

INDIANIZED ENGLISH IN KAMALA MARKANDAYA'S NOVELS

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Abstract

The style and language used by any author represents the totality of their mind. Simplicity of language depicts the message of human life, behaviour and other psychological facts. Kamala Markandaya tries her hands at the most challenging task of using Indian variety of English as well as the standard variety of it. Being a European citizen and an Indian resident, she proves very efficiently, the ability of an Indian author for the amalgamation of “the world of words” and “the world of sensation” in her novels. This paper presents the creative genius of Kamala Markandaya who is quite conscious of the mental level of her characters and presents their struggles and dilemmas in a flawless manner.

Key Words: Style, Language, Story telling, dialogue, indianess

The style and language used by an author not only reflects their own mind but also it reveals various aspects of human behaviour in their writings. From the point of view of Language and structure “the concept of style is the adoption of language for particular purposes, occasions and content”. (Verma,p-352) Simplicity of language depicts the message of human life, behaviour and other psychological facts. Kamala Markandaya having the advantage of being a European citizen and an Indian resident portrays very efficiently the Indian variety of English uniting the world of words and sensations in her novels.

Regarding Indian English Quirk (1972:51) is of the opinion that Indian English as a self respecting and established variety of English and Bandyopadhyay (2007) finds it as a specific variant of International Standard English. Her study of various texts of Indian Writing in English (IWE) texts for her Ph.D. dissertation reveals that IWE text is generally marked by many sociolinguistic features, like Indianisation of vocabulary, loan translation, use of repetition and linguistic creativity. She (2007:3) asserts her opinion in the following way:

The term “Indian English” refers to the variety of English which is learnt and used by a large number of educated (...) Indians as a second language Indian English has the status of an Indian Language, serves the international role of communication with the global community of nations and intra-regional roles of link language among people of diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Kamala Markandaya's novels are full of instances of Indianisation of vocabulary, loan translation, use of repetition and linguistic creativity as discussed above with regard to Indian English. Markandaya, being a creative genius, quite consciously reads the minds of her characters and presents their struggles and dilemmas meticulously. Having ten novels to her credit, she has dealt with various strata of society. Through her novels she has tried to present the true picture of her motherland to her foreign audience– the God- fearing poor villagers,(**Nectar in a Sieve**) , the underworld life in the city,(A Handful of Rice), the helpless Maharaja who has lost his grandeur on the integration of his state with India but uncomplaining villager, (**Possession**) or the saint (**A Silence of Desire** and

Possession), the freedom fighters who sacrifice their happiness for the sake of their own country, (**Some Inner Fury**), the social worker (**The Coffer Dams**).

Markandaya is one of the most spawning Indo-Anglian novelists. K.S Iyengar says, “**Women are natural story tellers**” and storytelling is a highly graceful art and Markandaya follows this great tradition of women novelists established from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf. In her efforts to portray a real-life character in her novels, she breaks the barrier of traditions, and carries out a lot many experimental innovations that need to be done for a close analytical study.

Markandaya adopts “Indianized English” to portray the characters who are deeply rooted in Indian culture. The show-case of emerging Indian ethos owes her novels a sociological nature. S.Z.H Abidi writes: “In order to convey her sociological awareness she uses the methods and techniques of social realism”. She experiments broadly in three arenas: words, word-order and rhythm. She experiments in these areas to keep a balance in both the cultures, the East and the West. She chooses Indian words consciously or sometimes inconsistently. But simultaneously she keeps in mind her western readers also. Thus she struggles between her the desire to be true to the spirit of Indian culture and to give English equivalent for her western readers. Finding a way out, she either impersonates her characters entirely in an Indian situation where they can talk in their regional language or in a highly anglicized society where the characters naturally talk English. To be effective, Markandaya picks out dialectal, colloquial and archaic words. In her first novel **Nectar in a Sieve** she gives a glossary of ‘Some Indian words’ at the beginning. . Apart from this she uses ascriptions to clarify the meanings for example, “Deepawali”, Festival of lights, or “...Khannan, the chakkli” or “... tope the colour of thatch”. Though Markandaya never transcribed her idioms or proverbs yet she uses ‘Indianized English’ in her language for example, Rukmani narrates her first journey to her husband’s home says, “We rested half-hour before resuming our journey.” The sentence is just the translation of the word from her mother tongue, which should be otherwise; ‘we rested for half an hour’. Several words are also used in cultural contexts such as ‘Apa’, ‘Ama’ and a woman wearing ‘lingam’ for fertility, which either original native words or literal translations. Some other idioms used are : “The overseer, he made much play of his authority.” “Traders waxed prosperous selling their goods to the workmen.” “There was no bad blood between us.” “a baby nearly took his mother’s life in exchange of his own”. “There is no earth in my breeding”. Markandaya uses these to lend an exotic ‘Charm’ in the language of her novels. The distinction between persons and their social status is quite apparent through her language; for example Rukmani ‘the only literate person’ uses good English whereas other illiterate people like Nathan, Kali, Janaki, Kunthi speak flat and colloquial English with a limited vocabulary and simple sentence pattern. Biswas, the money lender, shows his businesslike attitude in his economical use of words. On the contrary, the speech of Kenny, a foreigner, is all natural and fluent.

