

Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga-Identity through Language**Dr Monika Agrawal**

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DOI: 10.53032/tcl.2019.4.3.01**Abstract**

The present paper deals with the variety of languages and the innovative presentation in *God of Small Things* and *The White Tiger*. The writers of these two novels have made their writings so different that they caused great stir in the minds of readers. The main focus of this study is on how they adroitly use language, how their innovative usages give powers to presentation to fulfill desired aims.

Keywords- Billboards, Code-Mixing, Hollering, Hybridization, Culture

The God of Small Things and *The White Tiger* are full of various varieties of language and presentation as *all pleasures consists in variety*.ⁱ Both standard varieties – British and American – are used according to the context, at times they use Indian Variety and some other Varieties to some extent, perhaps acknowledging their existence and also hinting towards a world English. British English is obvious and can be seen throughout the novels. But it is juxtaposed with American English, for example; “There was so much garbage by the roadside that it lay there looking perfectly natural” (*The White Tiger*, 284) where garbage means, in American English, waste material, such as paper, empty containers, and food thrown away. In British English it is rubbish. Balram uses “hollering” (*The White Tiger* 251) an American informal for the meaning of to shout loudly. When Balram drove towards headquarters of the Congress Party, the three giant cardboard *billboards* (*The White Tiger*, 134) made the place easy to find which is different from British hoarding.

In the following sentence Aravind Adiga uses the British English word film and its American counterpart movie, “Now, I no longer watch Hindi films – on principle – but back in the days when I used to, just before the movie got started,...” (*The White Tiger* 8) “Crisp fall morning” (*The God of Small Things* 72), against Velutha’s *autumn leaf* (*The God of Small Things* 73).

Rahel talks about upstate New York, (*The God of Small Things* 72), but recalling things about the imperial *Plymouth* in India, she remembers a *windscreen wiper* (*The God of Small Things* 72), which is different from the American windshield wiper.

In *The God of Small Things* the Australian variety is acknowledged not only through vocabulary like roos, Qantas Koala, marsupials, joeys, baby bins, cemently etc but also by an Australian missionary friend of Baby Kochamma, who thinks that the language spoken in

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Kerala is Keralese. She gets killed near a cricket oval in Hobart. And for her Arundhati Roy uses *gnickers* instead of the usual *knickers* of Rahel.

Indian English is a recognised variety of English, according to Crystal, “India has the largest population of English speaking people in the world”.ⁱⁱ Kachru describes Indian English like this: “One legacy which the Indians slowly accepted, and then in their typical Indian way acculturated, is the English language. The outcome of this long process of Indianization of the English language is what is now termed ‘Indian English’.”ⁱⁱⁱ It is a difficult task to define English in India. Balasubramanian says that a definition of Indian English is as elusive as a definition of any other variety of English such as British or American English. There are simply too many variables to neatly define the English used in India as a single variety.^{iv} However, Balasubramanian has focused out some features that can be seen as typical for Indian English. The English that is spoken in India has features that are typical for this variety of English; these features are not found in either British or American English.

According to Balasubramanian “there are many features that researchers have found in Indian English which differ from Standard English. The features that are found in Indian English include the following: Indian words, stative verbs in progressive, use of perfect aspect verb phrases instead of simple aspect verb phrases, errors with preposition use, errors with article use, absence of subject-auxiliary inversion in question formation, use of “isn’t it?” as an invariant tag, relative clause constructions and the use of transitive verbs intransitively”.^v The reader finds the frequent use of Indian variety of English in both the novels, “My aunts and cousin-sisters gathered around her”. (*The White Tiger*, 28)

Cousin-sisters is an example of Indian English. It is a compound of two British English words ‘cousin’ and ‘sister’ which does not exist in the British English. Sometimes their deviations cannot be said to be acceptable to standard variety of English. In English language some verbs are stative which are not used in progressive aspect but Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga do not hesitate to use the stative verbs in progressive aspect:

“So I am guessing ...” (*The White Tiger* 23)

“He was seeing his Family...” (*The White Tiger* 88)

“I am even thinking of advertising in the newspaper...” (*The White Tiger* 54)

“...he’s having an open auction for that post.” (*The White Tiger* 49)

“Pappachi, for his part, was having trouble coping with the ignominy of retirement” (*The God of Small Things* 40)

“They weren’t thinking anymore.” (*The God of Small Things* 318)

Balam uses “spy mirror” in place of ‘rearview mirror’. Aravind Adiga uses the phrase *spy mirror* because Balam was not simply looking towards his master’s activities but actually he was spying. “I saw in the spy mirror that Mr Ashok was pressing the buttons on his mobile phone as I drove.” (*The White Tiger* 211-212)

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Likewise Arundhati Roy is not legging in the same area of cultural borrowing. She uses *Laltain* the Indian version of the British “Lantern in Big Man the Laltain, Small Man the Mombatti.” (*The God of Small Things* 79).

