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Research Journal

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POSTCOLONIAL STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF AN EXCERPT OF BAMA'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY KARUKKU: "WE TOO ARE HUMAN BEINGS..."

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to use postcolonial stylistics for the analysis and the interpretation of a postcolonial literary text in which the use of postcolonial theory and stylistics go side by side. Here the key concepts of hybridization, ambivalence, abrogation and appropriation are taken into account while interpreting the postcolonial literary text. In this paper, extensive use of the parameters for doing postcolonial stylistics analysis has been done which are propounded by T. Sriraman in his PGDTE course module of stylistics block III 'LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY'. T. Sriraman is a professor of English Literature at The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. Postcolonial stylistics devices of appropriation such as glossing, use of untranslated words,



syntactical fusions, neologism, calques, the proficiency levels in the uses of English and Englishes, code switching and code mixing based upon different classes, races, cultures and societies along with varieties of English and Englishes and linguistic determinism are used to point out the postcolonial issues/problems and themes in a more authentic and impressive manner.

KEYWORDS: Postcolonial Stylistics Analysis , Autobiography Karukku, postcolonial literary.

INTRODUCTION:

Postcolonial literature is generally considered to be written after the

made on behalf of canonical western literature and seek to show its limitations of outlook, especially its general ability to emphasize across boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference" (Barry 192). Earlier postcolonial theory was concerned only with the colonization/domination of one country by the another but now its scope has become wider and deals with "colonization of any kind, not only between societies, but within societies, such as the colonization of women by men (patriarchy), or of one class or race or caste by another, or of one region within a country by another, or of the rural and the suburban by the metropolitan, and so on" (Sriraman 26).

Before approaching to stylistics it is imperative to know about linguistics as stylistics uses linguistic aspects for the interpretation and analysis of a literary text.

independence of the colonies from their colonial power which provides a good area of research to find out the cultural impacts of colonialism on the colonies in the formation and representation of their natives' identities to establish and exercise power even after their independence. Pramod K. Nayar defines postcolonial theory as "a method of interpreting, reading, and critiquing the cultural practices of colonialism, where it proposes that the exercise of colonial power is also the exercise of racially determined power of representation" (154). Thus here attempts are made to "reject the claims to universalism

Linguistics is generally defined as “the scientific study of language” (“linguistics,” Oxford). It is a “field which classifies the pronunciation, grammar, meaning and use of language and hence provides terminology to talk about these matters” (Bharti 5). Linguistics can also be defined as “the study of the nature, structure, and variation of language, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics” (“linguistics,” def. 1, American).

Next comes the turn of stylistics which is considered as “an exploitation of all the resources of a language” (Sriraman 56). Thus language occupies a key place and is the moot point where the stylisticians put shoulder to wheel to exercise linguistic aspects to interpret and analyze the literary text effectively by looking at the style and the methods used in that particular text. According to Peter Barry, stylistics is “a critical approach which uses the methods and findings of the science of linguistics in the analysis of literary text ... its aim is to show how the technical linguistic features of a literary work, such as the grammatical structure of its sentences, contribute to its overall meanings and effects” (196).

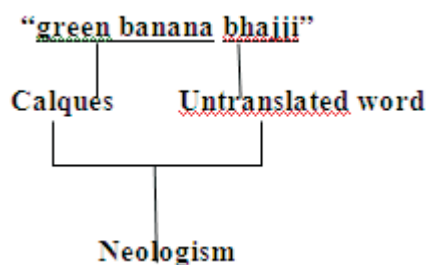
Thus postcolonial stylistics analysis is an indispensable field to look at the several devices of appropriation employed by the postcolonial writers in their work suited to the postcolonial themes or central ideas or expressions. Varieties of English and the proficiency level in the use of English or Englishes by the natives and non-natives as well as high class and low class speakers present the cultural differences or resistance that mark the postcolonial condition in an authentic and impressive manner.

