

The use of Terms of Address Keeping with the Politeness Principle in the Selected Fictions of Manju Kapur

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Abstract

Our social relation is determined on the basis of what and how we say something in our day-to-day interaction. There are number of factors that influence our use of terms of address in social situations. The use of etiquettes in our communication definitely reflects the politeness in the conversation. These etiquettes are nothing but the proper use of terms of address between interlocutor and interlocutee in communication. Off course, these terms of address differ from culture to culture in the society. These terms of address are a kind of rules of social conduct to maintain our relationship and show respect for each other. The article presents how the terms of address are used by characters in Manju Kapur's fictions, keeping in mind their personal relationship with the elders and others. The fiction of Manju Kapur has delineated characters and situations in the social atmosphere of mostly the Northern India. In the Indian community in this region, the families presented are mostly joint families, and the use of terms of address acquires importance as they mark distance in relationship, age, etc. There is hierarchy of relationship here ranging from grandfather, grandmother to uncle, mother, elder sister, elder brother, etc. Mother is an intimate relation for the children, so the son or daughter may simply say 'Ma', but otherwise there is a strict protocol in the use of the terms of address to avoid hard feeling or being called manner less. We see how the characters in Manju Kapur's fiction obey the observance of this protocol in their interaction with the elders.

Keywords: Hierarchy, Intimacy, Honorific, Rhetorical, Migrate, Generic

I. INTRODUCTION

In the Indian English fiction the writers have to present the Indian family relationships and social structure in realistic manner. In the Indian society, on account of its joint family structure, there is a great variety of terms of address used by the members of

the family as they talk to each other. There is a hierarchy of relationships in the joint Indian family, as the sons and daughters, the in-laws, the grand parents and grand children, etc. live together. And the terms of address signify the respect the younger members have to show to the elders as they address them. The grand-parents are respectfully addressed as 'Dada', 'Dadi' (in the case of father's parents) while 'Nana', 'Nani' in the case of the mother's parents. Then there are relations like 'Chachaji', 'Chachiji', (uncle and aunt), 'Mamaji' and 'Mamiji' (mother's brother and his wife) These terms of relation have to be used in the Indian English fiction to convey the special feeling encoded in them, and the love speaker feels for the addressee. There is a feeling of intimacy and respect in the use of these terms. Even the strangers, not really related, make use of them appropriately to express their respect or there bonding as they talk to the elders. The parents and grand parents address their children and grand children as 'Beta', 'Beti' to mark their feeling of love. And even the younger ones, not related, are addressed by the elders as 'Beta' or 'Beti' as the case may be. The expressions in this case are disarming as they claim respect from the listener.

Indian society, in its use of language, gives a lot of importance to pay respect to the elders and the persons of authority making use of honorific use of the terms of address while talking to them. These terms of address, within the structure of the family, depend on the hierarchy of relations obtaining between the members of the family, especially when it is a joint family in which grand-father, grand-mother and their sons, daughters and their children all live together. The terms of address and the use of honorific pronominals also depend on the hierarchy in the society in which members have to address persons in power, socially, politically or in the power positions in the government.

In Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, for example Lala Diwanchand's is a joint family, with Suraja Prakash and Chandar Prakash, as his two sons,

their wives Kasturi and Lajwanti and their children. Lala's daughter-in-law, Lajwanti, addresses him as "Baoji" when she talks to him: She says to him:

'Baoji, the noise from morning to night
I have a headache

(P: 21 *Difficult Daughters*)

Here, 'Baoji' is the respectful term of address that Lajwanti uses for Lala Diwan Chand, who is her father-in-law. While Lala Diwan Chand, addresses his son as 'Beta' (my son), as in:

'Beta, since when have everybody', needs not
been met equally?'

(P: 28 *Difficult Daughters*)

a rhetorical question, meaning he has met everybody's needs equally. While addressing the other member of the family, the expression 'Arre' (an interjection) calling attention of the listener is used especially as the elder one addresses the younger member, or brothers and sisters address each other. When the listener is shocked or surprised, he or she uses the interjection:

'Bap re', 'He Bhagwan!' or Simply 'Arre'.

(P: 31 *Difficult Daughters*)

When someone is annoyed and would like to stop the argument on the matter, he or she uses an expression:

'Bas, bas' (enough)

(P: 35 *Difficult Daughters*)
expressing annoyance.