The Indian Variety is manifest Again, at the Hotel Sea Queen, while Chacko was *dinnerful*, his niece, Rahel, was *dinnerless*. (*The God of Small Things*, 116). In the *steel shrill* (*The God of Small Things*, 79) the shrill of the police whistles had the piercing effect of a steel blade/knife.

Here is the classic example of Indian English. “You must be careful,” Kuttappen said. ‘This river of ours – she isn’t always what she pretends to be’ (*The God of Small Things*, 210). In English language the word river is masculine and pronoun ‘he’ is used. But in Hindi language the word river (nadi) is feminine and pronoun ‘she’ is used. Here, Arundhati Roy used the pronoun ‘she’ to show mother tongue interference. Some other examples are “angriness, swimmer-carpenter’s body, kiss-back, fever button eyes, offity, vomity, helmet” etc.

Thanks to both Indianized and internationalized use of English, they have broadened the perspective from national to international. Thus such writers as Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga put an everlasting impression on the reader. Aravind Adiga “manipulates the language either to give a cultural touch or to create an atmosphere for a certain purpose. He seems to try to blend the language with the situation or theme. Frequently the reader has to go beyond the texts to find the context. He gives new value to words and creates figurative and metaphorical meaning in this way”.^{vi} (Sharma, 172)

The above quotation shows that the captivating description is such a tool that a reader from any part of the world can easily understand and enjoy it. These things are globally common and they reflect that Arundhati Roy as well as Aravind Adiga has moved far ahead from the precursors so far as the innovative artistic techniques are concerned.

Code-mixing

It is the concurrence of lexical items and linguistic features of two different codes in a sentence. Code mixing can involve various levels of language, e.g. phonology, morphology, grammatical structures or lexical items. It is often a mark of solidarity. Code-mixing includes socio-linguistic, pragmatic and grammatical aspects. Muysken applies the “term code-mixing to refer to all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence”.^{vii} (Muysken, *Bilingual Speech: A Typology of Code-Mixing*). Now, due to the use of indigenous languages in the presentation of social life the mixing and switching of codes have become quite noticeable. Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga switch to other language items of Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. They switch both at inter sentence and intra sentence levels. Whether one may call this type of switches hybridization or translation or Indianization or Urdunization or Sanskritization or Malayalamization – their switches are according to the demand of the situation except a few. Both the writers have used lexical items other than English language. These are National (Hindi), Hybrid

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(Native item in combination with an English item), Hybrid₂ (Local item in combination with English item) which can be marked as-

National – Hindi *kohinoor, veshyas, dhoti, dhobi, mehndi* etc. (all from *The God of Small Things*)

Kama Sutra, namaste, hookah, beedis, Gulab jamuns, laddoos, pooja, Ganja, ghat, sadhu, dosa, lassi, charpoy, mandala, Ooooooom, daal, chapattis etc. (all from *The White Tiger*) Hybrid₁ – Native item in combination with an English item *dhobi's thumb, bus bhajan, zamindar mentality, oxford avatar, opposition bandh, mendhi hedge, henna red* etc. (all from *The God of Small Things*) *paan-chewing, paan-maker, paan-seller, potato vada, big paan-and-spit man, khaki uniform, samosa- and channa-serving, pucca servant* (all from *The White Tiger*)

Hybrid₂ – Local item in combination with English item *chhi chhi- poach, thanks keto, valarey thanks* etc

The mixing is on purpose – they are used by untouchables or underdogs or factory workers to show the lower strata or lack of higher education in the society. At times Chacko, the Oxford avatar switches to mixture for the purpose – talking something confidential.

The depth of the emotions is directly proportional to the art of presentation. Whichever language – English or the mother tongue – is deeper set is the most appropriate to express the emotions of that level. As G Orwell says for a creative writer “possession of the truth is less important than emotional sincerity”.^{viii} “Aravind Adiga’s use of language shows his supreme mastery for conveying the ‘emotive meaning’. It tells the true feelings and emotions of the speaker or writer”.^{ix} (Sharma, 172) And the same is true with Arundhati Roy’s writing. For example Aravind Adiga’s *Bits of beedis* could be translated as ‘a thin leaf rolled cigarette’ but the very cultural sense of the switched items would not have been clear to the reader. Again, to his use *Ganja* (*The White Tiger*, 147) could be translated as ‘powerful preparation of cannabis sativa’ but it could sound like a Narayan and the very taste of the switched word would certainly have been lost. Who can take risk to translate Aravind Adiga’s Sanskrit word *Ooooooom*. (*The White Tiger*, 189)

In their writings readers enjoy the emotive meaning because they are not translating or struggling for English equivalents. They are cool and comfortable in leaving untranslatable as they are. And so the Hindi terms are as they are. At the same time there are stylistic features that are purely English. If these items were translated into English the writing would sound like a Narayan and reader could not get the cultural and emotional taste.

