"English is an Absolutely Swadeshi Language. That the country should stir itself from the spell cast on it by a foreign language is a point that anyone, will readily grant, although personally I think otherwise. For me, at any rate, English is an absolutely Swadeshi language. English, of course, in a remotely horoscopic sense, is a native of England, but it enjoys by virtue of its uncanny adaptability, citizenship in every country in the world. It has sojourned in India longer than you or I and is entitled to be treated with respect. It is my hope that English will soon be classified as a non-regional Indian language." - R.K. Narayan

"English is a member of the Indian family of languages and, indeed, an intimate part of the Indian cultural psyche, having proved its ability as a language to play a creative role in Indian literature." – P.Lal
CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The innovative ways of exploring the frontiers of human experience provide umpteen number of opportunities in language experiments to a writer who unfolds the vagaries of life around him in an inimitable style of his own. Expressions find new dimensions to suit the peculiarities that spin around the given circumstances. The uncommon usages drenched in the local dialect pave way for a writer to sketch and weave a plot in an idiomatic language which is directly influenced by the language he is associated in and around the milieu he is brought up. New coinages are to be substituted to fit in its ambit the vast scope of ever creative and cognitive boundaries. As the problems in the given set up never remain the same and as the multiplicity in a complex social scene increases, the horizon for expression widens and consequently new, unseen areas are to be traced and treasured in a new, idiomatic language as the existing language in its limited compass, may not suffice to translate the scintillating thoughts of the over-sensuous writer like R. K. Narayan. Replenishing, restructuring language process has to overtake the commonest usages around. To understand a writer, one has to be familiar with the social background he has come across. The reader will be ill-equipped if he has not trained himself to comprehend the intrinsic merit of the new expressions that abound in his writings.

Every writer invents a new formula to embody his thoughts. To understand an Irish writer, one has to understand the nuances of the celtic cultural background. What Shakespeare wrote to the masses was in the language familiar with his times. So, to understand him the modern language may pose problems. To understand R. K. Narayan the plain knowledge of English may not be of utmost use. The landscape, the
people he met and the people with whom he lived, the dialect he used, the influence of
the neighbouring language he was constantly exposed to -- such similar things have to
be taken into consideration. English spoken in a particular area is directly influenced
by the vernacular used by the people of the area. No amount of translation can aptly
bring the colour and the shade to the original version. The writer accustomed to the
native influence may find it difficult to transcreate the similar in an alien language.
At best he may hover around the local coinage and find ways to robe it in another
language. The native speakers of England use idiomatic language which we may not
understand in all its totality. R. K. Narayan uses English of his own genre to suit the
requirements while depicting a scene. The genuine problem for any foreigner is to
imbibe the true hidden shades of meaning. However a person masters himself in a
different language he cannot achieve perfection like a native speaker. R.K. Narayan’s
English has some tinge of Kannada and Tamil, the two languages he was familiar
with. So, the idiomatic use of his English is not exactly like that of a writer of English
origin.

All great writers are great craftsmen of language. The ideas are clothed in
words which give a special meaning. As one writer puts it, we are all naked under our
clothes”. Similarly, all words ripped off embellishment present a naked feeling. The
individuality of a writer is better seen in the way he clothes his thoughts. That is why,
we have variety of writings. To understand R.K.N we must acquaint ourselves with
the peculiar idioms and expressions. It is always the use of idiomatic expressions of
native speakers a writer is associated with. The individuality is better seen in how a
writer moulds the language to his suitability. The characters presented by the writer
have to speak the language the writer devises and not in the Queen’s language handed
down to us. Though Queen’s language is familiar to us, it has gone tremendous
changes under the influence of a genius. R.K.N is one such language genius who has the ability to percolate it with the local flavor and flamboyance. The adaptability and accommodative quality of his language is clearly visible in the myriad use of idioms and expressions which lead a special colour to it.

