



LINGUISTIC ASPECT IN POST-COLONIAL WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Since Adam and Eve stepped on the Earth, it is language that played a vital role in shaping human civilizations through different ages. It is the means through which both the rulers and ruled, colonizers and colonized try to make their relevance in the changing world especially in post-colonial era. In this era writers from former colonies have made the colonizers language a tool for the sustenance of the native cum social practices. The English language being the language of once most powerful colonizer has now a days become a means of thought processes of the world intellectuals. Being internationally acknowledged, it has built a broad vision and scope for the interpretation of the meanings, ideas, and the concepts related to them. Therefore, writers like Salman Rusdie, Raja Rao as well as native speakers began to experiment with the English language to make it suitable for local needs.

KEYWORDS : human civilizations , English language , political governance.

INTRODUCTION :

Though post-colonial theory deals with causes and consequences of colonial invasion for political governance, it includes the invasion of culture, religion, economy, etc. whether it is creation of knowledge or distortion of any culture, language plays an important role of a motivating weapon in the hands of colonizer. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th edition, defines post-colonialism (postcolonialism) as, "of relating to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony and post colony." Its adjectival form is post-colonial.

Language plays an important role for foundation of the different races and civilizations. It is power of language in the hands of post colonial writers that makes the colonizer's language a tool for the survival of the native cultural cum social practices. This linguistic exercise helps the suppressed people to appropriate their position in the times of cultural relativism and foreign ethnic aggression. The initial steps of native cultural assertion have been observed from the African Continent where the colonizer has deeply subjugated mind of the colonized.

Aime David Cesaire, an African post colonial writer, boosts the suppressed African race. He, in an interview, "The Liberating Power of Words: An interview with poet Aime D. Cesaire." talks with Thebia Melson, a UNESCO courier, who asks him about the effective power of his poem, (*Cashier d'um retour au pays natal, 1939*) regarding the reconstruction of the fragmented society of Africa. Cesaire says: Disinterring memories, all that was buried, bringing it back, presenting it so that it bursts forth fully formed up on the world - I think this sends an important signal. To express not suppress, the force of one's reaction, to wield, reinvigorating words as a miraculous weapon against the silenced world, freeing it from gags that are often imposed from within ("The Liberating Power of Words").

Although a well-known post colonial writer, Franz Omar Fanon emphasized much on speaking native language, he suggests the future native writers to adapt the foreign language to boost native environment. He suggests in his works that if one speaks French, he or she accepts their culture, because culture is inherent in practices of language. Fanon studied the practice of using language for empowerment of the subject communities. Our language is the make-up of our personality; our identities, values, ethics, aesthetics and other ideals are comprehensible and communicative through native language. Fanon in the conclusion of his essay, "On National Culture" writes about different steps in post-colonialism for encountering with the colonizer. He discussed in this essay that native intellectuals first make sure to rewrite the distorted history of colonized. According to Fanon, the final phase of postcoloniality is called fighting phase. He writes about this as, "During this phase a great many men and women, who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work . . . feel the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentences which expresses the heart of the people and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action (Dennis Walder 1990 271)."

This all has been done as per the multiple efforts in the field of knowledge, politics, aesthetics etc. to construct as discourse. The word *discourse*, as verb means to speak or write authoritatively. As a literary concept, it refers to a body of knowledge that is strategic and may be partial to constitute certain values. With the help of this, they set behaviours for people in the colonized or post-colonized societies and define people on the basis of these values. His concept of discourse leads to the existence of Said's concept of Orientalism. In their book, Ashcroft et al discuss and quote Foucault in this context as, 'To speak of post-colonial discourse in Foucault's or Said's sense, then, is to invoke certain ways of thinking about language, about truth, about power, and about the interrelationships between all three' (165). There emerge the indigenous theories in the English writings and incorporation of elements of nativity into post-colonial texts. One of the landmarks in Indian English fiction was recorded when a famous writer, Raja Rao came up with his assertive literary practices. Raja Rao was born in Karnataka in 1908, worked as a Professor at University of Texas from 1966 to 1980. His contribution is great to Indian English writings. Rao is of immense importance in the post-colonial Indian English fiction. In preface to his first novel *Kanthapura* (1938), he gives a new field to explore by adapting a new style of writing in the English language. He presents Indian style by nativizing the English syntax, semantics and other structural aspects of novel writings. By projecting Indian words, scenes, myths and legends, he suggests replacing the Western notions of writing and gives it an indigenous touch. *Kanthapura* is set in 1920s and 1930s. In its preface, he writes: 'One has to convey in a language that is not one's own, the spirit that is one's own. English is really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make up - like Sanskrit and Persian was before - but not of our emotional make up. . . .' With this, he enforces the post-colonial consciousness that leads to the assertion and determination of colonized's nationalised culture. He also puts some strategies for the adaptation and modification of foreign language to make it suitable for the native culture.

