



SANSKRITIZATION OF ENGLISH IN THE WORKS OF THREE WRITERS BASED ON SOUTH INDIA: R K NARAYAN, RAJA RAO AND GIRISH KARNAD

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1. Abstract:

The hoary tradition of Hindu rituals and customs are maintained from the Puranic age to the postmodern India. The impact of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and meanings found in Sanskrit and Vedic literature and Puranas have a deep impact on moulding the thought process used in South Indian English literature and language. In my research I intend to explore 'Sanskritization' and the Indian philosophy of life through ritualistic vision in the works of three famous literary artists i.e. R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Girish Karnad. Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit) language shapes, reshapes, reconstructs, and is reiterated in the Hindu Dravidian culture of South Indian writing in English and acts as an Indians' retreat into the past, finding solace in religion and philosophy amidst British rule in the colonial and post-colonial era. Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* argued that the first step for 'colonized' people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past (Barry 186). Thus Sanskrit language and literature acts as a cultural and social as well as psychological background in creating the South Indian famous literary works. I want to explore how the root of Indian literature, especially of South India, is rooted and linked with Vedas, the Upanishads and the Puranas of Sanskrit literature and its relation with Indian philosophy through the lens of ritualistic vision which moulds the mind and imagination of the people of India. Thus it is a process of 'Sanskritization' of English language through the presentation of culture and traditions, rites and rituals. The 'Sanskritization' of English should be seen as part of a wider sociocultural phenomenon that has historically characterized Indian civilization. From the primordial to the postmodern era rituals are carried on as a flux and continuous practices as described in the works of the South Indian literary genre. I want to explore how the theories like Marxism, Structuralism and other theoretical genres interpret rituals and what role rituals play in South Indian literature from the mythical, historical, psychological, political, socio-economic point of view to create an Indian philosophy and mystic vision of life. In Indian literature we find a reflection of Eastern philosophy, culture and an extensive use of Hindu rituals during natural disasters like drought, famine, flood etc. I will analyse how Nature plays an important role in moulding the rituals as these are mainly practised in the time of natural calamities to retain a cosmic order. In R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* (1958), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* (1995), the rituals like yajña, fasting, mantras and many other Hindu rites play the most significant role as a quest to mythical as well as metaphysical way of life. The writers' spiritual quest through the characters of their works influences me to work on that particular topic to comprehend the Hindu philosophy of life in India. Their select works can be seen in the light of ritualistic vision through philosophical views of the Upanishads (the relation between *atman* and *Brahman*) and 'oceanic feeling' in the word of Romain Rolland and as defense mechanism in the word of Sigmund Freud. Thus a work of exploration on the works of the trio will reveal how the characters act in their works at a metaphysical level for the realization of the self.

2. Introduction:-

"Prajñānam brahma" - "Consciousness is Brahman" (*Aitareya Upanishad*)

"Tat tvam asi" - "That Thou art" (*Chandogya Upanishad*)

South India is characterized by Dravidian customs and traditions. Indo-Aryan i.e. Sanskrit language and culture project a firm root in the ritualistic culture of South Indian English writing. 'Sanskritization' of English language is a new kind of approach which acts from different critical and theoretical perspectives. The notion of gods, gurus, sadhus, mantra, rituals, rites, customs, tradition, faith and beliefs which are typically Sanskrit ideas came directly to reshape the socio-cultural and psychological basis of Indian literature. The *Maitri Upanishad* states,

The performance of all the sacrifices, described in the Maitrayana-Brahmana, is to lead up in the end to a knowledge of Brahman, to prepare a man for meditation. Therefore, let such man, after he has laid those fires, meditate on the Self, to become complete and perfect.

