

CHAPTER V

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5.6. OTHER FEATURES OF STYLE

The different linguistic features discussed in Chapter IV are more or less common to both Raja Rao's and Achebe's English. They are, in that sense, the general features of the English language. Apart from these features, one also comes across some other linguistic peculiarities in the English of Raja Rao and Chinua Achebe. These peculiarities are usually termed linguistic idiosyncrasies. They reflect the individual writer's predilection for using certain types of expressions and affective devices. They are intended to indicate emphasis, focus readers' attention, provide variety and add to the distinctiveness of a writer's style. Some of these features, strictly speaking, are not amenable to an orderly, rigorous linguistic analysis. Nevertheless, they are discussed in the context of a linguistic analysis of style. The justification for their inclusion in a stylistic study is that they often affect the structure of a writer's language and reveal certain important aspects of his overall linguistic performance. Such linguistic peculiarities generally comprise two groups of features. The first group

refers to those features which conform to the basic rules of grammar, such as parenthesis, parallelism and repetition. The second group includes features which deviate, in some way or other, from the accepted norms of the language. Most of the individual linguistic idiosyncrasies may be said to fall within this group.

The present chapter is devoted to a brief discussion of some of these peculiarities of Raja Rao's and Chinua Achebe's English. Only those features which have been found to be characteristic of the individual writer or of both, are considered here. The selection of the features discussed has been dictated either by their frequent occurrences or by their stylistic distinctiveness. The features have been listed from the randomly sampled pages of Raja Rao's and Achebe's texts. Accordingly, all textual illustrations, cited in support of the point in question, are from those selected pages only. Since these features do not appear very frequently, their frequencies have been measured in terms of the number of pages in each sample. In other words, their frequencies have been indicated by saying how often a particular feature occurs per page on an average. The sizes in pages of the samples of Raja Rao are K 26, SR 40, CS 12, CK 13 and FR 14 and those of Achebe are TFA 19, NLAE 15, AOE 23, AMOP 15, and GAW 12. Thus the size of the entire Raja Rao sample comes to 105 pages and that of the entire Achebe sample comes to 84 pages.

5.1. PARENTHESIS

Parenthesis is an important feature of both Raja Rao's and Achebe's English. Both of them have found the device useful for the different purposes it serves. The parenthetical unit in a sentence may serve as an adverbial, an appositive or an adjectival. It may also be structurally unrelated to the other units of a sentence. A parenthetical structure thus may be said to provide a kind of flexibility to sentence structure. It provides a scope for semantic diversion and a freedom from the rigidity of English syntax.

In Raja Rao's five samples (which together comprise 105 pages), parenthetical structures occur 92 times. The average comes to .88 parenthetical structure per page. From the 26-page sample of K, 18 parallel structures have been recorded. The 40-page sample of SR contains 42 instances. In the 12 randomly sampled pages of CS parenthetical structures have been used 8 times. The 13-page and the 14-page samples of CK and PR contain 13 and 11 parenthetical structures respectively. It is thus seen that the average of parenthetical structures within the samples of Raja Rao is the highest in SR and the average is the lowest in CS.

Achebe's five samples of total 84 pages contain 29 instances of parallel structures. The average comes to .34 parallel structure per page. The average is the lowest in

TFA with only 2 instances in the 19-page sample. The highest frequency is recorded in AMOP. In the 15-page sample of AMOP, parallel structures appear 10 times. NIAE and AOG have 6 and 7 parallel structures respectively. GAW contains 4 instances.

It thus follows that the average of parenthetical structure in Raja Rao is more than the double of that in Achebe. This points to the fact that parenthetical structures in Raja Rao's English, compared to those in Achebe's, are so frequent that they hardly escape the attention of a reader.

Both Raja Rao and Achebe have used this device for a number of different purposes, such as elaboration, clarification, substitution and explanation. But what are more important here are the variations that the two writers have displayed in the structures of parenthetic units. Both have indicated the position of the parenthetic units with the help of brackets, dashes or simply by putting commas.

Raja Rao has sometimes inserted a single-word unit in the parenthetic position as in the sentence. "When you take away the whole from the whole — purnam — what remains is the whole" (SR 302).

