



“The Importance and Relevance of Indian Languages: A Study through the Works of Preeti Shenoy.”

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Abstract

Language is not merely a system of words but a living expression of culture, identity, and human connection. In a country like India, where linguistic diversity reflects centuries of civilization and tradition, the significance of Indian languages becomes profound. They serve as vessels of emotion, philosophy, and collective memory. However, globalization and the growing dominance of English have created a gap between cultural inheritance and contemporary communication. This paper explores the importance of Indian languages in shaping thought and preserving cultural integrity, while also analyzing how modern Indian author Preeti Shenoy employs English as a tool to express Indian values, emotions, and relationships. Although her works are written in English, they echo the rhythm, simplicity, and warmth of Indian linguistic traditions. Through her novels, Shenoy successfully bridges the local and the global—demonstrating that language, regardless of its medium, can retain the essence of Indian identity when rooted in authentic emotion and cultural consciousness.

Keyword

Language, Indian Literature, Preeti Shenoy, Cultural Identity, Indian English, Communication, Indian Languages, Globalization

Introduction

Language is the foundation of human civilization — it is not only a means of communication but also a powerful vehicle of thought, identity, and culture. Every language carries within it the philosophy, emotion, and worldview of its people. In a country like India, where linguistic diversity is extraordinary, language becomes more than a communicative tool; it becomes a way of living, a reflection of regional histories, and a marker of cultural pride. India is home to more than twenty-two officially recognized languages and

hundreds of dialects, each representing a unique worldview. From Sanskrit, the ancient source of Indian thought, to regional languages like Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, and Malayalam, Indian linguistic diversity enriches both literature and everyday life. Indian languages are deeply connected to the emotional and cultural fabric of society, influencing the way people think, relate, and express themselves.

However, in the modern globalized world, English has emerged as a dominant language in education, administration, and literature. This shift has often led to the marginalization of regional languages and a gradual disconnection from native linguistic identities. Yet, even within English writing, many Indian authors, such as **Preeti Shenoy**, have successfully retained the Indian sensibility through their narrative tone, cultural setting, and emotional authenticity. Preeti Shenoy, a contemporary Indian novelist, writes in English but her works capture the essence of Indian middle-class life, relationships, and emotional depth. Her simple, conversational style mirrors the rhythm of Indian speech, and her themes—love, identity, resilience, and self-discovery—resonate with the Indian psyche. Thus, Shenoy's writing becomes an example of how the Indian spirit can find its voice in English while preserving its cultural roots.

This paper aims to highlight the **importance and relevance of Indian languages** in today's world and analyze how **Preeti Shenoy's English language expression reflects Indian linguistic and cultural values**. Through her novels, the study explores the coexistence of tradition and modernity in linguistic form and emotional content, suggesting that the language of the heart often transcends linguistic boundaries.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to explore the linguistic, cultural, and emotional dimensions of Indian languages through the perspective of modern Indian fiction. It specifically focuses on the works of **Preeti Shenoy**, whose writings, though composed in English, embody the essence of Indian thought and communication. The key objectives of this research are as follows:

To examine the importance of Indian languages as carriers of culture, tradition, and identity in the contemporary global context.

To analyze how Preeti Shenoy's language use reflects the rhythm, sentiment, and emotional depth typical of Indian linguistic traditions.

To explore the role of language in expressing the Indian sensibility, social values, and emotional experiences within Shenoy's novels.

To understand how Shenoy's English writing bridges the gap between regional linguistic expression and global readership.

To emphasize the continued relevance of Indian languages in shaping individual and collective identity, even within English-language literature.

Importance of Indian Languages

Language is the soul of a civilization; it preserves the values, wisdom, and experiences of generations. Indian languages, in particular, represent one of the richest linguistic heritages in the world. They are not merely tools of communication but repositories of philosophy, literature, and emotion. The importance of Indian languages lies in their ability to shape cultural consciousness, strengthen identity, and connect individuals with their roots.

(i) Cultural Preservation and Heritage

Indian languages are closely linked to the country's spiritual and cultural traditions. Ancient texts such as the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Ramayana* were composed in classical Indian languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, and Pali, carrying forward the moral and philosophical essence of Indian civilization. Regional languages preserve folklore, songs, proverbs, and oral histories that define the cultural soul of every community. The preservation of these languages is, therefore, the preservation of India's cultural DNA.

