

Indianized English: A Study of Anita Rau Badami's 'Tamarind Mem'

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to evaluate the language of Anita Rau Badami's 'Tamarind Mem' based on Braj Kachru's *Theory of Indianization*. Indian English is considered as the standard variety of British English and it becomes the inevitable truth that English Language is no longer a foreign language but very much the language of Indian people. The study asserts Anita Rau Badami's view that Indian Expressions can be easily administered in English Language. It gives a pleasant feel of Indianness to the readers, without breaking its beauty and meaning. India is known for cultural as well as linguistic diversity, which results in disintegrated national identity of English language and experimentation on it. Badami's 'Tamarind Mem' is full of several strategies to realize, the Indian Ethos. She utilized several Indian idioms, images, rituals, abusive terms; honorific terms to indianize her novel.

Key Words: Indianization, Culture, Linguistic-diversity, Experimentation, Multilingualism

Indian English fiction becomes the most popular during the last some decades of twentieth century due to its specific features and theme such as: multiculturalism, diasporic elements, subaltern features, feminism, marginalization, Indianization, of English and experimentation on it and so on. The use of English language in the post-colonial period has undergone a significant change because of the writers' flying imagination and their world-wide experiences. Indian writing in English crossed many milestones and has come to be finally accepted as a major literature of the world English is a glocal language in India as it satisfies both the global and local needs. English in India has acquired 'functional nativeness' as a medium of communication across distinct linguistic and cultural groups. Indian writers in English had to face some challenges. It is difficult to find English equivalents for various terms used in the Indian languages and context. Undoubtedly English has undergone a

process of nativization at lexical, phonological and syntactic levels due to the influence of different mother tongues and culture. This acculturation of English in India is termed by Braj Kachru as 'Indianization of English.' Kachru explains some lexical, collocation deviations and syntactic processes. After the 1980's Indian English Novel had its luxuriant growth mainly in the hands of Salman Rushdie, Vikram Sheth, Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai, Anita Rau Badami, Arundhati Roy and a few others.

Anita Rau Badami (b.1961) born in the town of Rourkela in the eastern state of Orissa in India. She had a nomadic experience of shifting from place to place as her father worked as an engineer in the Indian Railways. After graduating from the University of Madras, she studied journalism and after her marriage she shifted to Canada and settled there in 1991. Her first novel 'Tamarind Mem' was published in 1996 and then published as

Tamarind Woman in United States. This novel fetched her great fame. Among the Indo-Canadian writers Badami has earned unique place in the vibrant field with her focus on psychological insights and concerns of her women protagonist. Badami explores an updated analysis of the migrated Indian Families in India and abroad. Her writing revolves round as how families undergo socio-cultural, psychological transplantation, when they move from one culture to another. *Tamarind Mem* is a skillfully written family saga that analyses complex relationship of Indian family.

Tamarind Mem is the story of two women, Saroja, the mother and her daughter, Kamini. The first part of the novel titled "Kamini" gives us the account of her birth and childhood in several places and the death of her father "Dadda". The second part "Saroja" is Kamini's mother's flashback at her own childhood, youth, marriage to Dadda, their residence in several places, the births of the two daughters Kamini and Rupa, and souring of her relation with 'Dadda'. She narrates her story to the co-passengers in rail, she comes across during her journey. Both the parts are narrated in the first person and deal with the personal impressions of the mother and daughter about the kind of life they had to live in India. The title '*Tamarind Mem*' itself indicated the Indianness, as the term Mem indicated it. The Tamarind is believed by Indians as an inauspicious tree which is inhabited by malicious spirits and any contact with it is said to sour relations. Saroja, has a sharp, biting tongue and doesn't spare anybody, which earns her the inevitable epithet '*Tamarind Mem*'.