Post-colonial theory treats knowledge as a tool to conquer and control others. Knowledge, according to Foucault, is basically never impartial and unintentional, but there are set objectives behind it. Post-colonialism has emerged with certain tools or strategies that help critics and writers to reclaim and reconstruct certain values and ideals in societies that were once colonized. Bill Ashcroft et al write as:

Marginality is the condition constructed by posited relation to a privileged center, an 'Othering' directed by the imperial authority. But the abrogation of that center does not involve the construction of an alternative focus of subjectivity, a new 'center'. Rather the act of appropriation in the postcolonial text, issues in the embracing of that marginality as the fabric of social experience (103).

It is well known fact that language is the carrier of knowledge and culture. In today's world English language has become a means of thought processes of the world intellectuals. Being

internationally acknowledged, this language has built a broad vision and scope for the interpretation of the meanings, ideas, and the concepts related to them. Indian subcontinent, already composed of multiple cultures, became more mixed and multicultural after colonial encounter. Usually, in India, one grows with two or more languages from the childhood and develops almost equal competence in all of them. In the contemporary world, once colonized countries like India that were colonized by the English speaking empire, tried to adapt the colonizer's language to articulate local experiences.

DECOLONIZATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

To achieve this goal, writers used different tools for liberating their thinking process. This raised the need to re-interpret the literary canons. The foreign setting and narrative mode would not satisfy the reader to experience and adopt the ideas (mock-reality) embedded in the text. Therefore, writers as well as native speakers began to experiment with the English language to make it suitable for local needs. Salman Rushdie uses the technique of magic realism. This is a narrative that creates the flexible nature between fact and fiction; indicates to eerie and fantastic atmosphere in making of the mock-reality in the text. Here, the accepted reality is put to question. Rushdie uses this technique to distort and re-describe the provinces of knowledge. In the novel, it is through the telepathic power of midnight's children, especially of Saleem, that the author exercises the technique to mingle fact and fiction in an artistic manner.

The process of creolization is one of the linguistic phenomena that represent a hybridized form of languages in subject communities. This term emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during European colonial practices. The word *Creole* has descended from the Latin, *creare* means 'to produce, or to create'. The Creole language abundantly grew in coastal regions of America, Western Africa, Goa, and along the West coast of India. In the current times, almost every language has, somehow, gone through the stage of creolization. Professor Ayhan Kaya in a seminar "Analysis and Discussion of the Concept of Creolization" comments on the creole language as the mixed language of slaves and colonial masters, which has been constructed for a need of proper communication. Kaya writes: "Out of reduced form of dominating language and surviving elements of local indigeneous languages, a *lingua franca* evolved which was handed on from generation to generation and expanded to a Creole language, composed of 'African-derived grammar and European derived vocabulary' [qtd. from Mega Vaughan's *Creating the Creole Island*]" (Kaya 5).

Later 'the creole continuum' or the 'post-creole continuum' emerged as a linguistic project where 'decreolization' occurs, i.e. to approximate the creole to its parent language. It founded the base for alternative language against the language of the colonizer. Bill Ashcroft et al in *The Empire Writes Back*, discuss the creole-continuum as a post-colonial strategy in the cultures where different communities speak in different languages. They write about it, "Such a theory focuses on the variations generated in the habits of speakers rather than on a putative grammatical 'standard'" (44). Further in the concluding chapter, i.e. "More english than English" of their book, they opine the mixed culture of post-colonial societies and find it hardly possible to gain 'precolonial reality'. They discovered that the colonizer's language (the English) is divided into (i) English and (ii) english(s). If the first one is practice of language from the colonial perspective; the second one means the varied forms of innovative uses and victories over the first. This means that in previously colonized communities, the English language has been first adopted then approximated for the native's national and cultural consciousness. This exercise by writers contribute to the formation of various other dialects (englishs) of the English (parent language).