You too are starving I suppose”. “We have a little rice it will last us until times are better.” “Times are better, time are better, he shouts.” Times will not be better for many months, Meanwhile you will suffer and die. You meek suffering fools, why do you keep this ghastly silence? Why do you not demand-cry out for help-do something? There is nothing in this country, Oh God, there is nothing!

Use of colloquial language:

The dialogues of the characters in **Some Inner Fury** help in revealing their thoughts and ideas. Each character has a different type of language that indicates his attitude for eg; cultured Mira, smart and dynamic Richard, clinquish Kit, angry Govind, patient and silent Premala, conservative Dodamma, unusual personality of the uncle, tough Roshan—they are all distinct in their use of words. Through the use of archaic, colloquial and dialectal words she gives a realistic touch to the characters.

Word-order:

Word order is another important technique she has applied to sound emphatic. She repeats some words as:

“he almost tried me out,” or “so good to be home at last,” or “this wide, wide world”, or “long interval”, or “truth must be stated” etc. this snacks of the characteristic Indian device of repetition. Elsewhere she changes the word order in order to indicate a different kind of language for example: “I well knew”, or “I now this appears to be an attempt to keep the word order of the native languages.

Syntax:

Regarding syntax, Markandaya appears to be a little conservative. She uses punctuation marks very meticulously. She does not accept any economy measures. Yet she experiments a good deal with manipulation of syntax. It is rightly remarked that “**Nectar in a Sieve**, which has the purity of running water, is her first novel” where as **Some Inner Fury**, “is remarkable for its precision of language....” Her style owes her novels freshness of flowing water, and makes it crystal clear. She is extremely fluent and delicate in her description. But the way she handles syntax, makes her a little different from her coevals.

Fragmentation:

Markandaya has utilized the art of fragmentation very skillfully. According to Paul Roberts, a fragment is “a part of the sentence punctuated as if it were a complete sentence.” Generally she places these fragments in the beginning of the passage for example; “Wedding day”, “Rain”, “Afternoon” etc. On the very first page of **Nectar in a Sieve** we find various fragments like— “An old woman’s fables.” “A need for comfort” and “He and Kenny, the young and the old”. It suggests that when the novel opens the ‘past’ is just over and that the memory is fresh and the wound is yet to be healed.

Mixture of Tenses:

Markandaya has her own strategy of mixing tenses and using past and present continuous. She describes all journeys’ in the present tense. The uses of verbs in indicating tense is very unusual in some passages, they blend the past with the present, mind with memory.

It was not enough sometimes from sheer rebellion we ate grass, although it always resulted in stomach cramps and violent retching for hunger is a curious thing; at first it is with you all the time, waking and sleeping and in your dreams....

This type of contrasted tense pattern or shift from past to present appears to represent the writer’s point of view and the resulted fluctuation produces a highly emphatic effect. The use of future tense for past reference is given when Mira realizes that her bond with Richard is severed, she feels:

Soon, I would go too when the tail of that last procession went through the door, I would join it and Richard would stay behind. This was not a time for decision for he knew he could not come with me and I knew I could not stay it was simply the time for parting... Now it was fine to set it down, and go.

Markandaya gains stylistic effects, vividness and variety by this judicious use of tense.

