ABSTRACT

Braj B. Kachru's (1983) study attempts to show how English is used in India in creative and critical texts. In the present paper, an attempt is made to show how English (L_1) is exploited as a non-native variety (L_2) with reference to Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and explore Indianisms. Rao fashioned 'a dialect' and recreated new words, idioms, syntactic structures and rhythms. Postcolonial critics are critical about impact of the English language and its hegemonic consequences on the Third World. Polyglottism has been our unique linguistic feature; we use more than one language, while speaking or thinking. Rao's use of English in a unique Indian way was his conscious effort of displaying British-Indian under texts to the Western World. His conscientious refusal of using British variety of English was his conscious choice. It is his attempt towards acculturation of English in Indian discourse. Rao's significant contributions lie in his experimental use of English. Use of English in India raises several interesting socio-cultural and socio-linguistic problems. A study of cultural–bound use of English in Indian socio-cultural situations is a step–forward in globalization of Indian society.
 Key Words: Acculturation of English, Indianism, cultural factors, linguistic problems

Kanthapura: An Experiment in Aculturation of English in India

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I

Braj B. Kachru's (1983) study on uses of English in India highlights processes of Indianization of English; it focuses on sociological and cultural aspects of English exploited by Indian writers in English, media, journalism, educational channels and educated people at large using English in India since its beginnings from the famous Macaulay Speech[1]. Non-native users of English in India have been employing English for more three centuries now for different motives; it has given birth to a national dialect of English called Indian English in India (InE). Subsequently, its social and cultural pressures

spread among natives in the South Asian continent. Studies of Indian writings in English have been attempted in the colonial and postcolonial contexts where English has been employed as a non-native variety.

There are however debates among experts about use of English as a dominating structure among Indians who are employing English for intellectual discourses. The postcolonial critics like Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak, G. N. Devy and several Third World ideologues are critical about its impact and hegemonic consequences on socio-cultural and political spheres in the Third World. It is argued that the Third World intelligentsia and mass psyche are perplexed about use of English in varied spheres of their countries, especially in context of hegemony of the Western influence. Nevertheless, though Kachru's study (1983) lapses into history as a pre-postcolonial discourse; its significance cannot be sidelined as a mere documentary linguistic exploration. It fuels considerable energy to the postcolonial critical discourse that began around 1990's decade. His study provides a theoretical framework. He attempts to work out as how English has been used in India in varied creative and critical texts. Such study gives useful data of Indian texts produced in the twentieth century.

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938, 1963)[2] is a sincere attempt of acculturation of native English manifesting a representative Indian cultural scene. Rao was a product of the *Kannada* culture of Karnataka. About composition of *Kanthapura*, the overt remarks of Raja Rao regarding his linguistic approach to the writing of the novel indeed remarkable. He writes:

> One has to convey in a language that is not one's own … to convey various shades of meaning of a thought–movement in an alien language … yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up … but not of our emotional make–up. We are instinctively bilingual (Foreword, Rao, 1963: i).

Rao holds us as *instinctively bilingual* suggesting our multilingual cultural construct. Polyglottism is unique linguistic feature of Indians since ancient times. Indra Nath Choudhari (2010; 113) argues that Indians are essentially polyglots; they use more than one language, while speaking or even thinking. As a Third World country, India has a 5000 years-old history of multilingual civilization. However, in a post-colonial Indian context, metamorphosing multiplicity of political and cultural contexts is riddling. Gopal Guru's article (2011: 36-42) presents a complexity of emerging political and cultural scene in the last few decades of India. He refers to six types of *Indias* as a post-colonial hegemony distributed in cultural uneven blocks. These blocks assert their own cultural hegemony: *Brahmin*, non-*Brahmin*, *Desi*, *Dalit*, Subaltern, Deviant or *Varn*, Caste, Sub-caste, Creed, Minority and Residual or even a meta-category like

Class. Heterogeneity in Indian metaphysics is indeed ancient and people lived their mundane life with burden of this heterogeneity. *Aryan*, non-*Aryan*, *Brahman*, Non-*Braham*, *Brahman* and *Dalit* were parts of this conflicting heterogeneity.

