CHAPTER - IV

LANGUAGE AND TECHNIQUE

An important focus of this thesis, as it has already been discussed in the second and third chapters, is the analysis of language and technique of the spiritual writers, besides studying their soul stirring messages. Through their language, they built a spiritual bridge between the East and the West.

It becomes a redundant discussion to dwell upon the definitions of style, since it is a common subject of familiarity. Instead, it would be appropriate to ponder over specific aspects of the style, technique and language of the spiritual writers in general and the two writers in particular. It may or may not be proper to name the style of these writers as ‘spiritual style’, but it can be emphasized that there is a marked difference in the style and language of these spiritual masters- of their speeches and writings. If style is considered ‘the ornament of thought’ and a ‘mode of persuasion’, the style of the spiritual writers is a classical example of this. They are the ones that can persuade and inspire thousands of people instantaneously. It is the style of a speaker or a writer that inspires the listeners and readers; the way one chooses words and arranges them in the syntax and structures of one’s own for expressing one’s ideas and thoughts. In embellishing one’s thoughts, the writers and speakers have their own style of expression which is a distinctive and characteristic feature of that particular person. Before getting into the analysis of the language of the spiritual writers of India, whose messages and writings are
presented chiefly in the prose style, it would be appropriate to look at the
genesis of the genre – prose, in India- Indian Writing in English, in brief.

The entire volume of writing falls into two genres broadly – Prose and
Poetry. In comparison with the poetry, prose also has its own rhythm and music
besides being emotional and equally imaginative. The greatest masters of prose
are equally honoured and placed along with greatest poets and playwrights of
the world. Though prose may be considered ‘less spontaneous and musical’,
compared to poetry, it is certainly more logical, motivating and purposeful than
the poetry. From the 11th century onwards, prose has been made use of to the
fullest, in the fields of religion, philosophy, politics, economy and other social
aspects. The Elizabethan writers have, in a way taken this genre to the greater
heights of glory by giving novel expressions.

In India, though the prose writing was started with Cavally Brothers, it
was Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) who had given impetus to this genre.
He became the pioneer writer and a pioneer reformer whose immediate need
was to bring a big social change and he exploited the English prose over which
he had acquired an unfaltering command. He insisted on the freedom of press
and English education for all the Indians. In this direction he wrote ‘Memorials
on the Freedom of the Press.’ Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s writings had become a
source of great inspiration to the future writers. Scholars such as K.T.Telang,
Ganganath Jha, Rangacharya and M.G.Ranade contributed substantially to the
English prose through their translations of Sanskrit classics. The lectures of
Rangacharya on the Gita were acclaimed by one and all.
Nagesh Wiswanath Pai (1860-1920) contributed to the prose writing in English through his satire and his “Stray Sketches in Chakmakpore from the Note Book of an Idle Citizen” (1894) was hailed as a landmark in prose writing in India. K.S. Venkataramani’s major work ‘Paper Boats: Sketches of Indian Village Life’ (1921), was appreciated for ‘the figures of speech and figurative language.’

A new dimension of English prose began with the mighty orators and journalists like Surendranath Banerje, Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Desh Bandhu Chittaranjan Das and Sir Pherozesha Mehta with a thorough mastery of English language for attacking the British. Their urge for the freedom found a fullest expression in their oratory in the meetings of the Indian National Congress, religious congregations and in the convocational addresses of the universities. Their intense urge for self expression, and eagerness for acquiring language skills and literary knowledge, an admiration for English writers and the western thinkers, orators such as Mill and Macaulay, Bacon and Burk, Kant and Hegel had elevated them to the Himalayan heights. They were able to easily bend and break the language to suit their needs and could use ornate expressions, quote spontaneously from Indian scriptures and Western writers. They succeeded in appealing to the emotions as well as to the intellect of the men and women. Their ferocious and fiery flow of words astounded the listeners. With their intense patriotic fervour coupled with the command of the English Language, they were able to spread the freedom movement to all parts of the country.
In no time, in India, the wave of English language rose very high and it soon flourished spreading its influence on freedom movement. Though, the initial use of English was purely for the purpose of communicating to the British, very soon, it rose to the lofty levels of literary expression, a creative art. In 19\textsuperscript{th} century, more than Indian languages, English spread very fast, as many intellectuals wished to write in English to reach out to the people in the country. It was never a problem to the Indians for mastering English since the Indian languages have more intricate structures than that of English. The ease with which Indians like Jawaharlal Nehru used English evoked praise even from the Britishers. In the words of Marjorie Boulton,

\begin{quote}
English people, who will not trouble to write their own language, ought to be ashamed by reading the English of such Indian writers as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

\textit{(The Anatomy of Prose: 91)}
\end{quote}

It was Ram Mohan Roy who exploited prose in English to bring in a social reform, where as Swami Vivekananda was the first one to make use of the English prose genre to stir the soul of the humanity. He made powerful use of different figures of speech. His mastery is particularly seen in the use of ‘rhetoric’ and even when he uses – satire, irony and wit- there is a distinct touch of spirituality. Instruction in his irony and wisdom in his wit are embedded. Even in his humour, there is grandeur. His English became a weapon to whip the monstrous practices like the untouchability and the oppression of women. Swami Vivekananda’s prose, in fact sounds poetic.
Elegy and eulogy, ecstasy and fantasy, imagery and ideology— all found befitting expressions in the prose and poetry of Swami.

Swami Vivekananda’s elevated thought and noble sentiments flowed in the alien language in a spontaneous manner. In the words of Mr S.K.Nair of Travancore—

It might be a talk on Spencer or some thought of Shakespeare of Kalidasa, Darwin’s theory of evolution, the Jewish history, the growth of Aryan civilization, the Vedas, Islam or Christianity – whatever the question the Swami was ready with an appropriate answer.

(The Life of Swami Vivekananda, by His Eastern and Western Disciples: 74)

The eight volumes of the soul stirring speeches of Vivekananda are a matchless contribution to Indian prose literature to English. His English had astounded eminent people all over the world. His vast scholarship of English and spontaneity of expression was aimed at awakening the innate divinity in man. His lectures, letters and all writings are replete with superb solutions for eradicating social evils. They are the word pictures of the world teachers, the treasures of the universal scriptures, and contain practical tips to enable man to rise beyond the limitations of the body— all this is presented in lucid prose that is intelligible and illuminating to all. Through the melody of his speeches, he has awakened the sleeping minds of mankind into immense activity.

Swami Vivekananda’s contribution to Indian prose in English, Indian poetry in English and the Indian universalism in English were like a mighty
light house in the field of Indian Writing in English for almost all Indian writers after him. That light house scattered its rays to the West to acquaint the West with the ‘science of yoga and spiritualism.’

Another important contribution of Swami Vivekananda to English Literature is – ‘Biographical Sketches’ and ‘The Epistles’. Through these, Swami Vivekananda’s personality can be perceived. They give profound wisdom of the age old scriptures and offer guidelines to mankind for a meaningful life.

Rhetoric is an impressive art, used by several orators and writers for winning the audience. Rhetoric by Swami Vivekananda is used to explain the scriptures in a charming manner. Rhetoric is an art of expressing an opinion convincingly in order to gain the support of the willing audience spontaneously. Swami Vivekananda’s rhetoric has certain special features. The use of anaphora and inversions, slogans and exhortations is very frequent. In addition to the rich use of imagery, figures of speech and illustrations, he has the art of coining new phrases, slogans and whipping exhortations. Though he is accustomed to the art of using simple sentences, now and then in a breathless sweep and speed, he releases long sentences, but in simple words.

