

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick**

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/60257>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

**“The Home and the World”**

**Representations of English and *Bhashas*  
in Contemporary Indian Culture**

**Vedita Cowaloosur**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English and Comparative Literary Studies

University of Warwick  
Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies

June 2013

[S]he wanted words with the heft of stainless steel, sounds that had been boiled clean, like a surgeon's instruments, with nothing attached except meanings that could be looked up in a dictionary—

—Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*



[...] there are no “neutral” words and forms—words and forms can belong to “no one;” language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents.

—Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF IMAGES</b>	6
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	7
<b>DECLARATION</b>	8
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	9
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	10
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	11
A. AAMCHI MUMBAI	11
B. INDIAN FICTION AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE	25
C. THESIS STRUCTURE	36
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
<b>NATION AND NATIONALISM</b>	40
1.1. LANGUAGE AND THE “NATION” QUESTION	42
1.2. LINGUISTIC NATIONALISM IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT	47
1.3. THE CASE OF INDIA	55
1.4. ENGLISH AND BHASHA NATIONALISM	78
1.5. THE NEHRUVIAN WAY	92
1.6. NEHRU AND THE 1980S-90S NOVEL	105
1.7. AFTER 2010	119
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
<b>RELIGION AND SECULARISM</b>	121
2.1. THE RELIGION OF LANGUAGE	122
2.2. TRANSLATION AS TEST CASE: “ONE BUT UNEQUAL”	141
2.3. TRANSLATING NEHRUVIANISM INTO TANDONISM	152
2.4. TRANSLATING SECULARISM	169
2.5. HINDUISING GENDER AND SEXUALITY	180
2.6. THE CASE OF ANTI-SECULAR ENGLISH SPEAKERS	193
2.7. SECULAR HINDI WRITING	197
2.8. DIVIDE AND RULE	207
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
<b>CLASS AND CASTE</b>	209
3.1. THE ENGLISH ADVANTAGE	210
3.2. GODDESS ENGLISH AND CASTE	224
3.3. INTEGRAL HEGEMONY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE	227
3.4. ELITE INGLISH AND DALIT ENGLISH	237
3.5. UNFINISHED BUSINESSES	259
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	261
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	279

## LIST OF IMAGES

IMAGE 1. Screenshot, <i>Wake Up Sid</i> (2009)	11
IMAGE 2. Narendra Modi Depicted as Krishna in BJP Advertisement	132
IMAGE 3. Dalit Goddess English	224

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first and foremost debt is to my supervisor, Pablo Mukherjee for his guidance, support and patience throughout. I thank him for helping me transform flighty ideas and general enthusiasm for the subject into coherent and scholarly arguments, and for helping me develop a newer and more critical perspective on numerous political, social and cultural issues. I am grateful to Susan Bassnett, Maureen Freely, John Gilmore, Jon Mee, Nick Monk, Benita Parry, Manav Ratti and Rashmi Varma from the department for their encouragement and thought-provoking discussions on various aspects of this research. I would also like to thank the administrative support staff of the department, especially Cheryl Cave, for all the help.

The content of this thesis and my development as a scholar have greatly been shaped by invaluable—if sometimes brief—engagements with Simon James, Kylie Crane, John McKinnell, (late) Meenakshi Mukherjee, Francesca Orsini, G. J. V. Prasad, Stephen Reagan, Neelam Srivastava, Harish Trivedi and Robert Young. For this, I thank them. Big thanks also to Nandini Rao, Rammanohar Reddy, Pallavi Narayan, Saba Bashir and Achintyarup Ray without whom my research trips to India would not have been as successful and enjoyable.

I am grateful to Prabha Pillai and Jyoti Shetty for proofreading my entire thesis, and to Norbert Bugeja, Sorcha Gunne and Malachi McIntosh for taking me under their wing and initiating me into the ways of Postcolonial studies. Khalid Al Hamoud, Nazry Bahrawi, John Clegg, Nesrin Degirmencioglu, Mahmoud Jeidani, Joseph Jackson, Peter Kirwan, Paul McGrath, Charlotte Mathieson, Joseph Morissey, Sian Mitchell, Yvonne Reddick, Min Rowland, Sophie Rudland, Kate Scarth, Iman Sheeha, Adam Slavny, Máté Vince and Rami Zakaria I would like to thank for their camaraderie and for helping me retain my sanity when the going got tough.

Aditi Augustine, Gohar Karim Khan and their respective families have provided me with a home away from home over these past many years. For them my gratitude and love is constant.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to my family: Chacha Krishna for planting the seeds of this research in me from when I was very young, Bhaiyya Manish for his reliable presence, Mamoo Pritam for playing devil's advocate, Dadi and Nani for their unbroken faith in me, Honita—because she is irreplaceable, and Mama and Papa for going through my undergraduate degree, Masters degree and then suffering the three years of my doctoral research with me. Papa, especially, because he has been my anchor and guide all along this—and beyond. This thesis is as much his passion as mine.

# DECLARATION

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not previously been submitted for any other degree.

Extracts from Chapters 2 have been explored in:

Cowaloosur, Vedita. "A Suitable (Hindu) Boy." Eds. Francesca Orsini and Neelam Srivastava. *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 15.3 (2013): 349-364.

However, for the purpose of this thesis, the chapter has been expanded and its ideas developed further.