Kanthapura does not explore such Indian complexity of conflicting heterogeneity; it presents *Dalit-Savarna*, alien-native, religious-political ambience in a naïve fashion. Rao's major thrust was to project ambiance of the *Gandhi Yug*. He does not manifest multicultural and multilingual subtleties of Indian Freedom Movement era. There is also a village-city dialectics of culture but it is superfluous as socio-political complexities do not surface in the novel. Plot and action of the novel moves in a simplistic line; it demonstrate spiritual reformation of the protagonist, Moorthy, from a village *Brahmin* rough youth to a *Gandhian* political activist. Rao's interest lies in depiction of a *Gandhi ethos* and a *protest movement* triggered by Gandhi and Nehru rather than project social, cultural and political dialectics of existing times. His use of creative faculties in terms of English in an Indian way was his conscious effort of displaying British-Indian under texts to the Western. *His conscientious refusal of using a native variety of English was his conscious choice, an effective critical tool, which he developed in the novel, is indeed his admirable attempt towards an acculturation of English in Indian discourse.* Rao's contributions therefore lie in his experimental use of English, which is today developed into a national dialect. *Kanthapura's* unique place in development of Indian English as a national variety is therefore immense.

A detailed examination of the *Kanthapura* text might tempt one to argue that *Kanthapura* is an attempt to translate a Kannada text that prefigured in Rao's consciousness. While he began to transfer the same in English, he foresaw several linguistic and cultural problems of transfer but Rao overcame them competently in his own way resulting into a typical dialect suitable to express the Kannada rural consciousness. Chandrakant Patil's dissertation (as quoted by S. K. Desai, 1988: 7) on *The Kannada Element in Kanthapura* throws light on this aspect, though the novel was originally written in English and *not* in Kannada.

II

Kanthapura. an Indian text in English sets down a standard of Indian style. It is interesting to examine Rao's (1908-2006) critical efforts, which can be termed as *a process of acculturation of English*. An attempt is made to find out how the English language (L_1) is exploited as a non-native variety (L_2) with reference to *Kanthapura* and investigate *Indianisms* (use of native variety of English in Indian contexts to describe an Indian experience in varied Indian language situations in *Kannada*).

Rao is categorically conscious of problems of an Indian writer in English. He asserts that Indians should not write like the English:

> We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can write only as Indians … Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect, which will someday prove to be as distinctive as the Irish or the American (Rao, Foreword, 1963: iii).

Rao fashioned *a dialect* without fully understanding its implications to recreate an Indian *consciousness*. There is an immense impact of *Kannada* in his fictional writings.[3] The chief thrust of Rao is to recreate new words, new idioms, syntactic structures and rhythms. The question is that in what sense is Rao's Indian English *distinctive*? Has it *a distinctive form* of Indian English? Does it help to evolve a national dialect called Indian English? There is no clear yes–no answer to these questions, since it depends on a language attitude of a user.

It is therefore, formal features of Indian English, which mark it as distinct in its Indianness from the Englishness of British English, and linguistic significance of sociological and cultural factors in a bilingual's use of English as L_2 and impact of such cultural factors (Kachru, 1983: 130) are worth considering. A scale of bilingualism running from almost monolingualism at one end, through varying degrees of bilingualism to absolute ambilingualism at the other end is possible to imagine in Indian English. Indian user of English having no command over a wide register–range in English gets into a sort of what Kachru calls *register-confusion* (Kachru, 1983: 130). The term, *register-confusion* implies use of register bound items in another register of English where such an item is not used in a natively used variety of English. It becomes an item of discollocation in a native variety of English. Rao 'explored all possibilities of experimentation with English in *Kanthapura* that an Indian writer was capable of' (Desai, 1988: 15). Let us look at these 'experimentations' of Rao in a theoretical framework provided by Kachru and attempt to trace its distinctive characteristics, Indian formations or Indianisms in *Kanthapura*:

(A) **The Sources of Indianisms:** The linguistic factors generally determining the Indianness of Indian English language–contact–situations, which Kachru (1983: 131) terms it as a *process of transfer*.

