

THE CHUTNIFICATION OF ENGLISH IN ROHINTON MISTRY'S TALES FROM FIROZSHA BAAG

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Abstract

Postcolonial Indian English literature is characterized by nativization and acculturation of English. Salman Rushdie has coined the word chutnification for it. The Indian writers have decolonized English language and it has ceased to be sole possession of the British. Rohinton Mistry, the writer of Indian origin who migrated to Candada, writes about his Parsi community in his works comprising with short stories and novels. His literary voyage brings him to Bombay, a cosmopolitan city that accommodates everybody without disparity of culture caste and religion. The aim of this paper is to realize how Mistry has chutified and hybridized English language with Hindi and Gujrati-Parsi expressions. The vocabulary is from Parsi community to which Mistry belongs.

Key Words: *Postcolonial writing, Diaspora literature decolonization, chutnification, hybridization, domesticating language, acculturation of language*

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Present age literature is replete of migrant experiences. It symbolizes migrant sensibility as it negotiates with the migrant's old country and the new. Through this discourse the diasporic writers disengage and re-engage with the new realities of society, culture, identity, religion and politics. These writers attempt is to reconfigure the reality along with imagination that forms the diasporic experience.

Language plays crucial role in the formation of diasporas. M.M. Bakhtin rightly comments,

'Verbal discourse is a social phenomenon.' (Bakhtin 43)

The diasporic writer writing in English is often dissatisfied with the existing vocabulary and he tries to achieve the genuine effect by mixing with the vernacular language of the country to which he belongs. The attempt is to retain the cultural identity. The sociolinguistic study interprets it as a variety of language spoken by peoples with common roots who have dispersed for various reasons in the world. There are varieties of diasporic languages that include- Istro-Romanian, African-American vernacular English, Hinglish or Hindlish including Hindi and English, Yoruba including Carrabin and English. The experimentation with English reflects extensive hybridization because of migration across the world. As Rushdie rightly comments,

'what seems to me to be happening is that those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remarking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it.' (Rushdie 64)

The global process of de-territorialization has resulted in the chutnification of English. Chutney is an Indian dish. At the time of meal Indians have a side dish as chutney which is tangy. It adds flavor to the meal. "Chutney" is a noun form by adding "-fication", Rushdie changes an Indian word into an English in order to achieve transformation. Therefore "Chutnification" means transformation of English.

'It is transformation having an additional connotation in order to make it more flavoursome and exciting.' (Krishnamurthy 2)

Some writers call this process as domestication of language. Since diasporic characters suffer with their own construction of identity in the process of developing multiple homes. Therefore it is natural for them to mix the two languages as called chutnification thereby struggling to maintain their home culture at the same time accepting the foreign land culture to which they have migrated. Diasporic studies throw light on migrants past cultural identity as it conflicts with the present cultural identity of the migrant land.

'Plurality of consciousness with equal rights and each with its own world.' (Vice 35)

The argument of this paper is that in his short story collection *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, Rohinton Mistry does chutnification of English. The stories depict use of English mixed with local color of Parsi-Gujrati and Hindi languages. The analysis of the language explores Mistry's dissatisfaction with the traditional English and he experiments resulting chutnification of English by way of blending the two languages. It is spiced with Parsi-Gujrati and Hindi words and expressions. The English used is sprinkled with bits of Hindi. Following three stories from Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* are selected for the discussion

- 1) Auspicious Occasion
 - 2) One Sunday
 - 3) The Ghost of Firozsha Baag
- **Mistry uses Hindi collocations by adding English words-**
 - *Arre Mehroo!* (Mistry) - Arre is Hindi expression used informally to call someone for demanding attention
 - *Are forget your ganga bunga* - Gunga typical name of maids in Bombay
 - *White dugli*- typical Parsi coat of white color to be wore with a black turban
 - *Fully brushed pheytow* - a turban that Parsis wear
 - *White blouse with petticoat and sari* - typical Indian costume of women and no words to match in English.