Vedita Cowaloosur  
30 June 2013

## ABSTRACT

Although they have cohabited in India for centuries, critical analyses of contemporary Indian literature and culture often seem to draw a distinction between the “world” of the English language and that of the *bhashas* (or Indian regional languages)—as though the two are sealed off from each other with no conceivable overlaps. Even sixty-six years after independence, the debate over the contested linguistic terrains of “home” and “world”—and whether these seeming dichotomies are mappable as “Indian”/“non-Indian” or “provincial”/“cosmopolitan”—continue. Through a study of contemporary and modern Indian literary and cultural discourses, I analyse the historical and ideological roles played by English language—the ways in which it has interacted with *bhashas*, and the importance of the literary representation of English and *bhashas* in the politics of Indian cultural and linguistic nationalism(s).

Along with canonical Indian English writing (such as the works of Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie) I analyse *bhasha* literature (especially Hindi, Bengali and Urdu) as well as Indian literature in translation as my primary texts. My study includes fiction, as well as political documents and life writing (notably those by M. K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru). The analysis of Hindi cinema, ranging from films like *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) to *Ra.One* (2011) remains a running thread throughout, for this popular medium encapsulates the Indian linguistic debates in a way that is sometimes complementary and at other times a foil to the literary cultural discourse.

In each of my chapters I analyse the mobilisation of language(s) in relation to one of the categories that, in India’s charged socio-political setting, become associated with the question of one’s communal, cultural and/or territorial “identity”—namely nation, religion, and caste and class. Though this is a thesis about language and its cultural representation in *postcolonial* India, I often flit to events in pre-1947 India in the course of my discussions. This is because some of the cultural moments from the colonial past are either historical precedents to, or prove to be momentous departures from, the events that I focus on in contemporary India. Their significance can therefore not be ignored in any comprehensible analysis of the roles that language has played in India after independence.



## ABBREVIATIONS

AIPWA	All-India Progressive Writers' Association
<i>Anjuman</i>	<i>Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu</i>
BJP	<i>Bharatiya Janata Party</i>
MNS	<i>Maharashtra Navnirman Sena</i>
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
RSS	<i>Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh</i>
<i>Sammelan</i>	<i>Hindi Sahitya Sammelan</i>

# INTRODUCTION

## A. Aamchi Mumbai<sup>1</sup>

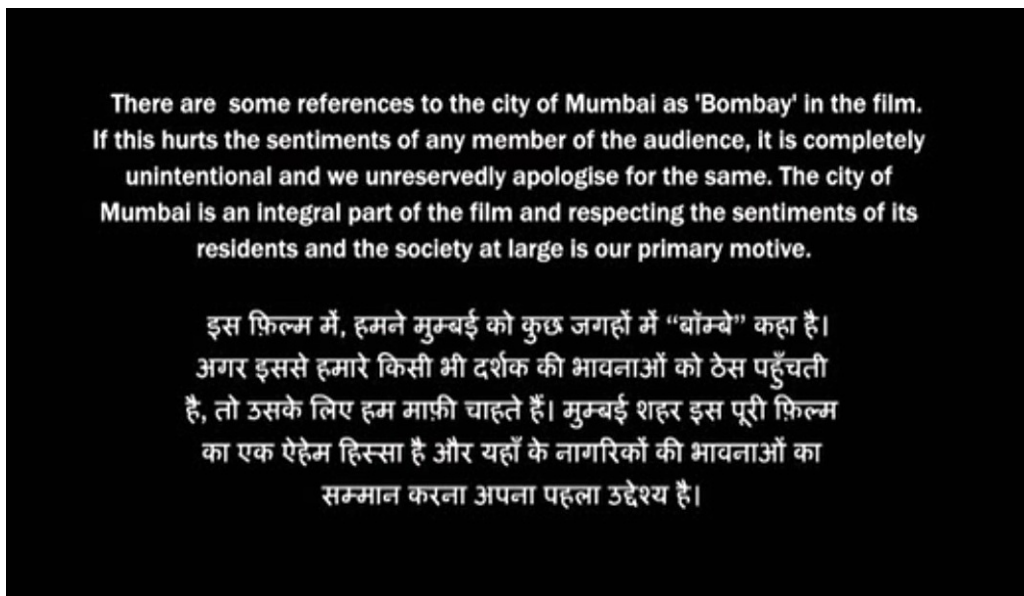


Image 1: Screenshot, *Wake Up Sid* (2009)

This disclaimer was inserted at the beginning of the 2009 Hindi film, *Wake Up Sid*, following violent protests in some cinemas in Mumbai on the day of its release.<sup>2</sup> The protest, which escalated into attempts at disrupting the screening of the film throughout the state,<sup>3</sup> was orchestrated by members of the *Maharashtra Navnirman Sena* (MNS)—a regionalist and right-wing political organisation that claims to defend the sanctity of the

---

<sup>1</sup> “Aamchi Mumbai” is Marathi for “Our Mumbai.”

<sup>2</sup> “‘Bombay’ Lands Karan Johar at Raj Thackeray’s Door,” *The Indian Express* 3 Oct. 2009, 18 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/-bombay--lands-karan-johar-at-raj-thackeray-s-door/524459/>>.

<sup>3</sup> A multiplex theatre in *Pune* did cancel the screening of the film, following discussion with the local MNS leader, Raje Gorde. “Pune Multiplex Cancels *Wake Up Sid* Screening after MNS Protest,” *Daily News & Analysis* 2 Oct. 2009, 12 Oct. 2012 <[http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report\\_pune-multiplex-cancels-wake-up-sid-screening-after-mns-protest\\_1294500](http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report_pune-multiplex-cancels-wake-up-sid-screening-after-mns-protest_1294500)>.