The writings of the spiritual masters are chiefly plain and instructive, though they are full of stylistic devices of expository art.

“What English has Vivekananda? He has learnt all its subtleties.” – Leo Tolstoy. (My India, the India Eternal: 194)
Leo Tolstoy noted in his diary that he had read ‘a charming book on Indian wisdom’. The book was a series of lectures on Ancient Indian philosophy delivered by Swami Vivekananda in New York in the winter of 1895-96. Swami Vivekananda’s scintillating speeches have covered all aspects of human well being. His action words are always filled with fire and instantly ignited the dormant energies of men and women alike.

The lofty themes and ideals of his lectures and his graceful prose style-directness and lucidity embedded with spirituality, is one which distinguishes Swami from many others in handling the English language. It is not only his monumental service to spirituality, but also his impressive mass of writing in English which made him a great spiritual leader of the world. Indeed, his contribution to the world of English language was enveloped by his indelible impact on the spirituality. Swami’s creative genius found an indelible expression in the realms of language and literature and in the boundless god consciousness. Perhaps the greatness of his contribution to the spiritual heritage of India was in making the world remain comparatively ignorant of his monumental achievement as a man of letters, whose creative genius had found expression in a language like English which was chosen as a medium of communication to win the world.

It is not known whether he was keen on English language and literature, when he was a student. But, all the vital factors of a successful rhetorician are found in the very first heroic address of the Swami at Chicago. As Hazlitt puts it, ‘It is the dress and address, personality and presentation, bearing and
behaviour that will decide a man’s reward in any endeavour and esteem in a society.’ His metallic voice, his artistically designed features by the creator and his towering personality in saffron robes and turban, had spontaneously attracted thousands of people at home and outside. Detroit tribune of February 14, 1894, spoke of Vivekananda-

As an orator by divine right’, ‘giant of the platform’, ‘a master of English’ and a ‘sensation of world parliament’. He is an artist in thought, an idealist in belief and a dramatist on the platform.

(Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries: 164)

The words that flow from his lips acquire a different meaning and move with great velocity. The very beginning of every benign lecture is always marked by a device to draw the attention of the audience. He usually commences with either a story, a biblical statement, a beautiful description, a vedic hymn, an episode an informal remark, or an epigram. He seldom uses a word that is unintelligible.

Through his speeches, Swami Vivekananda continuously inspired the youth to be courageous, unselfish and loving. ‘Be bold’, ‘be brave’, ‘be manly’, ‘be men’- repeatedly roared by the Swami to wake up the dormant energy of the young men.

It would be very appropriate to analyse a few of his soul stirring sentences in order to understand how and why he was called a ‘hurricane orator’ or ‘an orator by divine right’ or ‘a master of English’. For he never speaks, he roars, “Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake,
awake great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep?” (My India, the India Eternal: 78)

If this sentence is examined stylistically, it can be clearly understood what sort of language has been employed by swami Vivekananda to arouse his countrymen. The adjective- ‘bold’ is used in both positive and comparative degrees; the comparative is being used for the noun ‘deeds’ indicating that the action should be more powerful than the ‘words’ and the repetition of the verb ‘awake’ twice and the use of the adjective- ‘great’ with ‘ones’ further brings greater force to his intentions. Besides hinting at the sleepy nature of the people, Swamiji is reminding them of the dormant greatness lying in them. The phrase- ‘burning with misery’ and the rhetoric ‘Can you sleep?’ will certainly make people restless, sleepless and motivate them towards action. Though Swamiji’s words indicate that he is angry with agony towards his countrymen for their sloth, still he doesn’t miss to remind them of their vast potentialities. Instead of the fierce phrase ‘burning with misery’, if he had used ‘full of misery’ which is a common usage, certainly there would not have been the desired effect. The stamp of Swami Vivekananda is perceptible in each and every word especially when he speaks of strength and succor.

Wake up, stop not until the goal is reached. (Complete works of Swami Vivekananda: vol. v: 35)

“Avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin, weakness is death.”

(Complete works of Swami Vivekananda: vol. III: 151)
“Brave, bold men, these are what we want. What we want is vigour in the blood, strength in the nerves, iron muscles and nerves of steel.” (Power Capsules-56)

His views on vibrant youth, strength and weakness, ignorance and enlightenment, love and hate, faith and fanaticism, are most effectively illustrated. The working of the mind and its control, the nature of society and social evils are very well presented in the graphic illustrations. The beauty of Swami’s sentences can be seen in these succinct expressions- in a sentence of nine words, an immeasurable inspiration is presented – straight away, he started with an action verb- ‘wake up’ without using a subject, in order to heighten the intensity, continued with another commanding word- ‘stop not’ and to highlight the very purpose of life, one’s ‘goal’, he used a passive form – ‘goal is reached’. The entire sentence, if written in active voice, it should be- ‘Wake up and do not stop until you reach the goal’, which sounds as a simple advice but certainly not as exhortation or a command that has sprung from the very bottom of the heart.

A man of massive intellect, combined with a genuine concern for humanity, Swami Vivekananda probes deep into the very core of everything and spells out his readings, reflections and pronouncements pithily which are pregnant with profound thought. The more one meditates over these utterances, the light within becomes brighter and brighter beckoning towards truth. His aphoristic expressions are but the spontaneous outpourings of the intense universal love and an analysis of each of the aphorisms reveals the Swami’s
erudition as well as wisdom. The moment he starts speaking, aphorisms roll out of his vocal chords, consciously or unconsciously. And every aphorism can be expanded into an elaborate explanation of any length. These simple seeds in the form of aphorisms can be expanded into big volumes. To quote a few –

“Liberty is the first condition of growth.” (*The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda* vol. IV: 367)

“Inequality is the very basis of creation.” (*The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda* vol. I: 114)

“Each soul is potentially divine.” (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* vol. I: 124)

“Fear is the sign of weakness.” (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* vol. I: 47)

‘A finite subject cannot love, nor a finite object be loved.’ (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* vol. IV: 15)

‘Perfection is always infinite.’ (*The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda* vol. II: 172)


“Good and evil are our slaves, not we theirs.” (*The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda* Vol. VII: 13)

“The difference between god and the devil is in nothing except unselfishness and selfishness.”


...are only a few of the many aphorisms. Brevity and the beauty of word-arrangement are some of the essential qualities of a good aphorism. And Swami’s aphorisms are just the apt examples for the definition of an aphorism. This striking trait of Swami Vivekananda places him in the first line of
giants of literature and the saints of the scriptures. Swami Vivekananda’s ideas are exact and unambiguous and their corresponding expressions are precise and defined. Indeed, it is the precision that is the hallmark of perfection. The unintelligible philosophical or spiritual terms that are usually delivered by the priests and preachers in high sounding words are clearly and precisely placed before the common man by the Swami in simplest terms.

The word ‘want’ is explained by him as ‘that without which we cannot live.’ (The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda- vol. IV: 19)

Often debated question – ‘What is moral and what is immoral?’

He clarifies without any iota of ambiguity – ‘that which is selfish is immoral and that which is unselfish is moral.’