The elder sister is addressed by the younger one as 'Pehenji', as 'Virmati's younger sister, Vidayvati, addresses her showing her drawings. (P: 37) The honorific 'ji' is invariably attached to the terms of address when the younger ones talk to the elders, or a servant talks to the master, etc. For example, the driver addresses Virmati as

'Bibiji'

(P: 74)

In the Indian community to bring a bad news to the family is considered to be unlucky. The Professor's wife has to tell the news to Virmati's mother that she (Virmati) has gone to Tarsikka to drown herself. She says:

"Behenji, I am so ashamed, I am so
Unlucky! What will you think?"

(P: 80 *Difficult Daughters*)

Breaking a bad news to the sufferer's family is a very unpleasant job. The Professor's wife has to do this when she has to report to Kasturi, that Virmati has gone to drown herself in the canal. So before, breaking this unpleasant news she says how unlucky she is and how ashamed she feels.

In the novel *Home*, Vicky the orphaned boy is thrust upon Sona to take care of him. Her mother-in-law says:

"Bechara, he has only us now
....."

(P: 25 *Home*)

The term 'Bechara' (poor boy), is used here to elicit sympathy of Sona so that she should agree to take care of him.

Nisha, Sona's daughter, was entrusted to Rupa and her husband, who took care of her studies. Yashpal compliments him saying:

'It is all due to you, Bhai Sahib.'

(P: 73 *Home*)

'Bhai Sahib' is the respectful term of address used here by Yash Pal to address Prem Nath, Rupa's husband. Like 'Bhai Sahib', there are other terms of address like 'Behenji.' Normally, the expression 'Sahib' is appended to the term of relation to show respect to the person, and normally 'ji' for the elderly male and female, depending on the relationship, for example, Prem Nath refers to Nisha's grandmother as 'Maji', in:

'Maji' is so frail and weak'

(P: 135 *Home*)

Between friends, there is friendly relationship of equality and informality. The boys and girls of ten address each other with the expression 'yaar' (meaning friend). For example, Suresh, Nisha's college friend says to her:

'Arre yaar, let's get married'

(P: 153

Home)

'yaar' is more than a friend, it expresses closeness, intimacy between the speakers. Nisha, for some time cultivates love relationship with Suresh, which later comes to nothing. It comes to nothing, even after two meetings with Suresh, with her uncle and aunt sitting away from them in a hotel. Suresh, of course, tells her indirectly how their union is impossible without the parents agreeing.

When there is a proposal of marriage for Nisha, and the boy's mother arrives to see Nisha, she addresses Nisha, as 'Beti'. Normally 'Beta', 'Beti' are the common way of address, the older people while talking to the younger ones. The younger people address the elders in the family according to the relationship they have with the elders. For example, Rupa is addressed by Nisha as 'Chachi'. Nisha's friends, the girls from her college, address Sona as 'Auntie'. The terms like 'Chachi' and 'auntie' signify elderly women. The younger people make use of these terms of address to show respect, though the women concerned are not really related to them. 'Maji', for example, means 'mother', but an elderly woman is addressed by the children and the young men and women as 'Maaji'. 'Ji' here is the suffix attached to the terms of relation to show respect, e.g. Chachaji, Chachiji, Babuji, Bhaji, etc. Elderly sister is called 'Didi', as we see Rupa addressing Sona as 'didi' (P: 234)

When husband and wife, or lovers address each other they make use of the terms of endearment. For example, Ashok in *Custody*, addresses Shagun:

'Dearest, I have to go'.

(P: 92 *Custody*)

Similarly, he says:

'A little more patience, my love'

(P: 93 *Custody*)

And the mother addresses a son or a daughter as 'Beta', for example, Shagun's mother says to her when she tries to advise her daughter who is trying to break up her marriage.

'Beta, why are you talking like this?
Have I said anything wrong?'

(P: 94 *Custody*)

A stranger addresses a married woman as 'Madam' to show respect. For example, the tutor appointed to instruct Arujn, addresses Shagun:

'Madam, I am here, no?'

(P: 190 *Custody*)

While addressing the elders in the family, the terms of relationship, in the native language, are used as they have emotional value. For example, the sons and daughters would use the term 'Papaji' for father, 'Ma' for mother, and the servants would say 'Maaji'. Similarly, other elderly relationships are 'Chachaji', 'Mamaji', 'Buaji', 'Chachiji', 'Mausaji' and so on. In Indian social context, on account of a long tradition of joint family, there are so many relationship terms beyond the closed family set-up of

only father and mother. Children address their father as 'Papa' in Hindi, and mother as 'Maa'. The suffix 'Ji' is attached to these appellations to show respect. Only 'ji' is often used to say 'yes' in Hindi. For example:

'Will you be able to do this?'
'ji' or 'han ji' (yes, sir)

There are interjections like 'Bap re' to express dismay or surprise, as in

'Bap re' How did he do that? Are you sure?'

