

Being Swadeshi : Manju Kapur's Language in *Home and Difficult Daughters*

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Language serves two purposes: communication and identification. The Indian society under colonial rule experienced immense and pervasive influences in terms of culture, education, exploitation, technological progress, language, diseases etc. The colonizers designed language policies intended to develop national identities in the countries they had occupied. A widespread colonial practice aimed at discouraging the use of mother tongue. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong commented on colonial rule as the cultural bomb: "The effect of cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their language, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves....It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples languages rather than their own...".(p 3,28)."Language has always been the companion of empire," asserted the sixteenth century Spanish grammarian Nebrija (161,225). All the Colonial powers spread their languages to the countries that fell under their colonial power. Colonial powers often tried to supplant the native language with their own, with different degrees of success. The natives were thus under the control and suppression by the colonizers. This domination was not only on them physically but also on their identity, thoughts, culture, tradition, custom and most importantly on their language. British colonialism has spread English all over the world. India became an independent nation from Britain in 1947, and the English language was supposed to be phased out by 1965. However, today English and Hindi are the official languages and are the most spoken languages in India. English in fact has rooted itself in our culture and has fixed its place as a powerful medium of expression. Leaders, writers, historian, teachers and above all common man also have to resort to this language to make its mark in the outside world.

However deviating from the trend of writing only in standard English, most of our Indian writers in English have made use of both the languages in their creations. Since the last quarter of the 20th century, South Asian writing has increasingly received greater acclaim all over the world. The success of the Indian writing represents an enormous boost to the reputation of its authors outside the borders of the sub-continent, not to mention their bank accounts. A major source of disagreement concerns the very fact of writing in English and it is a problem present in all once-colonized nations .

Prominent writers like Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Upmanyu Chatterjee , Shobhaa De to name a few have always made an attempt to indianize their writings. These writers with their style and language have achieved great heights not only within the country but also in the international world. . Bandopadhyay writes:

The term "Indian English" refers to the variety of English which is learnt and used by a large number of educated (in the conventional sense, someone who has undergone an intellectual and moral training) Indians as a second language Indian English has the status of an Indian language, serves the international role of communication with the global community of nations and intra-regional roles of link language among

people of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Both English and Hindi have evolved as languages in our country and it is only in India, that one can hear the amalgamation of the two. We have created a new language with their blend and strangely enough it is accepted by all. Chutnefying English breaks all our perceptions of the spoken language. It leads us to think that: Is this a new language to be used in our country? Is it the best way to communicate, considering most of the population is familiar and comfortable with it? And then there is the other side of the perception, which in effect believes that if English is anyway a second language to the nation, why then it cannot be mangled and used to our communication advantage?

Raja Rao (1938:5) talks about the idea of Indianisation in the preface to his novel, *Kanthapura*:

English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up – like Sanskrit or Persian was before –We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can only write as Indians (...).Our method of expression ... will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American.

Manju Kapur, a professor at Miranda House for English in Delhi, has recently emerged as a new novelist in the world of Indian English Fiction. Her first novel, *Difficult Daughters* published in 1998 received the Commonwealth Award for the Eurasian region. She has vividly painted the inner turmoil of her female protagonists in her two novels, *Difficult Daughters* and *Home*. Manju Kapur has indeed created sensation in the literary world by voicing the inner tribulations of her protagonists in an emphatic manner. One of the most innovative aspects of Kapur's novel was her endeavour to capture the spirit of Indian culture with all its multiplicity and diversity and which moved her to attempt to destroy the natural rhythms of the English language.

Quite distinct from her contemporaries, Manju Kapur has amply brought regional influences in her writings showcasing the prominence of indianization in the individuals. Manju Kapur's novels are full of instances of Indianisation of vocabulary, loan translation, use of repetition and linguistic creativity. Her novel incorporates a number of Hindi and Punjabi words, phrases and expressions. Kapur's influence in this respect is attested by the fact that since then progressively more works written in English by Indian authors have incorporated semantic items from the diverse languages of India.

Chutnification was the word first coined by Salman Rushdie. It was he who used this term in his novel *The Midnight's Children* for the manner in which history gets presented and as Chatterjee (2004) puts it, to 'dislocate the English and let other things into it' (p. 253).

"Chutnification" in the novel means transformation of English having an additional connotation of making the language used in the novel tangy and more flavoursome and exciting. Chutnefying or kechupisation-more appropriate word would perhaps be khichdification because, while chutney and ketchup are mere taste enhancers, khichdi is a wholesome food. Thus incorporating the diverse words pertaining to the hybrid culture of our country, Kapur makes her writings tasty and delicious—ready to be accepted by the audience.

