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THE CHUTNIFICATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Abstract

The legacy of English language has taken India to global heights in world economy and has brought laurels to the brilliance of the Indian genius which is dominating every aspect of the global hurricane of economic liberalization, westernization and the proliferation of new information technologies. While the English language has largely contributed to India's new international status the reversal in the fortunes of the language too is witnessed by the country. Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children", a post-colonial novel has attracted the attention of many critics for its remarkable use of language and the blending of history and story. The writer's use of the expression "Chutnification" epitomizes his use of language in the novel. He has created a language of his own that transcends any English that has been spiced with Indian words and expressions. Since then the plethora of writers adopted this in their works contributing in Indianisation of the English language. Besides, this is widely accepted in day to day conversation.

Keywords: chutnification, transcends, Indianisation, accepted

Chutnification the word viral nowadays has the quality to attract the attention of the readers. Also to arouse few questions- how was this formed? How this did made a place in literature? Etc. It is acknowledged that the revolutionary changes brought western influences in Indian society and its writers. Due to this India was introduced to liberal thoughts, ideologies and world philosophy. Though, a group of fiction writers chose a language that was not their own to express their feelings; not to imitate but to compete with the rest of the world. They wanted to bring revolution in the country through their writings. That is to uplift the Indians, their morals and their attitudes. Infact they chose the English language to communicate with the outside world and achieve self-expression in an Indian way. Infact, all fiction writers whether R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, K.A. Abbas, Bhabani Bhattacharya etc conscientiously experimented with English language, gave it a peculiarly Indian tone and colour by drawing on the resources of the Indian languages and infusing their

essence into normal literary English.

Historically, the English language was introduced in our country with the advent of British. This language came in contact with indigenous people who reluctantly accepted it with local adaptations and additions. This new code which is no one's mother tongue and contains elements from numerous languages is called 'Pidgin' and the process by which it happens is called 'Pidginisation'. Being the only language of communication among a diverse group of people, the frequency of its use slowly increased as does the number of its speakers. Now, pidgin no longer remain confined to work place, it became the language of personal and informal interaction. It then passes on to the newer generation who learn the pidgin as their mother-tongue. A functional switch of language takes place and when this happen a pidgin becomes a 'Creole'. The process of 'Creolisation' is the reverse of the process of pidginisation.

The first major fiction writer to experiment with English language for writing fiction was Mulk Raj Anand with his novel 'Untouchable'. Then came Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, K.A. Abbas, Bhabani Bhattacharya etc. What Anand did was to experiment with the diction, dialogue and the syntax of English spoken by his characters. While Anand and Rao did it more obtrusively; Narayan and Abbas too bends the English language but very cleverly in their own way. What is common among all these fiction writers is that they use this language to convey a small geographical area or regional reality. Hence, these writers have deftly used Indian imagery, art, thought and style in their works and have successfully captured the rhythm of the vernacular in English. The language is completely decolonised and is given national colour. In order to create the impression of the country artistically they choose Indian setting and subject matter and successfully use appropriate language and imagery.

Moreover, Salman Rushdie, one of the most articulate Diaspora writers of global fame, has spoken about his aesthetics at such diverse length. He observes that his predecessors have colonised and re-fashioned English in a way that had de-colonised the English language they have inherited from the British, and so does he. Entering the scene of Indian English novel with his 'Midnight's Children', a book not about any one region but the whole sub continent, Rushdie uses English as a pan-Indian language and not as a regional language. Further, he uses many Hindi words without italicizing them. Thus, his fame tempered with Indian terms, writing in Pidgin and signalled a new term in writing that came to be known as 'Chutnification'. "Chutney" is a tangy India dish, adding flavour to the main course of any

meal. “Chutney” is a noun form and is understood as such in English. By adding “-fication”, Rushdie changes an Indian word into an English one to stand for transformation. Therefore “Chutnification” in the novel means transformation of English having an additional connotation of making the language used in the novel tangy and more flavoursome and exciting. He opened the doors to plethora of writers. And since 1981, when the Booker of the Bookers Book came out, Chutnification has gone viral with many Indian writers.

‘Chutnification’ of English is the new ‘mantra’ of the day. Globalization has made the English language geographically and culturally proximate. Today, more and more vernacular and regional words are being incorporated into the English language. This is primarily so as the number of non native speakers of the English language far outnumber the native speakers. By way of general information, every year new edition of the renowned Oxford dictionary gets apprehended by a new list of words of Indian origin. Among roughly 359,000 words and phrases in the Oxford dictionary, about 700 words find their roots in some of the most ancient and notable Indian languages like Sanskrit, Hindi and Tamil. To cite few examples: ‘masala’(a variety mix of spices), ‘dhaba’(open highway side eatery), ‘hawala’(illegal currency exchange), ‘bhajan’(a devotional song) etc. The most famous word of Indian origin today could indisputably be ‘Yoga’, owing to the global interest in this ancient art form. Literally, the word in Sanskrit means, “seamless integration of the mind, body and spirit”, the word has both literally and metamorphically affected tremendous integration in the global context. The word ‘Guru’ used in phrases like “language guru” or “get the Guru’s blessings” and the word ‘Dharma’ are used widely. A man’s ‘deeds’ is chutnified and its usage in its Indian equivalent is found in colloquial English. Words like ‘curry’ and ‘chutney’, ‘bungalow’ from ‘bungla’ and ‘pyjamas’ are all words of Indian origin that have Indianised the English language of the British.

Besides Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Kiran Desai and many Diaspora writers have contributed significantly to the ‘chutnification’ of language, but unfortunately for the western audience, they could do better by providing a glossary of the ‘chutnified’ words. Though sometimes, this becomes irksome. If we take “**Sacred Games**” of Vikram Chandra, set largely in modern Mumbai, it is assessed that the writer used the rawest Hindi slang, thereby attempting an Indianisation of the language. It works powerfully for Indian reader but full of hurdles to a native English speaker. Often such variants that are deviant forms of a language serve as impediments to understanding. Also, the ‘chutnification’ of the English language by common person leads to difficulty in digestion by native speakers. For

instance, the housemaid freely intersperses her vernacular communication with English words like: “Madam badi ‘fast’ gadi ‘drive’ kar rahi hai!!” Such Indianisms abound in plenty both in the colloquial and the written forms. A very common usage in India is of the generalised question tag: isn’t it? Repeating a word for emphasis: take,take;put,put;It was a small small box. However, more ‘chutnification’ is evident in words which are coined by joining a component each from English and Hindi as in ‘grameen bank’(village bank), ‘lathi charge’(a charge using lathis), ‘policewala’(a policeman), ‘coconut paysam’(a sweet made of coconut) etc. The list of Indian idioms can be endless, but some that strikes my mind are: ‘to sit on someone’s neck’ (to watch that person carefully) and ‘to stand on someone’s head’ (supervise that person carefully).

Thus, it is important for any language to have organic growth and constantly adapt itself. And the English language exhibits a flexibility to evolve and expand. Moreover, as Indians one feels both pride and happiness about the fact that India is the only country that seems to have added the spice and colour to the literary part of a dictionary. Rather, one can say that ‘chutnification’ extends the English language to create a new one which holds tremendous possibilities for the future.

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