

Shobhaa's Narrative - East Meets West

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Abstract

The following paper is an attempt to describe the bilingual technique of Shobhaa De. She has used a blend of 'desi' and 'phoren' words, thus establishing 'Hinglish' as her narrative style. De's readers don't need to refer glossary unlike others as the terms are too easy to understand. Despite several accusations, she remains an evergreen diva talking about remarriages, loveless marriages, relationships, and women empowerment. This vibrant lady marching ahead tries to bring a change in the mindset of the traditional patriarchal masses and suffocating women in it. Never caring who says what she floats her narrative technique which remains her sole proprietorship.

Keywords: bilingual technique, Hinglish, desi, phoren

The origin of Indian English writing in literature branched out towards the end of eighteenth century, when English Education system was established. It was in sixties that the first pioneers of Indian novelist started writing namely Tagore, Bankim Chandra etc. Later when women novelist came into picture like Shobhaa De, Kiran Desai, Namita Gokhale, Manju Kapoor etc., they spoke about much tabooed subjects like loveless marriages, alienation, and women empowerment without any hitch.

As it is seen that, English language is changing its face when flowing into the local language and gaining popularity day by day. Its instant growth into a hybrid language of Indian society has freshened up and given a new look to its vocabulary.

Shobhaa De has eighteen novels to her credit and is one of the most celebrated writer. Bombay is De's "Wessex". Making it a part of her settings for most of her novels, she infused the Hindi and English language together turning it into a new style -Hinglish. As she states in her autobiography that she is well acquainted with the elite culture of the Bombayites. She centers her novels around this culture but she has also well incorporated the Hindi slang and locally easily understandable words in her novels.

In Socialite Evenings, we meet three people discussing women as "Chalu cheez" meaning a girl who would go any lengths. Karuna is described as "Yeh to acche cheez

hai yaar. Not like the filmi chidiya" [1]. Varun the journo is described as having a fierce "khunnas" or a vendetta against people.

Hindi words like sab, memsaab, bhabi, jis, bhais and bens, pujari, malis, ayahs, gurkhas, khana dana, jhanjhat etc. are used with ease in her novels. De could have easily replaced these with English equivalents but she did not, this was done purposely and this was her style.

Cultural terms like related to attire like Angavastram, sherwani, ghunghat, pallav, gajra, the chignons and the bouffant; and food like Kesar barfis, gulab jamun, naan khataais is a common sighting in De's novels. Usage of cursing words like 'saala', 'bewakuf', 'hijda' and slang words like 'bindaas', 'chalu' are used with no regrets. Shobha De can be called the mother of 'Hinglish', seemingly a word coined by her. Words like Filmi, raddiwalla, presswallas, Bombaywalla need no explanation. But in using certain phrases like bhav lagoing (attitude) De's creativity is at its best when she flaunts hugely on Hindi words with an English suffix.

In Sisters Leelaben, the "paan' and "tambaaku" chewing "banjaran" mistress of Seth Hiralal, the Seth's wife whose dead body was smeared with "sindoor" on her forehead, the "dhotiyadasses", Dikras, bhajan and kirtan singing "bens" of the Gujarati community. Terms like chopda pujan, kanydaan "khakras", and "gujju" gives an insight about the Gujarati culture. Words like "mandap", "mahurat" are also used to lend familiarity to the hindu tongue.

The novel Starry Nights is a novel that centers Bollywood and uses Hindi and hinglish phrases. Readers who get to see hinglish words like hero-shiro, baby jaan, chikna-face dot the novel.

In Second Thoughts Ranjan is afraid to marry a "Bombaywali" and marries the gentle Maya from Calcutta. In Snapshots the "chamchi" (slavish) Reema organises a high school reunion for her friends on the behest of Swati the fickle and "matlabi" (selfish) and manipulative actress. Surekha was the "Gujju goody goody" and Reema was married to the "kafi rich" Ravi. Everyone has a story and

when Reema declares her daughter's innocence and purity Swati sarcastically remarks- "Like ganga-jal or Pierre water" [2]

In Sultry Days one would come across Hinglish words like "lecturebazi", "stuntbaazi", "babylog" and phrases like "squashed pakoras", "phoren cigarettes", "coffee-shoffee" make her different from the other writers. Similarly, a lot of hindi words like pagal, ladli beti, chamchas, chaalu, faltugiri, altu-faltu etc. are used.

De has used very strong words which are shocking for Indian society as they are spoken by women. In a way frustration and internal pain of the characters is somehow brought out by the use of such words. De has used words related to sex in her novels and she feels that if a man can use such words, why not a woman?

De's makes her women characters of her novel utter words in Hinglish - Hindi and English mix together, repetition of words and even capital letters to create special effect. When short studies on conversations were conducted, it was observed that when most of the speakers were asked to speak only in Hindi, they simply couldn't. They had to use English words in between to express themselves. This showed that Hinglish is an altogether new evolving language and not just a fashionable slang.

Thus, Shobha de moves a step further liberating her novels from linguistics disciplines boldly as she considers that a writer should be free to write what he or she wants. She

has dared to bare a women's thought without caring for existent male hegemony. It is here that she differs from other writers. What the other writers hesitated, she expressed in a very straightforward manner. Hindi words used by her in her novels might charm some of her readers but someone who is alien to the Hindi language might assume or jump to next sentences as there is no glossary. May be this the bold writer overlooked.

Works Cited

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