

Chapter 6

Rhetoric and Style

6.0 Introduction

Rhetoric is concerned basically with a creative process that involves all the choices a writer makes from his/her earlier experiences of a problem. In fictions the use of rhetoric or figurative language is unavoidable. Plato regarded rhetoric as,

“the art of rational discourse rather than the art of eloquent expression. Clarity, consistency, and “naturalness” were the only features necessary for the effective presentation of ideas.”

(cited in Richard E. Young, 1970, p:3)

As a matter of fact, rhetoric is greatly a method of creating effective sentences in a written or spoken presentation. Its function is to give clarity, force, effectiveness and beauty to an argument or writing. So, metaphors, simile, proverbs, poems, and memorable sayings by great scholars are either quoted or adopted by writers in their creations to substantiate the characters' viewpoint and to give a more clear picture of their narration in fictions.

Likewise, Re. Karthigesu has adopted and made use of certain rhetoric devices/elements such as lines from some of the poems, rhymes and quotes from the Tamil Sangam literature and other sources in his novels. He has also created his own simile, metaphors and proverbs and used them in his novels in order to elucidate his feelings and ideas through the characters. So, in this section the rhetoric devices used by Re. Karthigesu are identified and discussed analytically with relevant examples drawn from all the four novels.

6.1 Adoption of Poetic Features in Re. Karthigesu's Novels

Every successful writer recognizes the great power of language and that too the use of rhetoric features in it. The power of a writer is demonstrated by filling the minds of readers through his creativity that is, by creating images of his or her narration. In that sense Re. Karthigesu has adopted certain rhetoric devices to capture the attention of the readers. He is trying to communicate his ideas in a clear way by quoting couplets from ThirukkuRaL (an ancient ethical literature), Tamil Bakti literatures such as *Thevaaram*, *Sivapuraanam*, *ThiruvartuTpa:* and lyrics drawn from the famous twentieth century Tamil poet Subramania Bharathiar. Through such rhetoric devices adopted from the works of great authors /creative writers the readers are able to get a more vivid picture of arguments, discussions and contexts in the narration.

ThirukkuRaL is one of the best known works in the early ethical literature of Tamil which belongs to the early centuries of the *post-sangam* period (probably written in the early centuries of A.D. and translated into more than 65 languages of the world). Now, it is considered as the greatest symbol and representation of Tamil high culture. It consists of 1330 couplets, divided into 133 chapters of ten couplets (two line couplets) each. Re. Karthigesu has used some of the relevant and appropriate couplets taken from *ThirukkuraL* either wholly or partly in his novels to emphasize the character's viewpoint with reference to material or non-material culture. For example, in *antima ka:lam (p:39)* Radha's husband Sivamani one day phones to Sundaram, his father in law to find out whether Radha has come to his house. When he knew that she was there, he wanted to talk to her. Though Radha was still awake at that time, Sundaram lied Sivamani saying that Radha was sleeping. He lied this way wantonly, as he does

not want to perpetuate the situation and deepen the misunderstanding. Here Sundaram pacifies himself by saying part of the *ThirukkuRaL* (couplet:292) which stresses that one can lie for good purposes if that lie can bring out something good, by removing the vice. By using the causal case form *enpata:l* Re. Karthigesu tries to explain the fact, namely, Sundaram who usually never tell lies, trying to tell a lie here hoping that it will bring good to the family (by removing the vice).

*“ava ippa inga illappa:. tu:ngiTTa:nnu nenaykkiRe:n!” poyta:n.
attaruNattil e:n poy inta va:ykkuL vantatu enat teriyavillai. nilaimaiyai
inum mo:sama:kka ve:NDa:m enpata:la:? **“purai ti:rnta nanmai**
payakkum” enpata:la:?(245)*

(*antima ka:lam, p:39*)

‘ “She is not here Sivamani.I think she has slept!” It is a lie. Why did I lie at that time? I don’t know. Is it because that I do want to make the situation bad to worse? or “is it because it won’t cause any damage but bring something good to the family (by removing the vice)”?’

