

## 6. Re-discovering English as an Oriental weapon in post independent India: Chutneyfication of the western tongue through textual and verbal discourses

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**ABSTRACT:** In the contemporary era, English language performs a crucial role in global transformation and exchange. Diversification and modification of the language has not only diminished the age-old occidental/oriental dichotomies but has caused a complete erasure of the cartographical divisions of nation-state across the world. This language through a continuous process of colonial and marketing exchanges has become the primary source of universal contact. The acceptance and impact of English varies from nation to nation. English may have been introduced as a formal communicative procedure in Europe, but in the continents of Africa, Asia, America or Australia the language was introduced as a powerful colonial discourse and it is still flourishing as a neo-imperialistic discourse in several countries. This paper highlights the function of English in post-independent India, imploring the gradual transcendence of the language from mere colonialism to globalism. The language has been re-explored and re-discovered as an anti-colonial weapon to escape from the colonial shadow and establish universally distinct language identity. Most fascinating aspect about India is that English has been mimicked and molded on the basis of distinctive language communities spread across different states. Indianized version of English is not a centrally complete concept, but exists through its regional differences. Shedding its capitalist and colonialist identity, today English has emerged as a successful anti-colonial weapon in India to encounter all forms of imperialism or neo-imperialism.

**Keywords:** global transformation, diversification, occidental, oriental, imperialism, neo-imperialism

## FULL TEXT

Languages, in the oral or written form, are not a pure unilateral phenomenon. It evolved and developed through a multi-layered process of accepting, rejecting and blending various national and multinational dialects through multilateral, dialogic exchanges. Universally it performs both the role of unification and disintegration. During the pre-colonial times, especially in the various countries of Asia and Africa, all forms of socio-cultural and traditional aspects were communicated orally in the respective native languages. The 14<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance Movement revolutionized every aspects of human existence and encouraged the various European nations to explore beyond the boundaries of their continent. With the objective aim of universalizing the fruits of renaissance, various European nations started conducting voyages to discover new lands across the world. Through these exploratory voyages, they secretly penetrated deep into the un-invaded lands of Asia and Africa and imperializing them through political and technological power. The aspect of political power involves multiple fields of discussion and debates. Discourse performs crucial psychological functions of modulating the psyche of individuals within specific political frameworks. Politics or specifically discussing about colonial politics is more a verbal than a physical game. The process of winning and losing the faith of the common mass occurs through the verbal manipulations conducted by the political institutions. The Europeans very cunningly identified the basic laxity of modern socio-cultural, political and technological advancements in these continents. They invaded the continents, meticulously investigating the individual situations and then framing out their capitalist plans to colonize the people through false assurances. In the colonization process, English language immensely contributed towards establishing totalitarian control. Through the violation of people's rights and forceful implications of Eurocentric ideologies, the indigenous socio-political elements were absolutely destroyed. The medium of destruction and colonization was English.

During India's colonial period, English underwent a major transformation from a mere communicative language into a powerful imperial institute deciding the existence of the individuals. It permeated into every social, cultural, political, religious and traditional issues of the nation throwing them into complete oblivion. Before shifting into the language of the guns and barrels the Britishers used their mother tongue to monopolize their politics and trade in India. Colonial politics was not limited within the cocoon of governmental issues, but it scattered all over. Besides culture and politics the literature of the country was drastically affected. The distinct language boundaries and the creative uniqueness suffered

a huge setback with the introduction of English as an all-pervading *grandnarrative*. The individual creative impulses of the authors belonging to different cultural and linguistic backgrounds lost their freedom of expression and exploration. They were psychologically colonized by defining their performance within a specific language framework. Thus art and culture succumbed to the heavy burden of language chains induced by colonization. The infusion of western cultural norms in India caused major social fragmentations. On the basis of language the entire nation bifurcated in two major groups: English speakers and indigenous language speakers. This division basically occurred during the *Bengal Renaissance Movement* that started in nineteenth and early twentieth century in different parts of Bengal and later on it scattered to different parts of India. Purely socio-cultural and religious in nature, the renaissance influenced the Indian elitists to adopt and explore the western tongue. They firmly believed that the various indigenous language variants are centrally responsible for preserving the Indian traditional orthodoxies. So they opted for an alien language, to encounter and transform the entire society with modern ideas. During the British rule a major section of the Indian elite class cherished their western identity and preferred English over their respective mother tongues. The politics and discrepancies caused by the language among individuals further aggravated the class differences making it further easier for the colonizers to assert their control. The Indian literary circle was flooded with western authors. Due to insufficient literacy it could only capture the interest of limited number of people further endangering the diverse forms of the national literature.

