

Deconstructing English Narrative Discourse: A Study of the Appropriation of English in the Selected Works of Achebe and Rao

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English played, like some other European languages, a major role in the colonial process. In every colonial experience throughout history, the occupation of land was accompanied by imposing the colonizer's language on the colonized; Britain did this in India and Nigeria, for instance; and France did it in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Therefore, the imposition of the colonizer's language has marginalized the language of the colonized, and eventually lead to the natives' resistance against the colonial powers. Gauri Viswanathan describes how Britain was able to impose English in India through teaching English literature in Indian colleges and universities. She says:

British colonial administrators, provoked by missionaries on the one hand and fears of insubordination on the other, discovered an ally in English literature to support them in maintaining control of the natives under the guise of a liberal education. (Viswanathan, 17)

The Nigerian novelist, Ngugi Wa'thiongo, tells a similar story of how English was imposed on Nigerian schools by force. He says:

It was after the declaration of the state of an emergency over Kenya in 1952 that all the schools run by patriotic nationalists were taken over by the colonial regime and were placed under District Education Boards chaired by English men. English became the language of my formal education. In Kenya English became more than a language: it was the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference.(Decolonizing the Mind, 11)

When colonized countries gained their independence, however, they began to retrieve their marginalized languages and lost histories. Native novelists were pioneers in depicting the dangerous role the colonial language played in the political, social, and intellectual aspects of life. Colonial languages remained, after the colonizers' departure, a public legacy in the decolonized countries. Some native novelists used these colonial languages in depicting their own cultures and societies. The Indian novelist, Raja Rao, and the Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, were among those who used English, the colonial language, in writing their novels. Both writers, each in his own way, were able to appropriate English to express the feelings, ideas, and customs of their native cultures.

In his famous essay “The African writer and the English Language”, the Nigerian Novelist Chinua Achebe states that he has been given English and he intends to use it. He feels that the English language will be able to carry the weight of his African experience: “*But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.*” (*Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* .434).

Achebe believes that the African writer can learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing. However, he hopes that the African writer will not learn to use English like a native speaker.

“*It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so*” (Ibid,433). The African writer should use the English language in such a way as to be able to convey his message best without risking that the language loses its value as a medium of international exchange. “*He should aim at fashioning out English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience*” (433).

This international language must pay a price for being used by non native speakers. This price is that it must be prepared to submit to many different kinds of usage. Achebe illustrates his point by quoting from his novel *Arrow of God*.

The Chief Priest is telling his son why he is sending him to church:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. This world is like a mask, dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow (Ibid, 434).

Achebe puts the previous lines another way. He said: *I am sending you as my representative among these people --- just to be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well regret their lack of foresight* (Ibid, 434).

Achebe believes that the material in both passages is the same. But the form of the first one is “in character” while the form of the second is not. Throughout his literary career Achebe has endeavored to adapt the English language to fit his African culture. African proverbs, images, names, conventions, customs, and manners are conveyed in clear English that never loses its international values. It is enough to deal with his first novel in order to see how these strategies of adapting English work.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe says: “*Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten*” (.7). Though

linguistically proverbs are cliches, these are highly convincing and much respected by the public. The Ibo people are fond of proverbs which play an important role in their conversations. Without proverbs words would be dry and rigid. It is proverbs that stir the appetite of the Ibo for more words.

One day Okoye went to Unoka, Okonkwo's father, to ask him to return the two hundred coweries he lent him two years ago. After enjoying the traditional hospitality, Okoye decided to make his request; so *"he said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs"*. But his proverbs could not do him much good because Unoka didn't have enough coweries to return his debt. Unoka, on the other hand, had some lines drawn on his wall. The longer lines represent big debts, while the shorter ones represent small debts. He said to Okoye that he would pay him, but not today because: *"the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them."*

Unoka will pay his big debts first (8). Okonkwo, though still young, was one of the most famous and successful men in his tribe. He was the greatest wrestler, a rich farmer with two barns full of yams, a man of two titles and three wives. It was achievement that was revered among his people, as the elders say: *"if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings"* (8). Okonkwo had clearly done so.

The Ibo people are afraid of the night. When there is no moon, they stay inside their huts. But during moonlit nights, it would be different. You would hear the merry voice of children coming from the open fields; the young couples would be playing in less open places; and old men and women would remember their youth, as the Ibo say: *"When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk"* (10).