In the post-colonial societies, writers who undertake the process of decolonization must know their indigenous past in depth, so that they can assert their nativity effectively. Certainly, regaining and re-establishing the knowledge in literary, aesthetic, and philosophic fields is the immediate need in the

colonized communities. In the story-telling technique, writers give value to words for their native meanings and tendencies. These meanings and tendencies are transformed and reinforced through riddles, proverbs even, sometimes, by apparently illogical arrangement of words. The terminology on different occasions--parties, marriages, rituals and other celebrations--is used as tool to appropriate the English language.

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie has used the terminology that evokes the very essence of Indian culture. Generally, by culture we mean all the practices in our society, right from Scriptures (ethics) to celebrations and recreations. We find vocabulary in the text that, somehow, shows of the mixed culture of the country. In the novel, beginning with religion, we are told about Islam, about the sacred book of Muslims, i.e. the Quran and some Arabic words like '*ramzan*' for fasting month, '*Allah*' for God, etc. A practice in the Muslim community while giving divorce is highlighted when a character, Nadir Khan writes divorce to Mumtaz (Amina) as, "*Talaaq! Talaaq! Talaaq!* . . . I divorce thee, I divorce thee, I divorce thee" (78-79). This indicates the native ethics. When Amina reaches slum with Lifafa Das, she is surprised with bad conditions there. She expresses: *Allah-tobah* (105) that shows of typical Indian Muslim. When after the announcement of Gandhi's death, women expressed shock, they say, *Hai Ram, Hai Ram* (196), an expression for sorry state among Hindus. We come across a long series of Hindu gods and goddesses like--Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Ganesh, Hanuman, Parvati, Padma, etc. Saleem cites also to, "Brahmans' secret book , the Atharva veda" The references are also given to Christ, Christianity. These sacred structures of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity are referred to give the novel a shape of multi-religious India. The buzzword in Indian culture while exchanging greetings is *tick tock*. Methwold while referring to *Hindustani* greeting, once says to Ahmad Sinai, *Sabkuch Tick Tock* Another way of expressing respect in Indian culture is here as, " Hey *Maharaj!* ...Let me in great sir" (85). Instead of mummy and daddy, as is conventional in the English culture, Saleem calls his parents as, "I think *Ammi, Abboo*, I really think- . . . (227). These all expressions contribute to the reflection of Indian culture in the novel.

Further, a sort of pidgin is raised out of the approximation of the English language for Indian speakers of it. Rushdie has introduced some native ideas in this language by reshaping it. This is done by apparently illogical and unconventional structures in the language practices. Some illustrations from the novel are as: Naseem uses the word(s) 'Whatsitsname' numerous times in her speech. Saleem comments about it as, "I don't know how my grandmother came to adopt the term as whatsitsname as her leitmotif. . . . I like to think of it as an unconscious cry for help . . ." (49). Saleem once says, "Godknowswhatelse: I see no cracks" (83), and about 'Ravana Gang' he says, "Ravana . . . A gang of ne'er-do-wells" (92). Besides, Ahmad Sinai once addressing to people in Methwold Estate, says, "Ladies, ladahs"(136). And the words like 'cousinji,' 'motherji,' 'thees,' 'ees,' etc. are also used. These and other words and sentences in the novel are shown as influences from native vernaculars and constructions of Indian English.