The choice of idioms R.K.N displays is a testimony to his versatility in twisting and outstretching the flexible nature of English. The language he scripts reminds us of a huge, an age-old tree getting new foliages and offshoots. The roots are age old but the leaves and flowers are always afresh. R.K.N’s language is the reminiscential of the cultural background which is clearly depicted in the imaginary Malgudi locale. The idiomatic language he creates suits his narrative style. It has the smell and smear of the soil from where his plots are woven. The British English thins out and turns into insipid, uninspiring vehicle of expression if it is imitated religiously by an Indian writer. Take, for example, writers like Mulkraj Anand, Kamala Das and scores of Indian writers in English. They are bit UnEnglish in the sense as they create, the English of their native soil. So, R.K.N’s English bedecked with innumerable idioms and expressions wafts the effervescence of the culture he has lived in.

Each book is a mini lab of a language the writer uses. As an experimentor the writer uses and discuses some familiar phraseology. New words flow from the pen and come as a shot in the arms and thus the new language evolves. My aim in the present thesi is to trace out the masterly touches R.K.N has given to the language he has used. The brush and the paint may be the same, but the art originates differently in different hands that wield them. Similarly each expression finds a new dimension in the artistic and manipulative pen of a writer. Often words change meanings dramatically as they pass from one hand to another. My attempt is to show how R.K.N has brought such dramatic touches in the expressions that abound in his
writings. R.K.N has so artfully canarised and at times anglicised that it can be a surprise to an enthusiastic render. English is one of the great borrowing tongues and perhaps it won't be an exaggeration if I say that R.K.N too has lent some new expressions to enrich English. Infact there is an R.Kian effect on the language. The lucidity, simplicity and flexibility that we observe in his writings is the hall-mark of his achievement. He has left before the successors an example how English language can fully be exploited to burrow a deep dent in any cultural, background.

R.K.N's contribution to Indian fiction in English is the key note of my venture. Some may scoff at the idea of full-length study of R.K.N's idiomatic usage of language. It may sound incongruous from the scornor's seat, but the moment one enters into the domain of the fictitious Malgudi and starts searching the roots of all his luxuriant creations, one suddenly awakens to the audacity of his biased remarks and findings that the crevices are not that deep and can be patched up by sagacious fathoming. Perhaps Keats Homeric effect may cast a spell on such an intruder.

'English is the gift of Goddess Saraswati to India' (C.Rajgopalachari). It is the window of knowledge. English is a fascinating language with its stress, intonation, rhythm and rhymes.

We speak English some 3000 miles away from its native speakers. Pronunciation is said to vary at every seven miles. So, English in India has acquired a typical Indian flavour. For instance, Idioms in Indian English writings are influenced by a vivid Indian culture, custom and rituals. As R. K. Narayan hails from a highly cultured, traditional Brahmin family, the impact of Vedic literature is clearly visible in his works. Yet this has not curtailed the profound proficiency in the idiomatic usage

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of a global language. We find a number of British English idioms also in R.K. Narayan’s works.

When we go through this stream of thought, a question arises, why should we use idioms? Is there any possibility of language existence without idioms? Yes, it is possible. But it has no charm and life. A passage of English which doesn’t have ‘idioms’ would make dull reading. Idioms are born and develop in a language without the speaker being conscious of them.

Idioms for a language are like jewels for a woman. Idioms are precious ornaments which enrich and deepen the meaning of a language. Studying idioms especially in R.K. Narayan’s novels is a pleasure and an enjoyable thing.

English is a multicultural language, that’s why it comes under the influence of different languages and borrows new phraseological units extensively. As new concepts are developed, new terms are needed for their indication, so instead of creating new words, already existing words are put together in a way that they acquire a new sense in combination.

Idiomatic expressions are found everywhere. Even a cursory scanning of the newspaper headlines and perfunctory watching of television shows or news broadcasts reveal, the extent to which idiomatic language is a part of day-to-day life and communication. If stripped of the non-standard phrases, everyday language will lose its flavour and become pedestrian and dull.