(P: 167 *Difficult Daughters*)

There are contextually necessary regional words used in the conversations or narrations. For example, in *Home*, the narrator says:

A little Mandir, painted white, in the bend
of a road.

(P: 30 *Home*)

And while talking about articles of clothing like, gold dupattas, sindhoor, bindis (P:30)

There are a number of terms of relation in the Indian languages. In Indian English novels we come across as the members of the family talk to each other. For example, Sona, in *Home* says to Rupa, her sister:

'Your Jijaji can't be travelling all the time.'

(P: 32 *Home*)

And Rupa, (when Sona has son) asks Sona:

'What does Maji say to you now?'

(P: 34
Home)

The mother-in-law normally addresses the daughter-in-law as 'Bahu'. For example grandmother, talking to Sona about Vicky says:

'Let him be, bahu, -----'

(P: 44
Home)

As we have already noted, the eldest male member in the family is addressed as 'Baoji'. So Lala Diwan Chand is addressed by his sons, daughter-in-law, etc. as 'Baoji'.

In 'The Immigrant, the social scene changes. Ananda migrates to Canada, and visits his distant relations there on his landing in Halifax. He addresses Dr. Sharma as 'uncle' and when he accepts the

uncle's advice, he says, 'ji Uncle'. He does not use 'Chacha' the Indian term of relation as the scene has changed. (P:23)

The uncle also addresses him 'Beta' which is a generic way of address by the elders to the younger ones, though 'Beta' means 'Son'. Ananda, does not use the term 'Chacha', but says 'Uncle' as the scene has changed. The uncle in Canada, being of older generation keeps calling Ananda as 'Beta' and uses colloquial vocative expression 'Arre Beta' (P: 26), and Ananda responds saying 'ji, uncle', 'ji' being a universal way of showing respect.

The terms of address, are thus, used to address the elders to show them respect, while the younger ones are addressed as 'Beta', 'Beti', 'Bahu' or with their names such as Nisha, Vicky etc. The terms of address, their local versions, make the narration and the spoken interaction realistic.

II. CONCLUSION

The use of terms of address in the conversational interaction between the characters depends on their mutual relationship, social distance between the interlocutors and the occasion. In India, especially in the business community, there are joint families, and naturally, there are elderly members as well as two or three tiers of younger generation living together. In this socio-cultural setup, the tradition demands that the younger ones should observe manners while talking to the elders. In the fiction of Manju Kapur, the families portrayed are mostly joint families ranging from Dada-Dadi to their grand-children, and, of course, Chacha, Chacha, etc. The grand-children as well as the sons and daughters-in-law address the family patriarch as 'Baoji' or 'Dadaji'. The daughters-in-law address their mother-in-law as 'Maaji'. The suffix 'ji' is the marker of respect. It is also attached while addressing the elder brother as 'Bhaiji', similarly 'Chachaji, Chachiji', etc. The sons and daughters also address the father as 'Pitaji' and mother as 'Maaji'. This suffix 'ji' may also be attached to the verbs showing respect to the person addressed, even the respected stranger, for example, 'aaiyeji' (please come), 'lijiyeji' (please take), etc. In the Indian social set-up, the servants of the household also attaché this 'ji' to the nouns while addressing the members of the house, for example, 'Babuji', 'Master-ji' 'Bhaiji', etc. When the servants talk to the man in the authority, they may simply say 'ji' for 'yes' meaning he will obey what is told. In the Indian family there is thus a cline of address terms, the use of which is strictly observed to avoid awkwardness or scolding. The fiction of Manju Kapur presents society in the North of India where this protocol is strictly observed. And the observance of these terms of respect becomes necessary to maintain relationship avoiding any complication. In the fiction

of Manju kapur we get very good illustration of this as she presents mostly the joint families in the northern belt of India.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the authorities of Institute of Advanced Studies in English who encouraged me to carry out this research paper. Secondly I heartily thank to my colleagues for their consistent motivation to get this paper successfully completed. My sincere thanks go to my family members for their backing to accomplish this research paper.

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