

Is English Still a Colonial Legacy in India! A Study

Namrata Kumari

Research Scholar (English), B.R.A.B.U Muzaffarpur, (Bihar) India

Abstract

Decolonisation is a political process which the world experienced in the 20th century. From a historian's perspective, decolonisation was one of the most important developments that have a huge impact on the Indian writings in English. Now the aim of English studies in India does not remain merely to develop aesthetic sense and the creative and critical faculty of the students. In this globalised world English has no longer remained a colonial language but a language which various countries and people are using for communicative and commercial purposes. Today English studies do not merely mean the study of the texts written by British and American authors. Many writers from Africa and Asian countries enriched English literature through their writings. Their works have become very popular in their countries due to their proximity with the cultural ethos of the native population. In spite of the textual studies of the British and Americans, students failed miserably in acquiring proficiency in the use of English. The thrust was on teaching of content and not on the learning of the language. In order to decolonise English studies and to make it learner friendly, the need is felt to introduce Indian writers writing in English whose works represent the native Indian experience and ethos. The Indian English Writers not only produced many readable plays, poems, novels and stories but also contributed to the emergence and growth of Indian English. Their literary and linguistic contributions have produced native Indian colours to English language and writings

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The emergence of English as a global phenomenon as either a first, second or foreign language has recently inspired the idea that we should talk not of English, but of many English, especially in Third world countries where the use of English is no longer part of the colonial legacy, but the result of decisions made since independence. But what kind of English is it? That is a new and hotly contested debate which needs to be explored fully. The future, of course, is unpredictable, but one thing is certain the present flux of English multi-national

standard a international Babal?...It is part of a process that goes back to Shakespeare and beyond;. The truly significant development, which has occurred only in the last one hundred years as so, is the use of English, taking the most conservative estimates, by three or four hundred million people for whom it is not native language. English has become a second language in countries like India, Nigeria or Singapore where it is a vital alternative language, often unifying huge territories and diverse populations. We cannot ignore the two centuries of the

presence of English in India, and if it had been the language of colonial domination, it had also been language of anti- colonial resistance. Our national leaders including Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had employed it in the service of the freedom struggle arousing the nation to fight the Empire. We may also remember that it was our own decision to retain English as a link language and a language of intellectual, emotional and imaginative articulation, and the state language in some of the North-Eastern states even after the British had left the country. Salman Rushdie's *Aurora Zogoiby* (Moor's last Sigh) was not far wrong when he said, "Only English brings us together".

More importantly, English is getting absorbed into Indian languages and also enriching itself by assimilating them in turn. Several English words have merged indistinguishably with Indian languages that have not even bothered to find indigenous equivalents for them; words like school, desk, bench, book, party, machine, factory, computer and all its parts, wine, soap, box, trunk, stock, share, godown and classes in the country. English has acquired new structures and tonalities in India in the process of adopting it to native use. At a time when we ceased to speak Queen's English and speak instead of many Englishes, we need no longer be apologetic about Marathi/ Gujarati/Bengali/ Tamilian English that carry the tonalities and inflections of these mother tongues. When Vikram Seth's novel, "A Suitable Boy" was translated by Gopal Gandhi into Hindi as "Ek Achchasa Ladka", the author saw it as an act of retrieval since the cultural control or subtext of the original really belonged to

the Hindi milieu and some extracts from poems and songs were restored to their originals.

We may briefly examine the ways in which English is being indigenized by Indian writers. From 1960 onwards, a distinct Indian English idiom has been taking shape in poetry. The new poets abandoned the high rhetorical flourishes and colorful over statements of their predecessors like Sarojini Naidu and Toru Dutt. Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Adil Jussawalla, A.K. Ramanujan, Jayanta Mahapatra and Arun Kolatkar helped this nativisation in various ways. In his *Rough Passage*, R. Partha Sarathy wondered:

How long can foreign Poets provide the staple of your lines?

Turn inward, scrape the bottom of your past.

A.K. Ramanujan began searching for his Tamil and Kannada roots and translating the saint poetry of both the languages at the same time. He declared:

I must seek and will find my particular hell only in the Hindi mind.(Conventions of Despair)

Ezekiel employed colloquial speech rhythms and conventional tones in poems like 'The professor' 'Hangover' and ' Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa' to recreate Indian characters in their natural situations. We may cite some lines from 'hangover':

No Indian whisky Sir all imported this is Taj.

Yes sir Soda is Indian sir.

Midnight.

Taxi strike. George Fernandez.....

Haly the day lazy with the previous night.

Several Indian words and expressions like goonda, guru, mantra, ashram bhikshuks, chapati, pan, burkha, Indiraben, Rama Rajya etc. keep appearing in Ezekiel's poems. Jayanta Mahapatra is Indian by his closeness to Oriya reality, and Kamala Das revolts against the linguistic fundamentalism of his native place:

.....The language I speak

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses.