Again sometimes, he has used a group of words in the form of a qualifying phrase. The following instance illustrates this point:

I visited the new Minister of Education — an old student of Father's — and promised to finish my thesis in a year (SR 294).

More frequently, however, he has used clauses as parenthetical units. The parenthetical clause in the sentence "What genuflections of heart the simple, the true — who live with the trees, the fields and the animals — perform (SR 94)" appears in the form of an adjectival clause. At times, Raja Rao has also used a sentence (sometimes even two sentences together) within parenthetical brackets.

Like Raja Rao, Achebe too, has used phrases, clauses and sentences as parenthetical units. In the sentence "Men and women, young and old, looked forward to the New Year festival because it began the season of plenty — the new year" (TFA 33) the parenthetical unit is a phrase and in "Those Unuofians (that is the name they call themselves) who leave their hometown to find work in towns all over Nigeria regard themselves as sojourners" (NLAE 4) two clauses are used together within parenthetical brackets.

5.2. STRUCTURAL PARALLELISM

Like parenthesis, parallelism is another stylistic device which the two writers' English shares in common. This device refers to the practice of repeating a particular grammatical structure within a sentence or between neighbouring

sentences. It serves the purpose of presenting a contrast or establishing a relationship. It also serves as a means to point emphasis. It is said that parallelism in prose "acts like rhyme and rhythm in poetry, to make the sentences memorable". (Miller and Currie, 1972; pp.46-47).

In the 105-page sample of Raja Rao there are 21 instances of parallelism. The average is .20 parallel structure per page. The frequency is the highest in K where it occurs 8 times. The frequency is the lowest in SR. In the 40-page sample of SR only two instances of parallel structures have been recorded.

Achebe, in his 84-page sample, has repeated this device 12 times. That means, on an average, he has used .14 structural parallelism per page. Out of these 12 instances, 3 occur in TFA, 2 in NLA, and 3 in AOG. AMOP and GAW have 2 instances each.

Both Raja Rao and Achebe have employed parallel structures for different purposes. Both of them have introduced wide variations in their use of this device by varying the length of the structural unit. Raja Rao displays a dominant ^{staying?} tendency towards using two parallel structures within the same sentence. One such instance is — "And as she never came near the Temple-square the workmen laid down their arms,

as he came by the Tulasi Well they folded their hands,...." (PR 40). Achebe, on the other hand, has shown a preference for writing two adjacent sentences with the same structure as in "He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had no patience with his father" (TFA 4).

Raja Rao has also repeated the same parenthetical structure in a series of small sentences. The example below illustrates this point "To smell is sin. To do is sin. To gulp is sin. To purge is bounty. To die is forceful" (CS 21)

The sentences above have the structure of infinitive (used as subject) + verb to be + noun. They follow in quick succession and appear like a series of short declarative statements.

5.3.REPETITION

Closely related to the device of structural parallelism is repetition. The difference between the two is that in the former a particular grammatical structure is repeated, whereas in the latter a particular semantic unit is repeated.

Repetition is another distinctive area of stylistic interest which calls for attention in Raja Rao's English. In his 105-page sample, Raja Rao has used this device 46 times. The average is .44 repetition per page. He has used this device with the highest frequency in K where it

occurs 20 times in 26 pages. This highest frequency tends to suggest that repetition is a favourite device of story telling. With only 5 instances in the 40-page sample, repetitions are the least frequent in SR.

'Repetition' does not seem to be a marked feature of Achebe's English. Only 4 instances of repetitions have been recorded from his 84-page sample. This indicates that Raja Rao, compared to Achebe, uses more repetition in his English.

Repetitions in Raja Rao's English exhibit a wide range of variation. They vary in their functions as well as in their structures. They mainly serve the purpose of reiteration and intensification. Desai (1974) suggests that repetition is a Kannada device. Raja Rao might have inherited it from his native tradition. By employing this device Raja Rao has tried to capture the rhythm of Kannada speech. This seems to be a valid argument. Raja Rao has practised this device more frequently in K and in some of the short stories which depict Kannada way of life.

