

Linguistic Chutnification in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

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Abstract

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* has been variously described as postmodern novel, postcolonial novel and a novel of magic realism a novel of Indian feminism, and Indianized English. *Difficult Daughters* has been acclaimed as one of the most ingenious and fascinating piece of Indian English Writing in the modern age. The purpose of present study is to analyse the Indianized English used in the present novel which proves the Kapur's creativity and her chutnified English with a unique style of discourse giving experiences of Indian multiculturalism, multi-lingualism. Salman Rushdie, who is known as the pioneer of the term chutnification may be the model for many post-colonial writers and Manju Kapur is one of them. Like Rushdie she also rejected correct English and used chutnified English in a magical manner. Chutney is an Indian dish, which is a side dish and tangy, adding flavor to the main course of a meal, in the same manner chutnified English of post-colonial and post-modern writers such as Manju Kapur made the novel tangy, creative and exciting with use of code-mixing and code-switching. An examination of the lexis of *Difficult Daughters* will be a useful exercise in understanding Kapur's creative style, Indianized English.

Key Words: Chutnification, Indianized English, Lexical Creativity, Code-mixing, code-switching

Indian Writing in English is the Literature written by Indians of any language who write in English. Literature is elevation of human life expressing all thoughts leading to reformation in the society. Indian literature is very famous from ancient times but literature written in English took form during the British rule. Lord Macaulay's minutes and Lord Bentinck's decisions helped Indians to use alien language to express their ideas and critical theories that resulted in the creation of a new literature in English and the birth of Indian writing in English. Though India is multi-cultural and multi-lingual country, writing in English gained interest both in home and abroad. Post-colonial Literature emerged in the mid-

twentieth century, when many colonized nations were fighting for their liberation from the colonisers. The term "Postcolonial" has become a convenient term to describe any kind of resistance against class, race and gender oppression. The Indian subcontinent remained under the British Imperial rule for more than two hundred year. During the imperial rule, Indians were subjected to various harassments such as cultural, social, political, economic and so on. In those circumstances, the Indian writers emerged with a view to unite Indians and to wipe out the colonial perspectives.

India is multi-cultural and multi-lingual nation. Indian writers chose English as the

medium of their writings instead of any regional language and therefore the literature written by the Indian Writers in English, came to be known as “Indian English Literature”. The early exponents of post-colonial Indian English Literature are Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan and many more. After 1980s Indian English Literature became the most famous and widely known literature. The writers of this modern age are Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and also gave enormous scope for the women writers who received universal recognition among them, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Manju Kapur are the most notable and mostly known for their specific contribution in things as feminism, multiculturalism, diaspora elements, hybridity and linguistic experiments.

The use of English language in the post - colonial era has undergone a significant change. Prominent writers of Indian English fiction like Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapur have used English creatively, showing in their writings how far English can be ‘Indianised’. Indianisation, code-mixing, code-switching and hybridization are traits in their work which constitute an integral part of their linguistic experiments. Salman Rushdie is known as the pioneer of this Chutnified English, who created a new identity with the publication of ‘*Midnight’s Children*’ in 1981. The innovativeness of Rushdie’s English is prompted by a desire to capture the spirit of Indian culture with all its multiplicity and diversity. He attempts to

destroy the natural rhythms of the English Language. Many researchers and critics have studied various facts of post-colonial Indian English fiction but the aspect that has not as yet been the focal point of researchers is the language of the novel of post-colonial era. This paper endeavours to analyse the chutnified English used by Manju Kapur in her most discussed novel *Difficult Daughters*. India is the country of diversity with so many languages, cultures, religion, races and convictions. The relationship between language and culture is a complex process. Post-colonial writers differ in their view of the choice of language in post-colonial writings. Some writers stress the use of native words from regional language in their works. Writers such as Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Markandaya, Rushdie, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy and many others strongly believe that their age old customs, manners, traditions can be expressed best in their native language. These writers transform the English language so as to create a native experience. They thought that the imperial language needs to be transformed in order to suit the native readers. They employed the technique of ‘appropriation’, ‘nativisation’ and ‘indianisation’. Their writings are replete with regional dialects and native words and phrases so as to suit the native readers and cultural experience.

The post-colonial Indian English literature gave enormous scope for the women writers. Manju Kapur is one of those writers who received universal recognition. Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar, a town in Indian state of Punjab in 1948. Her novels are mainly stories of women living a life of marginality. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* is about a search for identity in a different

environment. It is set at the time of partition of India and was also entitled as 'partition' by her but on her publisher's recommendation she named it *Difficult Daughters*. The novel is a story of ten year old girl. She has to do different household tasks of the home. Ida, the narrator and the daughter of protagonist, tries to tell secrets of her mother's life. *Difficult Daughters* begins with death, is interwoven with memories and ends in a feeling of loss and despair. Ida regrets on her being a daughter of her mother and she does not want to follow her footsteps. This is essentially a story of three generations and partly analytical, partly historical and partly travelogue. Manju Kapur's success lies in her skillful handling of various themes and creative ways of presenting story. *Difficult Daughters* is studied by researchers with different approaches. But the most different thing which has to be studied about this novel is its language.