— Maitri Upanishad

(Max Müller, *The Upanishads, Part 2, Maitrayana-Brahmana Upanishad*, Oxford University Press, pages 287-288)

Through the projection of the Raju, though a skeptical guru in *The Guide*, Narayan shows that through the rituals of fasting during drought, rain occurs at the end of the novel:-

Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs- (p. 247)

Rain ('Male' in Kannada) which is pure and simple and which questions all the tradition and belief and thus a skeptical guru, from the state of individual self (*atman*) by tearing the veil of ignorance (*avidya*) and illusion (*maya*) attains the stage of universal self (*Brahman*). In the writing of Raja Rao also, Sanskrit is, in fact an obsession with him: "It is course of our culture...and I have wished a thousand times that I had written in Sanskrit" (qtd in Parthasarathy, xi). According to Raja Rao as he derived the idea from Sankara (8th c.), Patanjali (2nd c. BCE) and Bhartrhari (5thc.), the only reality is Brahman. Liberation (*moksha*) is the ultimate aim which the trio shows in their writings through the projection of Sanskrit culture, tradition and the ritualistic vision of Indian philosophy and vision of life. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan states that the Upanishads have dominated Indian philosophy, religion and life ever since their appearance. The Upanishads are respected not because they are considered revealed (Shruti), but because they present spiritual ideas that are inspiring. The Upanishads are treatises on Brahman-knowledge, that is knowledge of Ultimate Hidden Reality, and their presentation of philosophy presumes, "it is by a strictly personal effort that one can reach the truth". In the Upanishads, states Radhakrishnan, "knowledge is a means to freedom, and philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom by a way of life" (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads* George Allen & Co., 1951, pages 17-19). "Unless word becomes mantra, no writer is a writer, and no reader a reader", opines Raja Rao in 'The Writer and the Word', *The Literary Criterion* (qtd in Parthasarathy, xi). Rao himself is of the opinion that an Indian can never write a novel; he can only write a purana. The puranas are sacred history included in the canon of scripture, and they tell the stories of the origin of the universe, the exploits of gods and heroes, and the genealogies of kings. Their impact on the minds and imaginations of the people of India has been profound. Through them the Vedas and the Upanishads and the ideas of the great tradition of Hinduism were communicated by intention and organized effort to the people and woven into their lives in festivals and rituals. The literary writings of the three great artists are deeply embedded in their philosophical and linguistic orientations of Sanskrit language and literature. The three writers through the projection of fasting, yajna, mantra, local tradition, rituals and beliefs attempt not only to nativize but also to sanskritize the English language. From the beginning, English is ritually de-anglicized. In *Kanthapura*, English is thick with the agglutinations of Kannada; in *The Serpent and the Rope*, the Indo-European kinship between English and Sanskrit is creatively exploited; and in *The Cat and Shakespeare*, English is made to approximate the rhythm of Sanskrit chants. Like the tradition of recitation of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* by the *sutapauranikas*, *Kanthapura* is one long tale told in retrospect. It is significant that Moorthy enters the Untouchable's house in his own village first, before his imprisonment as a revolutionary. While the inspiration of the novel is moral and humanistic, its idiom is spiritual and religious. Stress is laid on such values as righteousness, love, non-violence and on ritual beliefs and practices. The performance-oriented discourse of traditional oral tales is largely present in *Kanthapura* as well as *The Guide*. The villages presented here are village India in microcosm. Rao considers in his entire work as: 'An attempt at puranic recreation of Indian storytelling; that is to say, the story, is conveyed through a thin thread to which are attached (or which passes through) many other stories, fables, and philosophical disquisitions, like mala (garland).' (qtd in M. K. Naik, *Raja Rao*. Twayne World Authors Series, p. 106). Philosophical debates are a part of both the Upanishads and the puranas. R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*, Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, *Kanthapura* and Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* resemble both. These works interpret rituals in terms of Vedanta which attempts to inquire into the nature of the Self and the attainment of the Self-Knowledge with the