Similarly Re. Karthigesu uses the same phrase **“purai ti:rnta nanmai payakkum” poyya:ha iruntatu**’ ‘the lie will not cause any damage’ in the novel *te:Tiyirukkum taruNangaL* (p:211) when Suriya was looking for his mother’s whereabouts. Suriya lied Sivagurunathan in order to get Sellammah’s address. He lied saying that he and his friend want to collect the money Sellammah and Karuppiah owe them.

*anta anbu mayama:na manitariTam poy colvatu avan manatai
uRuttina:lum atu oru te:vaiya:na poyya:ha **“purai ti:rnta nanmai**
payakkum” poyya:ha iruntatu.(246)*

(*te:Tiyirukkum taruNangaL,p:211*)

'lying to a loving person like Sivagurunatahan though it disturbs Suriya's feelings but it is a necessity. It will bring something good and no harm (by removing the harm)'

By using such quotes from the ancient ethical literatures at appropriate contexts like this, the author tries to bring out the attitudes and behavior of the characters involved. Likewise, in *te:Tiyirukkum taruNangaL* (p:28-29) when Samynathan passed away, his body was kept in his house and local devotional singers were reciting devotional hymns throughout that night. Here, the author picks up a few verses from *Sivapuramam and Thevaaram* (devotional hymns) to suit the grief stricken environment.

On the other hand, in the novel *va:nattu ve:lihaL* the author describes how the Indian community was brought to the then Malaya and portrays its lifestyle in the rubber estates before the independence. To justify his narrations the author quotes excerpts from well known authors of history like K.S. Sandhu: *'Indians in Malaya'* (p:9); S. Arasaratnam: *Indians in Malaysia and Singapore* (p:21); K.G. Triconning:*History of Malaysia –Singapore*,(p:37); Paul Sangmin Pang: *Educational development in Multi Racial Society*,(P:55); Kivi Hok Aan: *Emergency in Malaya*(p:90); Tunku Abdul Rahman: *I Look Back*,(p:121) at the beginning of a new chapter. In all these excerpts the author presents a brief historical background of the situation in order to maintain continuity in the narration of the story and to help the readers to understand the implications with relevant interpretations (in the subsequent section).

In all these novels the author is found to make use of the lines of the poems, phrases and old sayings taken from other Tamil literatures in a skillful way to clarify or emphasize the character's view point.

6.2 Use of Figurative Language

The process by which the poetic function affects language is generally referred to as figurative language use which involves imaginative activities such as **metaphor**, **metonymy**, and **simile** (Finch,1998,p:129). At one time figurative language was preserved only for literary criticism but Roman Jakobson who is revered as one of the pioneers among functionalists, included it within linguistics (Geoffrey Finch, 1998,p:129). Here, the use of figurative language in fictions is analysed and discussed in the context of the semantic level of a language.

6.2.1 Use of Metaphors

In Re. Karthigesu's novels there are many varieties of figurative speech found and metaphor is one among them. Metaphors are produced by looking at nature and realities. Looking at a reality through different metaphors is like looking at light through different filters. According to George Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not just an extra function of language, but an integral part of how all languages function. They also point out that metaphors with reference to a culture are invaluable to its values and outlook.

Metaphors help us to transfer the intangible into tangible and inexpressible into expressible because much of our experiential life is inward and intangible, whether it be of love, joy, suffering, or time. So, in fictions the use of metaphor allows for a further expansion of meaning. In other words, by coining words or concepts that usually do not have a semantic link, a new meaning can be expressed (Carter,1997).

In Re. Karthigesu's novels metaphors are skillfully used to deliver the intended messages. For example, in *antima ka:lam*, (p:8), after knowing about his deteriorating health Sundaram thinks about his past life and cries silently. All those happenings in his life flashed like lightning and scattered in his mind.

