

**INDIAN BREAKFAST BEYOND THE BOARDER  
A STUDY OF INDIANISATION OF ENGLISH IN SELECT INDIAN  
NOVELS IN ENGLISH**

**By Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi**

Every normal human being has his first Language, generally known as his mother tongue. He also learns one or more languages if he feels the needs for them. In spite of the sociolinguistic reality, Indian writers in English have earned their accolade and readership internationally. Their English is conditioned by Indian geography, linguistic habits and socio-cultural patterns, but it cannot cross the imperatives of so-called 'Standard English' as it prevails in English. Indian Writings in English rise above its contemporaneous significance. It has become more than a 'burden'. There are occasional untranslatability of Indian life, experience and speech habits that don't admit of translation into corresponding English terms. Therefore, a cultural as well as linguistic gap always prevails between an Indian author and a foreign reader of the text.

Before Indians could write novels in English, two related preconditions had to be met. 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 first of those two conditions, the Indianization of the English language began much more before the second, the Anglicization of the Indians. Due to the socio-cultural transmission English has become in India, as in other British Colonies, a passport to privilege. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the institutionalization of the British imperialism in India. A despotic (iron-fisted) economic and socio-political system was put into place, which highlighted the existing difference between the British ruling class and a vast populace of native Indians. This basic inequality resulted in various degrees of compromise and resistance to divergent cultural forces in cultural contacts. The tension between the alienating language (English) and Indian sensibility constitute the minds of the Indian novelists in English. According to Raja Rao (1996: 17-18), India is not a

country (desa), it is a perspective (darsana), it is not a climate but a mood (rasa) in the play of the Absolute; it is not the Indian who makes India but 'India' makes the Indian, and thus India is in all." The spread of English throughout India, via colonization, trade and commerce, cross-cultural contacts, personal socio-economical needs, etc. has spawned "number of gluent outriggers capable of contributing to English literature" (Updike 1997: 156). In a multi-cultural, and multi-lingual context like India, the novelists in English write against a sound background of native tongues and patois (dialect spoken by common people of a geographical! political region and differing from the so-called standard language of the country) to express the indigenous experience. According to Professor Iyengar (1985: 04), Indian English Literature is "a curious eruption, an expression of the practical no less than creative genius of Indian people." The real flowering of Indian writing in English began to take place after our independence. People started to display increasing ease and confidence in handling the English tongue, and consequently, English became the medium of self-expression in lives of the intellectuals. After late 1970s, Indian writings in English shot into international limelight. Indian writers in English received universal recognition and gained fabulous royalties "and prestigious awards.

Indian novels in English has carved out a new trend, a new vision - a vision that is "replete with an unswerving faith and hope, myths and traditions, customs and rites, our great country has enshrined in her bosom from the time immemorial" (Prasad 2000: vii). If we go deep into the novels of the Indian stalwarts of English novels, it is revealed that their works are not an imitation of English literary tradition but highly creative as well and Indian i ' n both theme and presentation. They have given a new shape and colour to English language and literature in the same way as the Americans and Australians have evolved their own language and literature in their respective countries. Indian writing in English has proved to be a stronger and more significant body of work than most of what has been produced in the "official languages" of India, the so-called vernacular languages. We now have an impressive body of Indian writing translated from our Bhashas into English and clearly this point to a vibrant literary culture in our country. According to Nabaneeta Dev Sen, a famous Bengali

poet and literary critic (1997: 72), "Every language is like a snail, it carries its social and cultural history on its back." Language is not just a linguistic phenomenon unrelated to life and society. Language is not a monolithic object. It is a human phenomenon, which is as complex as human relationships in a society. We talk to our family members, our friends, our teachers, family friends, etc. We talk face to face, over telephone or by e-mail, and everyone responds with more talk. Television and radio further swell this torrent of words. My study of Indian novels in English involves an analysis that goes beyond the level of mere linguistic structures. It's a study of literary discourses, verbal or nonverbal linguistic transactions, transmissions and exchanges. My study expounds the relation between language use and types of situations in literary contexts.