Every fields of education like philosophy, sociology, history, literature has been captivated by the western language. The entire process of communication and exchanges were institutionalized by English and the common people were unable to realize this basic flaw. Innumerable political organizations were formed and several anti-colonial movements were conducted to defend and evacuate the colonizers. But despite achieving political freedom, the shadow of the colonial language continues to haunt India. In the pre-independent days, the Oriental world's culture, literature and languages were interpreted from a totalitarian Eurocentric perspective. According to theorist Edward Said:

Michelet Ranke, Tocqueville, Burckhardt and others implanted assiduously certain stereotypes about Orient over centuries to shape the Oriental history, character and destiny. With time the quantity and character of the work increased and Orientalism became an imperial institution. So from Dante and Aeschylus emerge more scholarly beings like de Lessaps, Balfour and Cromer. Orientalism became more active. Its proliferation is

amazing with scientific character of its philological, dramaturgical, archaeological and anthropological explorations producing remarkable men and works. Orientalism overrode the Orient. The caricatures of the camel-riding, hook-nosed Arabs and bumbling blustering ignorant Hindoo originated long time back to denigrate the East. Its explanations and treatment of particularities grew into generalities, so that the way an Arab was presented came to represent all the Arabs or the entire Arab world. In this manner Orientalism became an unchanging discourse.

### ***(Crisis in Orientalism)***

Authors like Walter Scott, Benjamin Disraeli or Edwin Muir generalized India's traditional orthodoxies through their literary creations in English. Being a universal communicative language it was easily successful to suppress the truly diversified, rich multicultural Indian voices. This motivated the Indians to chalk out alternative strategies to resist colonial discourse in the language of the colonizer. In relation to this approach, Edward Said uses two terms to define this: Strategic location and Strategic formation. 'Strategy' is a crucial word in the anti-colonial and post-colonial concepts. According to Edward Said:

Strategy indicates that an Orientalist is perennially busy in devising means how to continue to hold onto his position of privileged white author, how not get overwhelmed and defeated by the material he is handling---its scope, its sublimity and its awful dimensions.

### ***(Introduction to Orientalism)***

The colonial regime saw the growing interest amongst the European authors and thinkers to research and interpret various classical and traditional texts of India. Initially it appeared to be a positive approach as India secured a definite identity in the universal socio-cultural platform. But it couldn't escape the limitations of Eurocentric chauvinism. It was soon identified as an imperial or later a neo-imperial strategy to ensure their psychological domination over India through discourses. In the post-colonial era, India chalked out a counter language strategy to challenge the western modes of interpretation of India. *Mimicry* was discovered as an essentially powerful weapon to confront language colonialism. In his concept of *mimicry* Homi K. Bhabha analyses the fractured nature of the colonial situation. The colonial power enforces the native to adopt and internalize the culture and habits of the colonial master. The entire colonial mission is to transform the native into 'one like us,' a copy of the colonizer. Bhabha analyses the element of *mimicry* as a highly appreciative strategy:

Mimicry is a defense, fraught with the resistance of the native. The native is in a position to return the gaze of the colonial master, since he is now camouflaged. A reversal has been achieved through the mimicry of the colonizer by the colonized. Mimicry is now active resistance; it achieves something other than the purpose intended by the colonizer. On one hand, the colonial power tries to recast the native as one of themselves, and on the other tries to remember and reiterate the irreducible difference of the other. Thus colonial discourse is fractured and mimicry produces a distorted image of the colonial master.

### **(Nation and Narration)**

Besides reviving the ancient classical and traditional texts which were submerged under the heavy colonial burden, Indian authors engaged themselves in the daunting task of re-investigation and re-establishing the texts in English. This not only enabled them to break the western misconceptions on India, but also exposed the ambivalence of the European texts whether original or translated. English language as a *grand-narrative* was deconstructed and broken into different *micro-narratives* through various regional modifications. The post-independent Indian writers like Mulk Raj Anand or R.K. Narayan blended and juxtaposed original English words with local dialects. It developed a unique Indian version of English with local variations. Analyzing the diction of the post-independent Indian novels, often native Hindi words like *mai* (mother), *bahin* (sister) or *babuji* (father) are used along with the established English words to create a strong indigenous essence. In the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, several hindi phrases like *dal mein kuch kala hain* are translated objectively as 'something black in the pulses' and used liberally without following any norms and regulations of the universal language structure. The problem of language hierarchies developed regarding the usage of multiple versions of English whether textually or orally. Initially Hindi enjoyed a high privilege, but with the passage of time other language groups started producing significant works in English promoting their respective linguistic features through it. Gradually, the Indian literary creations in English attained a global shape seeking universal attention. This alternative way of using amalgamated version of English not only functioned as a necessary weapon to encounter the western narrative, but also enhanced the cultural unity of India. The development and production of English from various language backgrounds has brought native literary creations close to each other erasing all the language boundaries. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the fluidity of intra-communication has attained massive heights. The contemporary writers freely use indigenous words beyond their mother tongue making the text much more complete and compact.

Today, Indian English has progressed far beyond its singular language identity. It represents and upholds the social, cultural, geographic and linguistic diversities of our nation. This multiple dialectical identity, has relaxed the attitude of the people towards the language. Controversial novelist, Salman Rushdie, term this mixing phenomenon as *chutneyfication*. The term was coined and used in the historical context but time has re-contextualized it through language. All forms of oral and textual linearity of English usage has been broken, crumbled and *chutneyfied* confiding with postmodern fragmentation. Thus, contemporary English in India has evolved and underwent massive transgeneration over time. The regional variants of English have self-deconstructed itself from a mere colonial tongue and have emerged as the major institute of promoting universal unity and brotherhood.

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