*oru yuham po:la manasukkut to:nRina:lum pattu nimitangaLukku me:l
a:hiyirukka:tu. minnal teRippukkaLa:ha avai manasukkuL o:Tina.
va:lnta va:lkkai, vaLarppu, paTippu, tolil, kalya:Nam, manaivi,
kulantaihaL, ella:m tuNDu tuNDa:ha, kulantai manampo:napo:kkil
veTTi oTTina oTTuppaTam po:la...(247)*

(*antima ka:lam*, p:8)

'Though it looks like a long period(yugh) for the mind but it would have taken not more than ten minutes. Those lightning flashes scattered into his mind. The life he lived, the way he was brought up, education, profession, marriage, wife, children, all scattered into pieces, like a child cutting a picture as she likes and pastes them back.....'

The noun phrase, *minnal teRippukkaL* 'scatters of lightning' is a new coinage in Tamil. Normally, the usage is *minnal veTTiyatu* ' lightning flashed' or *minnal minniyatu* 'lightning glittered'. The verbal noun *teRippukkaL* 'scatters,' presents the pictures of Sundaram's past life being scattered in pieces in a split of a second, like a stone is thrown on a piece of glass.

New coinages of metaphors and use them in appropriate places too can be a bench mark of the author. The innovative coinages like *minnal teRippukkaL* 'scatters of lightning' (*antima ka:lam*, p:8) is vividly reflects the utmost reduction in time as against the normal Tamil expression *minnal veTTu* or *minnal minniyatu* . Through this coinage the author has brought out the concept of abstraction into existence.

The author has also used metaphors like , *kolaic celhaL* (p:219) ‘killing cells’ and ‘*kolai pira:Ni*(p:292), ‘killing animal,’ *erimalaiyin a:ramba uRumal* (p:45) ‘the starting sound of volcano which is going to explode’ to describe cancer which was slowly killing Sundaram.

The metaphors in Re. Karthigesu’s novels are mainly related with human sufferings and nature and give a clear picture of the concerned situations.

6.2.2 Use of Simile

In order to expose or explain the resemblance between two features, characters, and environment, Re. Karthigesu has used appropriate simile. Some are found to be the existing similes and some are generated by the author himself according to the situation and context. The similes used by Re. Kathigesu can be divided into the following categories:

i) Exposition of Human Emotions - Comparison with Nature

To describe the happiness of Suriya when Professor John Hamilton proposes to him that he can do Doctrate straight away, if he makes some changes in his proposal.

avan uLLattil te:n va:rttatu po:l iruntatu. (248)

‘He felt like someone poured honey in his heart’

(te:Tiyirukkum taruNangaL, p:12)

In the above situation the author compares the proposal offered by Professor John Hamilton with honey that is so sweet news poured into his heart. Though the verbal

noun *va:rttatu po:l iruṅtatu* ‘is poured’ commonly used by people, here it depicts the happiness of Suriya subtly. The happiness is poured into his heart which pumps blood and happiness together into his system.

When Kathiresan first received a letter from his mother he felt as if he ate a dead lizard with his rice.

uNNum co:RRo:Tu cetta palliyaic ce:rttu viḷungiyatu po:la (249)

‘As if he ate the rice with a dead lizard’.

(su:ta:TTam a:Tum ka:lam, p:26)

Here, the author uses a dead poisonous dirty lizard *cetta palliyai* as a simile to show the hatred Kathiresan had over his mother because she left him with his father when he was very small. He hates to receive any letter from her because he always receives the same message (without any change). Secondly, he considers his mother as a dirt which should be thrown out and not to keep in his heart.

ii) Human Appearance

On that day it was raining heavily, and Sundaram was in his car and people were running here and there looking for a safe place to take shelter. But Sundaram was sitting safely in his car. Here, the author compares the safety of Sundaram with that of a baby in the womb of a mother. Nobody can harm him - even the nature. He felt that he is in a sound and safe place.

karpappaikkuL kulantai po:la(250)

‘like a baby in the womb....’

(antima ka:lam, p:129)

In the same novel in another situation the author compares the appearance of Sivamani with a giant shadow.

oru ra:Tcasa nīlal po:la jeansuTan ki:le: iRangi vanta:n Sivamani.(251)

‘Sivamani came down like a giant shadow’.