(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda- vol. I:110)

Swamiji’s comparison of moral and immoral to unselfishness and selfishness respectively speaks about his stubborn nature of emphasizing morality, which he always says, is the foundation for everything. Indeed, though immorality cannot be compared to illegality, it is sometimes an offence, and a punishable act. But, selfishness is purely a personal trait and nothing to do with law, but Swamiji has equated it with a punishable act. He subtly says that no one has ever got a right to be selfish. That right is not accorded to anybody.

Another tricky concept- what is a virtue and a vice?
Not much of a discussion is required. Swami simply defines them as ‘the two forms of energy aiding and retarding the onward progress.’

(The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda- Vol. I: 240)

The best definition for education can be found in the words of swami Vivekananda-

“We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one’s own feet.” (The Complete works of swami Vivekananda Vol. V: 342: chapter ‘Conversations and Dialogues)

To indicate how important the education is, Swamiji expressed the idea in his own style. The use of active and passive voice in the sentence is very well balanced. The sentence is begun with the active voice – ‘we want….’ which clearly indicates a demand with a sort of force indicating that we ‘long for’, ‘wish for’, ‘yearn’ and ‘pine for’ or we ‘ardently desire for’ – ‘that education’ by which ‘character is……..expanded’- all the three vital aspects of education are expressed in passive voice since they are not demands and only the outcome of the ‘real or true education’ and this is very effectively expressed by the conjunctive ‘that’. The opening and the closing clauses are in active and the rest of the three are in passive, very effectively balanced.


Swamiji elucidates what education is. In the earlier sentence, ‘how’ important education is explained and in this sentence ‘what’ is meant by ‘education’ is expounded. In a short sentence, the very quintessence of
education has been revealed. In just ten words that the sentence contains, two are prepositions, two are articles, one is an adverb and with the remaining four noun words with a static verb ‘is’ all the impact has been brought out. Rhyming is very obvious between all the four nouns - education, manifestation, perfection, man - the adverb ‘already’ emphasises the inherent knowledge of man, and the role of education in igniting the spark. Definite article, placed before the nouns- perfection and manifestation- definitely deepens the thought.

In the ‘Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda’, yet another vibrant sentence is found on education-

“To me, the very essence of education is the concentration of mind, but not the collecting of the facts.”

(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol: VI: 38)

This sentence further explains the very essence of education. The style of Swami Vivekananda can be seen in the use of the noun phrase- ‘concentration of the mind’ - instead of using the single word – ‘concentration’, he has used a phrase- ‘concentration of the mind’ only to heighten the effect. It is very obvious that concentration is related to mind but still Swami Vivekananda used such expressions very frequently. Moreover, here, he has rhymed it with another phrase- ‘collecting of the facts’ in which in fact, the preposition ‘of’ is not needed; ‘collecting facts’ is enough, but Swamiji has intentionally used it just to make a rhyming with the preceding phrase.

There is no evidence that Swami Vivekananda and Paramahamsa Yogananda paid any conscious attention towards language or towards the
literary aspects like rhetoric and figures of speech – yet, all those finer aspects of language overflowed their speeches. But, through their fathomless love of almighty and the burning desire for the upliftment of the masses had found their expression through eloquence and rhetoric all over the globe.

Rabindranath Tagore could see the glory of India in Swami Vivekananda. Hence Rabindranath Tagore advised all those who want to know about India to know about Swami Vivekananda—

“If you want to know India, study Swami Vivekananda.” – Rabindranath Tagore. (*My India, The India Eternal:* 195)

He used to advise young and old to study and understand swami Vivekananda. It was, Swami Vivekananda, who, for the first time conveyed the essence of the Indian scriptures to the West through English. Even the mysterious concepts like ‘death’ and ‘immortality’ could find convincing and effective expressions in Swami Vivekananda’s speeches. The life objective of Swami seems ‘to place before man the immortal message of scriptures for the spiritual development of man in clear and simple language.’ It is misunderstood by some when Dr.K.R. Srinivasa lyengar said that ‘the Swami should be counted more among our prophets and builders of nation than among the mere masters of prose’ (*Indian Writing in English*: 537) that he was pleading for a place for swami Vivekananda in the English literature, but in fact, he is only placing the practitioners of prose on a lower level, while projecting Swami Vivekanada as a master of the prose art.
Antithesis is one of the stylistic devices that has been used by the spiritual leaders as well as the political leaders. It is powerfully used even by the politicians also- “We observe today ‘not’ a victory of party, ‘but’ a celebration of freedom.” (*The inaugural speech of the President Kennedy*)

In the hands of swami Vivekananda, it found its fullest expression for presenting great ideas and for producing dramatic effects. In one of the public speeches, he gives a dramatic self introduction-

“I am not a Buddhist, as you heard, and I am” (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I: 21*)

About the worship of God and the attitude of the people-

“We may worship a picture of god, but not god as the picture…”
(*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Calcutta Vol. IV. 47*)

“We have brains, but no hands.”

The frequent use of antithesis can be found in the speeches of Master E.K. and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev.

“Education should stimulate your brain, ‘not’ dull your brain.”
(*Inspire Your Child; Inspire the world: 23*)

“There are ‘no’ bad people in this world; but there are people with badly arranged thoughts.” (*Overseas Messages: 101*)

The figure of speech is an ‘embellishment to the language’, and ‘a decoration to thought’. There are nearly two hundred figures of speech and all the major figures of speech have found befitting place in his expressions. One of the figures of speech that were exploited by Swami Vivekananda was
‘anaphora’ which means – a repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of the successive clauses or sentences’. In India, in the chanting of vedic mantras, this can be found. This is exploited to the fullest by the politicians of many nations in their respective parliaments on different instances. In the House of Commons in June 1940, Sir Winston Churchill declared –

“We shall fight on the beaches; we shall fight on the landing-grounds; we shall fight in the streets; we shall fight on the hills.”

(Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student: 472)

In his letter to the ‘Noble Lord’, in 1976, the popular parliamentarian orator Edmund Burke wrote- “It is a luxury, it is a privilege, and it is an indulgence for those who are at their use!”

(Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student : 473)

The famous speech of Martin Luther King Jr. on ‘Civil Rights March’ (1905) is well known to many-

“We are moving to the land of freedom. Let us march to the realisation of the American dream. Let us march on segregated housing. Let us march on segregated housing. Let us march on poverty. Let us march on ballot boxes………. (Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student: 472)

Swami Vivekananda’s powerful us of ‘anaphora’ for a historical purpose, the fusion of the East and the West, is seen in his first address at the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago on 11th Sep. 1893.
“I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.”

(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda : Vol - I :3)

On the same platform, he declared his pride of being an Indian, making powerful use of the same figure of speech:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance…. I am proud to belong to nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all the nations…..I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites …..I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering…..grand Zoroastrian.

(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda: Vol - I; 3)

The preaching of strength and courage through this figure of speech has an extraordinary effect on men and women of all ages and all nations-

Strength therefore is the one thing needful; strength is the medicine for the world’s disease. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannized over by the rich. Strength is the medicine that the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine that sinners must have when tyrannized over by other sinners; and nothing gives such strength as this idea of monism.