What is especially interesting about idioms is that they can be defined in different ways, depending on the functions they fulfill. Idiom can be a figure of speech, which means that the words in idiomatic expressions are used figuratively, rather than with their literal meaning.
When we say that someone is in the soup, instinctively we feel that there is no real soup involved. We know that here the meaning of the word soup is figurative, and we guess from the context that someone who says it implies that a person is in trouble and has some serious problems.

Native speakers get so used to figurative language they speak that they don't realize of how large a proportion of what they say and write is metaphorical. A great number of idioms which are used in everyday language are colloquial metaphor. Wikipedia offers a very clear and to the point example to illustrate this statement: get lost! - Which means go away or stop bothering me.

Idiomatic expressions are extremely common and are found in all kinds of English, both formal and particularly informal. After all, frequent occurrence of the idiomatic expressions in speech does not make them understandable for everybody, as the origin and history, standing behind them, remains enigmatic and obscure both for native speakers of the language and English learners.

The origin, also called etymology of idioms, which can be literally interpreted as tracing back to the roots of emergence of words and phrases in the language, is a vast field of unceasing debates of scholars and a fruitful ground for equivocal opinions and views of linguists. In my work I have tried to give the etymology of idioms found in R..K.N. as much as possible.

Indeed, language users do not pay attention to the stylistic peculiarities of the phrases they use and do not reflect much on the origin of the words they utilize on a daily basis. Idiomatic English language is a real diamond in the rough, which has enormous topical variety of forms and fascinating and surprising origins.  

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4 Correli Linda *Jazz Up Your English with Fresh and Lively Idioms* (web source)
The fascination of Indian writing in English lies in the phenomenon of literary creativity in a language other than the surrounding mother tongue. It would require very exceptional gifts and total bilingualism to express directly in English the lives of people who do not themselves speak English.

McCutchion supposes a surface-and-depth model: under the English language surface lies a "radically different" Indian mind.

This very particular set of conditions, inherited from the Raj but carried on beyond Independence to the present day, in no way makes these writers any less Indian: in most cases they are representing the lives, conversations and thoughts of Indian characters who more often than not are presumed to be speaking not in English at all, but in a plurality of Indian languages.

It has been said that IWE is already the product of a transfer between schematically two cultural systems or polysystems, even before anyone translates the text into a third language.

Here we may connect McCutchion's surface-and-depth model with the analysis of the contemporary translation scholar of IWE into Spanish, Dora sales Salvador, (2001) argues that "Indian narrative in English is a fictional echo of multilingualism and interculturality". So we find in Narayan the language which is the product of not just British, but multilingualism and interculturality.

In its very richness and creativity, Indian English emerges from this descriptive analysis as a specific form of English that may legitimately be considered as important a variant of the international language as British or American English. It will, therefore, inevitably generate a number of specific translation problems, whatever the language translated into.

Among these for the problem of translation of idioms we shall examine R.K.N's novels.

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5 Christopher Dr Rollason-rollason@9online.fr, Indian Writing In English:Some Language Issues And Translation Problems. 1
6 Christopher Dr Rollason-rollason@9online.fr, Indian Writing In English:Some Language Issues And Translation Problems. 3
1.2 Scope

My first problem is to indicate the difference between the literally same usages in English and Kannada. In English shaking hands is a custom, whereas in Kannada it is an idiom. Narayan has used it in his novels idiomatically.

So many idioms like — time-killers, paying for, blinded by, homesick, prying eyes, trying times, stood arrested, which are used often in everyday conversation are not found in the dictionaries I have referred. But just because they are not found in dictionaries one cannot say they are not idioms. The dictionary on the tongue of people is always changing and is bigger than any other dictionary in the world. My study may hopefully prove useful to the lexicographers.

