later phases of evolution enlarged its scope and drew into its domain historians and other prose writers. It was in the middle ages and the Renaissance that the rhetorical precept of style was applied to poetics. It influenced not only critical ideas but also the very composition of poetry
itself. The tradition of prescriptive criticism lingered almost into the eighteenth century. Prescriptive literary criticism has not been a central critical activity for nearly three hundred years.

In modern times, literary criticism does not prescribe do's and don'ts to poets. It does not dictate instructions to poets on how to write and much less on how to form a style. Rather, it is content to examine styles as they exist. In this respect, this literary critical method is parallel to the present day linguistic science which does not lay down rules for correct grammar, but on the contrary studies the underlying rules adhered to by an individual writer or a group of writers. As Graham Hough observes, "the aim is not to give laws for human utterance, but to understand the utterances that actually occur" 1.

Central to traditional rhetoric is the theory of distinction between matter and manner, between what is said and the way of saying it. This is often spoken of in a common place metaphor that style is the dress of thought. It implies that thought exists in a pre-verbal form which is given a shape by clothing it in language. This notion of style can be illustrated by the following passage from Dryden, the father of English literary criticism.

... the first happiness of the poets' imagination is properly invention, or finding of the thought, the second is fancy, or the variation, deriving or moulding of that thought, as the judgement represents it, proper to the subject, the third is elocution or the art of clothing or adorning that thought so found and varied in apt, significant and sounding words 2.
This theory emphasizes that language is the dress of thought and that style is often the cut and fashion of the dress. Dryden believes that language and style of a literary work are dictated, determined and moulded by the subject. This view is not very different from the neo-classic theory of genre-style relationship; the genre of creative writing determines the style. A tragedy, an epic, a pastoral poem — each has its own appropriate style.

During the romantic period, new expressive theories of creative writing came into being. Style came to be viewed not by the subject or genre but by the nature and personal tastes of the writer. Baudon's statement that style is the man epitomises the romantic view of style.

The current critical theories emphatically reject the distinction between matter and manner. Literary work is viewed today as an organic whole in which matter and manner, form and expression are merged into one harmonious artistic or creative expression. This doctrine which is essentially aesthetic and as such is related to literary art, is extended to non-literary utterances. Bloomfield emphasizes the linguistic hypothesis that formally different utterances differ in meaning:

Our fundamental assumption implies that each linguistic form has a constant and specific meaning. If the forms are phonemically different, we suppose that meanings are also different — for instance, that each one of a set of forms like quick, fast, swift, rapid, speedy, differs from all the others in some constant and conventional feature of meaning. We suppose, in short, that there are no synonyms.
Bloomfield's hypothesis precludes us from talking about different ways of expressing the same thought or meaning, but only of different thoughts or meanings. What then has become of the idea of style? It seems to have vanished. In this context, Ohman's views merit full quotation:

"... for if style does not have to do with ways of saying something, just as style in tennis has to do with ways of hitting a ball, is there anything at all which is worth naming 'style'? ..... The critic can talk about what the writer says, but talk about the style he cannot, for his neat identity—one thought, one form—allows no margin for individual narration, which is what we ordinarily mean by style. Style then becomes a useless hypothetical construct."

That is perhaps why modern critical schools shy away from using the word 'style'.

However, whatever might have happened to the word, the concept of style cannot just be wished away. Without using the term 'style', many schools of modern criticism have been active in stylistic analysis. I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism, New Criticism in America, the technique of 'explication' and 'close reading' of the text and 'deconstruction' are just different ways of talking about style. These style studies have made current the dogma that the nature of a whole work is embodied in and can be deduced from a small passage. From this viewpoint, a close study of the text or texture of any creative writing is a stylistic analysis. To modern critics, the word style has outlived its utility and is therefore outmoded and the
concept of style is ill-defined. So they are obliged to invent new terminologies, borrowing in the process, some techniques and methodology from the linguistic disciplines.

Meanwhile, linguistics as a discipline has come a long way from Bloomfield. Inspite of Bloomfieldian doctrine that there are no synonyms, many students of style could not help talking about different ways of saying the same thing. Charles Bally who coined the word 'Stylistics' and who is one of the founding fathers of modern stylistic studies, defines it "as the study of the 'affective' element in language - these affective elements being conceived as optional additions to an already determined meaning".

More recently, Hockett in his _Course in Modern Linguistics_ asserts that "two utterances in the same language which convey approximately the same information but which are different in their linguistic structure can be said to differ in style: _He came too soon_ and _He came prematurely_". Ullmann, one of the strong advocates of stylistic study of creative writing analyses French novelists and their style, in terms of effectiveness in expressing a given meaning. With the advent of Chomsky, the attitude of professional linguists to the problem of style has undergone a substantial modification. In the context of style studies; Chomsky's generative grammar may be interpreted as a hypothesis that the deep structure of sentences represents the universal semantic basis of all languages. Further, a
single semantic complex in any given language assumes
different but synonymous grammatical forms. The differences
among synonymous sentences is structural and may be described
as stylistic. Thus, linguists and students of style have
gradually reconciled with the view that style cannot be
dissociated from meaning. It is indeed an aspect of meaning —
the choice of the best verbal means to express a pre-determined
meaning or subject-matter.

Linguistic style-study technically known as stylistics
is different from the literary critics' approach to style.
The literary style study is subjective and impressionistic.
In the language of literary criticism, Milton's style is
'grand', Bacon's 'aphoristic', Browne's 'sonorous',
Addison's 'elegant' and Lamb's 'archaic'. The literary critic
is led to such vague descriptive terms, by mere subjective
impressions without any linguistic evidence to support them.
Such value judgements of style presuppose an objective anal-
ysis of language. But in the history of style-studies,
literary criticism came first. The linguistic approach is
a very recent one and is essentially a byproduct of the
emergence and growth of linguistics as an academic discipline.