(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol –I :201)
It was, Swami Vivekananda, who, for the first time presented the essence of the Indian spirituality to the West through his persuasive presentation with his ‘massive intellect and torrential eloquence’. (*Indian Writing in English, Bombay: Asia Publishing House: 234*) Even the mysterious concepts like ‘death’ and ‘immortality’ could find convincing and effective expressions in Swami Vivekananda’s speeches. The life objective of Swami was -

“to place before man in the East and the West a comprehensive message of man’s spiritual development and realization in clear and simple language and secondly to set in motion the wheel of such a spiritual message.”

(*Swami Vivekanada: His Life and Mission:11*)

Words derive their meaning and significance, in the way they are placed and in the way they are prepared to interact with each other. Any change of words or the arrangement of words results in a change of meaning. The same words, used in different structures will derive different meanings. A simple change of punctuation in a sentence will yield a totally different meaning. In the following sentences, the effect of punctuation can be clearly observed.

A judge has given his judgment-

“Hang him not, leave him.”

The sentence was typed by the typist- “Hang him, not leave him.” (a simple change of comma)

A man wrote to his wife who has left him-

“Woman, without her man, is nothing.”

The gentleman received a reply-
“Woman! Without her, man is nothing.” (a simple change of punctuation)

Just by the change of the word order, different levels of tonal effect of the author can be brought out, without disturbing the meaning. Following sentence is an example for that-

“Murali loved a beautiful girl.” – this sentence can be presented in different structures.

A beautiful girl was loved by Murali.

What Murali did was to have loved a beautiful girl.

It was a beautiful girl that Murali loved.

It was a beautiful girl that was loved by Murali.

It was Murali that loved a beautiful girl.

It was Murali that was in love with a beautiful girl.

Murali was in love with a beautiful girl.

Murali was in love with a girl of beauty.

In the hands of the spiritual writers, the lexical items have taken different shapes and forms for conveying the spiritual message. The cultural and social purposes and intentions provide significant clues to the meaning and text. The religious autobiographies of Indians have captured the minds and the hearts of the millions of readers of all ages, regions and religions all over the world. “The Autobiography of a Yogi” by Paramahmsa Yogananda is a masterpiece of Indian writing in English. It consists of 535 pages (1, 60,390 words.) Autobiographical writings are literary reflections of a sum total of experiences and experiments of the self, in narrative form and an essential section of literary tradition as early as fifteenth century. The onset of twentieth
century witnessed the expansion of the scope of the autobiography as a literary genre. This genre has been effectively exploited by the Indian spiritual leaders for spreading the essence of India’s ancient wisdom to the world.

About Yogananda’s English in the presentation of his autobiography, Columbia University Press, USA wrote in glowing terms-

“There was nothing before, written in English or any other European language, like this presentation of a yogi.”

(Autobiography of a Yogi – the cover page)

Though, the autobiography of a Yogi is a master piece of prose, the reading of it gives a poetic pleasure. The collocations that are sprinkled all through the Autobiography are remarkable- Holy vibration, mystic amulet, cosmic consciousness, spiritual engine, mortal memory, unbroken thrill, swelling glory, melancholic whirlpools, soundless chant, gathering darkness, sensory mirage, creative beams - are just a few examples.

Paramahamsa used stunning phrases like stairways of wakefulness, mind weaves dreams, nectar of immortality, dawn of pre-natal memories, vapours of sorrow, waves of laughter, veil of light, bubble of laughter, microphone of the spiritual eye, and mind is the wielder of muscles etc.,

Personification and Figures of speech are an integral part of Paramahamsa’s narration- referring to the grace of god, that a saint has been receiving in abundance, apart from the government pension, Paramahmsa uses the collocation- ‘the spiritual pension’. (Autobiography of a Yogi : 23) The root words ‘loq’, ‘log’ ‘loc’ mean to speak (loquacious, dialogue, elocution)
and the word – ‘paucity’ means scarcity, insufficiency and dearness. Paramahamsa coined a word ‘pauciloquy’ (I felt ashamed at his pauciloqy- *Autobiography of a Yogi* : 20) for indicating the speechlessness of the saint. A smile that cannot be understood is a ‘quizzical smile.’ (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 22) A caution with the touch of some conspiracy is coined as ‘conspiratorial caution’, (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 26) and a big boil on the body of Yogananda as ‘stalwart boil’. (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 10) India may be materialistically poor, when compared to the West, but there is no dearth for the spiritual wealth, an inexhaustible treasure is always available. Paramahamsa feels that ‘spiritual skyscrapers’ (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 31) can be frequently found on the wayside, even by the worldly people.

Speaking about the profound knowledge of his master’s master, Lahiri Mahasaya, Paramahamsa Yogananda says, ‘effortlessly, he dipped into the divine library. Foam of words and spray of thoughts gushed from the fountain of his omniscience.’ (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 36) Narrating a heart throbbing story of a tiger saint, who fought with wild tigers with naked arms, wounding and killing them in full public view, Paramahamsa speaks about the warning that was given by the father of the tamer of the tigers, “Son, I have the words of warning. I would save you from coming ills, produced by the ‘grinding wheels of cause and effect.” (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 52) Paramahamsa narrates a deadly fight between one of the largest and savage tigers ever seen and the tiger saint, “blasts of pain and lethal lust came from the bestial throat; landed a concussive blow.” (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 56) Explaining the transformation
that took place in the life of the tiger fighter, who was blessed by a saint, Paramahamsa says, “I will teach you to subdue the beasts of ignorance, roaming in the jungles of the human mind. You are used to an audience, let it be a galaxy of angels, entrained by your thrilling mastery of yoga!” (Autobiography of a Yogi: 57) People are hugely worried about their future arrangements and struggle endlessly for their outward security, which according to the belief of the Masters, “The divine order arranges our future more wisely than any insurance company.” (Autobiography of a Yogi: 62) One night, when Paramahamsa was in the ashram, he was unable to sleep due to continuous mosquito bites by the ‘hypodermic needle’ (Autobiography of a Yogi: 109) and ‘the singing drone as the mosquitoes celebrate bloodthirsty rites.” (Autobiography of a Yogi : 108)

Paramahamsa was advised by his master Sri Yukteswar ‘to get rid of mosquito consciousness’, (Autobiography of a Yogi: 109) in order to get into the lap of sleep. Paramahamsa refers to his master Sri Yukteswar a ‘divine lion.’ (Autobiography of a Yogi : 121) It is only due to the ‘disciplinary hammer’ of his master, Paramahamsa says that the ‘titanic transformation’ happened among the disciples. (Autobiography of a Yogi :119) indeed, discipline and disciple have come from the same roots. About the school, which was conducted by a saintly person, known as Master Mahasaya, Paramahamsa says, “No words of chastisement passed his lips; no rule and ferule maintained his discipline. Higher mathematics was taught in these modest class rooms, and a chemistry of love….” (Autobiography of a Yogi: 76)
Dissection and vivisection are known to the people in regard to the laboratory and scientific understanding of something. About the reprimands of his master, Paramahamsa refers to as ‘verbal vivisections.’ (Autobiography of a Yogi: 122) It is only the spiritual writers like Paramahamsa that can use an expression like ‘impersonal with wisdom’, while referring to his master. (Autobiography of a Yogi: 122) Paramahamsa’s experience with his master found expressions such as ‘an oceanic joy broke upon calm endless shores of my soul. The spirit of God, I realized is ‘exhaustless bliss.’ (Autobiography of a Yogi: 142) Paramahamsa warns how the emotions and desires drag a person of mirth into the most undesirable dirt, “Outward longings drive us from the Eden within; The lost paradise is quickly regained through divine meditation.” (Autobiography of a Yogi 147)