Let’s do the postcolonial stylistics analysis of an excerpt of Bama’s autobiography Karukku: “We Too are Human Beings...” and see how the writer has exploited the various devices of appropriation along with the use of varieties of English having a particular proficiency level suited to themes/ issues in a most authentic way. As this short story is an excerpt from Bama’s autobiography “Karukku”, she has given us her real life experience of the time when she was a child. In this excerpt, we find many untranslated words of both Hindi and Tamil languages along with neologism and calques.

Let’s first look at the untranslated words used in the short story. Here the writer has used the words “payasam”, “halva”, “vadai”, “bhajji” for dishes along with “appa”, “annan” for surname as a mark of Tamil culture which add authenticity, credibility, and to great extent originality to the short story.

Bama has also used many calques which describe the typical village bazaar in a precise way. As The performing monkey, the snake which the snakecharmer kept in its box...; the cyclist who had not got off his bike for three days...; the rupee notes...; the spinning wheels; ... the dried fish stall...; the narikkuravan huntergypsy with his wild lemur in cages; selling needles, clay beads and instruments for cleaning out the ears.... Puppet show; stunt performance... (96)

Here the performing monkey is a street show in which a man directs a monkey to act according to his wishes and like him, the snake charmer makes snakes act according to his desire by playing bean and after the show they get money from the spectators. The cyclist rides the cycle for a long time in a public show to get money as his reward. These shows are very common in a typical Indian village life and add the quality of Indianness to the text. Next we have “dried fish stalls” which are very common in the South Indian bazaars. So the flavor of region is also added by the writer. Apart from this, we have “clay beads”, “instruments for cleaning out the ears” which are commonly used by the Indians and the writer has easily made these words translated into English to make the text suitable to the context. Puppet show and stunts are also a type of street performance which mark the South Indian village culture. The writer has used these words to give us the flavor of a typical Indian village bazaar scene. Apart from this, we have a mixture of both untranslated words and calques which results into a new kind of neologism. For example:



If we look at the neologism, we have phrases which act like collocations as “bowing and shirking”, “to fetch and carry”. These neologism provide the crux of the short story. As “bowing and shirking” used for an old low caste

man who not only gives respect to his master but also feels afraid of him because of his superiority and high class status. It is not only because of the material point of view but also because of his low social class in that particular society. And thus because of low position/caste of that man, it is by default assumed by the upper class people to treat him in a dehumanized way as it is their right to do so. And for the untouchables, it is presumed that they will always bow and shirk before the upper class people. So this inner ideology maintains the power relationship in the Tamil society where writer herself belongs to the lower caste.

The phrases "fetch and carry" and "petty errands" are also related to that low caste man whom writer sees as "holding a package by its string" which points out his lower status as he is asked to fetch and carry different things without touching the package in a fear that the things would get polluted if touched by him. The phrase "petty errand" denotes that the untouchable is the only one who is destined to do petty jobs for his/her rich masters and stands before them by "cupping the hand". This shows the ideology in which the low caste person not only subverts himself/herself but also becomes a subject to the willing humiliation by upper class persons.

The phrase "four coins" has been used symbolically where it refers to the power and is represented by the landlords who are rich and in high power relationship. And also after having "four coins" means money/power, they lose all their human feelings and consider low caste person as a dirty object, and treat them without having any dignity like animals.

Thus the neologism used by Bama here shows the class distinction aptly. If we look at the text from the point of view of varieties of English, we come to know that the writer belongs to a lower class of Tamil. When we look at the syntactical fusion of the text, we find the narrations both in free direct and indirect speeches. In both cases, we find long sentences with commas (,), semicolons (;) and coordinator (and). So it follows the Indian oral narrative tradition. The longest sentence is the third paragraph which gives the description of the bazaar in sixteen lines. Thus it succeeds in the breathless narrative pace which is marked by 'run on' Indian writing style.

So at last, we can say that in the analyzed excerpt of Bama's autobiography, we have fine mixture of appropriation devices along with good syntactical fusion of long oral tradition of narrative with her unique variety of English that enriched the credibility and authenticity and also points out the social issues of her society in the text.

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