(ii) Emotional and Social Identity

Language is deeply tied to emotion and belonging. It connects people to their families, traditions, and social environments. Communication in one's mother tongue allows for a natural expression of feelings, empathy, and identity. Indian languages create a sense of unity in diversity by allowing people to express themselves authentically within their cultural framework. Losing a language, therefore, is not merely losing words—it is losing a way of feeling and understanding life.

(iii) Educational and Intellectual Relevance

Education in one's native language has been proven to enhance understanding and creativity. The **National Education Policy (NEP 2020)** emphasizes the use of regional languages as mediums of instruction in early education, acknowledging that language shapes cognitive and emotional development. Indian languages must therefore be integrated into education to promote holistic learning and intellectual inclusivity.

(iv) National Unity and Diversity

India's linguistic diversity—over 22 scheduled languages and hundreds of dialects—reflects its unity through plurality. While each region has its distinct linguistic identity, all Indian languages are bound by shared cultural values such as respect, harmony, and community. The coexistence of multiple languages promotes mutual respect and reinforces national integration.

(v) Relevance in the Global and Digital Era

In the 21st century, language has become a digital tool of influence. Social media platforms, cinema, and literature increasingly use regional languages, showing a renewed pride in linguistic heritage. Indian languages are gaining global attention through translations, subtitles, and bilingual publications. In this sense, they are not only surviving but evolving—becoming bridges between local tradition and global communication.

(vi) Language as a Reflection of Worldview

Each language shapes a distinct worldview. The Indian linguistic structure—rich with metaphors, respect-based pronouns, and emotional nuances—reflects a culture of empathy and interconnectedness. Thus, Indian languages influence not only how people speak but also how they think, feel, and relate to one another.

Indian languages, therefore, are more than linguistic systems—they are living expressions of Indian civilization. They safeguard India's pluralistic identity and provide a moral and emotional framework that connects the past with the present. Their preservation and promotion are essential to maintaining India's cultural continuity in an increasingly homogenized world.

Use of Language in Preeti Shenoy's Works

Preeti Shenoy is a contemporary Indian author whose novels, though written in English, deeply resonate with Indian readers because of their cultural and emotional authenticity. Her choice of language demonstrates that one can communicate Indian experiences, values, and thought patterns effectively in English, while still preserving the essence of Indian linguistic tradition. Shenoy's novels, including *Life Is What You Make It*, *It Happens for a Reason*, and *The Secret Wishlist*, offer rich insights into the role of language in expressing identity, emotion, and culture.

(i) Simplicity and Conversational Tone

Shenoy's language is characterized by clarity, simplicity, and a conversational style. This approach makes her novels accessible to a wide range of readers, while retaining a distinct Indian flavor. For instance, her narrative often mirrors everyday Indian conversations, where emotions are expressed subtly through tone, repetition, or culturally resonant metaphors. This method allows the English language to act as a vessel for Indian cultural expression.

(ii) Indian Cultural References

Although her texts are in English, Shenoy seamlessly incorporates Indian festivals, family dynamics, and social norms into her narratives. In *It Happens for a Reason*, the depiction of family responsibilities, arranged marriage dilemmas, and maternal guidance reflects Indian societal structures. Similarly, *The Secret Wishlist* explores cultural expectations surrounding women's independence and personal ambitions,

grounding universal themes in a distinctively Indian context. These references give her language a cultural depth akin to that of regional Indian languages.

(iii) Emotional Authenticity

Shenoy's novels emphasize the emotional landscapes of her characters, and her language mirrors the rhythm of Indian speech. Expressions of love, conflict, hope, and despair are conveyed in a manner that feels both intimate and culturally grounded. The internal monologues of her protagonists often blend English with Indian idiomatic thought patterns, reflecting the natural interplay between India's linguistic heritage and modern expression.

(iv) Bridging Tradition and Modernity

Shenoy's writing exemplifies how language can bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. Her characters navigate contemporary challenges—career, relationships, mental health—while retaining traditional values such as family bonds, respect, and social responsibility. Through her language, Shenoy demonstrates that even in English, Indian thought processes, moral frameworks, and emotional subtleties can be preserved, making her work a representation of “**Indian English**” that resonates globally.

(v) Examples from Key Novels

Life Is What You Make It: The protagonist's struggles with mental health and societal expectations are articulated in simple yet emotionally charged English, reflecting Indian cultural attitudes toward resilience and personal growth.

It Happens for a Reason: Family-oriented dialogues and reflections on societal pressures portray the rhythm of Indian domestic life.