The root cause of all the problems, according to the masters of wisdom, “All human ills arise from some transgression of universal law.” (Autobiography of a Yogi: 162) The solution for the eradication of the adverse effects of the past actions as given by Paramahamsa in a beautiful expression, “Seeds of past karma (actions) cannot germinate if they are roasted in the fires of wisdom.” (Autobiography of a Yogi: 165) Many people are, indeed, proud of their ‘egoistic intelligence.’ (Autobiography of a Yogi: 147) Explaining about the relationship, Paramahamsa and his brothers and sisters shared with their parents, uses the expression ‘a perfect parental harmony’. He says that in their mother’s presence, they made an early ‘bittersweet acquaintance’. (Autobiography of a Yogi: 2).
Those who have read his autobiography in which such descriptions as ‘late afternoon sun were crowning the tall ripple of the wild grass’ (*Autobiography of a Yogi*: 5); “her solacing black eyes had been my refuge in the trifling tragedies of childhood”, (*Autobiography of a Yogi*: 13) have to decide whether it is a prose work or a work of poetry.

The narrative style of expressing even the complex aspects of the scriptures is amazing. Paramahamsa narrates as though he personally experiences an incident. His narrative strategies are highly realistic in nature. The following is an example of Paramahamsa’s narrative technique. In the words of Paramahamsa, about his master Sri Yukteswar’s explanation of the Biblical concept, ‘Genesis’-

“Genesis is deeply symbolic, and cannot be grasped by a literal interpretation,” he explained. “Its ‘tree of life’ is the human body. The spinal cord is like an upturned tree, with man’s hair as its roots, and efferent nerves as branches. The tree of the nervous system bears many enjoyable fruits, or sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. In these, man may rightfully indulge; but he was forbidden the experience of sex, the ‘apple’ at the centre of the body (‘in the midst of the garden’). (We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, god hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest you die.”

(*The Bible: Genesis* 3.2-3)

“The ‘serpent’ represents the coiled-up spinal energy that stimulates the sex nerves. ‘Adam’ is reason, and ‘Eve’ is feeling. When the emotion or
Eve-consciousness in any human being is overpowered by the sex impulse, his reason or Adam also succumbs. God created the human species by materializing the bodies of man and woman through the force of his will; He endowed the new species with the power to create children in a similar ‘immaculate’ or divine manner. Because his manifestation in the individualized soul had hitherto been limited to animals, instinct-bound and lacking the potentialities of full reason, God made the first human bodies, symbolically called Adam and Eve. To these, for advantageous upward evolution, He transferred the souls or divine essence of two animals. In Adam or man, reason predominated; in Eve or woman, feeling was ascendant. Thus was expressed the duality or polarity that underlies the phenomenal worlds. Reason and feeling remain in a heaven of cooperative joy so long as the human mind is not tricked by the serpentine energy of animal propensities.”

“The human body was therefore not solely a result of evolution from beasts, but was produced through an act of special creation by God. The animal forms were too crude to express full divinity; man was uniquely given the potentially omniscient ‘thousand-petaled lotus’ in the brain, as well as acutely awakened occult centres in the spine.”

“God, or the Divine Consciousness present within the first created pair, counseled them to enjoy all human sensibilities, with one exception, sex sensations. These were banned, lest humanity enmesh itself in the inferior animal method of propagation. The warning not to revive subconsciously present bestial memories was unheeded. Resuming the way of brute
procreation, Adam and Eve fell from the state of heavenly joy natural to the original perfect man. When ‘they knew that they were naked,’ their consciousness of immortality was lost, even as God had warned them; they had placed themselves under the physical law by which bodily birth must be followed by bodily death.”

“The knowledge of ‘good and evil,’ promised to Eve by the ‘serpent,’ refers to the dualistic and oppositional experiences that mortals under maya (illusion) must undergo. Falling into delusion through misuse of his feeling and reason, or Eve-and Adam-consciousness, man relinquishes his right to enter the heavenly garden of divine self-sufficiency. The personal responsibility of every human being is to restore his ‘parents’ or dual nature to a unified harmony or Eden.”

(Autobiography of a Yogi: pp 168-170)

The above explanation of the Genesis, given through Paramahamsa is an outstanding example of the narrative technique of the spiritual writers in presenting an incomprehensible aspect of the religious scriptures from the background of the spirituality. Many religious heads can only be able to give a religious side of explanation, but rarely can they render a comprehensive understanding of the scripture from the light of the spirituality.

People of any region, religion, and any country have certain characteristic features in common about the understanding of the scriptures and of the incarnations and about the spiritual leaders. It is a common belief of the people that they cannot attain or reach a state of divinity since they are only ‘mortals’ or ordinary human beings with whom the accomplishment of
spirituality is an impossibility. Paramahamsa gave a fantastic term ‘spiritual cowardice’ (*Autobiography of a Yogi* : 171) to that kind of lassitude or attitude which “leads many worldly people to believe comfortably that only one man is the son of God. ‘Christ was uniquely created’, they reason, “so how can I, a mere mortal, emulate Him?” but all men have been divinely created, and must someday obey Christ’s command: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”(*Matthew 5:48, Bible*). “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (*Bible: I John 3:1.171*)

Had there been no ‘English language’, mankind might have got struck in their own narrow grooves of thought, confined to their hard shells of beliefs. Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev ironically says that one’s height of ignorance often turns as ‘belief’. Since the spiritual writers are the seers (who could see into the future), they had courted English language far earlier than any other group of people. In the beginning of the 20th century only, Master C.V.V (a spiritual master of south India) gave mantras (divine utterances which are made in the language Sanskrit, which is considered the language of the angels) to his disciples in English language to the chagrin of the society. He gave prayers and meditations in English. In India, especially with Hindus, offering prayers in English is unthinkable and unacceptable, but, Master C.V.V. as early as, in the beginning of the 19th century, in the place of Sanskrit mantras, gave utterances in English. There are thousands of disciples of Master C.V.V. all over the
world, performing prayers in English only, in the place of Sanskrit mantras. Master E.K was one among the staunch followers of Master C.V.V.

When one studies the works of Master E.K. and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, it is clearly understood that there is a triangular bridge of harmony built between the important three – the speaker, the subject and the listener; or the writer, the book and the reader. This is one of the special features of the spiritual masters. From the very beginning of reading the book or listening to the lecture, anyone can relate oneself with the author or the speaker spontaneously, through experiencing the subject. Experience of the content is possible only with the realized souls whose words come out of their profound practical wisdom. That means, there will not be a difference between them and the wisdom that comes out through them. This is a striking difference between the spiritual masters and the mere men and women of letters. The former express through their hearts and the latter write and speak through their minds. Otherwise, such collocations as ‘skilled ignorance’ in the expression ‘skilled ignorance of the scholars makes you see the difference between the Vedas and Upanishads’, (Our Heritage: 9) and the aphoristic expressions such as ‘Truthfulness is an attitude.’ (Overseas Messages-II; 215) and ‘Stability in happiness’, (Overseas Messages-II; 326) and ‘Masters are not concerned with the authorship of good thoughts’ (Overseas Messages -I; 144) will not flow.