One of the important features of Indian novels in English is the truthful portrayal of the Indian society - a society, which is sandwiched between so many social forces and tensions. Indian novels in English generally began with Mulk Raj Anand. His novels of social interest merit attention. *Untouchable* and *Coolie* show how the downtrodden, the vulnerable and marginalized in India have to face tyranny, injustice, insult and abuse without reason. Dalit literature has already established its solid claim as an engaging academic discourse for serious attention. R. K. Narayan believes in creative pattern of art rather on its suggestive appeal. He, like a natural observer, snaps a small group of men and their peculiarities and creates imaginary places like Malgudi, which is the Casterbridge of the novelist. *The Guide* guides us not only into the heart of a man having strangely comic encounters with himself but also into the soul of a country full of natural beauty, superstitious and prejudiced people and a host of tradition-bound life-ways. Raja Rao, the youngest of the famous 'trio' is content to deal with the socio-political furore of the villages of India during the Gandhian age. His *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope* show a harmonious blending of spiritualism and mysticism of our age-old heritage, its rites, custom, decorum and practices. He figures earlier than R. K. Narayan in my thesis for his major novel *Kanthapura*, which was published long before R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*. *Kanthapura* discusses the distinctive Indian sensibility with peasant life-ways even in the second language situation. *The Serpent and the Rope* is a

document of the Hindu view of life. Bhabani Bhattacharya, a social realist, like his predecessors was richly influenced by the doctrine of Mahatma Gandhi and the evils and perils of society. His *So Many Hungers!* and *He Who Rides a Tiger* reflect a confrontation between the high and low, the rough and the sublime. *A Dream in Hawaii* is a novel about the encounter of a Hindu yogi from the East with the American society in Hawaii. The dominant impression that we form of Indian society from this novel is one of spirituality with Swami Yogananda as its chief representative. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* deals with a great Indian political issue - the partition of the country. It is a socio-political reality that Indians had to face. Women novelists have also shown their extraordinary caliber and immutable imprint in the realm of Indian novels in English. In Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*, the lives of women in Purdah upholding the custom of their ancestors are poised against the desire for modernity and scrapping of traditional attitudes in the heroine, though ultimately there is only deference, duty and respect for tradition, because it brings security and peace. *Inside the Haveli* reminds the readers Mrinalini Sarabhai's novel *This alone is True*. *This alone is True* (1952) projects the growing conflict of the modern Indian women as she grapples with the changing milieu of tradition in the context of personal freedom. Anita Desai has added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English novels. She is of mixed Indian and German descent. Her education took place in Delhi. Anita Desai's novels are distinctly singular compared to that of her contemporaries. Ruth Jhabvala's works lay greater emphasis on the social background rather than the characters, which enact the various comedies, tragic-comedies and farces. In Kamala Markandaya's novels the focus is as much on the major characters as on the diverse backgrounds: economic, political, social and cultural. Anita Desai's novels deal with human mind and the inner climate of sensibility.

Arundhati Roy's portrayal of the plight of the untouchable is very near to that of Mulk Raj Anand. *The God of Small Things* shows a patriarchal domination of a caste-ridden Indian society where men dominate over women, the possessed over the non-possessed, and the powerful over the powerless and the touchable over the untouchable. Amitav Ghosh's novels reflect his socio-political awareness of the time. The narrator in *The Shadow Lines* is exposed

to the experience of life in India and action of his family members, and journey towards what may be called a spiritual goal. Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* ranges back and forth in time from an unidentifiable period the future to the nineteenth century search of 'Calcutta Chromosome' ' The novel exhibits malaria puzzle, religious cults and advancement of computer science and information technology.

The sociolinguistic approach involves a serious and methodical application of linguistics to literary studies. Our analysis of Indian novels in English indicates a chronological maturity in handling English language in Indian socio-cultural context. The non-native English Writers' experimentation with language, form and theme raises several questions. Indian novels in English in the pre-Independence period count for linguistic creativity and resourcefulness. All these novels reflect the indigenous sensibility where the location of texts is important. These novels reflect the thematic as well as linguistic Indianism. V K. Gokak in his Foreword to Asit Bandyopadhyay's *History of Modern Bengali Literature* (1986: viii - ix) writes:

By 'Indianism' is generally meant a word, phrase, idiom, expression or point of syntactical usage which is not apart of current English or American usage and involves a shade of meaning or usage which is peculiarly Indian or is reminiscent of the lexis, idioms, phrases, or syntax current in one of the modern Indian languages.

A careful sociolinguistic study of pre- Independence Indian English novels makes it abundantly clear that Indian writers have found their own voices and have produced a significant body of Indian English novels that is truly Indian, Do Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao introduction of native language and use of nativised style make their contribution obscure? It's hard to accept that linguistic deviations have Indian and panIndian intelligibility. These are natural consequences of the socio-cultural and linguo-cultural condition in the Indian context in which English is used. Indian regional languages exercise imperceptible influence on the use of English in India.