Until the nineteenth century, language was studied
as a means to an end, which is the understanding and appreci-
ation of classical writers, logical formulation of thought
grammatically correct expression or just an intellectual accom-
plishment. The nineteenth century gave rise to evolutionary
biology, anthropology and such other systematic studies of knowledge. Conforming to the historical and evolutionary ideas that pervaded the nineteenth century intellectual ethos, language began to be studied in a scientific way and for the first time, for their own sake. The first step in this direction was the growth of comparative philology, in particular the comparative study of the Indo-European languages. William Jones discovered Sanskrit and the unmistakable verbal affinities not only with Latin and Greek but also with modern European languages. Franz Bopp advanced the new found science by his rigorously researched work on the conjugation of Sanskrit and its relation with Latin, Greek and the Germanic group of languages. Max Muller popularized these scientific approaches to language by publishing his Lessons on the Science of Languages in 1861. Formed on the biological models in vogue all these studies were determinedly evolutionary in their attitudes and methods. Languages are arranged and studied in terms of 'families' and words are said to have 'roots' and 'stems'. Terms like morphology and syntax (from taxonomy) were borrowed from biological sciences.

Though not directly connected with 'stylistics' the historical and comparative study of languages was the first great step in studying languages with scientific rigour and precision. The second great movement in the scientific study of languages came with Ferdinand de Saussure. His lectures on general linguistics delivered in the first decade of the present century constitute a revolutionary departure from
the old school of linguistic study. His celebrated *Cours de linguistique générale* contains in embryonic form most of the methods, nuances and sophistications of modern linguistics.

One of the main contributions of Saussure is his theory of absolute disjunction between *diachronic* and *synchronic* linguistics. Diachronic linguistics is historical-comparative study of languages. Synchronic linguistics is totally divorced from the origin and growth of language but occupies itself with the study of the actual state of a language as a complete and interdependent system of communication, actualized in daily life at any given point of time. Diachronic linguistics views all languages as surviving remains of some old fossils, lost or reconstructed. Synchronic linguistics considers every language and dialect a living organization susceptible to changes in its various functions and usages.

Another most significant contribution of Saussurian linguistics is his concept of dichotomy between *la langue* and *la parole*. *La langue* is the totality of the system of a language its sounds, its vocabulary, its sentence-types as they exist in dictionaries and grammar. The individual in a society cannot help inheriting it. His will or volition cannot change these unalterable facts of language. It is a total code and not an individual mode of communication. *La Parole* on the contrary, is the way in which *la langue* is used by a speaker or a writer in a given context. This
distinction, developed more by Bally, Saussure's pupil is important for stylistics, because "it contains the germ of the idea, is often appearing in discussions of style, that there is an impersonal norm of which style is the specialized or individual variant". 8

The primary concern of Saussure is the natural sphere of language namely the spoken language. He is interested in the variations and literary manifestations of creative writers. To him, the language of creative writing like poetry, drama or novel is detached from the living reality of the natural human speech. It was Bally who carried these ideas much farther into the realm of literary language. As we have seen, he is virtually the inventor of the term 'stylistics'. For Bally, stylistics is a study of expressive mechanisms and effects in all varieties of language, the creative writers' language is no exception. His stylistics is a study of all the ways in which Saussure's impersonal system la langue is converted into the stuff of living human utterance—including the utterance of the creative writer. His objective is to establish a general system of stylistic possibilities that could be applied to all kinds of literary work. Bally's method constitutes the corner stone of this system. His method is to set up a linguistic norm against which all stylistic deviations are measured implicitly or explicitly. Every language has certain norms, but inherent in these norms are potential
deviations. Bally calls these deviations 'affective and expressive' characteristics of the language. So when the poet says 'two briefs ago' or 'he danced his did' the student of stylistics should not dismiss these statements as ungrammatical nonsense as purists and fetishists do. On the contrary, he should accept such expressive mechanisms as stylistic devices, or deviations from the norm of the language. The creative writer has his creative compulsions and urges to deviate from the normal. James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* is an extreme instance of such creative deviation. But it is a deviation from an abstract norm.

To-day stylistics has come not only a long way, but come of age. It studies with scientific precision, accuracy and thoroughness, stylistic devices used by an individual writer or vogue in a literary period or common to a literary genre or form. The devices are innumerable and include rhythmical and musical pattern such as alliteration, assonance, word-order, repetition, metaphor and other figures of speech, symbols and images, vocabulary, sentence-structure, the proportion of nouns to adjectives and of nominal phrases to verb - all those qualities that go to make up the characteristics of the style of an individual author or a period. Stylistic analysis occupies itself with a near complete inventory of the stylistic qualities and aims at objectivity and scientific knowledge of the creative use of language.
Practitioners of stylistic studies and their works are too numerous to be counted here. However, a few of them claim our brief attention. Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, Lamarco Alonso were some of the earliest students of style in the European tradition. They all came to stylistics via literature and philology of Romance languages. They concerned themselves with style studies without giving them the status of academic discipline. Nevertheless their contribution is significant.

In England, the practitioners of stylistics are too varied and their methods too diverge to be regarded as a tradition. Literary critics have made a considerable use of stylistic methods. But stylistics with formal linguistic base is not found in England in the early phase of development of stylistics. I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism (1927) is an important study which gave stylistics a new respectable footing. It is a prologue to style study in England. The methods advocated by Richards were further practised by William Empson. Under the influence of Richards, he wrote his Seven Types of Ambiguity in 1947. In this book, Empson extended his methodological inquiries. He analysed poetic language with the precision of a professional linguist. Again, his Structure of Complex Words (1951) is a linguists' analysis of complex metaphorical and figurative language of poetry in terms of its emotive values.