It is exclusively in the works of the spiritual writers that one comes across sutra-like definitions or aphoristic statements or universal truths in a ceaseless flow. In the works, other than that of the spiritual masters, one finds a
reference or the repetition of the quotes from the scriptures and other literature. Whereas, the truths of life just flow from the lips and pens of these spiritual masters effortlessly to shatter the illusions of life and guide people on the right path. The following are just a few examples.

People believe that ‘silence is gold’ and proper practice or observance of silence helps them in their spiritual progress. With this belief, some people even mark some days for ‘maintaining silence’ and during these days, they do not talk to anyone. But, master E.K. says that silence is ‘psychological’, related to ‘mind’, but not ‘physical.’ “It is the mental silence that is required, but not the vocal.” (Patanjali yoga: C.D.) If anyone tries to be silent on the physical plane, and be active on the mental plane, it is nothing but disturbing oneself more than while they talk. In an antithetical sentence, an essential truth of life is given just in twelve words. Master E.K. says that while speaking also, silence can be maintained. Silence, indeed, means not being disturbed by the turbulent waves of the undesirable and emotional thoughts. If one keeps the slate of the mind clean without the chaotic thoughts, then it is considered the chaste observance of silence, but not otherwise, as most people usually deem it to be. So also Master E.K. says that one can be a ‘sanyasi’ (renouncing the worldly things and a family), being in the midst of a big family; and a sanyasi can also become a ‘family man’, being mired by the thoughts of the world. Renunciation is not related to the physical things; ‘attachment’ or ‘detachment’ is not physical, but it is purely psychological. Many a man has been tricked by
the concept ‘detachment’. Master E.K. says that ‘abandonment is not
detachment.’ Leaving the responsibilities of the world is not detachment.

If anyone is beset with the lust for wealth, name and fame, they are
usually termed ‘selfish’, ‘greedy’ and ‘power monger’ and so on, but Master
E.K. gives out the real diagnosis of such a person in his own aphoristic style,
“Lust for name and fame are all psychological weaknesses.” (C.D. Patanjali
Yoga) It is only in the works of the spiritual writers, one can come across
appropriate definitions for the life concepts, such as these. This definition of
the Master will make one realize how foolish and ignorant a person can be-
considering ‘weakness’ as ‘virtue’, ‘strength’ and ‘greatness.’ People,
unfortunately think that they are climbing the ladder of social success in the
name of name and fame, unmindful of losing themselves.

Another meditative sentence, given by the master, is- “Children are all
experience; no thought.” (www.masterek.org)

The psychology of the children can be understood only through the
works of the spiritual masters. Adults think that the children do not know
anything and they should teach them. It is a major misconception of the adults
about the children. Children are, effortlessly in the state of ecstasy for which
the adults ceaselessly try all sorts of methods of meditation. Hence Sadhguru
also says that when a child is born, it is time for learning, but not for teaching.
Who can teach whom? A fresh and vibrant mind will be very much in tune
with life, but not the ‘grown ups’ who seldom entertain a lively thought. It is
only one’s thoughts that prevent anyone from experiencing the bliss of life.
Any number of definitions can be found for the concept ‘character’, but here is a different definition, given by the Master of wisdom – “The time that you take to repay your debts determines your character.” (www.masterek.org) Unfortunately, it is not an uncommon belief among people that the spiritual masters are impractical and not concerned with the financial matters, but, through this sentence one can understand how meticulous they are with every aspect of life. People usually think that ‘character’ means in regard to man and woman relationship, but with the spiritual masters, character means much more than what is usually understood by the people of all walks of life. In their view, a person who does not exhibit anxiety in the ‘repayment of the debts’, is also considered a characterless person. In Master E.K.’s speeches, one can find any number of aphoristic sentences in regard to the discipline of money. If a gentleman who has taken money from two persons- one who imposes ‘interest’ on the amount given and another, who gives without ‘interest’, then to whom should he first pay back? If he is a person of character, he should pay back at the earliest to that person who had not demanded ‘interest’ for the money that he had lent. But, in most cases it does not happen at all. All the spiritual masters are very keen on economic aspects, though they give last priority to them.

It is a common belief that rich ‘food’ bestows upon man the required strength. But, according to Master E.K., “Food is fuel only, not strength at all.” (www.masterek.org) What the spiritual masters feel is that there is something higher and subtle energy in nature. One can receive greater energies from the
five elements- earth, sky, water, air and fire- if only a person connects himself with the nature. Not being able to realize the secret of the real strength, people cling on to mere ‘food’.

Another aphorism from the speeches of Master E.K., “Nature is essentially progressive, because, it is always divine.” (www.masterek.org)

It is only through divinity, progress happens in one’s life, but not due to any other trait or possession. In spite of extraordinary characteristic features of one’s personality, development will not be steady and happiness will not be constant. Divinity is not related to any sort of activity related to religiosity. Purity of one’s personality is Divinity.

“See God through the temple, not in the temple,” is another aphoristic expression from Master E.K. (www.masterek.org)

This aphorism of the Master dismantles the robustly built shrines of ignorance in the minds and hearts of many a man and woman. People are only connected to the confined divinity of the sanctuary. Beyond the bricks of the temple, god is usually unseen. Temple, as the spiritual masters say, is only a training place. If a person is able to experience the same sanctity in a market place, it is seeing god through the temple. If people are able to see Almighty only in temples, the very purpose of visiting temples is lost.

What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? If at all a straight and soul satisfying explanation is to be given, it must be by the
spiritual writers like Master E.K. who says, “Knowledge acquired is burden and knowledge applied is wisdom.” (www.masterek.org)

Spiritual leaders are the masters of ‘aphoristic expressions’. If one observes the above expressions, the technique of the masters can be understood. The technique is that even the intricate, but vital aspects of life are expressed in an effortless manner as if they are very simple to be followed and implemented. So that people show inclination in implementing the teachings of the masters. If the same message has to be given by the religious people or the scholars, hundreds of words flow to baffle the already beleaguered mankind. Their only motto is to motivate mankind into action. This can be understood if one observes the length of Master E.K.’s aphoristic sentences which are constructed with bare minimum words, as few as four words also, such as ‘truthfulness is an attitude’, ‘logic is mind’s magnet’ etc.,

About Truth, Silence, Food, Detachment, Children, Temple, Nature and Knowledge- on any concept, (as discussed above and as discussed in the second chapter) a definite definition comes in a single simple compact sentence consisting of minimum of four words to a maximum length of not more than twelve to fifteen words. Each aphorism has the potential in it to be expanded into a lengthy lecture or be enlarged into a big volume. With remarkable felicity, spiritual writers can twist the language to the benefit of mankind. The analysis of the speeches and writings of the spiritual masters reveals that many spiritual masters are in infallible love with this type of short and succinct sentence structures. This striking technique can also be seen in the speeches
and writings of Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev who has given memorable definitions, inspiring explanations and epigrammatic expressions to certain concepts to shatter the confusions, illusions and delusions of the people.

The much talked about concept, ‘Ego’ finds a completely different expression in the words of the Sadhguru.