Rushdie takes the multilingual and multicultural context of India into his literary exercise. He makes a frequent use of brackets '()' hyphen '-', ellipsis '...' and other grammatical elements. This helped him to make free use of words from other languages and dialects, and their translations. This provides him with the mixed nature of narration, suitable to his style of story-telling. He often uses words from different languages--Hindi, Urdu, Persian and Arabic--their translation, next to the original words. This is a skill of decolonizing the English language. He writes in his introduction to the novel about the influences and intentions of the type of language he has used:

Dickens for his great, rotting, Bombay-like city, and his ability to root his larger-than-life characters and surrealistic imagery in a sharply observed, almost hyper-realistic background, . . . I have probably said enough, too, about my interest in creating a literary idiolect that allowed the rhythms and thought patterns of Indian languages to blend with the idiosyncrasies of 'Hinglish' and 'Bombaiya', the polyglot street slang of Bombay. (xii)

As in India, the English language is considered as the most interacting interstate language, it has also been called as secular language of the country. Under these conditions, Rushdie uses the technique of heteroglossia, the dialogic interrelationships of different registers and dialects within the framework of any text. In the novel, Saleem Sinai, being the authorial voice, narrates an autobiographical tale that coincides with the making of the nation, India. Showing the polyglot competence, he goes through the journey of making of both individuality and nation. In early twentieth century, linguists like Leopold initially, researched code switching as a language shifting in multilingual Norwegian context. The characteristic of code switching (structural shift from one language to another) and code mixing (lexical shift from one language to another) is frequent in the novel. In code switching, there is use of many languages simultaneously in one's speech, there is, somehow, adherence to syntax and phonology of each variety. And in code-mixing, we find a process similar to the creation of pidgin. It usually occurs within a multilingual setting. This ultimately evokes of the multi-cultural setting of any region. Exemplifying from the text, we find code-switching when Saleem was once asked by mob to speak some Gujarati. He says, "Soo Che? Saru Che! Danda Leke Maru Che! How are you? - I am well - I'll take a stick and thrash you to to hell!" (265). Other examples are: "Sabkuch Tick Tock hai. Everything is fine," "Duniya dekho", see the world . . ." (96), "Ye Akasvani hai. This is All India Radio" (230).

For code-mixing we find numerous examples in the novel. Aziz's mother addressing his son while "reclining on *takht*", means a seat. When Ghani orders two bodyguards of her daughter to dropdown the perforated sheet for two lovers (Aziz and Naseem), he says, "Enough of this *tamasha!*" (32). When Adam Aziz gives something in dowry to his daughter and says to Ahmad Sinai, "we are not *crorepatis* you understand" (84). Once Amina's house is burgled and she refers to one of missing things as "bejewelled *Samovar*" (199). Saleem once refers to *four annas* and *chavanni*; and he says about Jamila (Brass Monkey) that "she loved bread, *chapatis, parathas, tandoori nans*" (438). There is reference given to "Zenana chambers . . ." (447), during the engagement ceremony of Nawab's elder daughter with the son of General Zulfikar in Pakistan. On painted posters is the advertisement of new film "*Gai-Wallah* means Cow-fellow" (60). Saleem is called *Chand-ka-tukra* (144) by Reverend Mother and *little-piece-of-moon* (78) by Mary Pereira. Pereira is called as "little *mausi*, little mother" (198), by Sinais; she once refers to Saleem's urinating as, "his poor little *soo-soo*" (174)! In the slum, children are pulling hard the "*pallu* of her (Amina's) *Sari*" (106). When Padma offers food to Saleem on desk, she says, "Eat, *na*, food is spoiling" (24). Mary says to ghost of joe, "go go *na*". Mrs. Dubash, the wife of a Physicist, is related to 'untidiness' in the novel; by this, the word '*dubash*' is used as verb that means 'to make mess'. Mary says to Saleem, "Oh Saleem you have *dubashed* your room again, . . ." (177).

Using the technique of metafiction, Rushdie consciously tries to nativize the literary tradition of the English language. Besides, there is the use of slangy English used by the middle class of that time, in which we find omission of articles, abundant use of continuous tense rather than simple present. The slangs from the local vernaculars are introduced in the text. For instance, Tai says to Aziz "*Nakkoo*, Listen, Listen . . ." In Nawab's celebration, members of opposite political party are called "*badmashes*". Amina in fury tells Saleem, "You blackman! *Goonda*" (277). Besides, words like *Yara!*, *baba!*, *baap re*, etc. are used to show the indigenous effects of the language. Further, the word to word translation is used in some expressions as, "Madman from somewhere" (166). Mary says to herself, "Donkey from somewhere" (159). Adapting the English language with Indian vernaculars, the author contributes to the process of decolonization.