While Richards and Empson approached literature and the
language of literature from the points of view of semantics and psychology, John Halloway approaches them from philosophy. His *The Victorian Age: Studies in Argument* (1953) is a study of the philosophy of Carlyle, Newman, and Arnold. Although the best part of the work is basically about the philosophy of logical positivism of the Victorian writers, it is clearly stylistic in sense but it is the study of the verbal organizations which have produced larger literary effects in these writers. Holloway deals with the syntax and the vocabulary of these writers and examines how they contribute to the form of his argument.

Stephen Ullmann was trained in Continental Linguistics and much of his work on stylistics is semantics based. His most famous works are *Style in the French Novel* (1957) and *The Image in the Modern French Novel* (1960). While making studies of some stylistic questions Ullmann proceeds from linguistic observation and suggests how the gap between linguistic and literary studies can be bridged.

Donald Davie wrote two books *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (1952) and *Articulate Energy* (1955). The first of them deals with the diction and the second addresses itself to the syntax of the English poetry. With a sparing use of linguistic terminology Davie introduces stylistic matters in relation to poetry. These books are about the poetic diction and poetic syntax but in the course of his argument Davie makes extremely sensitive and original
analyses of poetic language with the precision of a professional stylistician.

**Linguistics and Style** is one of the influential works in application of linguistics to the study of style. It defines style from linguistic point of view and advocates study of style at various levels. A great deal of later work on the theory and practice of stylistics is based on the theories propounded in this book.

G. W. Turner's **Stylistics** is concerned with the variations in the use of language and includes in its spectrum spoken and written forms of language, besides the language of declamations, radio broadcast. Turner advocates the study of style in terms of the element of language like the sounds, vocabulary, syntax, register and so on.

Besides these there are innumerable books, papers and practical studies of style from the linguistic point of view.

The model of stylistic analysis adapted here is suggested by those of Eric Enkvist and Turner. Most stylistic studies address themselves to particular authors or their individual works and sometimes to the stylistic characteristics of a particular literary period. The present study takes the whole of English proverbs as a corpus unit and attempts to analyse their style. Proverbs in any language are not the work of a single writer nor, do they belong to any single literary period. They have what may be called corporate authorship including myths and folktales but a
close examination of the proverbs reveals certain stylistic similarities and common characteristics in the use of the language. Middle Eastern proverbs, for example, make frequent use of hyperbole and colourful pictorial forms of expression. Typical is the proverbial description of a lucky man "Fling him in the Nile and he will come up with a fish in his mouth". Classical Latin proverbs are characteristically pithy and terse, for example *praemunitas*, *praemunitis* - fore warned is fore armed*. Many languages use rhyme, alliteration and word play in their proverbs, as in the Scots, "Many a mickie makes a muckle (many small things make one big thing). Folk proverbs are commonly illustrated with homely imagery taking into service household objects, farm animal pets and the events of everyday life. Even a cursory glance at the list of proverbs suggests a certain pattern in manipulation of sounds and words and in structuring of sentences. A closer study based on linguistic principles is to reveal more stylistic characteristics of proverbs.
SECTION 2
DEFINITION

At the beginning of Bacon's essay "Of Truth", jesting Pilate asks "what is truth"? and does not wait for an answer. Perhaps, Pilate asked jestfully because he thought that no answer was possible. Similarly, if we also ask, 'What is a proverb?' we cannot brush aside the question - we cannot ask such a question in jest, though we may think the answer impossible. Much water has flowed under the bridge since the days of Pilate and we will have to attempt to answer the question. We have to define a proverb. Now 'define' has been defined by the Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary 1983 edition as equivalent to, 'to fix the bounds or limits of; to determine with precision; to describe accurately; to fix the meaning of'. This shows how formidable our task is. We will have to examine the views of various authorities who have spoken about proverbs. Joseph T. Shipley says,

'"The most important word in the English sentence is the verb. Hence verb that once meant word (L. Verbum, word, as in verbum sapienti satia est, A word to the wise is sufficient) has come to mean the predicate term. A proverb was literally something pro, instead of a word: an image, a figurative instead of a literal expression, hence the Bibles' "dark sayings", Proverbs; 5. from their popularity the Proverbs came into everyone's mouth; hence the word proverb came to mean a byword, a common place; now the word has gone back to a sort of middle ground, as a familiar but not despised, expression of a general truth'.

The above definition gives us two important points, first a proverb is figurative and secondly, a familiar expression of a general truth. The following lines reflect the views of Nathan Davis.

*Proverb* (ôk, parcimia; sinea). A gnomic form of folk literature; a short pregnant criticism of life, based upon common experience, e.g. (Bible, The Book of Proverbs) quite generally the product of the popular mind, it was important as reflecting prevalent attitudes. In Greece and Rome it often served as a vehicle of literary and dramatic criticism. In longer works, it brought vividness, colour by compression and boldness of imagery. Collections of Proverbs (compiled as early as Hadrian, Emperor 117 - 138 A.D.) served as medieval texts.

(Dictionary of World Literature, New Jersey, 1962)

From the above we learn that a proverb is a criticism of life. (The phrase is Matthew Arnold's). It springs from the popular mind and is a distillate of practical wisdom. The Oxford English Dictionary has this to say about the proverb,

"A short pithy saying in common and recognized use, a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all; an adage, a wise saw."

We run into some difficulty with this definition. The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs records the following:
"To travel through the world it is necessary to have the mouth of a hog, the legs of a stag, the eyes of a falcon, the ears of an ass, shoulders of a camel and the face of an ape, and overplus, a satchel full of money and patience".

Now this contains 49 words, hence cannot be called short and pithy - nor is this sentence concise. There are three more proverbs containing 44, 43 and 38 words respectively. The sentence cited is metaphorical but not alliterative, but it does express 'some truth ascertained by experience'. The definition therefore does not cover all the cases.

