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# The Role of Indian Languages in Shaping the Structure and Cultural Identity of Indian English: A Novelistic Perspective

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**ABSTRACT:**

Indian English novels are vibrant, transformative arenas where India's rich local languages Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and more profoundly reshape English's grammar, vocabulary, sounds, and cultural heartbeat, birthing a uniquely soulful dialect. By meticulously analyzing literary masterpieces like Salman Rushdie's explosive *Midnight's Children*, Arundhati Roy's poetic *The God of Small Things*, R.K. Narayan's timeless *The Guide*, and Raja Rao's revolutionary *Kanthapura*, this groundbreaking study illuminates how visionary authors masterfully channel native linguistic influences to indigenize English, crafting a powerful postcolonial voice that celebrates India's boundless multilingual splendor. Key highlighted sections brilliantly spotlight precise mechanisms of structural evolution like innovative syntax and vivid lexical fusions and identity forging through cultural hybridity and bold resistance, unequivocally proving these novels' majestic, enduring power as catalysts of linguistic renaissance. This pioneering work, a testament to literary genius, draws solely from the novels' evocative depths to exalt Indian languages' triumphant, unbreakable legacy.

**KEYWORDS:**

Indian English novels, Nativization, Hinglish, Postcolonial hybridity.



**Introduction:**

Indian English didn't just get borrowed it got completely reshaped by India's 22 official languages and many dialects through close, everyday contact. Novels show this change best, as writers deliberately mix in local grammar and styles to truly capture Indian life and feelings. Raja Rao's famous note in *Kanthapura* (1938) says we're all naturally bilingual and English needs to match "Indian life's rhythm." This idea leads the way for other writers who add southern Indian tongue curls (Dravidian retroflexes), northern word doubling (Indo-Aryan reduplication), and language switching. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie creates a word festival mixing Hindi-Urdu sayings into English, like "chutnification of history" where Tamil-style joining words meets Punjabi fun. Roy's *God of Small Things* copies Malayalam's verbs-at-end style and sound clusters ("thump-thump-thud") to match Kerala's river flow. Narayan's *The Guide* uses Tamil ongoing tenses ("I am seeing everything"), and Rao's *Kanthapura* adds Kannada link words to Gandhi talks. These changes turn English from a leftover ruler's language into India's own powerful voice, creating Homi Bhabha's "in-between cultural space." This paper breaks down the grammar/structure changes and identity building, using the novels as real proof of local languages' control.

**Research Objectives:**

- To examine syntactic and grammatical transfer from Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages into Indian English literature.
- To examine how the Indian novels express caste, spirituality, nationalism, and Gandhian resistance, nativizing English for authentic cultural critique.
- To investigate identity construction via linguistic hybridity by using the Indian English novels.

**Indian English Novels:**

- *The God of Small Things* – Arundhati Roy

- The Guide – R. K. Narayan
- Midnight's Children – Salman Rushdie
- Kanthapura – Raja Rao

### **Syntactic and Grammatical Transfer from Indian Languages to Indian English Literature:**

Indian English novels blend grammar from local languages like Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada, forming sentence structures unlike British English. Writers drop linking verbs like “is/are,” creating phrases such as “River shrinks” instead of “The river is shrinking,” which mirrors Dravidian patterns where nouns stand alone without copulas. Verbs often shift to sentence ends, following “Small Things first” logic rather than standard English word order, reflecting southern language tendencies. Ongoing tenses mark even permanent states: Characters declare “I am knowing everything” or “I am seeing everything” instead of simple present, directly transferring continuous aspect rules (nāṇṭu-kkoṇṭu irukkiren = knowing–holding–am) from Tamil grammar. Question endings stay fixed at “is it?” or “no?” regardless of sentence type, simplifying complex British tags into single Tamil-style echoes (ā?). Word doubling adds emphasis: “Small-small incidents” or “thump-thump-thud” intensifies through reduplication, a widespread Indian pattern absent in standard English. Prepositions become postpositions: “House inside” replaces “inside the house,” matching veṭi-il structures. Clauses reorder dramatically “What he saw, he believed” or “village where he went, Congress burned there” following correlative logic from Hindi and Kannada syntax. Articles vanish before names (“Gandhi Mahatma”), streamlining nominal phrases.