There is no such thing as ego. It is empty talk. The nasty part of you, you call it ego. Whenever you get nasty, you don’t want to say, ‘It is me who is nasty.’ You want to say, ‘Oh, it is my Ego.’ This is another way of passing the buck. There is no ego. There is just you, and you, and you alone.

*(Pebbles of Wisdom: 7)*

People look to the spiritual writers for this kind of clarity. The word ‘Ego’ is so popular that everyone is familiar with that term, but no one is clear about the meaning or the concept.

Sadhguru just holds a mirror how people are wasting their lives in the name of physical comforts and well being. “Most people are investing their whole lifetime just for their material well-being. Dying to live, this is called.” *(Pebbles of Wisdom-12)* The expressions ‘investing’, ‘material well-being’ and ‘dying to live’ will help the people realize the gravity and the futility of the physical pleasures for which the entire life is spent.

There is a mixture of humour and subtle satire in many of his expressions- Sadhguru says, ‘Your aliveness is going down because you are
committing suicide in installments.’ (Pebbles of Wisdom: 49) The expression, ‘committing suicide in installments’ is certainly a novel expression which definitely draws the attention of the people and unconsciously force them to ponder over Sadhguru’s words.

Sadhguru says, “If there is any genuine work on this planet, it is only with the human beings, with the rest of life, you really have no work to do—everything is fine.” (Pebbles of Wisdom: 90)

The subtle sarcasm can be seen in this expression. In the first half of the sentence, it seems, he is on the positive note when he has used the expression ‘any genuine work’, but, the second part of the sentence indicates that, that expression is mocking man. The expression, ‘genuine work’ and ‘everything is fine’ are used as the opposites, the former being negative and the latter being positive. This is another technique of the spiritual masters that they do not deliberately use the negative, instead, they use positive vocabulary to subtly indicate the opposite.

People are usually very conscious of their self, their presence which they expect to be recognised by one and all. But the problem is that ‘the less your personality, the more your presence’, says Sadhguru. (Pebbles of Wisdom: 46) That means, the less one is conscious of one’s personality, the more their impact of their personality will be on the society. Being ignorant of this fact, people constantly try to highlight their personality. About the control of mind, Sadhguru says -
Most men and women think that they need to control their minds, but the surprising fact is that ‘mind needs to be liberated, but not controlled, says Sadhguru.  

(Pebbles of Wisdom: 55)

People believe that God, the creator of this universe is great, but unfortunately, people create their own creation in which they are so struck that they do not have time to enjoy the beauty of the creator’s creation. Sadhguru says, “What you are creating in your mind has become more important than the creator’s creation.” (Pebbles of Wisdom: 56) So, the problem is that man’s psychological creation, filled with fantasies, problems and illusions has become more important than the real creation of God. This is all happening because of self exaggeration. It is like a minute particle in the universe thinking itself as the universe.

Sadhguru always says-

Children only come through you, you don’t create them. It is a privilege that they happened through you. Enjoy the privilege; do not think of it as an authority. Just enjoy the privilege that another life chose to come through you into this world.

(Pebbles of Wisdom: 64)

Many parents think that they can exercise uncontrollable authority over their children as if they have created them, forgetting the fact that it is a fantastic opportunity, given to a human being to become a brahma (the creator). The expressions- ‘come through you’, ‘happened through you’, ‘enjoy the
privilege’- show the people a different dimension of life, hence forth unaware of.

In the name of ‘security’, people are highly conscious of their mere physical wellbeing, showing gross negligence towards higher aspects of life. Sadhguru says, “When you are constantly in pursuit of security, you are in pursuit of death.” (Pebbles of Wisdom: 96)

This sentence is yet an example of a compact sentence, filled with a great length of meaning. According to Sadhguru, seeking security is nothing but courting death.

Another aphorism about ‘enlightenment’, by Sadhguru is, “The most difficult thing about enlightenment is that it is too simple.” (Pebbles of Wisdom: 93)

The term, ‘enlightenment’ is one which has always been discussed widely without a conclusion and proper understanding. In a single simple sentence of twelve words, he has defined how simple the ‘enlightenment’ is. A number of extraordinary aphoristic expressions can be found all through his speeches and writings—

“Your emotions are just the jucier part of your mind.”
(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 134)

“We are using people and loving things; today people are being used and things are loved.”
(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 118)

“As there is internet, there is also an inner-net.”
(Sadhguru- More than a Life: 214)
“Desire is just an anxiety to enhance yourself.”
(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance- 58);

“Fundamentally, desire is a spiritual process.”
(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 60);

“Truth is not a conclusion.”
(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 149)

“If you want the Divine to become alive within you, first of all you, as a human being, have to become absolutely alive.”
(Encounter the Enlightened-69)

“Only because, the fruit called life is inside this peel, this skin has so much value.” (Encounter the Enlightened-69)

‘You are a spiritual being dabbling with the material, although you think it’s the reverse,’ (Sadhguru- More than a Life: 227)

“Our closest relatives are trees and if we grow trees, they will grow us.”
(The Himalayan Lust: 104)

“Compassion is a most liberating emotion.” (The Himalayan Lust-104)

“A blessing is a piece of energy.” (The Himalayan Lust:192)

“A flower is the height of life’s expression in a plant.”
(The Himalayan Lust:191)

“You want the very way of your being to be joyful, not receive joy as a prize that you get at the end of misery.” (Joy 24 x 7)

“I don’t see any adults in the world. Small-bodied children, big bodied children, that’s all I see.” (Joy 24 x 7-69)

“People have invested their life in misery.” (Joy 24 x 7-111)

“Misery needs management, Joy doesn’t.” (Joy 24 x 7-112) “Misery is exploitation by itself.” (Joy 24 x 7:98)
“Good and Bad are according to your ego requirements.”
(Essential Wisdom:17)

“A gene is a memory chip.”
(Essential Wisdom: 193)

“Modern culture is a restrictive culture which causes you to behave in a certain way.”  (Essential Wisdom:193)

“Love is an assertion. Love is a supplication.” (Essential Wisdom: 82)

“Sleep is just a small manifestation of death.”
(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance:61); For in sleep, no one knows whether the person is a man or woman.

Spiritual writers are known for their wit and repartee. Sadhguru is known for his sharp wit and lively humour.

Speaking about the ‘emotional disturbance’ of the people, Sadhguru, very humourously says that ‘your intelligence has been hijacked by your hormones.’ (Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 190) Sadhguru is a master in using modern day vocabulary- from all subjects- for expressing the age old problems.

“There is enough unpleasantness in the world. Is it necessary that you have to manufacture your own private unpleasantness?”
(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance:116)

Sadhguru says that people tell him that “God loves me.” Sadhguru says that this has become a routine expression especially in the West. Sadhguru, very sarcastically says that the way they behave, only God can love them and no one else dare love them. If everyone around a person loves him, then it is greatness. Since no one loves him, he resorts to ‘god loves me.’ (Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 77)
People go on polishing their ignorance and feel great about it. Sadhguru says that ‘if you stop gold plating your limitations, if you stop seeing your shackles as ornaments, then it is very simple and you are on fulltime.’ 