The Oxford Dictionary also gives another definition - a common word or phrase of contempt or reproach. This meaning can be illustrated by this sentence, 'I decided not to ask her for a loan in view of her proverbial meanness'. The Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Current English (13th imp. 1989 ed.) defines a proverb as follows:

1. A popular short saying with words of advice or warning, e.g. It takes two to make a quarrel.

2. One of the books of the Old Testament.

3. Somebody or something so well known that he/it has become notorious. e.g. He is a proverb for meanness.

These definitions do not add substantially to what has already been discussed before.

The Collins' Cobuild English Language Dictionary (London 1987) says,
A proverb is a short sentence that people often quote and that gives advice or tells you something about human life and problems in general. E.g. 'Half a loaf is better than 'no bread', 'A man is not a man until he has a son'.

The above definition does not add to our knowledge already acquired. We turn to page 1036 of the Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary (New Edition 1983) and find this entry:

Proverb: a short familiar sentence expressing a supposed truth or moral lesson; a byword; a saying that requires explanation ...

The above definition puts emphasis on 'shortness' - but we have already seen that some proverbs are fairly long. The second condition is familiarity. Here we have a reservation. Some proverbs are universally familiar. Some may be familiar only to limited sections of people. Then we have 'supposed truth' - thus admitting that some proverbs may be based on superstition.

E.g. Monday for wealth,
      Tuesday for health,
      Wednesday the best day of all;
      Thursday for crosses,
      Friday for losses,
      Saturday no luck at all.

Then, same proverbs are rather unclear and written in a symbo-lical language and hence require an explanation, e.g. 'Money makes the mare go'. Webster's New World Dictionary (London, Macmillan 1962) defines a proverb as follows:
'A short saying in common use that strikingly expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience'.

We discover that this definition is not entirely satisfactory.

There are long proverbs. Many sayings are not in common use. Some have actually become obsolete. Some are no longer relevant. In these days of high pressure advertisement 'good wine needs no bush' is no longer applicable. Then is it really an obvious truth that 'A good Jack makes a good Jill'?

Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English (London, Longman 1978) has this to say about a proverb:

A short well-known saying usually in popular language: "A cat has nine lives", is a proverb.

The example given has no doubt the brevity and may be allowed to be well known. But whether the language can be said to be popular is to be doubted. It will be difficult for a common man to understand how a cat can live nine lives. It will not be easy to understand its symbolical significance. Despite the efforts of the various lexicographers we have not yet arrived at a full understanding of the term 'proverb'. The term proverb has eluded the scalpel of analysis. It only shows that lexicography is not yet a perfect science. As Cove says, 'It is an intricate and subtle and sometimes overpowering art, requiring subjective analysis, arbitrary decisions, and intuitive reasoning'. We have to turn to other authorities for further edification.
Everyman's Encyclopaedia (vol. 10, p. 200) has the following entry:

Proverb: Fragment of folk-literature or as the Greeks phrased it, 'a wayside saying' embodying a moral lesson or obvious truth. Though, like 'epigram', it is a word which defies succinct explanation, the essence of its meaning may be gathered from the sum of the following definitions.

According to Synesius, Aristotle remarked that,

'a proverb is a remnant from old philosophy, preserved amid countless destructions, by reason of its brevity, and fitness for use'.

Cervantes speaks of proverbs as,

'short sentences drawn from long experience',

Lord Russell described them as,

'one man's wit and all men's wisdom' ... . shortness, sense, salt' and, be it added, popularity are common attributes of proverbs".

The points made out in this extract have already been discussed. Encyclopaedia Americana (Vol. 22, pp. 704, 705) speaks thus of a proverb:

"a short, pithy saying presenting in a striking form a well known truth. They originate principally in the primitive stages of society; as colloquial rather than alliterary and constitute a form of folk-lore common to all races. While certain proverbs have undoubtedly strayed from one country to another the very nature of these pungent characterizations, founded on the common facts, experiences and observations of humanity, ensure their existing in similar form in different countries. New proverbs cease to appear as printed literature takes the place of folk-lore, the common catch phrase or valued quotation bearing no relation to these bits of wisdom with the stamp of ages of popular acceptance and use. Bacon calls them the edged tools of speech. Lord Russell's definition "the wisdom of many and the wit of one" is concise and accurate; as is South's "the experience and wisdom of several ages gathered and summed up in one expression" ..."
The words short and pithy in the above statement have already been commented upon, when the writer says that the proverbs are principally products of a primitive age, he is not entirely correct. The CLP shows that in the twentieth century itself so far 34 proverbs have already been formed—the latest being Small is Beautiful, the title of a book by E.F. Schumacher. The computer age has given us Garbage in, Garbage out coined in 1964. The modern electronic media helps in global spread, once an expression has taken root in the heart of the people. At the same time, it has to be admitted that people are now more enlightened, they think for themselves and are rather averse to repeat parrot like the utterances of others. Still, we find that old proverbs—a majority of them have a dynamism of their own and have managed to survive onslaughts on them. It has to be admitted further, that people do not rely much on folk lore. The advance of science has killed many a superstition on which many a proverb was based in the days of yore.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (Vol. VIII, 1977 edn., p. 258) defines a proverb as 'a succinct and pithy saying in general use, expressing commonly held ideas and beliefs. Proverbs are part of every spoken language, related to such other forms of folk literature as riddles and fables and originating in oral tradition. The Columbia Encyclopedia (Vol. IV, 1963, Ill edn., p. 1733), describes a proverb as a 'short statement of wisdom or advice which has passed into general use. More homely than aphorisms, proverbs generally refer to common
experience and are often expressed in metaphor, alliteration, or rhyme.

The two definitions quoted above do not add much to our understanding of the proverbs so far. We already know that though there are exceptions they are short and pithy and record common human experience covering almost all parts of the globe. The same ideas are expressed by Porter G. Perrin when he said,

'Proverbs are often quoted, concrete expressions of popular wisdom. They are likely to make observations on character or conduct. As a rule their authors are anonymous'.