All mine, mine alone. It is half- English, Half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest, if is as human as I am human, don't you see?.....(An Introduction)

Similarly Arun Kolatkar's poems like Jejuri, Sarpa Satra and the poems in the Kala Ghoda poems are Indian in respect of myth, tone and diction. Rukmini Bhaye Nair's poetry is not only deeply Indian in the ways its contents social and individual experience, but in the use of certain forms borrowed from Sanskrit like Stuti hymn too as in her Ayodhya Cantos.

Many Indian writes in English experiment with diction, literally translating idioms, or with syntax, transforming the structure of the sentence. The literal translations can be seen mostly in Mulk Raj Anand. Look at some examples: 'Your own calf's teeth seem golden' (The Road , 24), 'A goat in hand is better than a buffalo in the distance' (The road, 22) and 'The camels are being swept away the ants say, they float', (The Big Heart 206). Khushwant Singh also has a similar flavor to his English; Sardar Saheb, you are a big man and we are but small radishes from an unknown garden' (I shall

not hear the Nightingales). Bhabani Bhattacharya translates a Bengali Saying: 'When an ant grows wings and starts flying in the air, it is not far from its doom' (A Goddess Named Gold). There are also expressions in him like 'childing', 'Wifeling', 'starveling', 'villagefuls of falk', 'joy- moments', 'picture-play' etc. Sometimes, typical Indian expressions are directly used by Mulk Raj Anand 'angrez-lag', 'Yar', 'burburred in his sleep', 'sisking with cald', 'thak- thakking at a cauldron'; sometimes the spelling indicating Indian tone, 'yus' (Yes), 'notus' (notice), 'Amrika' (America) or 'Girmanya' (Germony). Arundhati Roy in her 'God of of small Things' uses malayalam words directly, at times mixed with English words: 'Poda, pattee', 'Valare thanks', 'Thanks Ketto', 'Naley', 'Chacko Saar Vannu', 'Veluthel Widay! Veluthe', 'Paravan; Pulayen'. She uses Malayalam words like there in English Script and does not care to give a glossary. Her descriptions invoke typical Ayemenem landscapes through their use of pepper vines tapioca etc.

Raja Rao uses Kannada figures of speech unobtrusively: 'Postman Subbayya, who had no fire in his stomach and was red with red and blue with blue' (Kanthapura 154), 'You are a Bhatta and your voice is not a sparrow voice in your village and you should speak with your people and organize a Brahmin party. Otherwise, Brahminism is as good as kitchen ashes' In Salman Rushdie, English is in dialogue with India languages, and this is especially so in *Midnight's children*, his best work so far. Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August* also at times uses a mixed language a typical marriage of Urdu and American slang. Amitav Ghosh has used

multi-lingualism most effectively in his *Sea of Poppies*. In the *Sea of Poppies* he uses the tonal music of Bhojpuri, the language of its woman protagonist, very effectively and even brings in Bhojpuri folk songs. Indian writers celebrate India's linguistic diversity and take over the English language to meet the demands of the Indian Context. English thus becomes part of the polyphony and its colonial authority is relativised when it enters the complexity it describes.

Multilingualism is a natural way of life for hundreds of millions all over the world; and multilingualism manifests itself in many ways. There are many situations that force people to take the help of more than one language for proper communication. Sometimes political decisions cause annexation, resettlement, military acts that can have immediate linguistic effect. Some people desirous to identify with a particular ethnic culture or social group usually communicate in more than one languages and also facilitate the learners to which a mix the codes. Economic reasons do also sometimes contribute to code - switching and code-mixing. In sociolinguistics code is used as a natural label for any system of communication involving language. The linguistic behavior referred to as code-switching is seen in bilingual speakers between standard and regional form of English or between English and occupational and domestic varieties. Code-switching involves the transfer of linguistic elements from one language to another; a sentence began in one language, then makes use of words a grammatical features belonging to another. Such mixed forms of language are often labeled with hybrid same such as Spanglish, Franglais, Singlish,

Hinglish etc. Code – mixing and code-switching in Indian context can be labelled as Hindlish and Hinglish. When a speaker starts speaking in English with Hindi clauses concluding lines, this strategy is known as code- switching. For example 'Take a loaf of bread with dochumach of chini ormalai'.

When a speaker speaks English, including Hindi words to his sentence this linguistic style is known as code- mixing. For example, Oh, I don't like this 'mandal and kamandal' 'Lota- dari policy of Bihar government'.

This type of communication is possible only when the person who wants it communicate his message and the person who is to receive the message are bilinguals. For example – one speaker was spoken in English in a meeting which was attended by people who could understand both Hindi and English. The speaker was speaking on the arrangements to be made for the successful conduct the meeting of the senate. He said, 'we have to make such arrangements so that kipurindebhi par namar sake'. And the message was received by the people well.