In the beginning of his farming career, Okonkwo needed assistance from Nwakibie, a wealthy man in the village. He paid him a visit carrying with him a pot of palm-wine and a cock as a gift. He also presented a kola nut and an alligator pepper. Breaking the kola nut to pass it to the people present, Okonkwo made a speech in which he mentioned that people are interested in life, children, success and happiness. Each is entitled to have what is good for him: *"Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break"* (19). Perhaps the closest meaning to this saying is *"live and let others live"*. The difference, however, is that Okonkwo's proverb, in addition to its being local, extends the right to live to the world of birds, if we choose to understand his proverb literally. Though longer than the latter saying, it is richer and more vivid.

Okonkwo was paying respect to Nwakibie because as the Ibo say *"a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness"* (19). The psychological effect of this

on Nwakibie will be immense. It admits that he is great, and that Okonkwo has the ambition to become one of the great.

Okonkwo makes his request in front of Nwakibie; he needs to borrow quite a good number of yams from him, acknowledging that it is difficult these days to trust another man with one's yams. Yonug men are afraid of hard work; Okonkwo is not. He goes on to say that: *"The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did."* (21). Okonkwo mentions that he began fending for himself when his peers were still sucking at their mothers' breasts. In the same meeting Ogbuefi Idigo says that Obiako, the palm-wine tapper has suddenly given up his trade. Idigo thinks that there is something behind this, because *"A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing"* (20).

Nwakibie tells his guests that Obiaka "has always been a strange man". Shortly after his father's death Obiaka went to consult the Oracle.

The Oracle asked him to sacrifice a goat to his father. Obiaka told the Oracle to ask his father if he *"ever had a fowl when he was alive"*. Everybody laughed, but Okonkwo felt uneasy because as the saying goes *"an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb"*. The story reminded Okonkwo of his father.

Nwakibie has refused to give yams to many young men because he knows that they would dump them in the earth to be choked by weeds.

They think that he is hard hearted. But that is not true. *"Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching"* (22). On the other hand, Nwakibie trusts Okonkwo because as the saying goes *"you can tell a ripe corn by its look"* (22). The equivalent saying in English might be: *"A tree is known by its fruit"*. But Achebe's aim is not to use English proverbs, since this would contradict the novel's local atmosphere. African (or Ibo) proverbs would be appropriate and enriching to the culture the novel is depicting.

While attending a tribal gathering, a man with no titles dared oppose Okonkwo, who silenced him saying: "This meeting is for men." The oldest man present said sternly that *"those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble"* (26). Okonkwo apologized and the meeting continued. Okonkwo has risen in his tribe very quickly. He got many titles at an early age, had three wives and few barns full of yams. An old man said describing how Okonkwo has risen from poverty to be one of the lords of the tribe: *"looking at a king's month, one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast"* (26). The novel relies heavily on proverbs. The reader is likely to come across proverbs in every chapter. These proverbs represent centimes of local experience and tradition; therefore they

reflect the natives' desires, fears, hopes, success, failure, and finally wisdom. Proverbs, however, are not the only means to reflect the local flavour of life for Achebe uses also folk tales.

In *Things Fall Apart*, folk tales are part of the Nigerean oral tradition; a tradition deeply rooted in the daily lives of people. Most of the folk tales in the novel are narrated by mothers to their children, thus ensuring the continuation of the tradition by passing it down from one generation to another.

The first folk tale we encounter is the tale of the mosquito. Okonkwo's mother, when he was still a child, had told him that: "*Mosquito had asked Ear to marry him, whereupon Ear fell on the floor in an uncontrollable laughter. 'How much longer do you think you will live? She asked. 'You are already a skeleton.' Mosquito went away humiliated, and any time he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive'*" (75).

Needless to say, here, those mosquitos are part of the local life, and hence the tale is deeply rooted in the Nigerean geography. Okonkwo remembered the tale because he was trying to sleep at night and couldn't since a mosquito had bitten him and another one was wailing near his ear.

The second folk tale is the lengthy tale of the birds and the tortoise. The birds were invited to a feast in the sky and the hungry tortoise begged them to allow him to accompany them to the feast. Convincing them that he has changed and become good and trustworthy, the birds have agreed to give him a feather each. They flew up to the sky and tortoise asked the birds to choose new names for themselves and the tortoise chose "all of you" to be his name. In the sky the feast was prepared for the birds; the tortoise made a speech thanking the sky people for their generosity and asked them whom they prepared the feast for. The sky people said for all of you. The tortoise looked at the birds and asked them to keep away from the food until he finished eating. The birds got angry and took their feathers back from him.