Marathi language and culture, and the rights of its speakers.<sup>4</sup> For them, the problem with *Wake Up Sid* was the use of the former name of the city: “Bombay.” The producer of the film, Karan Johar, was called upon by leaders of the party to apologise to the MNS and to all Marathi speakers of Maharashtra, the state of which Mumbai is the capital. This—to the disbelief of many—Johar did!<sup>5</sup>

What, then, is in a name? The MNS actions form part of an attempt to enforce a linguistic apartheid between what is thought to be the city’s “real” and authentic inhabitants and alien interlopers. In the lead up to the official changing of the city’s name in 1995, Bal Thackeray (a relative of Raj Thackeray and then the leader of another right-wing nationalist organisation, *Shiv Sena*) had made extensive use of the Marathi language newspaper *Dainik Saamna* as the party’s mouthpiece to popularise the idea that, along with these more recent “aliens,” the presence of all the languages other than Marathi in the city was evidence of the fact that different waves of linguistic communities had “colonised” the city throughout history. This included the Gujarati and Urdu speakers of the Gujarat Sultanate in 1407,

---

<sup>4</sup> The upliftment and protection of the Marathi language remains a primary concern, as stated in the “Objectives and Policies” page on their website:

“The *Maharashtra Navnirman Sena* is committed to raising the status of Maharashtra state, its people, and the Marathi language to resplendent glory. [...] It is committed to the development of the Marathi language and expanding its knowledge base. [...] To give justice to the *Marathi Manus*, *Maharashtra Navnirman Sena* will do everything from establishing a Marathi Language Academy, fighting with the anti-Marathi lobby, making Marathi a compulsory subject in all schools, insisting for Marathi name-boards on shops and establishments to broadening the knowledge base in Marathi.”

*Maharashtra Navnirman Sena*, “Objectives and Policies,” *Maharashtra Navnirman Sena* Website, 20 Jun. 2013

<<https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=67&smid=15&id=279>>.

<sup>5</sup> The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Ashok Chavan, for instance, did not feel that the apology had been called for, and even questioned Johar’s need to apologise to an individual as a representative of the entire state. “Bombay Says Sorry to Mumbai,” *The Hindu* 3 Oct. 2009, 13 Oct. 2012

<<http://www.hindu.com/2009/10/03/stories/2009100356650100.htm>>.

the Portuguese speakers after the colonisation of Bombay by the Portuguese (following the Treaty of Bassein) in 1526, and the English-speaking British after 1661. Renaming the city was therefore projected as a way to link the city to its mythical pre-colonial past, whereby “Mumbai” accords prime importance to this assumed “native” ethno-lingual group, the *Marathi Manus*.<sup>6</sup> The MNS website describes the *Marathi Manus* as “the living person in the State and born to Marathi parents, or one, though of a different linguistic origin, born in Maharashtra, who speaks Marathi and loves Maharashtra.”<sup>7</sup> Even the name Mumbai roots for this “native” Marathi speaker, in so far that it is allegedly derived from the name of goddess Mumba Devi, a deity of the Marathi-speaking fishing community who claim to be the aboriginal inhabitants of the area.<sup>8</sup> “Mumbai” is therefore seen as being anchored in the “original” linguistic culturescape of the city.

“Bombay,” on the other hand, has a different narrative. As posited by Arjun Appadurai (2008) and Thomas Blom Hansen (2001), among many others, “Bombay” reflects the “diversity, imaginings of modernity, and the hopes associated with that name.”<sup>9</sup> “Bombay” therefore challenges the primacy of Thackeray’s prized *Marathi Manus* by foregrounding the city’s heterogeneity and its cosmopolitan appeal—which is manifest in its polyglossia. Indeed, it can be argued that the polyglossia of “Bombay” is

---

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Zachariah, among others, has pointed out how the Marathi nationalist project, spearheaded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in the wake of the nationalist period, had constructed the historic Maratha kings, such as Shivaji Rao, into a kind of “proto-nationalist who fought the ‘foreign’ Mughals for the sake of a ‘Hindu’ nation.” Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London: Routledge, 2004) 44.

<sup>7</sup> MNS <<https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=67&smid=15&id=279>>.

<sup>8</sup> Sanjay Ranade, “The Kolis of Mumbai at Crossroads,” 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of Asian Studies Association of Australia, Melbourne, 1-3 Jul. 2008, 15 Oct. 2012 <<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/mai/files/2012/07/sanjayranade.pdf>>.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001) 1.

itself an extension of its cosmopolitanism. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, polyglossia is the interaction of two or more (national) languages within a single cultural system, the point at which "(l)anguages throw light on each other."<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of illustration, Bakhtin uses the two historical models of ancient Rome and the Renaissance, during which languages coexisted and mingled freely together. According to this logic, the cosmopolitan Bombay turns out to be a fitting site of polyglossia given the long history of various linguistic and cultural communities that have thrived together in the city. The *Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission* submitted in 1948 specified this:

Originally a small fishing village inhabited by koelis [*sic.*], a clan of fishermen, and subsequently a small Portuguese settlement, it has grown during the last 150 years to be one of the greatest cities of the world. In building up this great city, all communities, including the British, have taken their share; and, as a result, *it has acquired a mixed individuality and is distinctly multilingual and cosmopolitan.* Historically, it has never been a part of the Maratha empire; but it is the heart of Konkan, and the Marathis regard Konkan as their main limb. Geographically, it is separate from Gujerat [*sic.*]; but north Konkan adjoins Gujerat and is the borderland between Maharashtra and Gujerat, and has never been entirely free from Gujerati experience. [...] The best fortune that we can see for the city of Bombay is that it should continue as it is today, the meeting-place of

---

<sup>10</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 2004) 12.

all communities, their source of pride and affection and a convenient centre for their joint labour and enterprise. It will be incongruous to make this multilingual, cosmopolitan city the capital of a unilingual province.<sup>11</sup> (emphasis mine)

This is not dissimilar to the model of the Renaissance “carnival” that Bakhtin upheld in *Rabelais and His World* (1965) to illustrate polyglossia, which he defined as being characterised by “a special form of free and familiar contact reign[ing] among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age.”<sup>12</sup> Like Bakhtin’s carnival, Bombay thrives on the forging of heterogeneous and fluid bonds—bonds that develop through shared space, labour, responsibilities and commonalities, rather than the singularity of language and ethnicity—all of which is aptly reflected in Bombay’s polyglossic make up.