(1) Transfer of Context: This involves cultural transfers which are absent or different in cultures where English is L_1. In Indian English fiction, cultural patterns come under such transfers as the caste-system, social attitudes, social and religious taboos, superstitions, notions of superiority and inferiority. Some examples from *Kanthapura* in this respect are given below:

    i. Festivals and rituals: *Ganesh–Jayanti* (14), *bhajan* (11), *Harikathas* (11), *Dasara* (38), *tirtham* (39), *Prayaschitta* (57), *Gayatri* (88), *Arati* (150), a *kumkum*-worship (p. 95).

    ii. Items of Food: *khir* (31), *chutney* (31), *pheni* (31), *happalam* (51), *laddu* (113), *payasam* (173)

    iii. Items of dress: *dharmawar* sari (5), *dhoti* (10), *khadi* (29).

    iv. Philosophical Terms: *Maya-vadha* (11), *dharma sastra* (92), on p.129 the term is used with the translation–note the writ-laws of the ancient sages, *ahimsa* (103)

    v. Sociological Terms: a *khanda* of paddy (21), *hookah* (78), *bidies* (161), the *rohini* star (156), *thothi* (inner–court yard) (7), *mandap* (106)

(2) Transfer of L_1 Meanings to L_2 Items: Meanings of an Indian item may be transferred to an item of English, for example, *separate–eating* refers to a group of untouchables for whom separate arrangements for meals are made at a public ceremony.

Some more examples:

i. Native words / Native collocations: midday meal (6), rice–water (59), rice–cake (51), the seventh–month ceremony (25), thumb–mark (32), a crow-and-sparrow story (22), a traitor to one's salt–giver (20), to hold a word–for–word fight (42), to eat dust (87), to be one's dog's tail (98), to be fit enough to be mother of two or three children (38), to tie one's daughter to the neck of (52), to hold one's head and weep (21), hair cutting ceremony (171). Most of these collocations are literal and tend to attempt an exact translation from Kannada.

(B) Transfer of Form–context Component: This is essentially determined by what may be known as *Indian contexts* as opposed to purely *English or American contexts*. This situation is not unusual. In Indian languages specific items function in Indian contexts and while transferring the same in English, these stand out as Indianisms.

Some examples from *Kanthapura*:

    i. Swear Words: Sun of concubine (15), you goose–faced minion (31), son of a prostitute (340), licker of your feet (34), son of a widow (81), you donkey's husband (84), dung–eating curs (212).

    ii. Exclamations and slogans: he-ho (2), ayyo–ayyo (71), Rama–Rama (71), holya–holya (160), Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai.

(C) Formal Equivalence and Indianisms: Indianisms in Indian English may involve equivalence of items of L_1 and L_2 in two ways: 1. It may be translation of an Indian item or 2. It may be a shift based on an underlying Indian source item.

i. Translation: Translation is an attempt to find an equivalent or partly equivalent in Indian English for an Indian item.

Some examples:

caste–dinner (171), eating-leaf (57), rice–eating ceremony (171), seventh month ceremony (25)

ii. Idioms: to sleep sleep of asses (124), to beat one's mouth and shout (211), to light one's bath–fire (33), to stitch one's mouth (84).

iii. Similes and metaphors: as honest as elephant (12), be seated like a son (97), our stomachs began to beat like frames (220), helpless as a calf (55), bell–metal voice (10).

(D) Shifts: Shifts may imply adaptation where no attempt is made to establish formal equivalence.

Consider following examples other than *Kanthapura*:

May the vessel of your life never float in the sea of existence (Anand, 20), may the fire of ovens consume you (Anand, 78), crocodile in a loin cloth (Bhattacharya, 217).

1. Hybrid Indianisms: Hybrid Indianisms comprise of two or more elements and one element is from Indian languages. Consider the following:

kumkum–mark (159); police *Jamadar* (29); *Ekadashi*–day (30); a *kumkum* worship (95); (all examples from *Kanthapura*) attar–bottle (Raja Rao, *The Serpant and the Rope*, 266) ; Congress-*pandal* (Anand, *Untouchable*, 212).

