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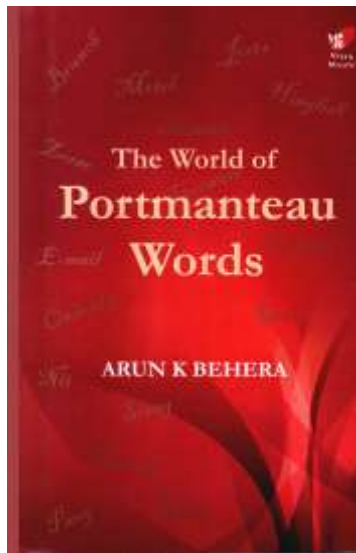
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Portmanteau Words: The Key to Creativity

A Review of Arun K. Behera's Book *The World of Portmanteau Words*

Reviewed by Abhilash Nayak, Ph.D.

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Portmanteau Words: The Key to Creativity

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Creativity is the soul of language. This creativity can be exhibited at the level of words, phrases, sentences and ideas. Philosophers play with ideas whereas poets play with words. While playing with words, it is possible to create words out of words, make words out of nonsensical sounds, arrange words in different orders to create different nuances of meaning and blend words to form new ones. Unless a user of English is well conversant with the different permutations and combinations that the English words can undergo, s/he will not be able to use the right word in the right place and add novelty to the language in everyday life. This book of Dr Arun K Behera, *The World of Portmanteau Words*, therefore has the potential to be a good companion to anyone who seriously thinks of embellishing his/her language to improve its presentability.

Portmanteau words or blends, take their origin in the French word *portmanteau* which means a travelling bag, divided into two compartments but outwardly looks like one. Likewise, in portmanteau words, two meanings get packed into one word, and serve the linguistic functions that the original words are supposed to convey. They closely resemble the compound words formed with the help of sandhi in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, carrying the imports of all the constituent words. The use of portmanteau words is nothing new in the history of language. It dates back to as early as 1398. The word 'aniseed' (anise +seed) has been found to be in use since this year. But these words have assumed popularity after Lewis Carroll made massive use of them in his writings, particularly in *Through the Looking Glass*. Pragmatically, new words come into use when the old ones are either obsolete or inadequate. In his preface to *The Hunting of the Snark*, Carroll explains, 'For instance, take the two words, "fuming" and "furious". Make up your mind that you will say both words, but leave it unsettled which you will say first. Now open your mouth and speak.....if you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say "frumious".' James Joyce and G M Hopkins also experimented with these words.

The main function of portmanteau words seems to be more therapeutic than linguistic. Though they fit into registers and genres of all kinds, they seem to be more suitable for hilarious writing where the writers aim at curing people of depression, unhappiness, agony and many other psychological ailments. When one says tigon, s/he definitely wishes to enrich himself/herself with a funny experience, wishing to see a hybrid between a tiger and lion. If such words do not sound hilarious or humorous all the time, they at least have the potency to be ironic or ridiculous. Tony Augarde cites two nice examples from Blake and Southey in this regard. Blake coined 'Nobodaddy' [nobody+ daddy] as a disrespectful name for God, while Robert Southey talked of 'futilitarians'-people devoted to futility than to utilitarianism. Dr Behera's book also abounds in many of them. Jorts [jeans+ sorts], skorts [skirt + shorts], lunner [lunch + dinner], manimal [man +animal], oranjuice [orange + juice], scrat [squirrel + rat], shart [shit + fart], shopaholic [shop + alcoholic], zony [zebra+pony] can be cited as a few examples in this regard.

The range of words selected by Dr Behera is very wide. Covering a wide range of areas from the kitchen to the internet, they seem to open doors of creativity for all the users of

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the language, thus paving the way for its enrichment. They range from simple words of daily use like knork [knife+ fork] to narcoterrorism[narcotics+ terrorism]. Some of the words like adornment, aerobatics, alphabet, alphanumeric, avionics, bash, biopic, bionics, bio-terrorism, bit, blog, bollywood, blotch, brash, brunch, dumbfound, digicam, camcorder, intercom, Interpol, knowledgebase, modem, motel, melodrama, netiquette, pictionary pixel, podcasting, smog, splatter, swipe, telecast, telecom, transistor, transponder, travelogue, twirl, vodaphone, wi-fi, wikipedia, workaholics have become part of our linguistic repertoire whereas some other words like absatively[absolutely+ positively], acknowledgment [acknowledgement + mention], amusementertainment [amusement+ entertainment], blam [blog+ advertising +marketing], Californication[California+ fornication], Pakistan [Panjab + Afganistahn + Kashmir+ Sindh+ Baluchistan] look very much far-fetched, unconvincing and are found to be rarely used. Still some other words like electrocute [electronic+ execute], fortnight[fourteen+ nights], goodbye [god+ be+ with + you], phoneme[phonetics+ scheme]do not at all look like the blend of the words given. However, the illustrations given from common life given for all entries are well within the comprehension of a layman and thus add to the readability as well as the usability of the text.

Prof Tripathy has rightly pointed out in the *Foreword* that this book can be a useful handbook for general students as well as students sitting for different competitive examinations. Besides, this can be a dependable handbook for people learning the tools and techniques of both poetry and journalism because creativity thrives where the doors of the mind are kept open. In spite of being very slender in its size, the book has the power to galvanize human minds in making them more fertile and creative. Dr Behera deserves all credit for successfully scripting a book on a significant yet neglected area of English vocabulary.

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