help of the Guru as in the Upanishads, the term 'Guru' symbolizes the person who brings light in darkness: "One-the Guru- brings you the lantern; the road is seen, the long, white road." It was Sanskrit that the philosophical speculations of the Indians found their profoundest expression. Rao's Sanskritic English is not unlike Milton's Latinized English in *Paradise Lost*. As opposed to the 'Prakrits', the vernaculars, Sanskrit was the 'perfected' language. Louis Dumont and David Pocock interpret Sanskritization as the "acceptance of a more distinguished or prestigious way of saying the same things" (qtd in 'On the Different Aspects or Levels in Hinduism,' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, p 45). Quotations from the classical Sanskrit poets- Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti and from the devotional hymns of Sankara and Mira are skillfully woven into the story and function as a parallel text. The philosophical notion is even more pronounced in *The Cat and Shakespeare*. Rao exploits the Advaita Vedantic idea of the world being a play (*lila*) of the Absolute.

Kantam kratum chakshusham

(Theatre as the 'desirable fire sacrifice of the eyes')

-Kalidasa

The fire sacrifice was a rite of such central importance in the Vedic society and so completely dominated the mode of thinking that it became the central metaphor used to underline the importance of activity. Thus the yajña metaphor in Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* acts on the same notion and philosophy:-

It has not rained adequately for nearly ten years. Drought grips the land. A seven-year long sacrifice (yajña) is being held to propitiate Indra, the god of rains.

(Prologue p.1)

As Kathleen Raine has pointed out in her review of Raja Rao's *The Meaning of India*, "the true meaning of sacrifice is the renunciation of the ego to the higher, the universal Self. Yajña means giving up greed, taking from earth only enough to meet our basic needs and returning as sacrifice what earth and nature so freely give." Rao's story 'Nimka' (*The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 1963) expands the stories from the two great Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, especially the story of Nala and Damayanti from 'The Book of the Forest' (the *Vanaparvan*) of the *Mahabharata*. Rich in symbolism, the swan (symbol of enlightenment) weaves the stories of the epics in 'Nimka'. 'Nimka' is a kind of illusion (*maya*), which Rao uses to draw upon myths and folklore, on the other hand, metaphysics, to try to express the inexpressible. In Rao's other stories also like 'On the Ganga Ghat' and 'X' we find *sthalapurana*, chanting, mantras to work on the ancient Indian tradition.

Girish Karnad goes with the same line and tradition in his path-breaking plays. The play *The Fire and the Rain* itself opens with a yajña, a fire sacrifice. The fire sacrifice was a rite of such central importance in the Vedic society and so completely dominated the mode of thinking that it became the central metaphor, used to underline the importance of any activity. Thus the three great South Indian literary artists used Sanskrit allusion to shape and reshape their writing which can be analyzed from ritualistic point of view to explore the socio-cultural, psychological and metaphysical view of life.

3. Review of Literature:-

- I. **Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. New York: Oxford Up, 2009. Print.:** In the great book Catherine Bell analyzed different theoretical approach to rituals. She quotes some theoretical term invented by theorists about rituals and also shows the inner conflicts and meanings of rituals and its relation with discourse and power. She also analyzed the cultural, social and psychological meaning associated with the "problems" of ritual practices. She criticizes the use of ritual as a world practice and not mentions it in reference to any text of its kind.
- II. **Dwyer, Rachel. *Key Concepts in Modern Indian Studies*. NYU Press. Book.2016. Print.:** It is a book of multiple editors' contribution of their articles and topics on Indian Hinduism like "Ahimsa", "Atman", "Bhakti", "Caste" etc....In the book the editors interpret such rituals and beliefs from social, cultural and regional point of view and their projection in the post colonial India.
- III. **Kamatchi,G. "The Vision of Pragmatism of Life Style by R. K. Narayan in 'The Guide'", *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online),Vol 4 Issue 1. January, 2015:-** According to G. Kamatchi, the novel explores the South Indian life style as a tragic-comic vision underlying the presentation of life style. The author presents his article on *The Guide* as a regional novel through the use of culture and society.
- IV. **More, Chinmai, "Myth, ritual and folklore Wole Soyinka and contemporary Indian drama a comparison" 14-Mar-2013. <https://sg.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/7588> (Online):-** By applying concepts of Soyinka's "fourth stage", this chapter will argue that Karnad compels the audience to rise above a mere physical realm, and enter into the metaphysical realm, as a means of addressing the social evil of casteism. Only then can one arrive at a true state of "consciousness". It is in Soyinka's "Fourth Stage" and the Indian "Advaitic Stage", that the souls are united.