The most outstanding feature of this novel is self-conscious stylistic and indianized terms and devices employed by Badami,

while unfolding her story. Badami's novel offers her readers a successful negotiation with the conscious exploration of the indigenous thought patterns, idioms, socio-cultural terms and experiences and techniques of foreignization, which is the feature of globalized language. The novel deals with a South-Indian Brahmin family immediately after independence of India. The British left the India but the colonial hangover has set in and Indians are still attracted towards Mems and Sahibs and the colonial hierarchies. The novel projects female characters all seem locked into interiors, circumscribed by rules and expectations. Badami successfully used many popular Indian idioms and phrases, Indian terms of abuse, expletive and swear-words, distorted Indian and English words and sentences, Indian Imagery, rituals, food terms, clothing terms, Kinship and honorific terms etc. from the vernacular which makes the novel interesting and indianized.

Badami uses code mixing strategy at large to indianize her English. The title itself is the best example of it. Tamarind is English word associated with Mem, a short form of Memsahib, a Hindi word used for Madam. Badami's Indianness lies in her use of English language in the Indian context with other Indian languages, which suits to her characters. In the following extract from novel one can get the idea of her skill of using language:

"Yesterday a Padre, father Joseph, from that boy's school across the road, was smashed like a fly against the side of number 21 bus," said the driver, "Total chutney, the poor man". (19)

Total chutney is a notable example of code mixing, where in Total is an adjective from

English, mixed with chutney a noun used for Indian food, a kind of strong relish. This hybridized term colourfully indicates the extent of damage to the priest's body after the accident. It shows the usual Indian way of taking about accidents.

Linda Ayah's (a maid servant of Saroja) gossip with the other working women is another example of indianized English:

'It is her Miyaan, he wants a son' (92).

Here 'Miyaan', a word from Hindi which points out here the Muslim practice of referring to the husband as *Miyaan* is used as it is. Badami subtly indicates the Indian ethos of male dominance through this code-mixing. The characters in the novel are of two types: Middle class Indians, servants, drivers, mechanics and Ayahs. Badami skillfully suggests their narrow way of thinking, which appears to be illogical and superstitious. Linda Aya is in trouble because of naughty and mischievous acts of *Kamini* and *Roopa*. To threaten them *Linda* talks of several superstitious concepts from Indian culture such as, *bhoots* (55), *Rakshas*, *Shaitan*, *dayain* (55), *Shani Devil girl* (57), *Kali-kaluti* (57), *Badmaash* (81), *Chudail* (213) etc. These are notable examples which are holding Indian cultural scripts. She mixed codes from various sectors of Indian society such as: religion, culture, profession, rituals and so on. For example use of several religious terms *Pooja* (43), *juttu* (70), *sanyasi* (101), *Amruth-dhara* (120), *apsaras*(136), *Trishanku* (143), *swarg* (143), *sharma* (156), *Kula-gothra* (165), *purajari* (176), *sadhu* (199), etc. is quite remarkable in establishing the Indian ethos in novel.

Use of Indian discourse markers in novel is another notable feature of Badami's indianized English. Gumperz

(1982) treats the discourse markers as an integrator or sentence fillers, used inevitably in speaking. For example,

"What did I tell you? Hanh?"

In this discourse *Saroja* crossed the *Kamini* and emphasizes her opinion by adding discourse marker 'hanh' as a question tag. Grammatically and semantically 'hanh' has neither a concrete place nor a meaning, but it suits here to *Saroja's* nature, indicating the negativity. There are so many discourse markers such as: *Baap re baap* (46), *Tchuk-tchuk* (18), *un-unh* (37), etc. used by Badami in her characters conversation.

'Word-formation' is another significant creative process used by Badami to indianize her English. She uses compounding, coinage and reduplication at large in this novel.

Reduplication, in Indian English provides emphasis indicating continuation of a process. Reduplications are linguistic doubling, called as echo-formations, which also stress cultural norms, values, ideals and attitude. Indians, especially North- Indians are big on 'echowords' tagged onto a noun. Indian English words that lend a playful rhythm to the spoken vernacular are used by Badami to enliven everyday conversation as in the following extract:

"Liar – Liar lipstick", I chanted immediately.