Today's world becomes a small village due to information technology. Globalization has made the English language geographically and culturally close. Indian writers have enhanced and moulded the language to the requirement of Indian cultural and setting 'chutnification' of English it becomes the new trend of Indian English writing. The process of chutnification is widespread and so used at large by Indian English writers. Manju Kapur also chutnified and Indianized her English to suit the setting of her novel *Difficult Daughters*. Her novel is full of instances of Indianized words, loan translations, use of repetition and linguistic creativity. She experiments with imperial language and voices her joys and hopes by using colourful words of informal Punjabi and creates a wonderful cultural setting for

her novel *Difficult Daughters*. Manju Kapur's use of code-switching and code-mixing devices is quite interesting and helpful in making novel highly readable and interesting. Attempt is made here to analyse and find out the use of chutnification in the present novel.

Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) earned her substantial success in both financial and literary matters. She is awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best first Book. As outline of the novel explained above, most of the characters and events are Indian in their socio-cultural contexts. The setting of the novel is pre-independent India which demands a meticulous attention in the part of the writer to use language to create the historical sense. The novel is written in third person omniscient narrative with dialogues of the specific characters intruding occasionally. Manju Kapur's novel is full of instances of Indianisation of Vocabulary. An example of her linguistic creation is witnessed through her language. She used language which explains the native Punjabi which extols the soul-satisfying virtues of butter and lassi:

The milk had a thick layer of malai,
Yellow, not white like nowadays.
And when food was cooked, ah, the
fragrance of ghee!
At this point, words fail them
I had grown up on the mythology of
pure ghee, milk, butter and lassi.
..., the barriers of time and space
would have melted like pure ghee in
the warmth of my palm (4)

Though the language used in above dialogue is English, it has written in Indian context, so gives us the sense of Indianisation. The

word Malai is used from Hindi and Punjabi which is used for milk-cream. Malai gives us feeling of proper context. Through the reading it is revealed that Manju Kapur has used code-mixing and code-switching extensively at the lexical and syntactical levels to express her in a better and satisfying manner. In the sentence:

“A woman’s shan is in her home” (13)

Shan is a word from Hindi/ Punjabi. Instead of ‘Pride’ Kapur used Shan which suits to its context. It ends this expression a homely and realistic touch. Such utterances aptly prove how Indian people would look upon the role of woman in society. Like Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Kapur also doesn’t think it necessary to provide explanations. She thinks that the text of the novel should be self-explanatory and absorbing in itself.

Manju Kapur makes use of number of Hindi and Punjabi words, phrases and expressions in *Difficult Daughters*. Such words, phrases and expressions form a long list including food terms, endearing terms, honorific terms, which makes the language of novel more spicy and chutnified. ‘Chutney’ is noun form and it is an Indian dish which is a side dish, spicy and tangy, adding flavor to the main course of any meal. In the same manner use of lexical innovations and Indianized English made *Difficult Daughters* interesting and readable. Kapur used food terms such as: Dahi, Dal, Pakora, Morraba, Paneer, Lassi, Mali etc. as they are. There are many Indian dishes that find mention in the novel. In India some places have specific terms in regional languages. Kapur used these terms with ease as they are used in regional languages for example: Dharmshala (instead of Spiritual Dwelling place), Gully (instead of lane), Ghat (instead of river pier),

Kothi (instead of home/house) etc. she used Indian professional terms without translating them into English such as: Chowkidar (watchman), Bania (shop-keeper), Munshi, Pandit etc.

Indian culture is very different from the western culture. Without losing the coherence and beauty of the structure of the novel Kapur used clothing term, Utensils, Relation terms from Hindi/Punjabi. *Dhoti, Dupatta, Kameez, Pyjama* etc. are used in natural manner. Utensils like *Katori, Thali, Patila* gives us the Indian kitchen’s feel throughout the text. Kinship terms such as *Bade Pitaji, Baoji, Bhai, Maji* beauty the language of *Difficult Daughters*. Kapur used various reduplications also. Reduplication is a process of word-formation. In this process two words are combined to create a new one. Either two same words or two different words with same sounds are combined together. Kapur’s use of *Bas-bas, shor-shor*, definitely used for emphasis and to indicate continuation of process, which is an important feature of Indian English she also used some religious invocations. India is multi-cultural, multi-religious country. Kapur’s use of *Allah-O-Akbar, Har Har Mahadev* are the examples of this multiculturalism. She borrowed various words from Indian language other than English. Hindi/ Punjabi words, names of Hindu Gods, Dishes, names of Indian clothing, Indian expressions made the language chutnified and became the best example of Indian collectivist culture.