- V. **Nair, N. Ramachandran, “Rites rituals and ceremonies in post independent Indian English fiction”, 10-Sep-2015, <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/49282> (Online):-** Here Nair explains the study of the functional importance of rituals and ceremonies, associated with birth, initiation, marriage, funeral, and festivals, in some of the post-independent Indian English fiction. He mainly used the primary texts like U.R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskara*, Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Two Virgins*, Kavery Nambisan's *Scent of Pepper*, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer's *Childhood Friend*, and Manohar Malgonkar's *Princes* and *A Bend in the Ganges*, *A Handful of Rice* by Kamala Markandaya, *Gauri* by Mulk Raj Anand, *Cry, the Peacock* and *Fasting, Feasting* by Anita Desai, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Painter of Signs*, *Grandmother's Tale*, and *The Vendor of Sweets* by R.K. Narayan, and Mulk Raj Anand's *Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts* as his reference. He analyses how the rituals help to understand the socio-political aspects in the post-colonial India.
- VI. **Rathore , Prof. G. S., Mr. Muzaffar Khan. July 2015, “Use of Indian Theories in R. K. Narayan’s ‘The Guide’”, *Journal of Well Being* (ISSN-0974-8717), Vol. 9, No. 2, July 2015, pp 45-50.:-** According to Prof. G. S. Rathore and Mr. Muzaffar Khan the theory and belief, the faith and rituals all work under three dimension i.e. Karma, Gandhian Ideology and Indianness. Karma and moksha shape the life of the character, Gandhian ideology makes Raju a saint to save the village from drought and Indian spiritual believes make their deep rooted faith that Raju is able to bring rain by fasting.
- VII. **Srinivas, M.N. “A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* Vol. 15, No. 4 (Aug., 1956), pp. 481-496 Published by: [Association for Asian Studies](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2941919) DOI: 10.2307/2941919 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2941919>:-** Srinivas, in his D.Phil. thesis at Oxford University, defined sanskritisation as a process by which "a low or middle Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently twice-born caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant class by the local community" Thus the term is limited only to the varna or caste system. There is more to be explored about the adoption of Sanskrit ideas and beliefs in English language.
- VIII. **Oceanic feeling:** - Oceanic feeling is a psychological term coined by Romain Rolland and popularized by Sigmund Freud in his books *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* to criticize the psychological feeling of religion, the ‘oceanic’ feeling of limitlessness. According to Rolland’s definition of the term, this feeling is the source of all religious energy which permeates in various religious systems. It is a sensation of an indissoluble bond, as of being connected with the external world in its integral form.
- IX. **Mysticism:** - In modern times, ‘mysticism’ has acquired a limited definition, with broad applications, as meaning the aim at the “union with the Absolute, the Infinite, or God”. This limited definition has been applied to a wide range of religious traditions and practices. The understanding of ‘mysticism’ as an experience of unity with the divine is reflected in a famous comment by Freud on the ‘oceanic feeling’. In response to *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) Romain Rolland wrote to Sigmund Freud: “By religious feeling, what I mean... the simple and direct fact of a feeling of ‘the eternal’. This feeling is in truth subjective in nature. It is a contact.” Hinduism has a number of interlinked ascetic traditions and philosophical schools which aim at moksha and acquisition of higher powers. With the onset of the British colonization of India, those traditions came to be interpreted in western terms such as ‘mysticism’, drawing equivalents with the western terms and practices. These western notions were taken over by Indian elites, and popularized as Neo-Vedanta, in which the notion of “spiritual experience” as validation of “religious knowledge” plays an essential role.
- X. **Defense mechanism:** - Defense mechanism is a kind of psychic process which includes ‘projection’ and ‘transference’. Freud proposed the structural hypothesis which divides the mind into three forces – id, ego, super ego. He believed that both normal and abnormal behavior result from interactions among the id, ego and the super ego, among which the ego tends to distort or simply deny a reality that would arouse unbearable anxiety. Freud called this tactic a defense mechanism, and, as long as it works, the anxiety will be experienced unconsciously.