2. Compounding: In Indian villages, 'people are known by their houses, fields, professions, idiosyncrasies, physical specialties; they are treated as part of their proper names' (Desai, 1988: 10). Rao, found it necessary to suggest the proper noun quality by forming compounds like *Corner-House-Moorthy*, a descriptive phrase implying 'Moorthy, whose house is in that corner', would not have served the purpose. Moorthy is known by the house he lives in. So, several such proper nouns are used in *Kanthapura* to identify characters by their locations, houses, professions and such idiosyncrasies:

(i) Corner–House-Moorthy (6), front-House-Akkamma (6), street-Corner-Beadle Timmayyaa (7), Jack–tree-Tippa (28), left–handed-Madanna (28), nose–scratching-Nanjamma (11), rice–pounding Rajamma (134), pock–marked-Sidda (7), one-eyed-Linga (28), Post–Office–House-People (31), Fig–Tree–House people (6), The-That-House People (31).

 (ii) Another linguistic device of compounding has been turned into a modifier and this involves a typical way of addressing objects, places in a form of Indianisms.

Consider following examples: *field with a haunted tamarind tree* becomes *The-Haunted–Tamarind–Tree–Field*, *a house with a nine beams* becomes *the nine–beamed-house*.

3. Repetition: Repetition of phrases and clauses has been a unique feature used in spoken form of Indian languages while transferring this use in L_2 Rao retained repetition device, which enabled him to maintain Indian rhythm of speech and achieve a desirable effect of emphasis in such expressions:

child after child (3), bridegroom after bridegroom (23), carts after carts (33), fever on fever (76), this boy and that boy (39), this woman and that woman (77).

4. Repetition of Adjuncts: ages, ages ago (2), better and better (3), here and there (47), to this side and that (72), spin more and more, and more and more (168), the rain pours on and on (74).

By employing structures of coordination and device of linkages, Rao makes his narratives continuous and exciting. He writes:

> The tempo of Indian life…must be infused into our English expression as the tempo of American and Irish life…We, in India, think quickly, talk quickly and we move quickly …We tell one interminable tale …Episode follows episodes …This was and still is ordinary style of our story telling (Forward, 1963: i)

The quality of *quickness*, *endlessness* and *interminableness* is achieved by employing structure of coordination and repeated use of structures creates what K. R. Srinivas Iyengar calls, 'the lilt and seductive rhythm,' and the 'curious incantatory power' (1973: 397).

Consider effect of *incantatory power* of Indian village life in Indian English.

> The day rose into the air and with it the dust of the morning and the carts began to creak round the bulging rocks and the coppery peaks and the sun fell into the river and pierced it to the pebbles, while the carts rolled on and on, fair carts of the Kanthapura fair … fair carts that came from Maddur and Tippur and Santur and Kuppur …. (*Kanthapura*, 1963: 56).

In India, English has blended with cultural and social complex of the country and has become, as Raja Rao says, '*the language of the intellectual make–up* of Indians' (Foreword, 1963: i). Indian intellectuals (except perhaps Sanskrit) in spite of loyalty to political pressures and regional languages have used English in India. The use of English as a link language in India (and the growth of Indian English) has for the first time created a pan–Indian literature (except, of course, the earlier use of Sanskrit), which symbolizes cultural and socio–political aspirations of Indians. Thus, a foreign language (L_1) has become more culture-bound in India than Persian and Arabic were in times of Muslim rulers. 'The linguistic implications of such acculturation of Indian English are more culture-bound. It creates more distance between Indian English and other varieties of English (L_1)' (Kacharu, 1983: 139). The use of English in India thus raises interesting socio-cultural and socio-linguistic problems. A study of

cultural–bound use of English in Indian socio-cultural situations could be considered a step–forward in determining hegemonic structures of Indian English in changing scenario and its use in globalization of Indian society.

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Notes and References

Notes:

1. Lord Macaulay's famous speech addressed to the British Parliament on 2 February 1835: 'I have travelled across India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them.'

2. All textual quotes from *Kanthapura* are from the 1968 Indian edition.

3. S. K. Desai's extensive article on *Kanthapura* focusing on linguistic experimentations refers to C. B. Patil's unpublished CIE dissertation entitled, *The Kannada Element in Raja Rao's Prose: A Linguistic Study of Kanthapura*.

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