The tortoise asked the parrot to tell his wife to bring all the soft things out to the compound so that when he jumps down he will not be much hurt.

Parrot promised to deliver the message, and then flew away. But when he reached Tortoise's house he told his wife to bring out all the hard things in the house. And so she brought out her husband's hose, machets, spears, guns and even his cannon. Tortoise looked down from the sky and saw his wife bringing things out, but it was too far to see what they were. When all seemed ready he let himself go. He fell and fell and fell until he began to fear that he would never stop falling. And then like the sound of his cannon he crushed on the compound.

"Did he die?" asked Ezinma .

"No" Replied Ekwefi, "his shell broke into pieces. But there was a great medicine man in the neighborhood. Tortoise's wife sent for him and he gathered all the bits of the shell and stuck them together. That is why Tortoise's shell is not smooth" (99).

The third folk tale is told by Uchendu who is Okonkwo's uncle. Obierika was telling them that the clan of Abame has killed a white man.

When Uchendu learned that the white man had said nothing, he declares that:

"Never kill a man who says nothing". Those people of Abame were fools.

To illustrate his point Uchendu told them the story of the mother kite and her daughter.

"Mother kite once sent her daughter to bring food. She went and brought back a duckling ' you have done very well' said Mother kite to her daughter , but ' tell me , what did the mother of this duckling say when you swooped and carried its child away ?' 'It said nothing' replied the young kite

'It just walked away'. 'You must return the duckling' said Mother kite. 'There is something ominous behind the silence.' And so Daughter kite returned the duckling and took a chick instead. 'What did the mother of this chick do?' asked the old kite. 'It cried and raved and cursed me,' said the young kite.

'Then we can eat the chick,' said her mother. 'There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts,' (140).

These folk tales told by Okonkwo's mother , Ekwefi , and Uchendu respectively illustrate this oral tradition and , like the proverbs , show its wisdom. In the novel, in addition to preserving these tales and proverbs, Achebe is appropriating the English language in order to carry the African sensibility. The diction is simple and the sentences are simple too .In the birds' and Tortoise's story we read that the Tortoise "fell and fell and fell until he feared that he would never stop falling". The repetition is a typical device in oral cultures.

Another typical device in Nigerian oral culture is the usage of local imagery. Similes can be illustrative, here.

"... his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the floor" (63) .

"He felt like a drunken giant walking with the limbs of a mosquito" (63).

"... like a hen whose only chick has been carried away by a kite" (102).

"Obierika's compound was as busy as an anthill" (112)

"He had been cast out of his clan like a fish onto a dry, Sandy beach, panting,"

(131). *"The clan was like a lizard; if it lost its tail it soon grew another,"* (171).
"Umofia was like a startled animal with ears erect, sniffing the silent, ominous air and not knowing which way to run," (196).

These similes are derived from the local elements. Words like Rat, mosquito, kite, anthill, lizard, startled animal, though not specific to one particular culture, are all familiar to the Ibo villagers. The last simile here, like the rest of them, sets in concrete vivid terms the shock and astonishment of the village.

Achebe continues to appropriate his English to fit his narrative purpose through introducing local superstitions. Thus children *"were warned not to whistle at night for fear evil spirits A snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear"* (9).
"When a man was afflicted with swelling in the stomach and the limbs he was not allowed to die in the house. He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die" (18).

After the death of Ekwefi's second son, Okonkwo went to see a "medicin man" to ask him what was amiss. The man told him that *"the child was an oybanje, one of those wicked children who, when they died, entered their mothers' wombs to be born"* (77).

To treat the situation Okonkwo called another famous medicine man who ordered that there should be no mourning for the dead child and with a sharp razor he began to mutilate the child. *"Then he took it away to bury in the Evil Forest, holding it by the ankle and dragging it on the ground behind him. After such treatment it would think twice before coming again"* (78-79).

One of the new native converts to christianity has killed *" the sacred Python , the emanation of the god of water"* . . . *" If a clansman killed a royal python accidentally , he made sacrifices of atonment and performed an expensive burial ceremony such as was done for a great man"* (157-58).