The India of Light is that of wealth, technology and knowledge, whose germination lies in the exploitation of the India of Darkness, where the majority of Indians live, is that of misery, destitution and illiteracy. But what is tragic is that the success story of a handful people (the tiny minority) is being used to create a metaphor of a strong and shining India. That appalled Aravind Adiga and he wrote to re-inscribe the true image of a modern India as it is both in the rural and urban societies so that the media, scholars, policy makers and

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political leaders, instead of carrying the false glory, can address the problems to eradicate them.

Aravind Adiga's primary aim is to demonstrate how the large majority of the people have been suffering in India. Their life has become a curse to them. Although the rich have been enjoying the multidimensional development of the nation, the life of the poor has become worse in the very process of development. This nonstop dilapidation of the poor has not been aptly given voice in the media till the publication of *The White Tiger* so as to work on their well-being. The flamboyant and showy images that are showcased about modern India are that of the rising economic, scientific and political power in the world scenario. Under the spell of these shining displays, the democratic and bureaucratic workings in India till now fail to see the sufferings of the downtrodden. To Aravind Adiga, to raise the claim of equality and liberation in social, cultural, economic and educational spheres by attacking on corruptions is a must to uplift the living conditions of the vast majority of the poor. Writer's feelings for the urgent need to re-educate the people about the gap between the lives of the privileged and the marginalized speaks on every page. *The White Tiger* is a mission to re-inscribe people's imagination with the images of a rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank against a poor man's spine like a knotted rope; the merrymakings of rich people against the sufferings of the underdogs so that mighty heart of democracy can move to make and execute the poverty eradication real programme in lieu of mere tiring monotonous sound of "garibi hatao slogan".

The same situation is with Arundhati Roy. The difference is between the agencies against which the banners of revolt are raised. Whereas Aravind Adiga raises his banners against mainly the corrupt workings of democracy and bureaucracy, Arundhati Roy raises her banners against the unfair workings of patriarchal society caused age-old agonies and ordeals of the suppressed class of women.

Arundhati Roy as well as Aravind Adiga very realistically depicts how the privileged class keep themselves aloof from the underdogs so that they may not feel the way the marginalized are suffering in their whole life. So, through these novels, it is worth tried at least the privileged and the ruling class may get a feel of the squalid and wretched life of the marginalized. Definitely this type of re-inscription of the social subjugation and economic exploitation of the marginalized is desideratum because the privileged till now have failed fail to see the sufferings and have been unable to face the challenges of the marginalized lives as they get carried with the media image of a successful modern India.

Achievements

As far as the achievements of Arundhati Roy and Aravind Adiga are concerned, they have gained success with flying colours in a test (in presenting Indian culture in the English language with minimum awkwardness and maximum acceptance) which many writers have taken, but have not reached this level. They have tried to get the reader to focus on issues and problems, creating a positive mental stance towards these things. Also they have easily

created for themselves an identity; it is rather a transformation from one identity to the other. Their innovative artistic styles are applauded all around the globe.

Arundhati Roy's as well as Aravind Adiga's narration is a double-edged weapon that works both outside and inside. With innovative style they attacks and wins the outside, but by raising the issues they have hurled the weapon inside. Their art is special because they describes not just the events and activities but also images, pictures, dreams and memories that are stored in some mental archive and suddenly surface now and then without any effort, and they present them as they are without even attempting to describe them properly, since that would become artificial. To them a character's mind is a sort of monitor screen where pictures/images appear, and they like a commentator narrate just as they are to the readers.

Thus till now it is established thanks to the innovative enchanting artistic styles used by both the writers chosen for the present study that they are *above all writers, at least above all modern writers*.^x

References

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- ^v Balasubramanian 50.
- ^{vi} Sharma, "A study of language and discourse in *The White Tiger*", 172.
- ^{vii} Pieter Muysken. *Bilingual Speech: A Typology of Code-Mixing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. p.1.
- ^{viii} Orwell, *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*. 45.
- ^{ix} Sharma, 'A study of language and discourse in *The White Tiger*', 172
- ^x Chickera, eds. *English Critical Texts* 133.