Predictably, cosmopolitan Indian art forms—especially the literary and popular fiction that are not made in linguistic isolation—have found an affinity with “Bombay” over “Mumbai.” To use just one example, “Bombay”—and not the more homogeneous “Mumbai”—is the preferred site of exploration in the cosmopolitan works of postcolonial Indian English novelists such as Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry and Jeet Thayil.<sup>13</sup> Jon Mee (2008) writes about the relation between Bombay and the works of

---

<sup>11</sup> “Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission,” *Reports of Committees of the Constituent Assembly of India*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. (Delhi: Gvt. of India P, 1950) 193.

<sup>12</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 10.

<sup>13</sup> A lot of work has already been done on the cosmopolitanism of the postcolonial Indian English novel itself. See, for example, Neelam Srivastava, *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel*, on which a large part of my discussion is here based.

Salman Rushdie, specifically *Midnight's Children* (1981), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), and *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995):

In Rushdie's fiction, Bombay has served as the place wherein the fractured nation becomes defined by heterogeneity, a place where India's different cultures meet, and where India meets the world [...].<sup>14</sup>

Mistry and Thayil also foreground this particular characteristic of "Bombay" in their novels such as *A Fine Balance* (1995) and *Narcopolis* (2012). They do so especially by bringing into focus the so-called "minority" linguistic, cultural and religious communities who are as integral to the city as the larger *Marathi Manus* cohort.

Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is perhaps most effective in vouching for the inclusiveness of "Bombay," for, as Neelam Srivastava suggests, the narrator of *Midnight's Children* belongs to *both* Indian "majority" and "minority" cultures: Muslim, English Christian and Hindu—all of which thrive in "Bombay."<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* Rushdie follows the interactions between Ormus Cama (a wealthy Parsi rock musician), Umeed "Rai" Merchant (a photographer with Muslim parents who nonetheless inherits the "the gift of irreligion" from them) and Vina Apsara (a rock singer of Indo-American mixed parentage) who are thrown together in "Bombay." Mistry's *A Fine Balance* too offers an intricate relationship between four unlikely friends, formed against the backdrop of "Bombay:" Dina Dalal and Maneck Kohlah are Parsis, while Ishvar and

---

<sup>14</sup> Jon Mee, "After Midnight: The Novel in the 1980s and 1990s," *A Concise History of Indian Literature in English*, ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2008) 363.

<sup>15</sup> Neelam Srivastava, *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008) 51.

Omprakash Darji are Dalits who move to the city in search of employment. Their camaraderie is set in the novel against the brutal fights and ethnic wars that are being waged to change “Bombay” into “Mumbai”. Dina’s house becomes a representative of “Bombay,” as the site for the creation of affective bonds between people from different linguistic and ethnic communities. This is epitomised in the novel through the quilt that Dina works on by joining different patches of cloth. Maneck in fact points out what appears to him to be the incongruous nature of the quilt in the first instance when the quilt is discussed, but Dina explains that it is her *choice* to try to harmonise these seemingly unlikely matches:

“Too many different colours and designs,” [Maneck] said.

“Are you trying to be a critic or what?”

“No, I mean it’s going to be very difficult to match them properly.”

“Difficult, yes, but that’s where taste and skill come in. What to select, what to leave out—and which goes next to which.”<sup>16</sup>

Outside Dina’s sphere of influence, however, “Mumbai” supporters wreak havoc and disrupt the smooth running of life by organising agitations that restrict movement, as in the episode when Dina is held back in the flat of friends due to the *morchas* [or agitations] being held (either by the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti* or the *Maha Gujarat Parishad*) for the division of the state on a linguistic basis.<sup>17</sup> This contrast drawn between the cosiness and comfort of “Bombay” inside and the chaos of “Mumbai” outside is palpable throughout the novel.

---

<sup>16</sup> Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996) 319.

<sup>17</sup> Mistry 54.



Similarly, throughout these novels, the cosmopolitan heterogeneity of “Bombay” is particularly made to stand out against these attempts at homogenising the city as “Mumbai.” A passage in Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* suggests that it is only “Bombay” that can fully embody all the city’s myriad communities, while “Mumbai” merely denies their existence:

I remember our neighbours on Cuffe Parade, their pretensions, their happy and unhappy marriages, their quarrels, their motor cars, their sunglasses, their handbags, their discoloured smiles, their kindnesses, their dogs. I remember the weekends with their odd, imported pastimes. My parents playing golf at the Willingdon, my father doing his best to lose to my mother in order to preserve her good mood. I remember a couple of Navjotes spent guzzling food served on the leaves of plantain trees, several Holis drenched in colour, and at least one visit to the giant prayer maidan on Big Eid [...]. I remember my friend sweet Neelam Nath, who grew up to die with her children in the Air-India crash off the Irish coast. I remember Jimmy King, with his pasty complexion and spiky black fringe; he died young, suddenly at school. [...] I remember a long, skinny boy clambering across the rocks at Scandal Point with his friends. [...] Gold Flake posters, the Royal Barber shop, the pungent mingled smells of putrefaction and hope. *Forget Mumbai. I remember Bombay.*<sup>18</sup> (emphasis mine)

---

<sup>18</sup> Salman Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) (London: Vintage, 2000) 157-8.