"You were sitting behind the building doing khusur-phusur with the other ayahs (29)

Linda Ayah complains against the little daughters to Kamini that they are naughty and disobedient. The little girl immediately tries to protest by exposing the Ayah who is seen doing 'Khusurphusur' (29) with the other ayahs and neglecting them. This

reduplication is purely Indian as the term comes from Hindi. In Hindi *khusur-phusur* means chitchatting in vain or gossiping with someone. There are several Indian reduplications applied by Badami in her '*Tamarind Mem*'. The most remarkable examples are: *hello-vello* (14), *revolution-shevolution* (69), *cutlet-mutlet* (72), *shampoo-tampoo* (76), *beggars-weggars* (102), *train-shain* (140), *packing-shaking* (195), *college-vollege* (111), *drama-shama* (111), etc. are quite interesting and meaningful when will be read in their context.

Badami's novel is a provocative novel, about the ties of love and resentment that bind mothers and daughters, masters and servants. The story is about the Indian family life, and hence the progress of Indianization of English language has naturally resulted in the use of Indian collocations. According to Braj Kachru collocations and compounds may have one or more of the following characteristics (1982:109):

1. They deviate grammatically from British English compounding.
2. They are loan shifts from Indian language.
3. They are collocationally Indian.
4. They have contextual units assigned in Indian culture which are absent in British Culture.

Badami's collocations and compounding are noticeable and suit the context syntactically and semantically as she Indianizes English to suit Indian Cultural contexts and Indian characters. Indian sensibility has been caught here brilliantly, in a typical Indian style and sometime; the words and expressions are in English, but the organization is Indian. An example from

Tamarind Mem could be analysed along these lines:

"Uh-huh, what mischief are you up to, monkey-child?" she asked (4)

'*Monkey child*' is a collocation used to emphasize the naughtiness of children. Badami collocates monkey with child to point out the same naughtiness in *Kamini* as a monkey, which happens generally in Indian communication. Badami's collocations are thus very rare and imaginative. There are other examples of such collocations in which Badami uses English words but her purpose is to point out the Indian way of thinking, such as: *nosy-parker girl* (26), *a sneaky-pie-face* (25), *rubbish pile-place* (37), *whispery-fabric* (46) *closed-tin mind* (55), *air-headed sister* (261). These appear very odd but strike as perfect and apt while reading.

In *Tamarind Mem* we have numerous funny and odd hyphenated compounds, which reveal Badami's linguistic competence and creative genius. This can be considered as *neologisms/ coinages*. Here is one such example creating humour. Whenever Kamini suffers from dysentery Saroja gives her medicine called Amruth-dhara that Kamini hates taking protest against it bluntly:

... my mouth filled with the ugly taste of shit syrup. (120)

Shit-syrup is a coinage created for the anti-dysentery medicine which Kamini's mother Saroja forces her to drink in her childhood. She hates its taste and smell as children usually do and so Roopa, Kamini's sister, names it as *Shit Syrup*.

The term '*hybridization*' has acquired a special meaning in the context of post-colonial writers of fiction. These writers

experimented with English, mixing the regional Indian languages. Language has been an important tool of resistance, so these writers create the new instrument of 'hybrid language'. Hybrid language is used for expressing writers' disparate cultural backgrounds and helps them assert their cultural identity. This linguistic hybridity was initially considered a negative aspect of the Indian Writers Orientation but since the publication of Homi Bhabha's (1994) work on Culture and related concepts of post-colonialism, the term 'hybridity' has acquired a positive, creative relationship.

Anita Rau Badami achieves considerable success in utilizing the technique of hybridization as her linguistic apparatus. A few notable examples of such hybridized terms used in the novel are: "Paanjice" (8), "raddhiman" (35), "Jamoan fruit" (56), "doctorwallahs" (66), "Bauni-rate" (87), "Thief-goonda-Rascals" (141), "Bilad-Pressure" (92), "Choono-box" (162), "neem-juice" (94), "Besharam-hedge" (22), and many more.