Verb Pattern:

The verb is the accelerator of the sentence. It is the word that brings life to the sentence. But sometimes it creates difficulty in understanding. So Markandaya adopted the popular technique of verbs which is found in most Indian languages, particularly south Indian languages. For example, here is a lovely description of sophisticated snobbery displayed in “Government House party” in verb less fragments:

“Indians and Europeans, man and women, Banares silks, satin gowns. Bare arms and shoulders, bare feet: bare midriffs; half based bosoms. Enameled nails and tinted palms and eyes like brilliants blue green and brown.” And on the walls, in heavy gilt frames, there were

“portraits of Governors and viceroys, paintings battles and surrender, Clive and Hastings, Plessey, Seringapatnam, British faces; Indian history...”

The perfect balance maintained by syntactic parallels results in euphony. The verbs would have marred the rhythm. It is human (particularly feminine nature) to indulge in poetic expressions when one is moved emotionally. Lucas expresses his opinion that “Prose in poetry is a blemish like ink on a swan; but prose without poetry becomes too often as drab as a Sunday in London.” Kamala Markandaya writes rhythmic prose with great skill and effectiveness. “Accepting Edward Gibbon’s statement that the style of an author should be the mind.” Markandaya’s style has the fusion of the East and the West. Her style, like Manohar Malgonkar’s and Santha Rama Rao’s, “has the smooth uniform ease of public school English.”

Markandaya’s style not only reflects the images of her mind, but it displays the images of her characters, events and actions also. As a painter plays with colours and draws the reality in various shades and dimensions, similarly Kamala Markandaya through her skill of using language and words portrays the impression of reality into various shades and dimensions. Having a perfect command over English, she uses it as a trained man does a trapeze—with grace and suppleness. Her long and short sentences, even sentence fragments make her style alive and breathing. Unlike others, she does not depict the happiness of a farmer by making him sing and dance, but she shows it through his small but generous acts, here each grain comes to greet the farmer on his success. Each grain as a living individual which would not deceive the farmer and “will see to it” that he is not too generous and would “slip and tumble down the sides of the measure.”

Markandaya’s effective and forcefully narrative techniques include First Person technique, Third Person Omniscient Technique, Stream of Consciousness and Interior Monologues. She penetrates into the soul of her women but never steps down, as her primary concern is to narrate the story and often the social comment though occasionally, she makes them lost in their consciousness resulting in interior monologue. She has employed quite successfully the non-omniscient third person narrative technique in **Possession** where the narrator is not the chief protagonist but Anasuya, a minor character who reports objectively. **A Silence of Desire, A Handful of Rice, The Coffin Dams, Two Virgins, The Nowhere Man, The Golden Honeycomb** and **The Pleasure City** are the examples of her Omniscient Third Person narration. **The Golden Honeycomb** presents her skill in chronological narration.

Markandaya’s style becomes reflective and philosophical when she portrays her characters having a reflective cast of mind, makes them instruments to convey their ideas. **Nectar in a Sieve** deals mainly with tragic issues of life i.e. hunger, pain and separation—so the tone throughout the novel is reflective and philosophical. Her comments on the blame and praise of gods for her daughter’s predicament have the ring of reality as if her insides were externalized and given an expression. But her narration in the first person gives a touch of artificiality. Rukmani’s concern for death seems to have traces of Markandaya’s use of “the technique of objective epitome” in which “the subjective conditions of a character are conveyed not through the descriptive method but only by describing a few objective details which ‘epitomize’ the conditions and feelings of the character.” She has very skillfully and wonderfully used this technique at many places in her novels.

Markandaya is also good in describing scenes or settings, what Herbert Read calls, “the art of analytic description.” Her descriptions of rains and storms, villages and cities, men and women are so fine and apt that they are capable of presenting a picture in front of the reader’s eyes. Parameswaran also feels that Markandaya appeals to mosaics in painting her backdrops. A one line comment here, a passing observation there, a causal description elsewhere and a fine picture emerges.

Markandaya is an expert in using figurative languages also. Her comparisons are either stated or connoted by the use of such a language that creates a pictorial effect. This is done by the use of antithesis, hyperbole, irony, metaphor etc. By using metaphorical languages, Markandaya uses a

veiled statement for a direct one, though mostly its function is illuminative rather than decorative. It fires meaning into the reader's mind. Her figurative style moves with dignity, ease and with measured pace.