- *Pyjama downstring* - a kind of loose trouser to be wear in house casually it has a string to fasten with the west here Mistry uses English word for it as downstring since most of the time it is hanging in case of old people as they are old and weak to take care of everything accurately.
- *Coals of Sigri* - sigri is Hindi word meaning an instrument like stove in which coals are filled for fire
- *Chaupati beach* - sea beach at Bombay famous as Chaupati
- *Coolie's back* - Railway station Porter's back
- *Flowerwalla*- a person who sells flowers
- *chalk designs* - designs drawn by women in front of house at the time festivals
- *Psychology of gundas*- it refers to the attitudes of rouges wandering freely in the society
- *Fragrance of loban* - Loban is particular incense that is burned in the house or shop for purification. It has a particular smell that makes the atmosphere holy and pious.
- *Weekly Quota of kerosene*-particular allocation of Kerosene for a week
- *Infernal people upstairs* – people who have gathered at the ceremony
- *Arre please yaar, why harass an old man? Jaane do yaar* – typical friendly expressions in Hindi
- *Chasniwalla employed at fire temple*-
- *Final Mutka* – Final bet played as a great risk
- *Bunya's shop* – a shop of grocer
- *Catholic Ayahs from Goa* – Catholic maids from Goa
- *Goan Ayahs* – maids from Goa
- *Curry masala* – ingredient spices of curry
- *Fish curry rice* – typical food dish from Goa
- *A lotta full of water* – a particular shaped bowl of copper called lotta is used for God's worshiping and offering water
- *Charas and ganja* – opium and other drugs

- **Hindi abuses are used; sometimes they are mixed with English**

Anger is reflected with the Hindi mixed English words and expressions

- *I will not spend one paisa (means a penny) of my hard-earned earnings! (Mushkil se kamaya hua) those scoundrels sitting with piles of trust money hidden under their arses should pay for it!* This abusive tone is retained from Hindi.
- *Saala gandoo* – filthy son of a whore
- *Arre you sister fucking ghatis what are you laughing for?* ‘sister fucking’ is typical Hindi abuse and *ghatis* means the people from Maharashtra who belong to the ghats of Sahyadri.
- *Saala chootia spat pan on my dugli and you think that is fun?* - typical Hindi abuse that shows anger
- *Bawaji we'll break all your bones Maaro saala bawajiko!*- *Bawaji* is typical word for Parsi old man and *Maaro saala bawajiko* is Hindi expression for beating in anger.
- *Arre your arse we'll tear to shreds!*- typical Hindi expression of threatening
- *Are badmash! You have no shame? Eating her food, earning money from her then stealing from her, you rascal?-'Badmash'* refers to a person who deceives. ‘No shame, eating food and earning money’ These are the typical Hindi expression used when a servant deceives his master by theft of money.

- **Mistry has used Hindi onomatopoeia expressions**

- *When someone pulled a flush then on my head I felt - pchuk all wet! On my head!*
Pchuk is onomatopoeia expression used in Hindi
- *On your head ? chee chee chee!* In Hindi Chee chee refers to something that is ugly and dirty
- *Drink that quickly, gudh gudh, the urge will return-* gudh gudh refers to dinking speedily
- *Crrr-crr-crrr-crr sound of bed* - sound of movement of the warned out and old bed
- *Tock-tock they came in their high heel shoes* – sound of shoes
- *Sheeh, what a boy that was-* refers to something that is ugly and dirty
- *I lifted my chappal very slowly and quietly then phut! phut!* – sound of beating

- *Curry is hot, they are blowing whoosh – whoosh on their tongues* – sound coming from mouth while eating
- **The Gujarati name of dish is retained as it is-**
 - *They cooked dhandar-paatyo and Sali-boti for dinner-* typical Gujrati-Parsi dish to be prepared at the festivities.
- **Hindi words are retained as they are without translation-**
 - *Tohrun-* decorative garland of flowers made up of string
 - *Ailchee-* Caedmon
 - *Mori-* a place for washing clothes having channel hole for dirty water coming from clothes
 - *Choli-* typical costume of girls belonging to North India where Hindi is the mother tongue
 - *Bhindi Bazaar-* a market of lady's finger
 - *Ritual of Chasni-* a prayer ceremony in Parsis where they partake of fruits and sweets
 - *Ararghaan* – shining silver statue on its marble pedestal
 - *Agyari* – the fire temple of Parsis for worship the sun God
 - *Dastur Kotwal-* announcer of news among Parsis
 - *Paan-* beetle nut leaf chewed by people and need to spit out with the red color
 - *Sudra* – a shirt
 - *Sataan* – an evil spirit
 - *Seth and bai* – servants and maids call their master and the mistress with these formal titles
 - *Kaun hai what do you want?* – question of enquiry who is there?
 - *Chor! Chor! stop him-* typical expression in Hindi when people run behind thief to catch
 - *Bhoot* – a ghost in Hindi
 - *Ayah* – maid servants who is like nurse of the family and serves for many years
 - *Muluk* – a region which is usually a birthplace of a person