A crucial common feature of these novels, which hammers home the point about the relationship between language and the cosmopolitanism of the city, is their attention to the polyglossia of “Bombay.” In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie captures this in Umeed’s reflections on the integrity of this polyglossia in his relationship with Vina:

Because it was only me, she could prattle on in Bombay’s garbage argot, *Mumbai ki kachrapati baat-cheet*, in which a sentence could begin in one language, swoop through a second and even a third and then swing back round to the first. Our acronymic name for it was *Hug-me*. Hindi Urdu Gujarati Marathi English. Bombayites like me were people who spoke five languages badly and no language well.<sup>19</sup>

All the adherents of “Bombay” in Rushdie’s writing—from Vina, Umeed and Ormus in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, to Saleem Sinai in *Midnight’s Children* (1981) to Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* (1988) and Moraes Zogoiby in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995)— are identifiable as citizens of “Bombay” by the virtue of their polyglossia.

Perhaps even more overtly than Indian English literary fiction, the Bombay Hindi language cinema (referred to as Bollywood since the 1970s)<sup>20</sup> which is the vast film industry that has become synonymous with the city, manages to represent this tussle between the cosmopolitan and

---

<sup>19</sup> Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* 7.

<sup>20</sup> Vijay Mishra (2002) and Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2003), among others, trace the genealogy of the term “Bollywood,” in their respective works, to show how the term “Bollywood” is actually a 1990s phenomenon (though the name itself originates in the 1970s) whose emergence in the era of neoliberal reforms in India is barely deemed coincidental. See Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (New York: Routledge, 2002) and Ashish Rajadhyaksha, “The ‘Bollywoodisation’ of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.1: 25-39. Henceforth in this thesis, I will distinguish between the two by using “Bombay Cinema” for pre-1990s films and “Bollywood” for the films that were made after then.

polyglossic “Bombay” and the provincial, Marathi-speaking “Mumbai,” while holding the flag up for “Bombay,” through form as well as content. For example, it is no coincidence that the upholders of “Mumbai” are villainised in films such as *Bombay* (1995), *Kaminey* (2009), among others. To just elaborate on one of these films, the stand in *Kaminey* is even *against* the politics of the MNS. Vishal Bhardwaj significantly presents a Mumbai-based Hindu right-wing politician called Sunil Bhope, who seems largely modelled on the MNS leader, Raj Thackeray, as the main antagonist of the film.<sup>21</sup> Bhope’s assertions that “Mumbai” belongs foremost to Marathi speakers, his crusade to oust citizens who do not speak Marathi from the city and send them “back” to their states of origin, among other things, have many similarities with Bal and Raj Thackeray’s linguistic and ethnic cleansing campaigns in the city. Throughout the 1960s-70s, it is the Tamil-, Telugu-, Kannada-, and Malayalam-speaking South Indians who were foremost vilified by the Thackerays and their supporters. By 2008, the ire was being directed at the Hindi and Bhojpuri speakers from the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.<sup>22</sup> Bhope in *Kaminey* leads similar campaigns against such “alien” communities. A scene from the film dramatises this anti-immigration sentiment: on finding out that his sister, Sweety, is in love with one Guddu Sharma (a surname which immediately reveals that the latter is not an “indigenous” Maharashtrian—a fact that is underscored by his inability to speak Marathi) Bhope questions Guddu about when he moved to the city. On being told that it was his father who came to “Bombay” from north India,

---

<sup>21</sup> Raj Thackeray, in league with the *Shiv Sena*—which is led by his relative Bal Thackeray—had been elemental in the campaign that enforced the name change in 1995. See Hansen.

<sup>22</sup> Raj Thackeray’s tirade against north Indians has a long and lasting history. Hansen documents this campaign extensively in his book.

and that he himself was born in “Bombay,” Bhope flies into a rage and assaults Guddu, insisting the city is called “Mumbai.” Since it is fairly clear from the rest of the film that the film’s sympathy rests with Guddu, this tussle reveals Bollywood’s stance on the politics of “Bombay” and “Mumbai.” Nor is it an oversight on the behalf of the producers of Bollywood to have explicitly cosmopolitan and polyglossic characters use the name “Bombay” in their films. To hark back to the example set by the controversial *Wake Up Sid*, the character who uses the name “Bombay” in the film is the multilingual Aisha Banerjee (who speaks Hindi, English and Bengali). Aisha leaves her native “Calcutta”<sup>23</sup> to migrate to “Bombay” in pursuit of a professional career. Her preference of “Bombay” over the name “Mumbai” can therefore be read as a strategic step by the makers of *Wake Up Sid* to reveal their viewpoint on the linguistic politics of the city, through their choice of name.