One more problem is differentiating idioms from common usages like, running the household, said haughtily, drop in, homesick, studied her face, paying for, wipe us out, breaking down, sound sleep, and so on. Those which are not considered as idioms so far will become idioms with time. It is time and people who give birth to idioms. A very simple usage in north Kannada language may look idiomatic to south Kannada people because Kannada itself has so many dialectic forms. Indian English has contributions from all the languages of India. 'The light was out there', 'her own parents,' 'salting and pickling' are all influenced by local languages.

Another problem is to focus on culture, age and gender specific idioms.

All these problems are dealt with in the following chapters—

CHAPTER 1. is INTRODUCTION, in which objectives, scope, importance of the study are made clear.

CHAPTER 3. HISTORY OF IDIOMS deals with the origin of idioms, definitions of idiom and nature of idioms.

CHAPTER 4. NARAYAN: THE WRITER OF MASS throws light on idioms which are found both in English and local languages. Narayan is the writer of mass as his idioms are familiar both to native and alien. That is why, as C.D.Narasimhaiah said, Narayan's writing now belongs not to his own state or country but is considered by competent English and American critics to be a contribution to English literature.

CHAPTER 5. IDIOMS TYPICAL TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE throws light on idioms which are language specific. For the idioms I have listed in this chapter I did not find parallel idioms in Kannada.

CHAPTER 6. THE COLOURS OF INDIA IN R.K. NARAYAN unravels the colours of India in Narayan's language. As C. Paul Verghese pointed out, Narayan as a novelist is also a commentator of the broad tendencies of his society and age. In this chapter I have listed and analysed idioms on which the influence of our Hindu culture, traditions, rituals and mythology is clear.

While analysing idioms in chapters 4, 5, and 6 I took the help of Janapada Nudigattugala Kosha, Avali Padenudi Kosha, Dictionary of Idioms and Phrases with Tamil Translations, and Universal Deluxe Dictionary, English-English-Tamil. While classifying idioms on the basis of parts of speech I observed the prominent part of speech in the idiom and the context. For each reader the prominent word in idiom may be different. It depends on the way a reader reads and perceives them. But still it's important for me to prove that in idioms generally verb plays dominant role. For etymological comment on the idiom, I took the help of Online Etymology Dictionary and Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.

CHAPTER 7. WHY CAN'T THESE BE IDIOMS? Gives a list of usages which are idiomatic, but not found in dictionaries.
CHAPTER 8. NEW CONTRIBUTIONS has a list of idioms which are not yet included in dictionaries of idioms, but are widely used.

Both the chapters 7 and 8 are open for further study.

In APPENDIX-I an important article on nature of idioms is furnished.

In APPENDIX-II the complete list of idioms from all the novels of R.K.Narayan is given.

I am confident that my work will definitely open a way to new vistas of study in linguistics. Within the framework of R.K.Narayan's writings I could find so many idioms and idiom-like usages. A serious lexicographer, if he/she adopts the same methodology referring to some more writers, the joy of exploiting the richness of linguistic aspects of each writer would be unique.

Limitations:

Being a Kannadiga I can identify the influence of Kannada language on R.K.Narayan. Though Narayan lived in Mysore his mother tongue was Tamil. As I don't know Tamil language it is my limitation that I couldn't do much on Tamil equivalents of idioms used in his novels. Dr. C.V.Venugopal and Dr. K. Anban helped me in giving Tamil equivalents of some idioms.

1.3: Objectives

1. To identify the usage of idioms in R.K.N's novels.
2. Using the context tool to enter the idioms.
3. To know how much local the idioms are in Narayan's novels.
4. To find out the locality of idioms and subsequent difficulties in expressing local idioms into English language.
5. Focusing on socio-cultural influences on idioms in Narayan's novels.
1.4: Why I Chose R.K.Narayan

When my guide Dr Rajendra M Nayak suggested the topic, I happily agreed to work on it as I found it interesting. I had already read the novel 'Waiting for the Mahatma' and seen the movie ‘Banker Margayya' based on his ‘Financial Expert', and the Malgudi Days serial on Television. On the basis of my earlier knowledge of R.K.Narayan I had considered his works as classic. After my reading all his fifteen novels, he is still classic to me.