The Secret Wishlist: The narrative showcases aspirations and desires shaped by Indian social realities, using language that conveys cultural nuance and emotional sincerity.

Preeti Shenoy's use of English is a testament to the adaptability of language. By embedding Indian cultural sensibilities, familial norms, and emotional depth into her narratives, she demonstrates that Indian identity and values can be vividly communicated even in a non-native medium. Her works show that language, when used with cultural consciousness, transcends mere words to become a bridge between tradition, modernity, and global readership.

Discussion and Analysis

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a mirror of culture, thought, and identity. In the context of Indian literature, the interaction between regional languages and English has created a unique linguistic landscape. Preeti Shenoy's novels exemplify how Indian identity and cultural ethos can be

preserved even when the medium of expression is English. Her works provide insights into the evolving dynamics of language, identity, and cultural continuity in contemporary India.

(i) Indian English as a Cultural Bridge

Shenoy's writing represents the concept of **Indian English**, a hybrid form of language that incorporates Indian idioms, thought patterns, and cultural references into English prose. This allows her to maintain the authenticity of Indian experiences while making her work accessible to a global audience. By blending the emotional depth and rhythm of Indian speech into English, Shenoy demonstrates that language is flexible yet capable of preserving cultural specificity.

(ii) Language and Identity

Through her characters, Shenoy illustrates the relationship between language and personal identity. The protagonists' thoughts, dialogues, and expressions reflect their cultural upbringing, social environment, and internal values. For instance, familial loyalty, societal expectations, and moral dilemmas in her novels are conveyed in English, but their roots are unmistakably Indian. This underscores the idea that **language carries identity**, and that cultural identity can persist even when the linguistic medium changes.

(iii) Emotional and Social Resonance

Shenoy's use of English is particularly effective in conveying the emotional nuances of Indian life. Her narratives highlight universal themes—love, ambition, resilience, and self-discovery—but are framed within the Indian socio-cultural context. This dual resonance—local and global—enhances the significance of Indian languages and thought systems, showing that their essence can survive translation or expression in other languages.

(iv) Preserving Cultural Values in a Globalized Era

Globalization and the dominance of English have posed challenges to the survival of regional languages. However, Shenoy's work demonstrates that cultural values, social norms, and emotional expressions rooted in Indian languages can be transmitted effectively through English. Her novels act as conduits, bridging traditional Indian linguistic sensibilities with contemporary global readership, thereby reinforcing the relevance of Indian languages in shaping cultural consciousness.

(v) Implications for Indian Literature

Shenoy's approach suggests a broader implication for Indian Writing in English (IWE): even when authors write in a global language, they can retain the linguistic and cultural nuances of Indian languages. This highlights the adaptability and vitality of Indian linguistic heritage, showing that the spirit of Indian languages persists through emotion, expression, and cultural context, rather than only through native vocabulary.

The analysis of Preeti Shenoy's works illustrates that language is more than words; it is an expression of thought, culture, and identity. Indian languages, with their emotional richness and cultural depth, continue to influence literature even when English is the medium. Shenoy's novels demonstrate that Indian identity, sensibility, and values can thrive in global literature without compromising authenticity, emphasizing the ongoing importance and relevance of Indian languages.

Conclusion

Language is far more than a medium of communication; it is the essence of culture, thought, and identity. Indian languages, with their rich heritage and emotional depth, have shaped the social, cultural, and intellectual fabric of the nation for centuries. They preserve traditions, nurture identity, and provide a framework for expressing complex emotions and ideas.

In the contemporary global context, where English dominates education, media, and literature, the preservation and relevance of Indian languages remain critical. Preeti Shenoy's novels exemplify how Indian cultural sensibilities, social values, and emotional nuances can be effectively expressed in English while retaining the essence of Indian linguistic heritage. Through her conversational style, culturally rooted narratives, and emotionally authentic characters, Shenoy bridges the gap between Indian traditions and global readership. This study highlights that the significance of Indian languages extends beyond their regional use. They continue to influence thought, emotion, and literary expression, even in English-language writing. Preeti Shenoy's works serve as a compelling example of how language—whether regional or global—can embody the soul of a culture and connect readers to India's rich linguistic and cultural heritage.

In conclusion, Indian languages remain indispensable to the preservation of cultural identity, the expression of emotion, and the enrichment of literature. Authors like Preeti Shenoy demonstrate that language, when rooted in cultural consciousness, transcends boundaries and continues to be a vital medium for conveying the Indian experience to the world.

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