
**HYBRID LINGUISTIC DISCOURSE IN MANJU KAPUR'S SELECT NOVELS:
A STUDY**

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Abstract

Indian English women novelists are revolutionary both in their content and form and have won the appreciation of readers both at home and abroad. Postcolonial literature has followed three phases in their growth as "adopt," "adapt" and "adept." Indian English fiction in our country is now following the third phase, "adept," in which "the new literature breaks away from all the previous norms and conventions and strikes a path creating literature that is one's own". Manju Kapur has successfully created a new Indian English idiom that at once distinguishes it from the "English" and other "Englishes." While focusing on the "strategies of appropriation in post-colonial writing" (58), Ashcroft and the co-authors mention some of the techniques used in the language of the post-colonial writers – "glossing," "untranslated words," "inter-language," "syntactic fusion," "code-switching," "vernacular transcription," "code-mixing," "verisimilitude" and "credibility" etc.

Keywords: *glossing, untranslated words, inter-language, syntactic fusion, code-switching, vernacular transcription, code-mixing, verisimilitude, and credibility*

Indian English women novelists are revolutionary both in their content and form and have won the appreciation of readers both at home and abroad. There is a distinction "between the 'standard' British English inherited from the empire and the English which the language has become in post-colonial countries" (Ashcroft et al 8). The imperial education system installed a "standard" version of the metropolitan language as the norm and marginalized all "variants" as impurities. Postcolonial literature has followed three phases in their growth as "adopt," "adapt" and "adept." Indian English fiction in our country is now following the third phase, "adept," in which "the new literature breaks away from all the previous norms and conventions and strikes a path creating literature that is one's own" (Nagarajan 188).

Manju Kapur has successfully created a new Indian English idiom that at once distinguishes it from the “English” and other “Englishes.” While focusing on the “strategies of appropriation in post-colonial writing” (58), Ashcroft and the co-authors mention some of the techniques used in the language of the post-colonial writers – “glossing,” “untranslated words,” “inter-language,” “syntactic fusion,” “code-switching,” “vernacular transcription,” “code-mixing,” “verisimilitude” and “credibility” etc.

With the publication of her very first novel, *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur has shown her mastery in both style and technique. Full of innovative flourishes, it exudes a continuous urge for experimenting linguistically. Set in flashback technique it begins with the death of Virmati, the heroine of the novel. Her daughter Ida, who learned the story of her life from her aunt, tells it to the readers. Ida starts with a very cryptic statement: "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like a mother" (*DDI*). This sets the tone of the novel and the readers get curious to explore why she did not like to be her mother. A narrator of this type is labeled as ‘homodiegetic’ (qt in Roy 150). The fabric of the novel is interwoven with multiple narratives. The major part of the story is narrated by the author herself, who seems to be omnipresent but does not take part in the story. This type of narrator is called ‘heterodiegetic’ (qt. in Roy 150).

The novels use much of the Indian expressions and colloquial terms without any hesitation. This gives her English definitely a local flavor. Code-mixing (including elements of more than one language in the same utterance) and Code-switching (moving from one language to another) is an important trait in Manju Kapur’s fiction. Punjabi and Hindi words that have been taken from different areas of experiences occur profusely throughout the novel. Here, are a few examples from the text: Food items – atta, malai, lassi, ghee, puris, lunches, kulchas, tandoori, morra, sherbet, papad, dal, pakora, chutney, dahi, paneer, mathri, etc.; Places – Dharamshala, aangan, gully, Kothi, etc.; Professions – chowkidar, pundit, dhobi, Hakim, vaid, Munshi, bania, etc.; Utensils – thali, Katori, karahi, etc.; Religious terms – sandhhya, haven, etc.; Exclamations – bap re, arre wah, hai re, etc.; Reduplications – seedha-saadha, bas-bas, shor-shaar, etc.; Religious Invocations – Allah-O-Akbar, Har Mahadev, Bole so Nihal, etc. A few examples from the text: “She was so keen to study, bapre” (*DD5*), “Arre, exclaimed her cousin patting her on the back” (*DD18*), etc. Also, the use of a few native slangs adds to the “Indian-ness” of the text. This off and on switching to words and expressions in different languages makes this novel an enjoyable reading for the Indian readers though this may pose some difficulty for the non-Indians.

A close analysis of the novels reveal that realism also promotes a high degree of reliability and realism, to a large extent, is realized in ‘verisimilitude’ and ‘credibility’. Leech and Short explain this: “The sense of being in the presence of actual individual things, events,

people, and places, is the common experience we expect to find in literature” (156). For example: “Quickly she calculated dates.... She was certain she was pregnant” (*DD* 141). Credibility is “likelihood or believability of the fiction as a ‘potential reality’” (Leech and Short 157). For example, Kasturi, Virmati’s mother believes “it is the duty of every girl to get married” (*DD* 13).

