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Indianized English in Indian English Novels

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ABSTRACT

Indian English has a special Indian tone, sensibility, vocabulary and to some extent syntax. Indian writers are naturally faced with many problems and find difficulty in presenting Indian consciousness, thoughts, scenes, reality, culture and belief system. The use of English by Indian authors has always been to suit their tastes and needs. Indians have been writing in English and have achieved considerable success from the very beginning. Indian English novelists have been experimenting with language. They tried to mould the language to suitably communicate Indian thoughts and experiences. It appears that even the early novelists of English were aware of the problems of using a foreign language for literary work. India developed her own idioms in the same process as the other British colonies had done. At the level of vocabulary, the early novelists had to take recourse to various innovations and experiments by retaining a number of culture words in their works. Indian authors made an attempt to give a local flavor to their works, especially in order to satisfy the demand for exoticism by Western readers. The language of the colonizer and the colonized will be in conflict on various levels, as e.g. those of dominance, control and obedience, or of cultural authority and prestige, and of linguistic and cultural identity. This paper deals with language used by Indian authors to retain Indian tone in their works.

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Introduction

Indian Writing in English has gained immense popularity and recognition in the last two decades of the century. From Raja Rao to Salman Rushdie, the fictional writers have concentrated on changing societal patterns, transformation of values and individual's predicament in a society in transition. Rapid industrialization, scientific revolutions and upsurge of information technologies have all led to a devaluation of ethics and crumbling of culture. Indian writers have constantly tried to adapt themselves to the changing scenario. Writers like Amithav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Raj Kamal Jha and Sashi Tharoor are part of a hybrid culture, rooted in tradition and embracing the West for its receptivity and flexibility. Indianness for them is only a window to the outside world.

There are, of course, obvious reasons for writing in English. The mother tongue of the Indian writers is not English. Still they write in English because,

- It is the language of wider range, vocabulary and thoughts. It is a dominant language for them. They feel they can express their thoughts, feelings, experiences, etc... in English more effectively.
- They want to reach the reader beyond their vernacular. They want to be recognized by the people whose mother tongue is different. This love of recognition is either personal or of his culture.
- English is more flexible than their own mother tongue. It is the language of their emotional and intellectual make-up. It has the qualities of adaptation and development.

There are two related preconditions had to be met by Indians before writing novels in English. First, the English language had to be sufficiently Indianized to be able to express the reality of the Indian situation or the indigenous experience. Secondly, Indians had to be sufficiently Anglicized to use the

English language to express themselves. The novels written between 1845 and 1870 seem to have depended more on explanatory methods like foot notes, glossaries, parenthetical notes than the ones written in the latter period. In the latter phase, workable language began to take shape. It acquired different identities in accordance with the language backgrounds of the authors. Gradually the language which may be called Indian English acquired a distinct identity and character of its own.

Use of Language

After the official implementation of English education in India, English gradually emerged as a new medium of communication. Educated middle class Indians used English first as what C.D.Narasimhaiah describes as "the language of agitation". The enlightened Indian in the beginning used English as a device for making communication possible with the rulers. Most of the writers who wrote in English in the 19th century intended their works to be read by the English. They even made this intention quite explicit in their works.

The novelists of Indian languages felt inclined to render their work into English because they thought that they would be able to draw the attention of the ruling class to the social evils. It is interesting to note that creative writing in English went hand in hand with early pamphlets, memoranda and translation work. Toward the mid-19th century Indian English Writing in various forms gradually began appearing. By 1870-s the emergence of the genre of Indian Writing in English in all possible forms, had already become a reality. The Indian novelist of the second phase i.e. those who wrote in and after the 1870-s to try to mould the language to suit to the Indian situation. A creative writer who chooses a foreign language as his medium is bound to face the problem of transmissibility of culture. Each language-speaking community has its distinct and individual cultural nuances. In a country like India where diverse ways of

life and very old literary and philosophical traditions do already exist, the Indian Writer in English has to be more cautious. In order to interpret and communicate, the writer has to delete or add a few things. The author has to take liberties and accept responsibilities so that the Indianness of the work is retained.