Here is another statement:

Proverb: 'A short popular saying, generally an observation or a piece of advice. Though it may be attributed to an individual, some of the Biblical proverbs are attributed to Solomon and others, most proverbs are anonymous products of the folk'.


The above definition does not cover any new ground.

We now turn to Rosalind Fergusson who in her introduction to The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs (Penguin Books, 1988) says,

For the purpose of this dictionary a proverb is defined as a succinct and memorable statement that contains advice (first thrive and then wive), a warning or a prediction (Marry in haste and repent at leisure), or an analytical
observation (a maid marries to please her parents, a widow to please herself). Idiomatic phrases, such as between the devil and the deep sea and similes, such as like a bat out of hell are not included .... Proverbs have to be short, they have to be memorable and they must not be merely platitudes'. The above definition is comprehensive enough and helps us in classifying our ideas of a proverb.

We now turn to the opinion of Henry Davidoff who has edited A World Treasury of Proverbs, (London, Cassell & Co. 1953). In his 'Foreward' (p. 5) he remarks,

The first problem that meets the ambitious Collector of proverbs is the difficulty of defining his search. Any fairly complete dictionary will give him a list of synonyms for 'Proverb' that will contain such words as 'Adage', 'Aphorism', 'Apostrophe', 'Axiom', 'Maxim', 'Quotation', 'Saying' and others. Without going into detailed discussion of the somewhat subtle differences among these words, it will be enough to say that the title-page of this collection, emphasizing just 'Proverbs' will sufficiently indicate what has been included.

Davidoff has mentioned a number of so-called synonyms without sharply defining any of them. He seems to say, 'presume not to scan what a proverb is, - a proverb is what I have included here'. We will have to see whether a proverb can really be equated with an aphorism or a maxim. Here are a few entries under proverb in the above book. They may help us to understand further what a proverb is:
Proverbs are the daughters of daily experience. Proverbs are the wisdom of the streets. The genius, wit and spirit of a nation are discovered in its proverbs (Bacon). A proverb is a short sentence based on a long experience. A short saying often contains much wisdom.

We will now consult The New Century Handbook of English Literature edited by C. B. Darlington (New York, Appleton, 1967 edn.). This is the entry under 'Proverb':

A short pithy sentence, often repeated colloquially, expressing a well-known truth or common fact ascertained by experience or observation; a popular saying which briefly and forcibly expresses some practical precept; an adage; a wise saw; often set forth in the guise of metaphor and in the form of rhyme and sometimes alliterative.

In the scriptures, an enigmatic utterance; a mysterious or oracular saying that requires interpretation. The points covered in the above words have already been discussed. It is obvious that there is a fair amount of agreement about what constitutes a proverb, though the exact definition in scientific terms still eludes us. It was Tennyson who spoke of,

"Jewels five words long
That on the stretched forefinger of all time
Sparkle for ever."

(The Princess, 'Prologue' 107).

But as we have seen neither the lexicographers, nor the encyclopaedists nor the poets have been able to clearly spell out for us what 'defines' a proverb. Like the colours
of the spectrum merging into one another from the extremes of ultra-violet to infrared, the different definitions of a proverb overlap and merge into one another. We can sum up in the words of Rev. John Ward who was Vicar of Stratford-on-Avon at the time of his death in 1681. He laid down six qualifications for a proverb; it must be short, plain, common, figurative, ancient and true. Many aspects of these various qualities have already been discussed. We may say that a proverb, 'is the harnessing of the paradox of earth cradling life and then entombing it'.

We have now to examine some words which nearly approach the word proverb in meaning. The Penguin Thesaurus (Penguin Books, 1966) p. 204, gives under the entry maxim, the following words among others:

apophthegm, adage, saw, proverb, gnome, byword, aphorism, dictum, tag, saying, truth, epigram, cliche, truism, common place, motto, watchword, catchword, slogan, axiom,

and so on. We will examine some words which may be considered close to a proverb.

A maxim prescribes a rule for good and sensible conduct and behaviour. It is brief. It is widely accepted. Examples are, Instant action, that is my maxim', 'Discipline is the soul of the army', 'Waste not, want not'. Only the third has the status of a proverb. Why is this? Burton Stevenson explains it thus, '...
... a maxim is the sententious expression of some general truth or rule of conduct, that it is a proverb in the caterpillar stage, and that it becomes a proverb when it gets its wings by winning popular acceptance and flutters out into the highways and byways of the world.

John Simpson in his introduction to the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs says:

A proverb is a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short and pithy manner. Paradoxically, many phrases which are called 'Proverbial' are not proverbs as we now understand the term. We might for instance refer to the 'proverbial fly on the wall', or say that some thing is as 'dead as proverbial dodo', although neither of these phrases alludes to a proverb. The confusion dates from before the eighteenth century, when the term 'proverb' also covered metaphorical phrases, similes and descriptive epithets and was used far more loosely than it is today. Now-a-days we would normally expect a proverb to be cast in the form of a sentence.

An adage means an old and wise saying and is permitted to stand close to a proverb. An epigram is a short usually witty statement, graceful in style and ingenious in thought. Originally referring to an inscription on a monument, the term came to be associated with short satirical poems. 'Brevity is the soul of wit' may be cited as an example of an epigram which has risen to the status of a proverb.