The practice of introducing native diction in foreign language and using foreign diction for native experiences expands the thought-processes of both writers and readers. This puts the produced literature into a wider vista in both post-colonial communities and rest of the world. Many post-colonial writers took steps either to put structure of native dialects into the English language or to use native words and their translated forms in this foreign language. Raja Rao, an Indian post-colonial fiction writer,

talked about the process of decolonization of the English language. In his preface to the novel *Kanthapura* (1938), he gives a sort of theory where writer is supposed to modify the English language for Indian experiences. In this process, one should modify the strict syntactic and semantic rules of foreign language to incorporate the native experiences in it. He denied any mandatory uses of "treacherous 'ats' and 'ons'" in using the language for indigenous practices. Exemplifying long tales of Indian classics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, he suggests the breathless story-telling narrative as a native element to introduce in this foreign language. Rao suggests, native writers must tell 'interminable' tales as there are in Indian classics.

Following the tradition, Salman Rushdie says in his introduction to *Midnight's Children*, "[W]ith that immodest proposal, the novel's characteristic tone of voice, comically assertive, unrelentingly garrulous, and, I hope, a growing pathos in its narrator's increasingly tragic over-claiming, came into being (x)" In the novel, we find the hasty story-telling of native type, where there are breathless long sentences. Within this practice, the lesser number of articles and other punctuation marks are used within the structure of the English language. We find the colloquial tone with natural pauses, as of this sentence, "But they'll never let up until . . . thirteen fourteen fifteen . . . O God O God the fog dizzy and falling back back, seventeen eighteen nineteen. Twen" (*MC* 421-22). Besides the long endless sentences speak of garrulous nature of narrative, and the indigenous effects of 'telling' of the lengthy tales. For instance, this paragraph is with only one full stop:

At midnight, Saleem awoke to find that he still clutched the magical parchment of Mutasim the handsome in his right hand; and since the wind from north is still blowing gently through his room, he made up his mind to creep, in the chappals and dressing-gown, through the darkened passages of the lovely palace, past all the accumulated debris of the decaying world, rusting suits of armour and ancient tapestries which provided centuries of food for the palaces one billion moths, giant mahaseer trout swimming in glass seas, and the profusion of hunting trophies including tarnished gold teetar-bird on a task plinth which commemorated the day on which an earlier Nawab, in the company of Lord Curzon and party, had shot 111, 111 teetars in a single day; he crept past the statues of dead birds into the zenana chambers where the women of the palace, and then, sniffing the air, he selected one door, turned the handle and went aside (*MC* 450).

This shows the hurry of the speaker to complete great endless tales like those of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. There are only commas (,) except one semi-colon (;) in the whole paragraph that indicates of verbal nature of language. Because, we find short pause of the speaker and only a long pause in the end of the paragraph.

Hence, in the novel, language carries the very essence of certain conceptions and constructions of nativity, culture and other beliefs of Indian subcontinent. And in a nation like India, it is the English language that is spoken by middle and upper class in constant influence and mixture of other local languages. This situation is mature enough to raise a good Indian dialect of the English language. Literary exercises like these in field of the English language strengthens the communicating influences of its Indian dialect.

In conclusion, it is observed that the different racial, religious, political and above all cultural confrontations in the social structure of Indian subcontinent are illustrated throughout *Midnight's children*. The causes of these conflicts in the form of racial bias, ethnic jealousy, political propaganda, religious exploitation are studied objectively. The exposition of the wrongs that have been done by power hungry individuals or bodies in Indian history, helps us to approach reality. The author refers to reality and social integrity that has been kept off from the public by political conspirators like Mrs. Indira Gandhi, anti-social organizations like Ravana Gang, and so-called religious preachers like the Muslim priest. The jingoistic perspective of nationalism is best illustrated in the novel. This leads to further our

interrogation of dominant powers with respect to subject communities in colonial and post-colonial context.

Moreover, the approximation of the English language for the indigenous experiences is done in an excellent manner. The native style of narration and selection of vocabulary in the text are very assertive signs of postcoloniality. Rushdie takes syntactic and semantic liberties while introducing day-to-day diction from different ethnic cultures. This experiment with language has contributed greatly to enrich Indian dialect of the English language. Besides, it smoothes the way for thinking process and literary exercise in foreign language for natives as well.

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