Indians have been writing in English and have achieved considerable success from the very beginning. Indian English novelists have been experimenting with language. They tried to mould the language to suitably communicate Indian thoughts and experiences. It appears that even the early novelists of English were aware of the problems of using a foreign language for literary work. India developed her own idioms in the same process as the other British colonies had done. Indianisation was inevitable and natural. In the initial stage, the novelists had to imitate the English models. As a result, the novel was bound to suffer from artificiality and archaism. Archaic words like *thou*, *thee*, *dost*, *hath* were used in some works even as late as 1897.

On the other hand, many of the novelists of the 1890-s used their language with great efficiency. It is evident from contemporary reviews that the Indian English novelist's language was invariably appreciated by British and Indian critics. The early writers kept English readers in their view while writing their novels. It was because of their eagerness to educate the western readers and interpret to them the importance of Indian culture. A novelist has to deal with characters and situations drawn from life. He cannot escape situations of cultural or religious bearing. The task becomes all the more challenging to a novelist using a foreign language as his medium to delineate characters and interpret typical ethnic situations.

At the level of vocabulary, the early novelists had to take recourse to various innovations and experiments. First, they retained a number of culture words as they are. India is a land of a variety of cultures and many different languages with hundreds of years old literatures of their own. The first difficulty that the novelist had to overcome was of vocabulary. An Indian author could not possibly exclude all those words in Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil and other Indian languages which did not have equivalents in English. Words like *mantra*, *pooja* & *veda* related to religion and philosophy; *daroga*, *munsif*, *chalan* & *mofussil* associated with civil administration; *sari*, *dhoti*, *langot*, *etc* related to the day-to-day life of Indians and words expressing the flora and fauna belonging to Indian topography such as *tulsi*, *neem*, *champak* had to be used without any change.

Usage of Indian words adopted by the novelists helped in evoking an Indian ethos in the novels. The second device adopted by the Indian English novelists was the adaptation of words in anglicised form. A number of Indian words which had been adapted by the early European users gradually gained words like *rupee*, *anna*, *paisa*, *verandha*, *cashmere* etc... associated with units of currency, distance and Indian Products. These words were freely used by the novelists in their anglicised forms.

Neologism was another device. It is interesting to see new turns of expression being created by adding Indian affixes to English words and vice versa. A number of new semantical constructions came into being by the interaction between the Indians and British. These words were readily picked up by the novelists. Next a number of Indianised English words were used in the novels. The interaction between the two races gave birth to many new words. Many English words were used by Indians in their distorted forms. These words underwent phonological changes in accordance with the Indian ways of pronouncing them. Thus *company* became *kumpany* or *compane*, by dropping of sound *deputy* became *dipty* and *commissioner*

became *kommishnur*. All these usages built a realistic atmosphere.

Usage of literal translations or interpretations such as the idioms, phrases, slogans and expressions can be easily understood by the people who speak the writer's mother tongue, whereas these expressions cannot be easily understood by the foreign reader. Therefore, the Indian English Writer explains to them by putting the explanation either after the comma or in the brackets immediately after them. The style of each and every Indian writer is distinctive as they try to give their characters shape, movement, gestures and local habitation. They create their own style, diction, syntax and mode of expression. They focus their attention on the pattern of life and culture in India. Literal translations may be used to convey Indianness (e.g., Oh, may I die for you!), to convey beliefs, observations from Indian life and culture (e.g., caste brethren, fall at one's feet) and in order to be intelligible to the foreign readers (e.g., cat-killer's lane (Billimaran), ocean of Nectar (Amritsar).