Every Literary language, inevitably acquires the nuances of the particular culture. Braj Kachru (1961) has identified Indian English as a ‘transference variety’ in his pioneering work. *Difficult Daughters* a rich mine for

study of cultural elements as there is a large use of various culture-specific terms such as Kinship Terms, Address Terms, Honorific Terms, Greeting, Culinary or food terms, Abusive terms etc. In *Difficult Daughters* one can find remarkable use of Discourse Markers in code-mixing and code-switching. Discourse Markers are the responses that indicated text as a conversation. Generally they are in one word or two words and do not have independent identity but are very meaningful when they occur in conversation. In general, the educated English Speaker, while conversing in English uses English responses as *ok, res, oh, I mean, yeah, woo, nei* etc. However it is observed fact that most of the time, he/she switches to his/her mother tongue only for the similar responses. Kapur considered this fact and used such discourse markers in natural manner. Her use of discourse markers such as: *Aree Wah, Bap re, Hai re* etc. makes her language indianised. Manju Kapur switches code on various levels. She uses this device in expressing agreement, affirmation and consent. The following extract from *Difficult Daughters* show the agreement between the two speakers.

'What a lovely place to be finally laid to rest!

'Hoon', said Virmati absently who saw nothing so remarkable about the gravestone (176)

In above extract instead of explanation or answering in detail Virmati just expressed through "Hoon" which shows her agreement. In another extract also one can find Hindi/ Punjabi discourse marker as below:

At the doorway she (Kasturi) turned back once to say. 'Indu.... use the fresh butter in the doli, the old one is for ghee.'

'Han', said Indu (74)

Here an agreement has been shown by the use of word 'Han'.

Manju Kapur used a lot of local expression with a flavour of local culture and customs also make the novel indianised. There are some examples such as:

- i. *Hai re, beta (13)*
- ii. *Come her beta (202)*
- iii. *Mornings, toast and milk. Lunch dal, rice, chapatti, vegetable, dahi sometimes a sweet dish, for tea, Pakora or Mathri, for dinner, dal, sabzi, sometimes with paneer, rice, chapatti (108)*

Kapur extends the use of code-mixing to phrases and sentences also which are found in the following sentences:

- i. *"Puris and Parathas wrapped in Britannia bread waxed paper" (2)*
- ii. *"Aaluki Sabzi in Mithai boxes" (2)*
- iii. *".... And pull her Sari Pallu" (213)*

In these all examples Kapur used various words from regional language as they are. Throughout the novel we get excellent use of code-mixing. All culinary terms are used as they are used in Hindi and Punjabi. Two Hindi words are innovatively, combined with English conjunctions 'and' as *puris and parathas*. In another example two phrases (*aluki sabzi and mithai boxes*) are connected with the help of English preposition 'in' while close analyzing of many code mixed noun phrases one can notice that the Hindi/ Punjabi words are used sometimes as headwords for e.g. *sweet morabbas in huge*

jugs, sometimes they are constituents of a post modifier, for e.g. four varieties of *barfi*. The code-mixing device gives a great freedom to the novelist to use native words at large and consequently make English nativised.

Difficult Daughter also abounds in the translations of Indian idioms for regional languages and also metaphorical process of the character. For example, Kasturi says:

Now it is you who are eating my head (p. 19)

The literal meaning of the above utterance cannot be accounted for what the character and the novelist intends to convey. The phrase eating my head! Would be quite inappropriate and ungrammatical in English language. But the Indian readers may not find this utterance unintelligible or ungrammatical for it is of their thoughts process and the way they use language. Kapur has simply translated Indian expressions into English literally, which helps to give 'Indian sensibility' to the literary works. Besides, the novelist has also used Indian honorific terms like *Baoji*, *Pehnji* etc. which give typical Indian sensibility to the novel. Again the

interjections used by the characters are literal translation of Indian words. The English interjections would be out of place here and interjections like *Arre*, *Bap re*, *Hey Bhagwan*, etc. from Hindi/ Punjabi are used. The Indian way of using English is also evident in expressions like:

"*Tell me na*"

"*Nice, no*" etc.

The list of linguistic experiments or chutnified English from Difficult Daughters may be more. We may say that Difficult Daughters is brilliant literary work not only because it is about female desire and conflict but also because of Kapur's use of code-switching and code-mixing devices. Her chutnification of language makes the novel more realistic, clear, and readable and Indian. Like Salman Rushdie, Kapur extends the English language to create a new idiom and vocabulary which holds tremendous possibilities for the future. So as Indian linguists such as Braj Kachru, S. N. Sridhar, Yamuna Kachru aptly pointed out that Indian English should be treated as a variety in its own right and should not be considered as a deviance from Standard English is really very true about Difficult Daughters.

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