The man who killed the python had fallen ill and before the day was over he was dead. *"His death showed that the gods were still able to fight their own battles."* (160). Another superstitious act that the Umofians practised was throwing twins into the Evil Forest because they thought twins were evil.

In addition to translating proverbs and folk tales from Igbo into English , Achebe uses another technique which is the modification of Nigerian spoken English to make it into a literary style ; diction and word order are often based more upon Nigerian than British Usage : *" I have kola "* ; *" Okonkwo's neighbours heard his wife crying and sent their voices over the compound walls "* ; *" You will blow your eyes out "* ; *" I cannot yet find a mouth with which to tell the story "* . Many of these expressions are transliterations from Igbo. (King, 67-68).

In addition, Achebe uses many Igbo words in his novel. words like agadi – nwayi : old woman ; iba : fever ; ndichie : elders ; nza : a very small bird ; osu : outcast ; tufia : a curse or oath . . . etc . (please see glossary of Igbo words at the end of the novel).

It is quite clear, through the previous examples of proverbs, folk tales, images, superstitions, Igbo words and the Nigerian diction Achebe uses, that the English language has been successfully modified and adapted to serve Achebe's interests. Furthermore, I would argue that Achebe's english (with the low keye) , represents a highly conscious attempt on the part of the writer to resist and eventually subvert the colonial English .

Two decades before Achebe, the gifted Indian novelist Raja Rao did a similar thing with English. In his foreward to his novel *Kanthapura* Rao states his position towards English. He says:

One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought --- movement that looks maltreated in an alien language.

I use the word "alien" , yet English is not really an alien language to us .

It is the language of our intellectual make---- up-like Sanskrit or Persian was before ---- but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of writing in an own language and in English.

We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large word as past of us.

Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American.

Rao, here, acknowledges the difficulty of expressing one's feelings and emotions in a language that is not one's own. Yet Indian writers are bilingual, which means that they can neither write like "pure" Indians nor, of course, pure English. Rao states that Indians are linguistically hybrids and their writings should reflect this linguistic hybridity. It is obvious that this is what Achebe has realized, but has not expressed so clearly. To Indianize English, therefore, like to Africanize it, does not mean only to include Indian words in the text which is there anyway, but rather to be able to dislocate the English conventional syntax and replace it with the rhythms of the local languages like the Punjabi, Kannada or Tamil (Tilak, 45). Doing this, the writer might then be able to catch the Indian voices, movements of the hands and twinkles of the eyes of the Indian characters in the text.

This call to use English in order to express Indian sensibility has been implemented by prominent Indian writers like Tagore, Jawahar Lal, Gandhi

R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand , and others as well (Ibid, 46).

Rao believes that the “*tempo of Indian life*” must be infused into “*our*” English expression. Indians think quickly, talk quickly, and move quickly. They rush, tumble and run on, and their paths are interminable.

We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous ‘ats’ and ‘ons’ to bother us ---- we tell one interminable tale. Episode follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath stops, and we move on to another thought.

This was and still is the ordinary style of our story-telling. I have tried to follow it myself in this story.

Rao's telling of *Kanthapura* illustrates the previous thought. The novel sounds like an oral story similar to the ones our grandfathers used to tell us when we were young. One does not have to look carefully for an illustrative passage from the novel, since any passage will do. The following one describes early rains in the village.

In Visakh men plough the fields of Kanthapura. The rains have come, the fine, first-footing rains that skip over the bronze mountains, tiptoe the crags, and leaping into the valleys, go splashing and wind-swung, a winnowed pour, and the coconuts and the betel-nuts and the cardamom plants choke with it and hiss back. And there, there it comes over the Bebbur Hill and the Kenthur Hill and begins to paw upon the tiles, and the cattle come running home, their ear stretched back, and the drover lurches behind some bel-tree or papal-tree, and people have their querns and rush to the courtyard, and turning towards the Kenchamma Temple, send forth a prayer, saying, "There, there, the rains have come, Kenchamma; may our houses be white as silver," and the lightning flashes and the thunder stirs the tiles, and children rush to the gutter-slabs to sail paper boats down to Kashi (114).