Markandaya frequently uses short images to portray an aspect of a character, an idea or situation. Her images are quite abundant and diversified, complex and sophisticated but are not as connotative. Images certify the novelist's imaginative faculty and her power of observation. Markandaya's range of experience is certainly large and she has drawn her images from various walks of life i.e. insects, birds and animals, grass and tree, precious stones, dresses, hygiene, vegetables, grains, weeds, land, ocean, sky, gas, coins, vehicles, army, gods and goddesses, the sun, the moon and the stars. In **Nectar in a Sieve**, Nathan's pitiable condition is compared to the "face such as a dog has when you are about to kick it"; Rukmani, running during her pregnancy, to "a water buffalo"; patient Kunthi to "a vulture" and her slow and dependable husband to an ox. Nathan and Rukmani watch the ripening paddy "as a dog watches a bone" and when starving, they become "thin and boney like scarecrows". Ira, when happy, is "like a bird" while Kuti lay "like a bruised fledgling". In **Some Inner Fury**, Roshan's saree is compared to a "butterfly's wings" and a child's eyes to "a blackbird's". The air "seemed full of expectancy, crouched and waiting like an animals about to spring". Dandekar in **A Silence of Desire** is clever "as a monkey" and goes home like animals. He thinks about the operation of Sarojini "like a squirrel in a cage". The dwarf is compared to "a watching dog at the entrance".

Markandaya expertise in the use of irony is unquestionable. Irony is a trait that originates from one's intelligence or stratagem, humility or arrogance. It is an indirect (and usually malicious) implication that requires intelligence and sophistication and is expressed by coolness and restraint. Markandaya possesses these traits in abundance. All her novels are full of various kinds of irony. The titles of most of her novels are ironical. **Nectar in a Sieve** refers to the illusory happiness of man in his Sisyphean struggle for survival. **A Silence of Desire** portrays a desire that can never be silenced. **Possession** exposes the idea that a free spirit could be possessed by the material wealth. **Some Inner Fury** portrays no less than incomprehensible outer fury of the people against the whites. **A Handful of Rice** refers metaphorically to the insatiable ever-widening human desires which begin humbly but destroy him as he strives to attain them. **The Golden Honeycomb** is a palatial cage.

The sophisticated use of irony and satire, ingratiating and innuendo is quite evident in real life by the speaker's tone and gesture. Here the author gives very little by way of commentary but presents a piece of drama without stage directions, keeping in mind the connotative aspects of language for rich meanings, Markandaya makes a good use of symbols. She occasionally and randomly sprinkles Indian words in her languages for example beedi, chowkidar, dhoti, ghee, jutka, kohl, kum-kum, pandal (**Nectar in a Sieve**); bania, bulva, pan, puja (**A Silence of Desire**); arak, baksheesh, chokra, ayeah, parijeta (**Possession**); apam, pakora, shamiana, masale, pattani, sigri etc (**A Handful of Rice**); namaste, jaos, and joldis, jodhpurs (**The Coffin Dams**); thalees, nimbu pani, kacha hunda, kesavan (**Two Virgins**); gaddi, howdah, ashram, thali, name-vaste, king, darshan, mahouts, hathikhana(**The Golden Honeycomb**). The use of such a large number of Indian words in her style give the impression that Markandaya writes for Indians but it cannot be denied that she caters to the western readers.

Markandaya says, "I do write and rewrite and polish endlessly.... I cannot tell you how I know, when to stop, having achieved the effect I wanted. I simply know that that is just right; and then I stop being haunted". She clearly expresses her concern for her style which she nurtures very carefully and patiently until she gets the desired effect. Due to the magical effect of her style, she is capable of drawing the undivided attention of the readers who are always very curious to know about what is to happen

Kamala Markandaya's contribution to the style of Indo-Anglian fiction should be seen in the fact that though English happens to be her acquired language, she has made it an appropriate vehicle of her creative writing. The strong and effective use of language and the stylistic innovation from **Nectar in a Sieve** to **Pleasure City** describe a remarkable development of her mastery for using different kinds of images, symbols, metaphors and figures of speech. Her use of 'Indianized English' contributes to develop a great bond between the author and the reader. In addition, the author's sincere effort to make the novel realistic also makes the text highly lucid and readable.

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