Now-a- days pure, standard form of English is Sodom word. There was a time when Language change, either by code- mixing or by pidginisation a creolization, was considered to be correct and the scholars at that time put stress on purification and codification of language. In the eighteenth century writers like Swift and Dr. Johnson vehemently opposed the idea of language change. In *Dictionary of the English Language*, Dr. Johnson considered all linguistic change 'an evil'. In the preface to his *Dictionary* he stated.

‘Tongues (i.e. language), like government, have a natural tendency to degenerate, we have long preserved over constitution, let us make some struggles for one language’.

Not only in English but also in Schendl6 America, Benjamin Franklin believed that with the degeneration in language society also degenerate. In India language is being mixed up by regional, professional and funky codes that are media- triggered. Mrinal Pandey, editor, Hindustan once observed, the change in Hindi market. Code- switching and code- mixing becomes a natural habit of those who live in a society where many languages are spoken. Code-switching can take place at various points in an utterance between sentence, clauses, phrases and words. It is governed by different bilingual community but although the norms differ, and although the reasons for the switch are diverse, there is some evidence that the switching itself is guided by a number of constraints imposed by difference structure between the languages involved. Among the most interesting case of this sort of code- switching are those in which a speaker mixes distinct, mutually unintelligible, language in a situation that often arises in bilingual areas such as Patna in Bihar.

‘bhaikhanakhao and let us go’ (Bright, 185) we can contrast these cases of code-switching with that of borrowing. When speakers of one language borrow words from another language, the foreign words come to be used as regular vocabulary. For example, when a speaker of English says, ‘they have a great deal of Savoir-faire’ (Akajianri 29). We may know that the term savoir- faire was originally borrowed word from French. Similarly it a Hindi speaker

speaks ‘suo motto aapdoshihain’ or ‘ yah niyem to ultra virus ho gaya’.

Code switching can be classified into four major types-

- (i) Tag- switching- in question tags certain set phrases in one language are inserted into an utterance. It’s nice day, hana? (isn’t it)
- (ii) Intrasentential switching- switches occur within a clause or sentence boundary-
- (iii) Intersentential switching- A change of language occurs at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is one language-sometimes I am so yed up kibahutgussaaatahai.
- (iv) Intra – word switching – A change occurs within a boundary, such as fallen (plural of file)

Womania (derogatory of women)

In Bihar the cases of code- mixing and code-switching are very interesting as there are many languages like Bhojpuri, Magahi, Angika, Vajjikaetc, for typical situation.

Aaj morning mein death karkaye.
Sabse best budget hai.

There was a time when Bihari’s were notorious for atrocious gender sense and shoddy pronunciation but the same traits have become the special flavor of their conversation.

The big question before the promoters of English education is whether English will remain solely as a facilitator of the globalization process or aim at doing something more than that. It is widely accepted that these is no one English now, but a variety of English, emerging from

different corners of the words. One has to look at the monumental Handbook of world English's (2006), edited jointly by Braj Kachru, Yamuna Kachru and Cecil Nelson, to see the global panorama of English's in their amazing verity. English vocabulary at the moment is the most eclectic, and English speech more latitudinarian, than only. Ram Mohammad. Thomas's fettering feeling about his acquisition of 'Queen's English' from father Timothy in Vikas Swarup's Slum dog Millionaire (2006) is only the delusion of 'a slum dog'. There is not any Pedagogic Strategies are more versatile today than ever. We may look at the African and Caribbean encounters with English. They have fought the hegemony it with the tones, timbres, rhythms and expressions of native speech as has been done by Derek Walcott or samselvon. There are writers like Ngugi who have chose to shift their creative writing into their own languages and persuaded other it write in pidgins, creoles and other dialects of English rather than Standard English. Zumunya of Zimbabwe too admits that English can be stifling and inflexible while translating from shone his mother tongue. In his own words, we only render the meaning, but not the feeling; the feeling is lost the feeling; Gabriel okara, the Nigerian Poet, also Speaks of the

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untranslatability of Ijo experiences. Poets like Christophesokigbo, okot p Bitek, kofi Awoonar and Dennis Brutus bring in their writing the qualities of oral poetry, thus collapsing orature with scripture. China Achalse considers English richer than his language, Igbo, though his expression is also impacted by native speech. G.V. Dasani in India had allowed the intrusion of Sanskrit compounding in Al about H. Hatters.

While we ought to resist the cultural imperialism of English that might promote the enfeebling of other languages, and the erasure of language writing, we may also well remember that English itself has been used as a tool for subversion as in Derek Walcott's Dream of the Markey Mountain that invests Shakespeare's Tempest and tries Shakespeare for crimes against humanity , in Aime Cesaire's line tempera queen's English or in J.M. Coetzee's Robinson Crusoc into its protagonist, Empowered by the knowledge of the master's language. Let us not forget that every language carries in its armory tools of introspection and weapons of self subversion like satire, irony, parody and structural inversion all of which it can turn upon itself.