So much for content, but in terms of form too, Bollywood’s support for “Bombay” is explicit. Though officially a label for the Hindi language film industry, Bombay cinema/Bollywood has actually been characterised by remarkable heteroglossic fluidity—not least because it stages the interaction of different registers and dialects within the orbit of Hindi itself. Several critics, including Jigna Desai (2012) have convincingly demonstrated how Bombay cinema achieves this heteroglossic quality. Desai proposes that these films

---

<sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that Aisha does not use “Kolkata” to refer to her home city, but uses the older name, “Calcutta” instead. The West Bengal government raised no known objection to this.

are intertextually related to each other and to other minor cinemas with which they align themselves; they also may respond to, mimic, and otherwise engage dominant cinemas. In this manner, many films are characterised by polyvocality, or in Bakhtinian terms *heteroglossia* in that they contain multiple speech and language types.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, from the moment of its inception, Bombay cinema has displayed an astonishingly supra-regional and integrative linguistic register, even just through manipulating Hindi. Codes switch depending on the subject matter, geographical placement, and even the social and economical background of the characters involved. From interspersing Hindi with high Urdu in films such as *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) and *Umrao Jaan* (1981) and with Sanskritised Hindi in films like *Chupke Chupke* (1975) and *Utsav* (1984); the integration of regional languages such as Bengali, Punjabi and Tamil in films like *Kahaani* (2012), *Rab Ne Bana di Jodi* (2008) and *Hum Hai Rahi Pyar Ke* (1993) to pidgins such as *Bombaiyya*<sup>25</sup> in which most of the dialogues of the *Munna Bhai* series (2003; 2006) are scripted, this cinema assimilates and showcases several of India's languages.

Along with being heteroglot, Bombay cinema/Bollywood—like Bombay itself—is polyglot. That is, the language of this cinema is not just multi-layered and hybridised *Hindi* (which Bakhtin would have marked out as “heteroglossia”) but languages in Bombay cinema/Bollywood also stage an awareness of linguistic differences and otherness, as in a polyglot

---

<sup>24</sup> Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (London: Routledge, 2004) 36.

<sup>25</sup> *Bombaiyya* is an argot associated with the cosmopolitan “Bombay,” which mixes English, Hindi, Marathi and a few other regional languages.

arrangement. Indeed, as well as mixing Hindi with other languages, these films also display and represent multiple Indian languages individually. For instance, it is not mandatory that a Hindi language film will have a *Hindi* speaker as its protagonist, or that the story will necessarily be set in Hindi-speaking regions. Guru Dutt's *Saheb Bibi Aur Ghulam* (1962) and Bimal Roy's *Devdas* (1955—remade by Sanjay Leela Bhansali in 2002) are iconic Hindi films set in Bengal where the main characters are “in fact” meant to be Bengali speakers. Akshay Kumar in *Singh is Kinng [sic.]* (2008) is meant to be a Punjabi speaker who lives in a small village in Punjab, and later moves to Australia where he presumably continues to speak Punjabi to the various émigrés from his village. Similarly, Amitabh Bachchan in *Sarkar* (2005) is meant to be a Marathi speaker from rural Maharashtra, who resides in Mumbai. The list can go on.

Even the cast and crew of those involved with this cinema very rarely consist of native Hindi speakers.<sup>26</sup> In *India After Gandhi* (2007) Ramachandra Guha uses the 1975 blockbuster, *Sholay*, as a study of pan-national and polyglossic collaborations in Bollywood:

Its director was a Sindhi, while its lyricist and one male lead were Punjabi. Other male leads were from Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and North West Frontier Province respectively. [...] Of the two female

---

<sup>26</sup> Among some of the most renowned contemporary actors are Vidya Balan and Katrina Kaif, who are native Tamil and English speakers respectively; Anurag Basu, Ashutosh Gowariker, Nagesh Kukunoor, who are among the most prolific directors, are Bengali, Marathi and Telugu speakers. Hindi cinema's beloved “nightingale,” the eminent singer, Lata Mangeshkar, is a native Marathi speaker. The celebrated lyricist, Gulzar, is a native Punjabi speaker who pens lyrics in Hindi (Sanskritised and otherwise), Urdu, Punjabi and English. A. R. Rahman, who produces music to accompany the films' ever-present songs (in Hindi or any other language), is a Tamil speaker.

leads, one was a Tamil, the other a Bengali domiciled in Madhya Pradesh. The music director was a Bengali—from Tripura.”<sup>27</sup>

Predictably, this heterogeneity has not sat very well with MNS, *Shiv Sena* and other Marathi supremacists who champion “Mumbai.” Tellingly, Karan Johar’s apology to Thackeray for *Wake Up Sid* was reported in *The Hindu* as “‘Bombay’ says sorry to ‘Mumbai’.”<sup>28</sup>

So what, in sum, does the above scenario point to? As the fictional representatives reveal, the line that divides “Bombay” from “Mumbai” tends to place cosmopolitanism and multilingualism on one side, and provincialism, monolingualism and ethno-regionalism /nationalism on the other. The different names here measure these perceived differences. What also emerges from all this is that the postcolonial controversy about the names of the cities, linguistic pride in singular *bhasha* languages and mistrust of multilingualism (under the pretence that it is alienating for the aboriginal people etc.) are in fact expressions of the greater conflicts that are fought over the “markers of Indian identity” and political organisation involving territory, community and ethnicity, among other things. Language itself is merely a front.

Bakhtin had proposed that each language reveals specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualising the world in words, specific world views, each characterised by its own objects, meanings, and values.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: History of the World’s Largest Democracy* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2007) 728.

<sup>28</sup> “Bombay says sorry to Mumbai”  
<<http://www.hindu.com/2009/10/03/stories/2009100356650100.htm>>.

<sup>29</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 291-2.