4. Need of Research:-

“The eternal wisdom of India is so much needed in our time when materialism is dominating our culture”, says Raja Rao (qtd in *The Meanings of India*). South India is a locale of many greatest literary works in Indian English literature. The three literary artists which I have selected for my research have the greatest contribution in that literary genre. There are ample evidence of literary allusion which they used in terms of defining and describing the culture and tradition of that particular locale. As a student of Indian English literature, and Sanskrit as one of my favourite subjects, their extensive use of Sanskrit texts and language make a growing interest to research on this particular field and area. Not only that but also there are many research topics, journals and books deal with myth, rituals, reality but very little is told about ‘Sanskritization’ in English language. I want to go through this particular area to explore more about how Sanskrit moulds the background as well as the English language of their works.

5. Scope of Study:-

My scope of study is limited to

- i. South Indian literary texts.
- ii. Three authors: - R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Girish Karnad.
- iii. Rituals and practices.
- iv. Inter-relation between English and Sanskrit as language and the influence of Sanskrit in Indian English literature.

6. Aims and objectives:

In my research proposal on the ritualistic vision in the works of three South Indian writers i.e. R.K.Narayan, Raja Rao and Girish Karnad there is an ample scope of research of future generation as it invites the queries the projection of rituals in the time of natural calamities as well as the ironical and symbolical metaphor of the practices which bridges the age long gap between the ancient to the modern era. My aims and objectives are the following:-

- i. To explore the relation between rituals and myth of the locale.
- ii. To analyze the multiple effects of ritual on the psychological as well as socio-economic, cultural and religious history of the particular region
- iii. How rituals act to shape the characters as it acts as the realization of the self i.e. “*moksha*”.
- iv. To explore the relation between ritual and eco-criticism as some rituals are seen to be practiced in the time of natural calamities like drought, famine etc.
- v. To find the relation between rituals and Indian as well as Hindu vision of life.
- vi. The relation between Sanskrit and English through the lens of rituals as etymologically Sanskrit means “*Sam-kri-ta*” i.e. “to work together” as rituals is also a process of working together to liberate the self as well as the community as a whole. In the word of Raja Rao rituals and myths help to Sanskritize the English language.
- vii. To analyze the effect of rituals in post-colonial India.
- viii. To explore the link from ancient past to modern present through the bridge of rituals.
- ix. Rituals as a unifying force in community.
- x. Symbolic significance of rituals as they act as a hidden metaphor to hint at the larger view of life.
- xi. How the Sanskritization helps to project and apply the oral narrative style in their writings.

7. Research Design and Methodology:

i. Area of Study:

South Indian English Literature in the select texts of three writers: R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Girish Karnad.

ii. Research Design:

It will be a kind of Descriptive research as I want to analyze and explore the influences of Sanskrit on English language through ritualistic vision.

It will also be a kind of Co-relational research as I want to explore the co-relation between the two languages and how Sanskrit ancient literature influenced to develop the background and language of South Indian English literature.

iii. Data type:

a. Primary mode of data collection:-

1. Interview with Philosophical and Sanskrit scholars. It can also be continued with the interaction of Philosophical scholars and with the local villagers of South India about their rituals and culture.
2. Questionnaire will be done online with the South Indian authors who are still writing on this traditional approach.

b. Secondary mode of data collection:-

1. Data from online resources.
2. National and International Journals on this topic.
3. Books on rituals, myths, and cultural practices.
4. Online data from literature reviews.