Though the language of the previous passage is poetical, it is obvious that through the repetition of the conjunction *and* the long sentences reflect the interminable narrative strain. It is clear that the imagery is locally derived from the village life; this makes the narrative realistic, and ,therefore, believable. When rain comes sweeping through the fields, life moves in so many things simultaneously. The hills, trees, animals and people all jump into a vivid unique Indian scene. Another illustrative passage will suffice. This time the whole village is waiting for Moorthy's (the protagonist of the novel) return:

And hearts began to beat, and yet we saw no Moorthy, and yet we saw no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy, and yet not a hair of his head was seen, and we were silent as though in the sanctum of the camphor ceremony. Yet no Moorthy, and no Moorthy,

and the bus had surely passed by the river, over the bridge and up the Santur valley, and Rangamma got so anxious that she sent Pariah Lingayya to run and see, and Pariah Lingayya ran and ran, and from the top of the road cried out, "No, no," and we all looked to this side and that and no Moorthy and no Seenu either was to be seen, and our hearts began to beat like drums... (121).

Breathless and anxious, the villagers wait for Moorthy, who has been released from prison. Achakka, the grandmother narrator, is telling the story through memory to a newcomer. Her repetitions create suspense and anxiety in a state of urgency. Moorthy's name alone was mentioned six times in the previous few lines, as if the name's presence in the grandmother's traditional narrative were making up for his real absence. Pariah Lingayya will run and run up the hill to see if Moorthy is coming. No one appears and the women's hearts begin to beat like drums. Achakka, the narrator, has many traditional mechanisms of storytelling under her disposal. She will spice her story with proverbs, superstition, village costumes and habits, Indian food and sensibility; the end result will be a story unlike any western story that the reader might have been familiar with.

Achakka is a common woman from Kanthapura. Like most uneducated women in rural societies, she is fond of proverbs, sayings that summarize a society's experience and public wisdom over centuries. Proverbs are not overused in the text though they illustrate certain forms of social behavior through common language. One of the earlier proverbs in the novel is: *When the master of the house is out, better not bother about the meal (23-24)*. This is about Bhatta and his wife Savithri. Bhatta, the master of the house, was out attending a religious dinner and his wife was alone at home, therefore, she did not bother to prepare a meal for herself. Bhatta gets rich and becomes a money lender in Kanthapura; unlike other money lenders in the village, Bhatta is jovial and always smiles to the people. He does all sorts of good deeds such as paying a young man who is not his son to continue his education in the city. Yet, Bhatta will never help the Gandhi revolution, perhaps because he will not gain any money. There is no "money in it" as the narrator says. Therefore, the narrator continues, *less strange are the ways of the gods than are the ways of men (27)*. Achakka cannot understand how such a nice generous man will offer help to all who need it and yet will not help the revolution.

Moorthy, the main character, is seen by people as meeting secretly with Ratna in the temple. The villagers begin to speak of a love relationship between the two. The narrator says let them say what they want since: *you cannot put wooden tongues to men (33)*. Also, when a woman thinks that she is the only one who has heard certain news before all the other women in the village, Venkamma says: *you think the cock only crows because of you (40)*. During the

revolution that broke out in the village against the government authorities supported by the British, the Gandhi revolutionaries showed great courage in resistance. The policeman is helpless in front of a Gandhi man. Thus, Achakka says: *does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?* (60). Because there was much violence Moorthy decides to fast for three days. The faults of other people must be expiated for since *the fault of others, Rangamma, is the fruit of one's own disharmony* (65). Water is a great symbol of purification in Indian culture. One has to think of the Ganges' water and how Indians swim in it for purification. The following proverb shows Indian sensibility and the symbolic significance of water. "*The sinner may go to ocean but the water will only touch his knees*" (99). Perhaps the equivalent proverbial saying in English is "*Not all the perfumes of Arabia can sweeten this little hand*".¹ But this saying, if used instead of the previous one, will be out of place since it has nothing to do with the Indian context and sensibility which the novel is interested in depicting. The following proverb will also illustrate the Indian context: "*A cock doesn't make a morning nor single man a revolution*" (123). The English equivalent is: "*One swallow does not make a summer*". However, in an Indian village where people wake up early to go to work in their fields, cocks are more important than swallows. In addition, every Indian village family might have quite a good number of cocks and hens. This makes Rao's saying more realistic in the novel since it is part of the Indian culture.