As seen with the MNS above, in India, the different linguistic “points of view” are often used for the political mobilisation of racial/ethnic regionalism or nationalism. That is, language does not so much subsume different kinds of social, cultural or political perspectives but instead gets exploited as a foundational category for specific social, cultural and political causes. Frantz Fanon had predicated this as being a problem pertinent to postcolonial nations, by suggesting that:

The language problems of each stage and kind of national integration (...) [become] a reflection of the unfinished business of each.<sup>30</sup>

In this thesis, I will illustrate how postcolonial India is an apt instance of a nation dealing with its “unfinished businesses” *through* language. These “unfinished businesses,” I will illustrate, are specifically related to the markers of Indian identity, namely nationality, religion, class and caste. And fiction (literature as well as films) has a crucial role here in registering, representing, and politicising the role of language in these conflicts—both through form, as well as by dramatising the topic of language within their content. In the rest of this introduction, I will discuss how Indian fictional narratives and their allied forms encapsulate the complex histories of nationalisms (in relation to nationality, religion class and caste) through the depiction and representation of language.

## **B. Indian Fiction and the Politics of Language**

If we follow Frederic Jameson’s hypothesis that “[a]ll third-world texts are necessarily [...] allegorical, and in a very specific way they are to be

---

<sup>30</sup> Frantz Fanon, “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness,” *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) 152.



read as [...] national allegories,”<sup>31</sup> we should not be surprised that the question of “language” is registered decisively by Indian literatures. Literary representations of the language wars in India often politicise languages according to sympathy and ideology of the author. For instance, early Indian English writing often showcases the civilisational triumph of English, such as in the poetry of Michael Madhusudan Dutt. In the following poem, written on 9 February 1843 (that is on the day of Dutt’s conversion to Christianity) Dutt is seen avowing the supremacy of all things English—notably the religion that they have introduced to him for sure, but also their language, which Dutt seems to see as being *as* elemental in granting him “freedom” (from the stifling confines of his ancestral languages?) and leading him to enlightenment. Hence in this poem, “O Lord” could both be a reference to Christianity, the religion introduced to Dutt by the English, as well as to the English language itself:

Long sunk in superstition’s night,  
By Sin and Satan driven,  
I saw not, cared not for the light  
That leads the blind to Heaven  
  
I sat in darkness, Reason’s eye  
Was shut, was closed in me,  
I hasten’d to eternity  
O’er Error’s dreadful sea:

---

<sup>31</sup> Frederic Jameson, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text* 15 (1986): 69.

But now, at length thy grace, O Lord!  
Birds all around me shine;  
I drink thy sweet, thy precious word,  
I kneel before thy shrine  
I've broken affection's tenderest ties  
For my blest Savior's sake  
All—all I love beneath the skies,  
Lord: I for thee forsake.<sup>32</sup>

Here, both the content (in praise of the brilliance of the English's culture, religion and language) and the form of the poem (which seeks to emulate the style of British Romantic poets) reflect Dutt's ideological sympathy with the English language. Indeed, the English language here becomes a touchstone of culture and civilisation for Dutt. Dutt's example illustrates the triumph of the colonial linguistic project—notably Thomas Babington Macaulay's vision of the role that the English language would play in India. First Baron Macaulay, then serving on the Supreme Council of India, had presented his (in)famous "Minute on Indian Education" in 1835, advocating for the introduction of the English language as the teaching medium in all tertiary institutions. Macaulay had in fact upheld the English language as the educational zenith, arguing that he had never come across any arrangement or system that could rival English language education.<sup>33</sup> Through his

---

<sup>32</sup> Michael Madhusudan Dutt, qtd. in Sujit Bose, *Michael: His English Literature* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2007) 43.

<sup>33</sup> T. B. Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) *Speeches by Lord Macaulay, with his "Minute on Indian Education,"* introd. and notes, G. M. Young (London: Humphrey Milford-Oxford UP, n.d.) 349.

reverence of the English language, Dutt seems to subscribe to a similar view in his earlier writing.

Conversely, some *bhasha* literatures of the colonial period acknowledged this conflict with English but came down firmly on the side of the Indian languages. In Rabindranath Tagore's *Nastanirh* (1901, later translated into English as *The Broken Nest*) the protagonist Charulata, is marked by her passion for Bengali literature. She is both an avid reader of Bengali literature, and later becomes an acclaimed writer herself. But her husband Bhupati, owner of an English language newspaper, is concerned by what he sees as the inferior quality of Charulata's preferred medium. He therefore requests his cousin Amal to inculcate her with a taste for "higher" (read: English) literature:

Amal, it would be an excellent thing if you could manage to study with her a little. If you would translate English poetry and read it to her once in a while, it would do her good and be enjoyable, too. Charu really has a taste for literature.<sup>34</sup>

However, while Charulata goes on to be celebrated regionally and nationally on the publication of her own Bengali work, Bhupati has to close his English language newspaper down. Bhupati's failure with his newspaper is full of significance. Firstly, it needs to be emphasised that, despite being written in the English language, Bhupati's paper is marked by its *nationalist* sympathies. Bhupati seeks to gear his newspaper in service of "The Common Man," after whom the paper is named, and his involvement with the English

---

<sup>34</sup> Rabindranath Tagore, *Nashtanirh* [*The Broken Nest*], trans. Mary M. Lago and Surpiya Bari (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1971) 45.

language is therefore not of the same nature as, for example, Dutt's, discussed above.<sup>35</sup> His intention of using the English language is in view of *subverting* the hegemony of the English. And yet, as Mary Lago points out, though

Bhupati's journalistic venture is part of this manifestation of new national feeling, [...] no one was ever less suited by temperament and training to cope with the realities of political journalism than the naïve, good-hearted Bhupati. His newspaper is his plaything. Mercifully, Tagore does not provide samples of Bhupati's editorial prose, but one may safely guess that the Government of India saw in it no threat to the Empire.<sup>36</sup>

The English language, even when wielded as a tool *against* the empire, is therefore shown by Tagore to be inefficient and ineffectual. Having failed with the English language, towards the end of the novel Bhupati tries to reach out to his wife through the Bengali literature that she cherishes. But, as Charulata's reaction to his prose reveals, he is shown to fail there too, since he neither has the vocabulary nor the requisite knowledge. Bhupati's compositions in Bengali elicit the following reaction from Charulata:

She read it. She laughed a little at the style and the subject. Alas! Charu was making such an effort to worship her husband; why did he scatter the votive offerings so childishly? Why did he try so hard to get plaudits from her? If he did nothing at all [...] it would have been

---

<sup>35</sup> Tagore 78.