8. Possible outcomes:-

Sanskrit is an ancient language and rituals are the age old practices. The writers allude Sanskrit Vedas, Puranas and the Upanishads to attempt to situate a relationship between individual self (*atman*) to the universal self (*Brahman*). The use of mythical and traditional oral and folk tales is a kind of metaphysical quest for the realization of the self (*moksha*). In the works of the three great writers, the mythical presentation of Hindu ritualistic vision and ironic subversion of this whether an imposture (Raju in *The Guide*) or patricide (Parvasu in *The Fire and the Rain*), set the tone for the way in which Puranic tradition and culture function within the ambivalent social realities. Though there is a "Hawthornian ambiguity" (Naik 171) in some works, but the rites and rituals, myths and legend that permeate rural life in Hindu communities, instead of being rejected as superstitious, are described in language evocative enough to contain "anticipatory echoes" as in Rao's *Kanthapura* to merge lyrically "myth and history, for conflating the sacred and the political to evoke the spirit of a place and the mental world of its inhabitants" (Mukherjee 73). Like the eastern philosophers and writers, western philosophers also find solace in mediating upon Sanskritic views and ideas in their thoughts, works and ideas. The German philosopher like Arthur Schopenhauer in his *The World as Will and Representation* (1819) and *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short philosophical essays* (1851) exerts the ideas from the Upanishads:-
It has been the solace of my life, it will be solace of my death."

T. S. Eliot once said, "I am convinced that we fail to realize how completely and how irrationally, we separate our literary from our religious judgements" ("Religion and Literature", in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode p. 100). In Chapter V of *The Waste Land* he directly alludes some Sanskritic words from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad like "Ganga" (l. 395), "Himavant" (397) and "Da...Da...Da...Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata" (432) and the last line "Shantih shantih shantih" ("the Peace which passeth understanding"). Though a firm believer of Christian revelation, he used the ideas of the Upanishads directly in his cult poem. Max Muller, the German philosopher in his review of the Upanishads, opines that the key concept of the Upanishads is "know thyself", thy true self, that which underlines thine Ego, and find it and know it in the highest, the eternal Self, the One without a second, which underlies the whole world. It is noteworthy to mention with P. B. Shelley says in his "Defence of Poetry": "There is want no want of knowledge," scientific and other, "respecting what is wisest and best in morals, government and political economy", what we lack is "the creative faculty to imagine that which we know" and "the generous impulse to act that which we imagine" (qtd in Abrams 84).

Abrams opines that, despite all contrary views, all ecocritics believe that science-based knowledge of ecological disaster is not enough. It is because knowledge can lead only to effective political and social action only when informed and impelled, as it is in literature, by imagination and feeling (84). As Bruce King observes in discussing Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Philosophy", "it is the mundane, the common the life of the sense", which 'sings' (a Yeatsian word), has 'virtue' and 'religious value' (45). In the words of Ezekiel: "The mundane language of the senses sings/Its own interpretation" ("Philosophy" 16-17). Thus the ritualistic vision of Hindu

religion and their defence of natural disaster as well as social and psychological problems can be found in the Vedic and Puranic ancient India and also in modern India. Thus it is a rhythmical continuation and a cyclical process of Hindu world-view presented in the forms in Indian English literature. Thus the ancient and modern India, through the Sanskritization of English language in the backdrop of Indian culture and tradition go hand in hand. Thus the continual cultural Hindu ritualistic vision and its presentation in Indian English literature can be termed in Yeatsian manner “Of what is past, or passing, or to come” (Yeats 32:128-129). Thus the projection of Vedic and Puranic Sanskrit culture through the rituals and customs is a process of creating the relation between *atman* and *Brahman*, the only reality in the universe.

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