(Midnights with the Mystic: 185) “Just having physical well-being is just like making a journey in a stationary car.” (Midnights with the Mystic: 187)

Sadhguru asks the people, “You have seen couples divorcing each other; have you seen anybody divorcing their money?” (Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 177)

People in the modern age are highly worried of two things- Money and Sex. Sadhguru says,

“Sex and money aren’t problems. Sex in the body is fine; money in the pocket is fine. It’s only a problem when they enter your mind.” (Sadhguru- More than a Life: 232)

Sadhguru says that if this human form is just for eating, sleeping and reproducing, then this form is just wasted. Just for that, this level of massive intelligence need not be given. Sadhguru’s refreshing wit and humour can be seen in the following -

Every worm, every insect, every bird, every animal does these things very efficiently: eating, sleeping, reproducing and dying, isn’t it? In fact you are no competition for them. Eating; there are insects and worms which can eat a thousand times their own body weight in twenty-four hours. Now if you weigh fifty kilograms, you should be able to eat fifty tons of food. That would be a real party, isn’t it? If you
eat a little more than what you should eat, you go straight to the toilet or to the doctor. That is the kind of body you have. So in the eating department, you are no competition.

Sleeping also you are no competition because there are birds, insects and animals which can sleep for three months to six months at a stretch. With the most comfortable mattresses, you cannot remain in bed a few more hours than you should, isn’t it? Reproduction; to bear one child, how much fuss! They are bearing in thousands, some of them in millions. There also you are no competition. Dying also you make too much fuss about it. That also they are doing gracefully.”

*(Encounter the Enlightened:3)*

Even the serious aspects of life can be presented in a highly humourous manner. One more striking techniques of the spiritual masters is that they teach through parables. Invariably, all the masters are fond of stories which at once draw the attention of those whom they aim to reform. Sadhguru narrates a story why an ignorant person should be silent.

“Once there was an old lion. This lion was prowling, looking around for grub. A fat old bull had strayed into the forest. The lion saw it and he thought, “This is it.” He was just looking for a snack, but here there was a whole meal. You know a bull is not like other animals of the forest; it is easy prey. So with great joy, the lion pounced upon the bull, killed him, and ate him up. With his belly full, full to the point of bursting, he felt really satisfied and he roared. A few hunters were walking in the forest, and they heard the roar. They tracked down the lion and shot him dead. So the moral of the story is, when you are full of bull, do not open your mouth.”

*(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 171)*
When a person is full of bull, only the lower nature is exhibited. If a foolish person just shuts his mouth about himself and his life, he finds some solution.

Sadhguru always says that doing appropriate thing is very important. Unless one performs actions befitting the situation, right results will not happen. It only happens only when one lives in awareness and one’s intellect is sharp. To explain this practical aspect, Sadhguru narrates a story-

“On a certain day, one man fell into a septic tank up to his neck in filth. He struggled to come out, but could not. Then after some amount of struggle, he started to scream, “Fire, fire, fire!” His neighbours heard the fire call and called the fire brigade. The firemen came and they looked around; there was no fire anywhere. Then they found this man in the septic tank, pulled him out and they asked, “Why are you screaming fire?” The man retorted, “If I said, shit, shit, would you have come?”

*(Don’t Polish Your Ignorance: 14)*

People spoke volumes about the concept- ‘realization’ and Sadhguru also has spoken, but the difference is, he spoke in few sentences and those few are through a story-

“There were two cows grazing on an English meadow. One said, “What’s your opinion on the Mad Cow disease?” The other said, “I don’t care a hoot about it. Anyway, I’m a helicopter. If a cow realizes that it is a cow, it becomes a celebrity—a holy cow. It’s that simple. It’s just a question of realization. In India, we’ve always called mystics “realized” beings. It is not about inventing or discovering something; it’s just about realizing who you are.
If there is something you do not understand it’s mysterious to you. Someone who seems to know what others do not is called a mystic. But the mystic is just someone who has realized what is there. Others don’t because they’re too self-engrossed to pay any attention to life.”

Sadhguru narrates a true story to explain how giving makes one strong; how sacrifice can be a joy. Even if one gives away one’s food and starves, still he becomes stronger, but not weak. Giving away what one needs most, one’s very sustenance itself, is what leads one’s closer to the Divine. Sadhguru says,

“There is a very wonderful true-life story, which happened during World War II in the ill-famed German concentration camp, Auschwitz. Every day numbers were called out, and people were led to the extermination area, because the camp became full. Numbers were called at random, or the weak and the old who couldn’t work were chosen. If your number was called today, you were going to your death. You were going to be shot and buried en masse. Now there was a man whose number was not called. Seeing the man’s fear he said, “Don’t fear. I will take your place.” The man felt ashamed, but at the same time, he could not refuse the offer. He wanted to live. The missionary was shot. It so happened that the very next day the Germans lost the war and our man was freed. For many years he lived with this sense of defeat and shame and later narrated this incident in his life. He saw that there was simply no point, because his life itself was somebody else’s charity. It was because of another man’s greatness that he was living. Otherwise, he would have been shot that day – it was his number. The missionary, who didn’t know him – he was not a friend, a father, a son or anything – just to ease his fear and suffering, father, a son or anything - just to ease his fear and suffering, he took the call. Now that man will know life- that man who went, not the man who stayed back. Only the other will know what life is. Only he can experience
something, certain strength, a certain power within himself that somebody who is trying to protect himself will never experience.

*(Essential Wisdom: 91-92)*

Unlike, in the works of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, ‘hybrid words’ have not been used in the works of Master E.K. and Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. Hybrid words are those words that combine the elements of the Indian language with the elements of English, such as – ‘lathi-charge’, ‘rail-gaddi’, ‘city-kowali’ marriage-pandal, Brahmin-land, attar-bottle, worship-sari etc., (Raja Rao’s ‘The Serpent and the Rope’) Indeed, it represents the ability of the Indian writer to bend the English language for his purpose. But, hardly one comes across this type of expressions in the speeches or writings of the spiritual writers. It suggests that the motto of the masters is certainly the universal appeal but not the regional.

Spiritual writers are ‘phrase makers’; the creators of varieties of ‘collocations’. In the works of the two select spiritual masters, the readers can come across remarkable, refreshing and invigorating phrases and collocations. They are the exciting story tellers. Their interesting and inspiring use of sentence structures and grammatical shapes themselves indicate the essence of their message. Rosebery once wrote regarding the oratory of William Pitt, “It is not merely the thing that is said, but the man who says it counts, the character which breathes through the sentences.”

The characteristic features of many a great writer of English prose is reflected in the style of these writers. Francis Bacon’s laconic brevity and
epigrammatic terseness, and the humour of the Charles Lamb can be found in
the works of these spiritual writers.

Through the medium of English, Indian spiritual masters have risen to
spectacular heights. With their mastery of the language and dexterity in
presenting the powerful thoughts in simple but sonorous English, unlocked the
treasures of the genius of the ancients to the common man. Above all, every
single expression of theirs can act as an antidote to many ills, troubles and
tribulations of the society and their messages are pathways to perfection. All
their utterances are highly convincing on account of their beauty of
construction, authenticity of content and purity of thought.

It is not just they made a rich use of English, but they enriched English
language. They brought science and religion on to the same platform, proving
that both are born out of the fertile human mind only.

Through their soul stirring words, spiritual leaders like Master E.K. and
Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev live on and on, forever and ever, in the hearts and
minds of millions and millions of men and women of all the regions and
religions.