An aphorism stands for a short, pithy statement of truth or doctrine and is similar to an apothegm or maxim. A proverb may be said to be an aphorism which is extremely brief and easier to remember and has passed into general use. And as John Gross points out:
... aphorisms, unlike proverbs, have authors.... an aphorism is a form of literature and often a highly idiosyncratic or self conscious form at that. It bears the stamp and style of the mind which created it, its message is universal, but scarcely personal.... Many aphorisms are also retorts and ripostes, shafts aimed at the champions of an established view point or a shallow morality.11

A cliche is a time worn, stale, lifeless expression.
As Martin Green says,

"By a cliche I mean primarily a standardized opinion, a judgement expressed in a phrase or sentence so standardized as to deprive it of all intellectual sincerity... when this happens a sensitive person must keep silent about them."12

As G.H. Vallas has the following to say about worn out proverbs:

Cliches also include proverbial expressions which have their origin in the ordinary traffic of language, especially speech. At sometime or the other, in the distant past "a rolling stone gathers no moss", "a stick in time saves nine" and "birds of a feather flock together" were fresh and vivid expressions somebody carried them; but now, to continue the metaphor, they have become so worn in use as almost to be taken out of currency.13

We have now to take into consideration the term 'idiom'. The line dividing an idiom from a proverb seems to be very thin. An idiom can be defined as a phrase the meaning of which cannot be deduced from an understanding of the individual words in the phrase. Thus, to let one's hair down is not connected with anything done to one's hair; it means to enjoy oneself or behave wildly. The way in which the words are put together is often odd, illogical or
even grammatically incorrect. Idioms can be totally opaque when there is no resemblance between the meaning of the idiom and the meaning of individual words, for example, a hat trick; they can be semi-opaque where part of the phrase is used literally, e.g. to eat a humble pig. An idiom can also be fairly transparent in terms of metaphor, e.g. burn the candle at both ends. The English language is very rich in idiomatic expressions. Many idioms have risen to the status of a proverb. It is difficult to explain why a particular idiom has developed an unusual arrangement or choice of words. The idiom has been fixed by long usage. An example of an idiom, turned proverb, is to be a pig in a poke. It means buying something without close inspection at an exhorbitant price. The word poke is an old word meaning sack. Poke appears in present day English with this meaning in this idiom only. Born with a silver spoon in one's mouth is another example of an idiom raised to the status of a proverb.

In order to further clarify our ideas about the various terms we have been using, let us take the help of a well-known authoritative dictionary:

**Saying** is the simple direct term for any pithy expression of wisdom or truth; a **saw** is an old homely saying that is well worn by repetition (the preacher filled his sermon by wise **saws**); a **maxim** is a general principle drawn from practical experience and serving as a rule of conduct (Ex: keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee); an **adage** is a saying that has been popularly accepted over a long period of time (Ex: where there's smoke, there's fire);
a proverb is a piece of practical wisdom expressed in homely concrete terms (Ex: A penny saved is a penny earned); a motto is a maxim accepted as a guiding principle or as ideal of behaviour. (Ex: Honesty is the best policy); an aphorism is a terse saying embodying a general truth or principle (Ex: He is a fool that cannot conceal his wisdom); an epigram is a terse, witty, pointed statement that gains its effect by ingenious antithesis (Ex: The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it).
SECTION 3

ORIGINS

When we come to origins, we have to take into consideration - two aspects. First we have to see in general how proverbs arose in the firmament of human endeavour. Afterwards, we have to examine the sources by means of which English proverbs came into being. Proverbs existed in various forms in different languages before they were given a local habitation and name in English language.

Proverbs have existed since time immemorial. Most of the proverbs were formed by simple unlettered folk whose names have sunk into oblivion. These proverbs have descended from hoary antiquity and spread by word of mouth in time and space long before books came into existence. When we compare the proverbs found in various parts of the world we find that the same kernel of wisdom may be gleaned under different cultural contexts and languages. "Adages are as old as the hills, and are common to all languages and people. The Spanish have as many as 30,000 whilst Wander actually estimated the Germans at 145,000".

Speaking about the origin of proverbs, L'Israeli says,

'The Spaniards date the origin of their "Sayings of old wives by their firesides", before existence of any writings in their language, from the circumstance that these are in the old romance or rudest vulgar idiom. The most ancient poem in the Kaddo, the sublime speech of Udim" abounds with ancient proverbs, strikingly descriptive of the ancient Scandinavians. Undoubtedly, proverbs in the earliest ages long served as the unwritten language of morality and even of the useful arts; like the oral traditions of the Jews, they floated down from age to age on the lips of successive generations. The name of the first sage who sanctioned the saying would in time be forgotten, while the opinion, the metaphor, or the expression, remained consecrated into a proverb. Such was the origin of those memorable sentences by which men learnt to think and to speak oppositely; they were precepts which no man could contradict, at a time when authority was valued more than opinion and experience preferred to novelty.'

It is evident that some people who had become wiser by experience were only too eager to transfer their wisdom in an easy assimilable form, readily absorbed. This wisdom in a capable form was transferred from father to son, from farm to household and workshop to common life. These proverbs by and large stood for primitive wisdom in a rudimentary form. Rosalind Ferguson remarks:

Proverbs have to be short, they have to be memorable and they must not be mere platitudes. But they do not have to be true. Folk wisdom is often contradictory .... If too many cooks spoil the broth, in what circumstances do many hands make light work? Perhaps it is a mistake to regard proverbs as a source of accumulated wisdom. Perhaps they are better seen as a collection of tags that enable thoughts to be communicated and exchanged without the effort of formulation.
The invention of proverbs no doubt points to a higher level of development of human intelligence. At first men acquired experience through sense-data. Then he began to think of using it - so we have conception and expression, then the art of symbolization came. We may think of proverbs as symbols of human experience, just as we can think of language itself as the history of the gradual accumulation and elaboration of verbal symbols Susanne Langer says:

"Symbolization is pre-rationative, but not pre-rational. It is the starting point of all the intellection in the human senses, and is more general than thinking, fancying, or taking action. For the brain is not merely a great transmitter, a super-switch-board, it is better likened to a great transformer. The current of experience that passes through it undergoes a change of character, not through the agency of the sense by which the perception entered, but by virtue of a primary use which is made of it immediately: it is sucked into the stream of symbols which constitutes a human mind."