The experimentations of Indian English Writing have two main aspects: a) interpolations b) literal translations. Interjections and invocations like *Ohe hacha*, *ohe acha*, *Hei sri wahe Guru* can be interpolated rather than translated. Similarly, greetings and blessings like *wadahi wadgai*, *Ram Ram* are interpolated to give flavor of Indianness; words and phrases like *maya*, *Maharajas*, *Rajas* are interpolated because they do not have equivalents in English dictionaries; swear words like *ohe chup*, *ohe chup* are interpolated to give catharsis for emotions. Another category of experimentation in language was the formation of compound words and joint nouns. It was again an outcome of the interaction between the two languages which necessitated the yoking of the words belonging to Indian and English vocabulary to form new words suitable to the Indian way of life. New syntactical constructions were also innovated by translating expressions of everyday life to communicate Indian experience. A few instances are *bathing time*, *cake-woman*, *fruit man*, *childhood home*. From the very inception, the Indian English Novel made bold experimentation by translating typical expressions, words, phrases, even proverbs into English to evoke the milieu.

In Panch Kouree Khan's *The Revelations*, several Indian phrases and idioms have been translated. Here are few examples: "mother's son", "oil of palms" and "throwing of dust in the eyes". 'Maika lal' is a Hindi expression rendered into English as "mother's son". Indian English novelists of the 19th century achieved considerable success even in their experimentation at the level of Syntax without causing injury to grammar. India is a country of many languages with individuality of their own novelists of 19th century who chose to write in English belonged to different parts of the country and spoke different languages as their mother tongue.

Prominent writers of Indian English Fiction like Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai have used English creatively, showing in their writings how far English can be Indianised. Indianisation and hybridisation are traits in their works which constitute an integral part of their linguistic experiments. For example, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children's* popularity rests on two things : the innovative use of English as a language and the fantastic representation of history. Rushdie's language becomes the bounteous sprinkling of English with Hindi and Urdu words throughout his work *Midnight's Children* which provides a certain amount of oriental flavour to the novel. The English of the novel is not standard English; it is the English best suited to express the sensibility of South Asian readers. He makes use of

a number of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani words, phrases and expressions in Midnight's Children. Words like *baba* (grand father), *garam masala* (hot spices), *yaar* (friend), *dhoban* (washer woman), etc... to retain indianisation in his novel. The author combines words and phrases to make compound words like over and over, up down up, such and such, black as night, etc... to suit his purpose.

Indian female writers have followed the traditional way of writing. But the woman novelist Shobha De differs among others because of her own style while writing her seven novels. Mainly novels fall in the following categories: a) descriptive b) explanatory and c) emotive. Shobha De's works fall into 'descriptive' category. She uses direct and spicy language in her works. Sometimes she becomes sentimental in her use of language. For example, in 'Socialite Evenings', she describes the mental condition of Karuna after her divorce. She comes to her parents and said none was there to take care of her : "They needed me and I needed them". Here the reader sees a different Shobha De than the De who is known for her spicy language.

Conclusion

Indianness is inseparably linked to Indian culture which is based on love or affection, humility or politeness, tolerance or patience, forgiveness or compassion. Indian Culture is very elusive and complex. It is difficult to summarize it through few situations and characters. In the early novels of R.K.Narayan, characters are typically Indian-sworn. The characters like Chandran in *A Bachelor of Arts* and Krishna in *The English Teacher* are Indians not only in name but also in character and spirit. They have the notions and feeling, taboos and morals of India with them. The major characters we come across in *Malgudi* belong to the higher strata of society and most of them are basically innocent. They are traditional and superstitious. His character Chandran who is intensely in love with Malathi cannot

marry her because their horoscopes do not tally so he leaves home and becomes a *sanyasi*. Usage of Indian words like *Bindi*, *bangla*, *chaya wala*, *paan shop*, *daal*, *lungi*, *maidan* and *sarkar* in Amithav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* show us Indianness in his novel to retain our Indian tone.

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