While searching for the literature for this thesis I didn't find much work on Narayan with a linguistic approach. That made me more determined to work on the subject seriously.

Idioms are the life and spirit of a language. In RKN what I found is idioms have the smell of native soil and at the same time there are plenty of typical English idioms like willy-nilly, rocked with, at a loss, with an air of, point-blank, egg on, etc.

R.K.N. is "Widely regarded as India's greatest writer in English in the 20th century." The fictional town of Malgudi is a splendid creation of his imagination. His characters, humble men and women living their daily lives, have become real people of flesh and blood to us."7

R.K.Narayan considers English as an Absolutely Swadeshi Language. "That the country should stir itself from the spell cast on it by a foreign language is a point that anyone will readily grant, although personally I think otherwise. For me, at any rate, English is an absolutely Swadeshi language. English, of course, in a remotely horoscopic sense, is a native of England, but it enjoys by virtue of its uncanny adaptability, citizenship in every country in the world. It has sojourned in India longer

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7 C.V.Narasimhan -'Remembering R.K.Narayan'- 'Frontline' May 26-June 8,2001
than you or I and is entitled to be treated with respect. It is my hope that English will soon be classified as a non-regional Indian language." (From an essay titled 'To a Hindi Enthusiast')

R.K. Narayan is right. Today almost all Indian languages use English words as if they belong to Kannada, Telegu, Hindi or any other Indian language.

• Most of his works were translated into European languages and Hebrew. Almost all of his writings are set in the fictional city of Malgudi, and are narrowly focused on the lives of relatively humble individuals, neither extremely poor nor very rich.

• Narayan is unusual among Indian authors writing in English due to the fact that he has stayed contentedly in his home country, venturing abroad only rarely.

• He rarely addressed political issues or tried to explore the cutting edge of fiction. He is a traditional teller of tales, a creator of realist fiction, which is often gentle, humorous, and warm rather than hard-hitting or profound.

R.K. Narayan is a genius.... unpretentious yet deep, simple yet complex, Indian yet universal*. – he is inoffensive and harmless and simple; one can even see in him the essence of ancient Indian wisdom.

A fan of R.K. Narayan says in website 'He is India to me'. No other writer has that vast expanse of thoughts that could bind a culture together.

"To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots- both in religion and family. I have these things....." The idea of being rooted in one's own culture, traditions, values, changing local milieu, modernity and family, and among one's own people – is important to Narayan's development as a writer and, incidentally, to his assessment of other writers. "His writing is interesting," he would remark to me about
some writer who was temporarily in the news. "But you can see the writer has no roots."\(^8\) It is these roots which make R.K.N universal and unforgettable.

V.S.Naipual wrote in the New York Review of Books (March 4, 1999), "Forty to fifty years ago, when Indian writers were not so well considered, the writer R.K.Narayan was a comfort and example to those of us (I include my father and myself) who wished to write. Narayan wrote in English about Indian life. This is actually a difficult thing to do, and Narayan solved the problems by appearing to ignore them".\(^9\)

One more interesting thing about Narayan, as he admits to Ved Mehta, is that he does not read much for fear of being influenced.

Narayan is unique with all his simplicity. His characters come alive from his own life. His friends and grandmother in Swami and Friends and Grandmother's Tale are the best example for autobiographical elements. The English Teacher, as he himself says, is autobiographical. Studying Narayan is studying his life and the Indian characters of that time and milieu and studying his deft use of English language in the Indian context. One feels at home and never feels an alien as the language binds one to the life-like situations experienced around.

\(^8\) N. Ram, Reluctant centenarian. The Hindu. Online edition of India's National Newspaper. Sunday, oct 08,2006. page 6 of 10