The instances recorded from Raja Rao's samples include repetition of verbs, adjectives, adverbs and adjuncts. The most frequently repeated items are, however, verb, and verb phrases. Sometimes he has repeated the verb with conjunction. This tends to give an indication

of a continuous action as in "They would spin and spin and spin" (K 33).

At times, Raja Rao repeats the verb without inserting any conjunction in between. The absence of conjunction make such utterances paratactic as in "Chant, chant, chant the name of Eesh" (K 156). Repetition of adjectives can be illustrated by expressions, such as hot, hot coffee, (PR 82), many, many children (PR 107). Repetitions of adjuncts are not as frequent as those of verbs and adjectives. However, infrequent, they add variety to Raja Rao's English as in — "that had gone to their village, and to the village next to their village, and to the village next to that" (K 68). Sometimes, instead of repeating a phrasal unit he repeats a whole clause. In many cases, such repetitions are passionate utterances which tend to give an impression of how an Indian mind reacts in particular situations. Expressions like "He will never come again, He will never come again," (K 211) and "they all hate me, they all hate me" (PR 94) illustrate this point.

5.4. COMPOUNDING OF PROPER NAMES

Another marked feature of Raja Rao's English is the compounding of proper names. This special device of coining compound proper names gives Raja Rao's English a typical Indian characteristic. Proper names, it is true, often do not reflect the real identity of an individual. In Indian

character

villages, it has been a common practice to add certain distinguishing features to a person's name. Raja Rao has adopted this device of attaching to an individual's name, certain attributes that would easily distinguish him from other members in the society. Such attributes, attached to the name of a person, may refer to his occupation, his houses, his trees, his physical deformities, the characteristics he possesses, or the persons he is related to. With these attributes added, proper names in Raja Rao's English, deserve special attention.

Raja Rao's samples contain 25 compounded proper names. Out of these 18 occur in K; 3 are listed in SR and the rest 4 appear in PR. CS and CK have no such proper name.

The use of this device of compounding proper names gives Raja Rao's language semantic richness. For instance, the compound coinage "Left Handed Madanna's son Chinna" (K 35) is constructed from the expression — Chinna who is the son of Madanna who is left-handed. It has been observed that in the construction of compound proper names Raja Rao has displayed a dominant tendency towards shifting the qualifier into the modifier position. The modifier is sometimes one word as in "Patwari Nanjundayya" (K 24) or a group of words as in "Siddanna's wife, Sati" (K 78), and Post-Office House Suryanarayan (K 35).

However, instances of proper names with qualifier are not totally absent. Examples are "Dasaya, the one eyed" (K 28) and "Ramaswamy, the three Pice Advocate" (K 40). He has also used proper name with both modifier and qualifier such as "terror-stricken Devaru, the school master" (K 207).

One hardly comes across such instances of compounding of proper names in Achebe's sample. This indicates that it is a peculiar characteristic of Raja Rao's English alone

5.5. INVERSION

Raja Rao is further distinctive in his use of inversion. It is true that a creative writer, often, "takes even more liberties than a generous grammarian would like to allow" (Baker, 1967; p.26). He, therefore, finds himself at considerable liberty to deviate from the accepted diction and syntax even in an uninflected language like English. One such attempt at deviation is the inversion or the change of word order. Inversion is supposed to be a feature of the language of poetry. But it is also found in prose. It is usually used to indicate prominence or emphasis in a sentence. It inverts the normal word order and serves to give the displaced words an emphasis they would not have in normal word order. An inversion, often, gives the reader a key to a writer's purpose in the sentence.

In the 105-page sample of Raja Rao 27 instances of inversions have been recorded. The average is .26 inversion per page. The frequency of inversions is the highest in K which contains 12 instances. In SR only 6 instances have been recorded. CS and CK have 2 instances each. 5 instances occur in the 14-page sample of PR. The highest frequency of inversions in K seems to suggest that inversion, as a device, best suits the style of a Puranic tale.

The listed instances of inversions show that Raja Rao has a clear tendency to replace the normal Subject - Verb - Adjunct (SVA) order by the inverted ASV structure as in "High up the ghats it was" (K 21). He also inverts the normal SVO order by replacing 'O' to the front position as in "him I will show" (SR 40).