Diversity which is a fundamental characteristic of India and one of the manifestations of the diversity that is India is the existence of a great many languages. Manju Kapur through her novels has presented a view of authentic India, inhabited by all regional people varying in their languages. She voices her joys and hopes by using colourful words of colloquial Punjabi and creates a wonderful cultural context for her novel. I would like to quote some of the examples from the text:

“ with all the breads she could make, **puris** with spicy gram inside, **luchis** big as plates, **kulchas**, white and long, **tandoori rotis**, layers of flaky flour, **paranthas**, crisp and stuffed. With **morrabas**, never soggy, and dripping juicy sweet.With **sherbets** of **khas**, roses, and almonds, with**lassi**....With **barfis** made of nuts and grains....With **papad**,the ones to be fried with **dal**....With thread spun, with cloth woven,with **durries**, small stitched carpets, and **phulkaris**, with **pyjama kurtas**, shirts, and **salwar kameezes**”(DD,62-63)

‘achcha achacha, sorry. One for Vijay-one for Chacha-one for Chachi-one for Didi-one for Dada-....’

‘Arre, why? He is your Bhaiya...’(Home,60)

“In the evening the men came home with kulcha-cholla, dahi bhalla, and rasmalai...”(Home,93)

Where words from the vernacular are concerned, the novel abounds with such borrowings. They are from different languages: Hindi primarily, but also Punjabi as well. The words may be categorized under several lexical fields, such as names of food items, names of Gods, other Hindi and Urdu words, Indianisms, Indian words and expressions and translations of Indian expressions. Manju Kapur’s novels use profusely Punjabi and hindi words. Some of the words that the readers encounter in her novels are as follows-

Food items- ‘atta’, ‘malai’, ‘lassi’, ‘ghee, puris, luchies, kulchas, tandoori, sherbet, paneer, dahi, dal, mathri etc

Professions- chowkidar, pandit, dhobi, hakim, bania, vaid, ayah etc.

Relations- bhai sahib, bua, maji, bade pitaji, baoji, beta, masi, pitaji, pehnji, samdhin, papaji, ammaji, dadu etc.

Dresses- pyjama, kurta, dupatta, kameez, achkan, odhnis etc.

Other words- Karma, tamasha, manglik, barat, gully, chowk etc.

Anne Donadey (2000) has precisely conveyed the dilemma faced by the writers of the colonized nations in the following way:

*The question of the language of writing is overdetermined in the context of anti- and postcolonial literatures. If postcolonial authors write in [...] the language of yesterdays’ enemy, even writers with a clearly anti-colonial agenda are regularly accused, at worst of betrayal, at best of **not being able to reach their intended audience**. (my emphasis, p.27).*

The usage of mix of indianized words and English is twofold. On the one hand, it is through the usage of these Indian words that the readers are able to attach themselves with the characters of the novel. The readers can feel and sense the same emotion as felt by the characters portrayed by the novelist. The indianization of the language is thus a powerful medium of creating a link with the readers. In one of her interview, on being questioned about the focus of her audience, Manju candidly answered-

*When I write it is really for someone like myself. Writing is such an intimate activity, but the result of which gets played out in the public sphere. So although as a writer I am essentially in dialogue with just myself, as a published author **I want to reach as many people as possible**.(surfed on 9feb2012)*

It is thus her endeavour to connect with the audience/readers belonging to different regions that makes her resort to include certain vernacular words in her novels.

On the other hand, Manju Kapur through the treatment of the language and delineation of the characters presents a real picture of the society and this is what impresses the readers. As Khuman says, "Social Realism is an approach in literature that attempts to describe life without idealization or romantic subjectivity. It gives the impression of "recording" or "reflecting" the actual way of life in a particular society"(78). Through her indianized language Kapur emphatically presents the real India as perceived by common man. A realistic novel is more or less not for the sake of art but for the sake of life of an individual or a mass presented by a common character as we find in the Dickens' *Hard Times* or Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*. More so, in a realistic novel we can easily transfer our own identity to some of the characters and derive vicarious pleasure out of this identification. While continuing to live our own life we share to the full the experiences of the characters in the novel – thus enriching our own personality.

Manju Kapur has made sincere effort to be swadeshi by making her novels realistic and appealing through the use of her chutnified language ---incorporating English, hindi and Punjabi words. Her language fascinates the readers and captivates them to identify with the characters and lends the novel a sumptuous flavour.

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