Raja Rao has also been successful in showing Indian feelings and attitudes in his novel. Let us consider the wide range of feelings and attitudes in the behavior of an Indian crowd.*while policemen beat the crowd this side and that side, and groans and moans and cries and shouts and coughs and oaths and bangs and kicks are heard, while there is heard 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai! Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!* (89). The passage portrays the massing of men in a crowd during the village revolt, massing of words and massing of high emotions. Indian feelings and attitudes are also clear in other examples: for instance in the description of a temple atmosphere "*people came and people went; they banged the bell and touched the bull and took the flowers*" (66). We also hear the voice of the cartsman encouraging his bulls to move on "*Heho cries the cartman and the bulls shiver and start*" (1). Kanthapura is a village whose main crop is rice. When the harvest is done, one can hear the musical counting of rice measuring: "*One, two, three, Hm – Four, Hm, Five.....Seven*". The superstition forbids the mention of "*six*" which instead becomes "*God's grace*" (19). The language of food and drinks is more intimate in expressions like the following: "*Take only this much milk, just this much, only*

The above quotation is from Shakespeare's **Macbeth** Act five scene one. However, it is not the purpose of this ¹ paper to give equivalent proverbs in English to the Indian ones I quote from the novel.

one cup more, just one". The English equivalent would be out of place here with a people who need coaxing: *"Won't you have a second helping?"*

Salutations and superstition depict Indian sensibilities. *"How are you?" "Like this, you see"*. Kanthapurans are also superstitious. *"Suddenly a shooting star sweeps across the sky between the house-roof and the byre-roof, and Ramakrishnayya says 'Some good soul has left the earth' (30). 'And Satannarises up and says, 'Why, my right eye winks, we shall have a grand harvest (114).*

The Kanthapurans are villagers whose lives are full of hard work, arguments, struggle against the British government, revolution with Gandhi...etc. We listen to their country talk arguing: *"...and that if these sniffing old country hens thought that seeing a man for a day, and this when one is ten years of age, could be called a marriage, they had better eat mud and drown themselves in the river"* (32-33).

Perhaps the second most important aspect of Rao's style after proverbs is imagery. Rao's images are derived from the Indian context of the village life. His similes are materialistic including words like *cow, elephant, sparrow, calf, buffalo, bamboo, marriage shawl, and cart-light*. The following images will illustrate Rao's style.

...had gone through life like a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deferent (5).

He was a veritable tiger amongst us (6).

... As honest as an elephant (9).

...your voice is not a sparrow voice in your village (29).

Otherwise Brahmanism is as good as kitchen ashes (30).

Helpless as a calf (41).

Important as a buffalo (82).

Growing thin as a bamboo and shriveled like banana bark (45).

The darkness grows this as sugar in a cauldron (54).

The sky became blue as a marriage shawl (56).

...an idea came into his head like a cart-light in the dark (81).

...to slay the serpent of the foreign rule (12).

In an Indian context, characters' names are descriptive. Unlike English names that might use initials, here no initials are used:

The bent-legged Chandrayya

Waterfall Venkamma

Front-house people

Fig-house people

Nine-beamed house Range Gowda

Corner-House Morthy

Rao also uses elastic English to describe extended family relations: "...*he is my wife's elder brother's wife's brother in law* (29).

Both Achebe and Rao, as postcolonial writers, have been able to subvert the normative English with all its legacy of imperial power and use instead a different English. This process of abrogation and appropriation of English is the site of creating difference in postcolonial writings. The writers of *The Empire Writes Back* believe that Postcolonial literatures are cross-cultural (the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized), and therefore, the processes of abrogation and appropriation take place simultaneously: "*this literature is therefore always written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the centre, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex of speech habits which characterize the local language...etc.*" (39). Achebe and Rao as is clear in this essay have been in many ways under the influence of their vernacular tongues: the Igbo and the Kannada respectively with all the complex varieties of their speech habits. By using their own versions of English, they have constructed different worlds of different values and realities. The most important use of language in postcolonial literature may be: "*the one in which it also constructs difference, separation, and absence from the metropolitan norm. But the ground on which such construction is based is an abrogation of the essentialist assumptions of that norm and a dismantling of its imperialist centralism*" (Ibid, 44).

It is clear by now, that Rao's usage of Indian proverbs, imagery, sensibility, politics, peasantry, and food has enabled him to domesticate or indianize the English language in order to be able to convey his themes. English has been appropriated without losing its universal appeal to convey the Indian sensibility and feelings. Reading *Kanthapura*, we feel that we are reading English of a different taste and culture.

Both Achebe and Rao have been successful in appropriating the English language to suit their own ends. *Things Fall Apart* and *Kanthapura* are exemplary novels for postcolonial writers who are interested in using English as a medium for their creative writing.

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