The “English” used in *A Married Woman* is a hybrid linguistic formation consisting of a cocktail of vocabulary from Hindi, Urdu, and Sanskrit. A distinctively Indian lexicon is transfused with International Standard English to bring out the essence of familiarity for the Indian readers. The novel is replete with Indian coinages like Mohalla, Swami, NRI; religious invocations like Jai Shri Ram etc. When Pipee proposes to Astha that she accompanies her on the “Ekta Yatra” and Astha accepts the proposal, Hemant argues with his wife using a code mixing discourse combining the Indian terms with the British: “the Dalits have called a Nyaya Yatra ... some mill workers have called a Roti Yatra ... every Tom, Dick, and Harry is going to march up and down India demanding something” (*MW* 249).

Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman* abounds in native Indian words that have been absorbed into British English, either in colonial times or more recently. Kapur also mixes terms that now seem obsolete to a British reader but are still current coinage in India-e.g. STD, MBA, NRI, scheduled castes, etc. Plenty of code mixing is the characteristics of this novel also. Indian words are profusely used in the body of the text- culinary items like “Tikki,” “papri,” “chutney,” “ghee,” “dosa,” etc.; relations like “beta,” “ma,” “dadi,” etc. During her stay in the “Zenana” (again a code mixing) with Aijaz’s family, Pipee is exposed to Urdu, a language she appears to know passively but not actively: “the way they greeted each other, Assalamalaikum – Wa Alaikum Assalam, their manner of speaking, the kh’s that made her Hindi tongue seem crude and unsophisticated” (*MW* 136). Indian multilingualism is also focused when, for instance, Pipee has the idea of linking her South India trip up with her academic research and we are told: “With an interpreter, she could get some field work done” (*MW* 247).

Manju Kapur’s *Home* is written in live Indian English idiom illustrating the way Indians actually use English. The language that the characters speak is a kind of “Hinglish” where Hindi words are blended humorously with the English vocabulary. The code mixing devices used in the fast-moving story makes the context or narration more realistic. In the sentence, “it was your kismet not to have children” (*Home* 26), Kapur’s choice of “kismet” for “fate” lends this expression a homely and realistic touch. The novelist’s use of Indian expressions in the English sentences reminds us of Mulk Raj Anand’s coinage, “pigeon English”. Such expressions as “Achcha achcha, sorry” (*Home* 61) or “Arre why? He is your Bhaiyya” (*Home* 61) or when Sona moans, “You are too trusting, ji” (*Home* 195), bear testimony to Anand’s words. There are

also some speeches which show the typical Indian way of expressing things: “We were so worried about Ammaji,” (*Home* 319) or in “How sweet it is, bap re! ..We are Dilliwallahs” (*Home* 81) or in the narration – “Suresh doing a B Eng from DU” (*Home* 200). Sometimes small cryptic sentences are used. These are without verbs or the necessary conjunctions.

In *The Immigrant*, Manju Kapur has successfully created a new Indian English idiom that at once distinguishes it from the “English” and other “Englishes.” She uses much of the Indian expressions and colloquial terms without any hesitation. Also, she makes brilliant use of code mixing devices. For example: “She accepted tea... along with mathri and pickle” (*Imm* 229), “Arre, beta, last visit” (*Imm* 26), “sweeping woman, long-handled mop, salwar kameezed,” “the surprised scooter-wallah roared off” (*Imm* 291), “Ji, Uncle” (*Imm* 26) and so on. A distinctively Indian lexicon is transfused with international Standard English to bring out the essence of familiarity for the Indian readers.

Mukul Kesavan, a famous novelist commends *Difficult Daughters* as ‘a first-rate realistic novel’ (Bala and Chandra 106). Cassirer defines art as ‘a continuous process of concentration’ (144).

Human perception is meant to understand a given situation and the understanding of the mechanism of the natural process lead to its domination by man. The development from a certain perception to a composition of a new discourse leads us from Nature to culture. So the very use of the word culture brings to mind the absent notion of Nature on the paradigmatic axis. Culture is thus knowledge of the world and understanding of the natural process. This means not only that member of culture must know certain facts or be able to recognize objects, places, and people. When one studies culture as a semiotic concept, it is taken as a ‘System of Signs’ or ‘communication’ and ‘linguistic discourse’. Culture then is seen as a representation of the world, a way of making sense about reality by objectifying it in stories, myths, descriptions, theories, proverbs, artistic products, and performances.

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