Some Indian words are pluralized by adding 's' as an inflectional suffix from English. It is also considered as a part of hybridized linguistic creativity. In *Tamarind Mem* there are several examples of such types by Badami like; kata marans (68), cholis (82), pakoras, samosas and tikkas (99), aloo-parathas (115), saris (121), memsahibs (145), etc.

As Kachru observes Indian English has specific feature of Indian idiomatization, it can be easily seen in the above speech acts. The utterances are addressed to Saroja by her mother and reflect the older generation concept of how in a family, a woman needed to be married and have children. The primary function of marriage is considered

to produce and reproduce children. Today, having the influence of Western culture and education, we find some changes in such type of orthodoxy in urban area, but still we find that women are treated as inferior to men in Indian society. 'Woman is a shadow of her husband' has a hidden meaning that women have no identity; they are mere shadows of men.

Saroja wants to oppose her parents but is not successful. Her grandfather has kept an illicit sexual relation with a woman and hurt his wife Putti. She expresses her anger for male chauvinistic tradition and her dislike for the meekness of the other women in the family when she remarks:

"They are like Cows. All they do is to have children and gossip" (171)

Here Badami uses ironically an Indian tradition of worshipping cows. Cows are worshipped in India as holy creatures, very mild, productive and useful. The Metaphor of the cow has an implied meaning, and suggests here irony of a woman's life in India.

In Indian culture Honorific terms are socially determined on the different basis such as age, higher social status, profession etc. These Honorifics are used with prefixes such as Mr. /Shri, Mrs/Smt. or with suffix 'ji'.

In "*Tamarind Mem*" (1996), there are several Honorific terms which are in the indianized English. Some English Honorifics are also to emphasize the colonial influence of the '*British Raj* For example, Linda Ayah addresses Saroja as '*Memsahib*' or '*Mem*' (201). '*Ji*' is "*Hindi*" Honorific suffix, Badami uses it in her novel with several address terms in which honorific suffix is attached to Kinship terms for indicating politeness:

Baba+ji = Babaji (66)

Aunty+ji = Auntiji (195)

Behen+ji = Behenji (235)

Bibi+ji = Bibiji (258)

Bhabhi+ji = Bhabhiji (208)

The honorific 'ji' accompanies even verbs, adjectives, adverbs and negativizers. English Honorifics are also used by Badami to depict the influence of English language on Indian life.

Badami uses endearment terms in her novel such as; *My Kanmani* (47), *My Jesu child* (), *My Bitiya* (114), *Baby, Missy* (47), *Naughty Badmash girl* (81), *Baby Chikkamma* (146), etc. These underline the elders' love for children and the Indian habit of using metaphoric language, especially for children. Some terms in the list make meaningful use of code-switching and hybridization, which throws light on linguistic experimentation.

Badami has also used clothing terms, without giving them any equivalent from English. One example is a Sari (length of cloth worn wrapped around the body in specific ways by Indian women). Badami specifies the significance of 'Sari' through various events and narratives in her novel. *Silk Saris* (13), *Zari Saris* (121), such terms

are used to focus their preciousness and their importance in Indian traditional ceremonies. *Chooridar* (pants that are baggy from the waist to the knee and ending in *churis*, 77), *lehenga* (decorative ankle-length skirt, Urdu term, 8), *salwar-kameez* (combination of tunic and pants, 91), *dupatta* (long scarf like item, 91), etc. are also used in the original form. These are all type of clothing used by women of various religions from India. Badami has used men's wear terms also such as: *Pyjamas* (from Farsi, to Urdu and Hindi, sleepwear used by men, 237), *baniyan* (an inner, sleeveless vest-Hindi term, 237), *kurtas* (a thigh length tunic Hindi, 237) etc.

Badami's use of these words, in their vernacular form seems justifiable and desirable when read in their context and moreover it shows her skill of using English language for Indian characters and readers.

In *Tamarind Mem* Badami has achieved a language which is remarkably simple, clear and transparent, through which a profound understanding of life is communicated. Badami's language is a unique kind of Indianized English. Her numerous experiments with the English language have made *Tamarind Mem* quite interesting and readable to anyone.

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