(antima ka:lam, p:129)

Sivamani arrived at Sundaram’s house at 11p.m. He got down from his *Pajero* with its lights on. When he walked towards Sundaram, Sivamani’s shadow fell in front of him like a big giant walking to the house. The poun phrase *oru ra:Tcasa nīlal ‘a giant shadow’* not only describes Sivamani’s huge size but also the vengeance he had on his wife Radha.

iii) Inanimate Things

Preparations for the wedding ceremony of Gunasegaran and Kamalam - Viswalingam’s daughter were organised as though preparing for someone’s funeral ceremony.

ilavu vi:TTu eRpa:TuhaL po:la (252)

‘Like making the preparations for a funeral ceremony.’

(va:nattu ve:lihaL, p:93)

Totally opposing concepts such as *tirumaNa viḷa* ‘wedding ceremony’ and *ilavu vi:TTu* ‘funeral house’ are synchronised by the author in a simple simile in order to express Viswalingam’s disgust because he did not like his daughter Kamalam getting married to his worker Gnasegaran. This kind of unique rhetoric features of the author can not only make an impact on the readers but also add richness to his novels.

Similes are useful rhetoric devices . These are some of the examples of similes used by the author in his novels. Re. Karthigesu has used similes suitably in order to provide the readers with vivid elaboration of narrations.

6.2.3 Use of Analogy

Besides simile and metaphor the novelist has also used the method of analogical creations to describe the concerned situations. For example, in the novel *te:Tiyirukkum taruNangaL (p:26)* Suriya was shocked to see his father lying on the bed in between machines and tubes running through the veins of his hands, as an airless bag.

*iyantirangaLin ri:nga:rangkaLin mattiyil ka:RRuppo:na paiya:hak
kiTanta:r saminathan. sailain tiravam po:TTaliliruntu coTTuc coTTa:ha
iRangik kuLa:y valiya:ha kai narambuhaLukkuL e:Rik koNDiruntatu.
(253)*

(te:Tiyirukkum taruNangaL,p: 26)

*‘in between the noises of the machines Saminathan was lying as an
airless bag. Saline water was dripping drop by drop from the bottles into
his veins in the hands ’*

The author instead of using the phrase *ka:RRuppo:na pai po:la* ‘like an airless bag’ prefers the use of the form *paiya:hak* ‘as a bag’ which explains that Saminathan is crumbled as an airless bag. The author thus illustrates that Saminathan is almost dead and there is nothing in his body.

6.2.4 Use of Metonymy

The novelist also has used metonymy in his novels to describe the environment. In *su:ta:TTam a:Tum ka:lam* (p:123) when the young educationist from Nigeria presented his research paper he read it word by word and the hall looked so dull. By this the author refers to the audience in the hall who looked so tired and dull.

*tan kaTTuraiyai varikkuv_uri paTikka a:rambittapo:tu arangam
co:rntiruntatu.*(254)

(*su:ta:TTam a:Tum ka:lam* ,p:123)

‘when he started reading his paper word by word, the hall looked so dull.’

Similarly, in *su:ta:TTam a:Tum ka:lam* (p:9) instead of saying the people in the house are sleeping he says, *vi:Tu tu:kkattil iruntatu* where *vi:Tu* ‘house’ in this noun phrase refers to those people living in that house.

In another situation in the same novel the author uses,

*viRuViRuv_ena naTanta:L. viTintavuTan in_{ta} vi:Tum akkampak_{ka}mum,
u:rum vilikkum. ceyti terintavuTan ennaip palikkum.*(255)

(*su:ta:TTam a:Tum ka:lam* (p:12)

'She walked so hastily. At dawn, this house, the neighbourhood and the whole village will wake up and when they come to know the news, they all will blame me.'

The metonymy, *inta vi:Tum akkampakkamum u:rum vilikkum*, *palikkum* refer 'to the people in her house, the neighbourhood and all those who live in the village' .

That means the whole community will accuse her for what she has done.

6.3 Conclusion

The author of these novels Re. Karthigesu has not only adopted the different types of rhetoric devices and techniques as effectively as possible, but also analogically created his own devices such as metaphors, simile, metonymy, etc. to suit the socio cultural contexts in the novels and made use of the same in a fitting way.