In Achebe's English inversions are not altogether absent. But they are not as frequent as they are in Raja Rao's English. In the 84-page sample, he has used only 5 inverted structures. Thus, the frequency of inversions in Achebe's English is almost negligible. However, in the recorded instances, he also shows the tendency to change the usual SVA order to AVS as in "On his head were two powerful horns" (TFA 82).

5.6. APPENDED CONSTRUCTION

Apart from altering the normal word order of English

sentences, Raja Rao has also introduced some other syntactic distortions to give a touch of local flavour to his English. This he has achieved by adopting a peculiar stylistic device for which there is perhaps no appropriate name in English descriptive grammar. The device is adding the name of the subject to the end of the sentence to explain the pronoun used as the subject. Following this device, Raja Rao begins a sentence with a pronoun in the subject slot and then attaches the name of the subject when the sentence has already come to an end. The device, in the absence of a better term, may be called appended construction. It may be taken for a kind of foregrounding against the background of the normal English sentence structure.

Raja Rao has applied this device in all his works. But he has practised it more frequently in SR. It is, however, to be mentioned here that the instances of such structures are not many. They are important not because of their frequency but because of their stylistic distinctiveness. The syntactic peculiarities of this device are evident in the following instances:

He is not a badman, the new Sahib. (K 82)

He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma. (K 211)

He is a very nice man, Rama. (SR 234).

Raja Rao has been found to introduce variation in any styli-

stic device he has experimented with. The one under discussion is also not an exception. In the instances cited below, while conforming to the basic syntactical pattern of the sentences cited above, he slightly changes the structure:

She needed a comb wherever she went, did Madeleine (SR 94).

He looked so enraged, did Motilal (PR 68).

The difference here is clearly discernible. The attached subject is preceded by the past form of the verb 'to do' which confers on the attached unit the status of a clause and the clause hangs in the form of an appended statement in the sentence. Thus, with the change of structural pattern, the emphasis also is shifted from the actor to the action performed.

McCutchion (1969), presumably because of the non-existence of such syntactic peculiarity in native English writing, discards this device as 'an irritating trick'. Mukherjee (1971), however, suggests that such a peculiarity of style tends to make Raja Rao's English sound archaic, and an archaic style is intended to create a distance between the reader and the happenings of the novel.

Such syntactic peculiarities are, however, conspicuous by their absence in Achebe's English.

5.7. CLEFT CONSTRUCTION

It has been observed that Achebe's English does not share some of the peculiarities one come across in Raja Rao's English. For instance, proper names in Achebe's English are not high sounding like those in Raja Rao's English. Moreover, repetition and inversion are important features of Raja Rao's English. Although these features are not altogether absent from Achebe's samples, they however, cannot be said to characterize his English. Nevertheless, Achebe's English has peculiarities of its own. One such peculiarity is cleft construction. In a cleft construction the pronoun it is followed by the verb be which again is followed by the theme clause as in it is he who is responsible.

The 84-page sample of Achebe contains 35 cleft sentences — averaging .42 cleft construction per page. The highest number of cleft sentences occur in AOG. Out of the 35 cleft sentences 16 appear in AOG. TFA has 12 sentences with cleft construction. The last three samples together have 7 cleft sentences.

The cleft sentences, like the proverbs, have the left branching structure — where the essential material appears before the main clause. Winters (1981) suggests that Achebe uses this device to lend a sense of distance of remoteness to the style.

In the 95-page sample of Raja Rao only 5 cleft sentences have been recorded. It, therefore, cannot be said that cleft construction is a marked feature of Raja Rao's English.

5.8. CONCLUSION

The different linguistic features discussed in this chapter are some of the peculiarities of Raja Rao's and Achebe's English. In their attempt at describing the local landscapes and situations in a foreign tongue, the two writers have taken recourse to these different linguistic experiments. Both of them are aware of the fact that too frequent use of such devices can distort the character of the language altogether. They, therefore, have used the devices quite sparingly. The moderate use of these stylistic devices has added to the variety of their English without causing much distortion.