The process of the creation of proverbs seems to resemble the process of the creation of a myth. Both are fundamental expressions of human nature. Friede Fordham says:

"When a myth is formed and expressed in words, consciousness, it is true, has shaped it, but the spirit of the myth—the creative urge it represents, the feelings it expresses and evokes and even in large part its subject-matter—can come from the collective unconscious. Myths, it is true, often seem like attempts to explain natural events, such as sunrise and sunset, or the coming of spring with all its new life and fertility, but in Jung's view they are far more than this, they are the expression of how man experiences these things."

Collective unconscious means the total racial memory and aspirations according to Jung. Now it is clear, if we analyse proverbs that proverbs are akin to myths. Many seem to originate from them. Some can be called offshoots of them.

After considering proverbs in general we turn once again to the consideration of proverbs in England. Proverbs were prevalent in English language from times immemorial. Some were born in the native soil but many of them came with successive waves of invasion. English language became richer by contact with foreign elements. The proverbs became so numerous that collections of them were made. These collections helped in perpetuating and spreading the various proverbs. In 990-992, Aelfric, a monk at Winchester published *Catholic Homilies*, an influential work. Aelfric is a very prominent figure in Anglo-Saxon literature; his writings are important from their illustration of the belief and practice of the early Christian church. The next important collection is named *Proverbs of Alfred* (c. 1150-80). This is a collection of wise sayings, dating from the old English period and long associated with King Alfred, king of the West Saxons. It is now generally believed that little if anything can be attributed to Alfred and that the collection derived its name simply from the fact that Alfred's name was synonymous with wisdom in the minds of the generation immediately following him. Another important collection was *Proverbs*
of Hendyng (c. 1250). Desiderius Erasmus, the great Dutch humanist published his *Adagia* in 1500. This was a collection of Latin and Greek proverbs, traced to their source with witty comments. This was one of the first works of the new learning. These various collections have to be examined by the paroemiographer to understand the sources of English proverbs. Erasmus came more than once to England and from 1511 to 1514, he taught at the Cambridge University. A very large number of proverbs entered the English language through Erasmus.

When Christianity entered the shores of England, it brought with it not merely the Holy Bible but also the utterances of many saints and preachers, some of the sayings of whom became proverbs in the current language. The most important source, however, was the Bible. Many translations of the holy Book were made in English and also the English people learnt a lot of it. Many preachers delivered learned sermons and helped circulate the sayings. The principal versions of the Bible are (i) Wycliff's Bible which appeared in 1330; (ii) Tyndales' Bible printed in 1525 (iii) Coverdale's Bible - 1535 (iv) Mathews' Bible, 1537 (v) The Great Bible 1539 (vi) Cranmer's Bible - 1540 (vii) The Geneva Bible 1560.

The most important edition was the Authorized version, prepared at the command of King James I and published in 1611. All these editions, brought into fore, the Book of Proverbs which is included in the Old Testament at the twentieth
place. It is the first and most famous of the wisdom or
gnomic books of the Bible. The book is an early example of
a type of literature popular among the Jews of post exile
times, wisdom literature; the praise of abstract wisdom is
typical of such writing. The dating of the proverbs is
difficult. Although tradition attributes proverbs to
Solomon, the book is probably a collection of various
origins, dating from the 9th - 2nd cent. B.C. King Solomon
was the wisest person of his time. We are told in the Bible,
'And he spake three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a
thousand and five' (1, Kings, iv, 32).

The followings are some of the Biblical sayings that
have acquired the status of a proverb:

In the multitude of counsellors there is safety (Proverb)
The beauty of old men is the grey head (proverbs)
Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see
visions (Joel)
With the ancient is wisdom; and in the length of years
understanding (Job)
A soft answer turneth away wrath (Proverbs)
An angry man stirs up strife (Proverbs)
Let not the sun go down upon your wrath (Ephesians)
Judge not according to the appearance (John)
When the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into
the ditch (Matthew)
Man doth not live by bread only (Leuteronomy)
He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it (Ecclesiastes)
Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew)

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles (Matthew)

The love of money is the root of all evil (Timothy)

Besides the above, many more sayings of the Holy Bible have become proverbs - either by themselves or in a modified form. In a similar way, sentences from some religious sermons have also found a place in the collections of proverbs.

Another fertile source of proverbs is folk lore. This term includes customs, legends, beliefs and superstitions passed on by oral tradition. It includes folk dances, folk songs, folk medicine (the use of magical charms and herbs) and folk tales (myths, rhymes and proverbs). Folk lore is an imaginative expression, by a group of people, of its desires, attitudes and cultural values. An example of a myth originated proverb is to be between Scylla and Charybdis, based on a story in Homer's Odyssey. Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, betrayed her father at the behest of her lover Minos. Later, Minos despised her for this treachery and Scylla committed suicide. She became a bird monster and lived on one side of the Straits of Messina, on the other side of which lived Charybdis, another danger, so a person seeking to avoid one danger, falls into another; there is no escape. This is what this proverb means, the idea being something like, between the devil and the deep sea.
Of the proverbs based on folk lore the following examples may be given:

1. Before you make a friend, eat a bubble of salt with him.
2. He that was born under a three-penny planet shall never be worth two pence.
3. If you carry a nutmeg in your pocket, you will be married to an old man.

Fables have also enriched the treasury of English proverbs. A fable is a "brief allegorical narrative, in verse or prose, illustrating a moral thesis or satirizing human beings. The characters of a fable are usually animals who talk and act like people while retaining their animal traits". The oldest known fables are those in the Panchatantra, a collection of fables in Sanskrit (Columbia Encyclopaedia). The tales of Panchatantra travelled West and reached Europe via Persia and Arabia. The fable ever aims at one great end and purpose—the representation of human motive, and the improvement of human conduct. The moral conveyed by a fable finds a place among proverbs. A liberated Greek slave Aesop of the sixth century B.C. is the most famous of the fabulists. Other writers include La Fontain, Dryden and John Gay. The following is an example of a fable by Aesop:

A man agreed to purchase an ass and agreed with its owner that he should try him before he bought him. He took the ass home and put him in the straw-yard with other asses. This ass joined himself to the most idle and the greatest eater of them all. The man at once returned him
to the owner. The owner inquired how in such a short time the worth of the ass could be assessed. The would be purchaser answered, "I do not need a full trial. I know that he will be just like the one he chose for company - a shirker and a heavy eater".