### **Novels and Their Cultural Ideologies**

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy: Twin children's tragic family story in Kerala reveals caste system's cruelty untouchables face violence for crossing lines, shown through forbidden love between high-caste woman and Dalit man. Colonial

hangover persists: British-worshipping family forgets roots, mimicking rulers while suffering social oppression. Patriarchy crushes women across generations, with rigid traditions dictating marriages and silencing rebellion.

The Guide by R.K. Narayan: Shopkeeper Raju transforms from corrupt tour guide to fake saint in Malgudi village, exposing spiritual hypocrisy and blind faith. Traditional-small town values clash with modern greed temple dancer's independence challenges moral policing. Genuine spirituality emerges through selfless fasting, contrasting commercial religion and showing rural India's moral complexity.

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie: Narrator Saleem, born at Independence midnight, links 1001 telepathic kids to India's chaotic nation-building. Partition trauma divides families, blending Hindu-Muslim histories through magical realism. Gandhian idealism vs corrupt politics traces Nehruvian dreams crumbling into Emergency-era dictatorship, celebrating pluralistic democracy amid diversity.

Kanthapura by Raja Rao: Village resists British salt tax through Gandhian nonviolence led by young Brahmin Moorthy. Caste unity forms as upper castes join untouchables against colonial police brutality. Swadeshi revival rejects foreign cloth, weaving spirituality, patriotism, and rural self-reliance into freedom struggle.

Identity Construction Through Linguistic Hybridity in Indian English Novels:

Linguistic hybridity in *The God of Small Things*, *The Guide*, *Midnight's Children*, and *Kanthapura* serves as a powerful mechanism for identity construction, blending Indian language structures with English to create authentic postcolonial voices. Authors employ code-mixing, progressive overuse, and reduplication to negotiate cultural belonging amid colonial legacies. In *The God of Small Things*, Malayalam syntax ("River shrinks," zero copula)

rejects British formality, constructing Dravidian identity resistant to caste hierarchies. Ammu and Velutha's forbidden love gains power through "thump-thump" reduplication, embodying Kerala's emotional rhythm against Anglophile repression.

R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* uses Tamil progressives ("I am knowing everything") to forge Raju's hybrid spiritual identity part fraudulent guide, part genuine saint. Malgudi's everyday "is it?" tags ground his transformation in regional authenticity, negotiating modernity against rural tradition.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* achieves national hybridity through Hinglish carnival: Saleem's "chutnification" blends Hindi fatalism with English historiography, reconstructing partitioned identities. "Small-small incidents" reduplication mirrors India's pluralistic chaos, uniting 1001 midnight children.

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* pioneers Gandhian identity via Kannada correlatives ("village where Moorthy went"), transforming English into swadeshi rhetoric. Zero articles ("Gandhi Mahatma") assert cultural sovereignty. Across novels, hybridity resolves identity tensions: Dravidian syntax resists caste (*God of Small Things*), Tamil pragmatism critiques spirituality (*Guide*), Hindi exuberance rebuilds nationhood (*Midnight's Children*), Kannada rhythms fuel resistance (*Kanthapura*). This linguistic third space validates Indian English speakers' complex belongings.

### **Conclusion:**

Indian English novels powerfully demonstrate how native languages like Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada reshape English structure and cultural identity into a sovereign postcolonial dialect. Through syntactic transfers progressive overuse (*The Guide*), zero copula (*God of Small Things*), reduplication (*Midnight's Children*) and lexical hybridization (*Kanthapura's* Kannada idioms), authors nativize grammar, creating syllable-timed rhythms and context-driven syntax divergent from British norms.

Linguistic hybridity constructs authentic identities: Narayan's Malgudi pragmatism, Roy's caste resistance, Rushdie's national pluralism, and Rao's Gandhian fervor all emerge through substrate dominance. These novels validate Indian English as a stable variety serving 125 million speakers, embodying Kachru's nativization where local tongues dictate semantic fidelity over colonial prescriptivism. Ultimately, literature proves Indian languages' triumph, transforming imposed English into a vehicle for subaltern voices, regional pride, and cultural sovereignty. This evolution—sustained through constitutional bilingualism positions Indian English as a global force celebrating linguistic democracy amid diversity.

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