- *Saterunjee* – a kind of carpet made up of cotton strings
 - *Chai in the morning* – Morning tea
 - *Maibaap* – refers to father and mother or caretaker
 - *Chappal*-
 - *Jashan* – a religious ceremony to be performed on the street to get relief from black magic
 - *The flat cane soopra* - an instrument used for winnowing rice
 - *White mathoobanoo* - a cloth to be fastened around the head to neck like a scarf
- **Mistry has coined New words -**
 - “*Gunga is late and the house is **unswept***” there is no word like unswept in English but it is invented like in Hindi when the house is cleaned it is swept by the maid called as *kamwali bai* usually having the name Gunga. When it is not clean it is unswept by her.
 - *Coconut oiled gray hair* – in India people apply coconut oil on their hair the words express this habit.
 - *Bedding* – refers to the bed prepared on the floor everyday with a quilt for sleeping.
 - **In Hindi there is a practice of repeating certain words the same effect is achieved by repeating English words. Sometimes Hindi words are also added**
 - *slippers flopping in time ploof ploof,*
 - *coming coming! two hands, so much to do,*
 - *on your head? chee chee chee!*
 - *poor poor tanoo*
 - *breath coming fast-fast*
 - *big big trunks*
 - *all work I do I do on floors*
 - *blackie backie they would call out*
 - *funny illay illay poe poe*
 - *big big hotels*
 - *bhoot! bhoot!*

- *yes yes*
- *everything is okay children are okay*
- *no hippie-bippie business with charas and ganja*
- *steering and steering taking the aroma as it boils and cooks*
- *steering it again and again watching it budding and steaming*
- *Steering, steering and steering till it is ready to use*
- **The habit of writing the typical titles along with half translation of English words is used and the effect of the local color is successfully achieved –**
 - *Awabai Petit Parsi Lying – in Hospital*
 - The English name Jacqueline is corrupted as Jaalaylee. The complaint of the Jacqueline regarding the mispronunciation of her name is very significant. *She says, 'Forty nine years in Firozsha Baag's B Block and they still don't say my name right. It is so difficult to say Jacqueline? But they always say Jaakaylee. Or worse Jaakayl. All the fault is of old bai who died ten year ago Old bai took English words and made them Parsi words. Easy chair was igeechur, French beans was ferach beech and Jacqueline became Jaakaylee.'*
- **Most of the time *ing* is used to achieve the English effect –**
 - *I am telling you, this is more than I can take!*
 - *She is seeing things*
 - *All work I do on floors griding masala, cutting vegetables cleaning rice*
 - *I opened by bedding*
 - *I knew why he was feeling happy*
 - *Busy eating bai-seth*
- **Ungrammatical expressions and sentences in English are used. They are constructed on the basis of Hindi day to today conversations –**
 - *Blasted gas company refers to the LPG*
 - *Believe or don't believe*
 - *Never will I forget that first day in Bombay*
 - *My breath was fast fast*
 - *Completely! I shook my head and started for second floor*

- *Even schooling I got first year at night*
- *Coming to Bombay was only thing to do*
- *So many people from south are coming here, Tamils and Keralites with their funny illay illay, poe poe language*
- *New fullum bhoot bungla*
- *Just like that*
- *But masala machine they will not buy*
- *Very esskey messkey, so short I don't know now their maibaap allowed it.*
- *Don't burn the dinner*
- *The bhoot came but he did not bounce any more upon my chest*
- *But for worrying there was no reason*
- *Busy eating bai – seth*
- *Curry is hot, they are blowing whoosh – whoosh on their tongues but still eating*
- *My hair was standing*
- *I felt chilly as if a bhoot was about to come*

In addition to the hybridization of English, Marathi and Konkani songs are written without translation in English. To conclude the dialogues of Parsi characters in the stories are in abundance with the blended vocabulary and expressions that achieves the chutnification as it is called by Salman Rushdie. Being diaspora writer, Mistry tries to achieve balancing with the help of common link of language between his Parsi culture and Indian culture.

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