The moral of this story is obvious. A man is known by the company he keeps. Other proverbs derived from Aesop's fables are:

1. Union is strength
2. The grapes are sour
3. Honesty is the best policy.

The stream of English proverbs has also received contributions from many a foreign source. We have already seen that several waves of foreign invaders came to fight in England. Along with the invaders came many learned scholars, preachers, administrators and so on. They brought their language and the English language absorbed many words and also many proverbs in translation. In due course of time these proverbs became naturalized in English. A few examples may now be seen:

right i. right originates from Plato's Republic. It has become so firmly entrenched in English that its Greek origin is forgotten. Others are, Nothing comes of nothing (Alcaeus); one nail drives out another (Aristotle); A rolling stone gathers no moss (Erasmus); Revenge is sweet (Homer); other times, other manners and so on.
Some of the proverbs which have come from Latin are:

- Necessity knows no law. There is a remedy for everything except death. All roads lead to Rome. When in Rome do as Romans do; and so on.

From French we get, To man is hero to his valet; Functuality is the politeness of princes; The road to hell is paved with good intentions; Providence is always on the side of big battalions; you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs; and so on.

That must be, must be is derived from Italian. So we see that England has always kept its door open and accepted many foreign proverbs with a catholicity of mind.

The stock of English proverbs was augmented from time to time by native authors. The words uttered by various poets, dramatists and essayists were wide spread with the invention of printing and with the growth of education. Some striking words and phrases found an entry into the public mind and found a permanent lodging there. The early proverbs were rooted in the soil and were made by persons unknown. But here, well known men of letters unconsciously and without deliberate aim made statements which were admitted to the proverb lore. This obviously happened because as we know there was a great demand for proverbs at one time. Proverbial sayings were prevalent in England right from the first half of the eighth century. They were also popular with the rhetoricians. We also notice the 'proverb-loving side of
the medieval spirit'. Even in the age of Elizabeth, people
used proverbs either by quoting them directly or by clothing
them in more ornate language. When the demand was so large,
new sources of proverbs had to be explored. The law of
supply and demand becomes operative. And this newly created
demand was met by the works of the English writers themselves.
Numerous illustrations can be cited from Chaucer, Spenser,
Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Lyden, Pope and others. Many
of their sayings are parts of a modern man's conversation.

To get an idea of the contribution of English proverb
makers we turn to *World Treasury of Proverbs*, edited by
Davidoff mentions the names of the following major English
writers. The number of extracts from them is mentioned
against their names in parenthesis:

Francis Bacon (45); William Blake (29); Lord
Byron (22); Geoffrey Chaucer (45);
S. Johnson (34); A. Pope (52); John Lyden (34);
John Milton (27); William Shakespeare (361);
G.B. Shaw (18); P.B. Shelley (16);
Lord Tennyson (22); J. Swift (19); Edward Young (27).

The above list is illustrative, not exhaustive. There
are many authors with smaller number of contributors. The
above list gives us a total of 750 which is really a very
impressive number. The Americans like R.W. Emerson and
Benjamin Franklin are also important contributors. Franklin
is specially noted for his *Poor Richard's Almanack* which ran
from 1733 to 1758. It is full of 'pleasant and witty verses,
Jests, and notable sayings" - though many of them were not original.

A study of Davidoff shows that Shakespeare is the greatest 'proverb-maker' in the literary history of the world. Although he never intended so, many of his sayings have become universally popular.

The creative urge to forge proverbs has almost been smothered in the twentieth century. Still, no less than thirty six coinages of the present century are recorded in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* by John Simpson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982). Some of these are:

- Every dog is allowed one bite (1902)
- The good is the enemy of the best (1912)
- The female of the species is more deadly than the male (Kipling, 1911)
- There's many a good tune played on an old fiddle (1902)
- If anything goes wrong it will (1955, Commonly known as Murphy's Law)
- Work expands so as to fill the time available (1955, the famous Parkinson's Law)

Our special attention is captured by a 1964 coinage, *Garbage in, Garbage out*. This is based on computer operation. The relationship between input and output is sometimes - when input is incorrect - tersely noted by this expression. The earliest proverbs to a great extent were based on superstition. Now we have proverbs based on science which is an
enemy of superstition. According to Simpson, the title of E.F. Schumacher's book *Small is Beautiful* (pub. 1973) has also become a proverb.

From whatever sources they have come, proverbs are a part of our common heritage. Proverbs sprang from the very heart of the people and flit from age to age, from lip to lip of shepherds, peasants, nurses of all classes of men that continue to be nearest to the state of natural man. They make music with the splash of the fisherman's oars and the hum of the spinning wheel. They keep company with the ploughman as he drives his team afield. The countryside seems to have aided men in the making of proverbs; the note of birds rings in them, the tree has lent its whispers, the stream its murmur, the village bell its tinkling tinkle. The whole soil of the people breathes in them, just as the great sea resounds in the shells cast upon the shores. Proverbs are a voice from secret places, from silent people and old times long dead, and as such they have the capacity to stir us in a strangely intimate fashion. The proverbs have displayed tremendous staying power and are sure to live even when all the best sellers of the day have been swirled away in the waters of lethe.
REFERENCES


2. Quoted by Graham Hough from Dryden's Preface to Annus Mirabilis, p. 3.


5. Graham Hough, Style and Stylistics, p. 6.