We notice a historical maturity of Indian novels in English in the hands of the novelists of the post-Independence phase. Some major themes that reflect Indian sensibility in their treatment are: East-West encounter; struggle for independence; the great impact of Indo-Pak partition; contemporary social issues. East-West encounter in its different shapes appears as the prime issue in the novelists immediately after the Independence. Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* is the novel about the great partition. Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Dream in Hawaii* examines the clash of values between the East and the West. Our analysis of the novelists of the immediately after Independence consists of R. K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Khuswant Singh. All their representative novels reflect Indianness both in theme and treatment. A common device that the novelists of this period have adopted for maintaining linguistic realism is the use of sprinklings of Hindi or/and Bengali expressions, mainly words, with or without translations. The interpersonal rhetoric of *The Guide*, *So Many Hungers*, *He Who Rides a Tiger*, *A Dream in Hawaii* and *Train to Pakistan* are marked by Indianisms. The major thrust of these novels has been to look at the use of English by non-English speaking characters in a non-English-speaking ' world.

In order to express "a different world view the resources of the English language have to be fully exploited, the language must be dislocated into meaning" (Ray 2002: 17). The creative and resourceful use of the English language in the hands of the Indian English novelists of 1970s and 1980s show tremendous vitality, strength and possibilities. In Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*, a premium is placed on orthodox moral values, especially in matters relating to the man-woman relationship. The novel makes use of Indian English sociolinguistic conventions in interpersonal greetings, compliments, politeness principles and interpolation of native language. Anita Desai's 'mind-style' involves the representation of sequences of thought which results in the projection of the point of view of the character and presents the unique mental world of the character. There are the marks of nativisation in her representative novels.

The recent Indian English novels in India exhibit the confrontation between modernity and post-coloniality in various ways. The novelists of 1990's don't find the so-called insurmountable problem of expressing one's own social and cultural heritage in an alien language. Contemporary novelists are concerned with global readership of their novels. Therefore, they hardly transgress the orthodox conventions of the Standard English. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* doesn't fall in that line. *The God of Small Things* is set in Ayemenem near Kottayam and it "captures the sounds, sight and smells of the area accurately" (Ramanan: 49). It is a whirlpool of images, symbols, antithesis, sex and sensation. The structural pattern and the architectonics of *The God of Small Things* have vehemently brought about a revolution in the literary scenario. The book has an architectural shape. Like an expert architect who is in a habit of creating new words and phrases the author has turned and trusted language to conform to the feeling, as a result of which we have broken sentences, illogical statements, unrestricted use of italics, bizarre phrases, ungrammatical and creative constructions, unconventional rhythm, gross Indianisms, etc. *The Calcutta Chromosome* is a scientific thriller, which is a compressed masterwork that further consolidates Amitav Ghosh's premiership in contemporary Indian novels in English. *The Shadow Lines* brings together the forms of the autobiographical novel and the family chronicle. As a post-colonial writer and a member of a small group of English-speaking (and writing) Indians, catering to an international community of English-speaking (and writing) people, Amitav Ghosh clearly adopts a globally acceptable stance.

Thus this survey of Indian novels in English shows that Indian novelists have acquired an immutable and inevitable place in the realm of English fiction. They are being conferred on not only national but also international awards. All of them have tried to portray as well as nakedly expose the realistic picture of Indian socio-cultural life, which is enmeshed in the web of superstition, corruption and hypocrisy. The major achievement of these writers was the creative adaptation of English to Indian needs and the assertion of an Indian identity by dealing with Indian issues, both large and small, in their own inimitable style of story telling. The doyens of English literary studies in India have helped in establishing this search

for authenticity in Indian Writing in English as a justifying discourse that authorises the native canon. Sociolinguistic parameters reveal different aspects of Indian sensibility and life-ways as we are whisked from a page to another of Indian Writing in English.

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About the Author:

**Dr Jaydeep Sarangi** is a bilingual writer, academic, editor, translator, academic administrator and the author of a number of significant publications .He is the **Vice President**, GIEWEC (head office at Kerala). He is one of the founder members and the Vice President of SPELL(Society for Poetry,Education,Literature and Language)in Kolkata. Dr Sarangi has delivered keynote address in several national and international seminar and

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conferences. His stories are featured in different journals and magazines of international repute in different continents. He has been invited as guest writer/critic in Australia, Poland, Italy, Germany and Canada. He reviews literature regularly.

Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi is Associate Professor, Deptt. of English at Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College (Calcutta University), 30, Prince Anwar Shah Road, Kolkata-700033, WB, India.

E mail: [jaydeepsarangi@gmail.com](mailto:jaydeepsarangi@gmail.com)