<sup>36</sup> Lago, introduction, Tagore 8.

easier for Charu to worship her husband. She wished wholeheartedly that he would not do anything to belittle himself before her.<sup>37</sup>

The adherent of English, even when “converted” to *bhasha*, is here shown to be risible. Hence, in their contrasting ways, both Dutt and Tagore illustrate how Indian writers of the colonial and imperial eras could use the language tussles to make particular claims regarding their own status as writers in their oeuvres.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, English language was no longer in conflict with the classical Indian languages, but with Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani (which were also involved in the contest for the status of the “national” language of India). While certain sections of Indians supported the English language’s “unifying” powers, adjudging it to be in the position to end conflicts even within India, a larger lobby objected to its “oppressive foreign” presence. For example, as I will discuss in further detail later, Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari and Abdul Kalam Azad were among those who maintained that it was the English language that was in the best position to act as a national lynchpin, in so far that it had percolated throughout India as the language of British administration during colonisation.<sup>38</sup> But the lobby formed by the conservative Purushottam Das Tandon (henceforth P. D. Tandon) among others, radically rejected the retention of the English language. The disagreement with English was not only a reflection of their nationalist commitment, but revolved around class and caste privileges. Even the socialist politician Ram Manohar Lohia militated against the

---

<sup>37</sup> Tagore 94.

<sup>38</sup> See pages 87-9 for the more detailed discussion on this topic.

English language because he believed that English was not only an anti-national language, but it was also an elite class marker:

In our own country, I feel [...] as if we have been evicted from our fields and homes, and that some intruder has usurped the lands and we, the real occupants, are thrown out wringing our hands helplessly in despair. [...] Sitting tight on the high pedestal of offices the top-men advocate a “go-slow” policy regarding the removal of English. Having been deprived of all our belongings, we have become strangers in our own homes.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time Neeladri Bhattacharya has argued that these agitations of Lohia and Tandon, among others, were not entirely selfless either. Bhattacharya maintains that behind their opposition of the English language lay the interests of a “self-seeking upper-caste local elite desperate to exercise national dominance.”<sup>40</sup> As I will show later, the strongest contender for the position of the English language was Hindi—but even this Hindi was strategic, as the kind of Hindi that was proposed was a specific version of the language which would ensure the hegemony of the high caste Hindu at national level.

Elsewhere, supporters agitated for Urdu and Hindustani on a large scale too, with Urdu supporters rooting for the authentic Indian roots of the language. Z. A. Ahmad, for example, argued for Urdu’s characteristic pan-Indian representativeness, affirming that Urdu was an autochthonously

---

<sup>39</sup> Ram Manohar Lohia, “Banish English,” *Language* (Hyderabad: Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyalaya Nyas, 1986) 10.

<sup>40</sup> Neeladri Bhattacharya, Preface, *Hindi Nationalism*, by Alok Rai xi.

Indian language since it had imbued the history of India's several transnational encounters:

Urdu...is a language which represents a unique synthesis of that culture which, during the last six or seven centuries, has grown out of the common hopes, achievements, struggles, joys and sorrows of the Hindus and Muslims of this land. It is basically an Indian language...<sup>41</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru—who upheld Urdu as his mother tongue—vouched for the indigenusness of Urdu in the following words: “Urdu, except for its script, is of the very soil of India and has no place outside India.”<sup>42</sup> Urdu had been the lingua franca of India for a long time, under Mughal rule, as pointed out by Asaf Ali—and the case was thus made that its retention as national language would be relatively easy, since it had already served in a similar capacity under a prior government.<sup>43</sup> But anti-Urdu elements objected to Urdu because of its communal affiliation with a minority community, and afterwards for its national affiliation with a country born after secession from India (that is, Pakistan). As I will elaborate in Chapter 1, Hindustani too bore the brunt of this association, due to the copious presence of Urdu vocabulary in the language. Through various such scenarios (which will be discussed in detail throughout this thesis) it becomes clear how the conflicts of languages were in fact a microcosmic representation of the kinds of crisis of identity around nationalism, religion, class and caste that India was and continues to be riven with, as a nation.

---

<sup>41</sup> Z. A. Ahmad, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Nehru, “The Question of Language” 246.

<sup>43</sup> Asaf Ali, in Z. A. Ahmad 158.

I argue here that language is implicitly linked to various political and social issues in India, and it is for this very reason that postcolonial Indian literature and films focus so much on the subject of language. Indeed, it is arguable that language is at the very core of what have become canonical novels and films of postcolonial India. For the purpose of illustration, I will focus on two specific novels which have been celebrated for their deft treatment of the subject of language throughout the thesis, notably Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (which encompasses a time frame that stretches from 1915 to 1977) and Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993, which spans the two years leading on to India's first General Elections in 1952). All the major elements of India's "language wars"—the question of India's national language, debates about official state languages, the division of India into states along linguistic lines, the identitarian significance of language—percolate into the narratives of both these novels. For example, in *A Suitable Boy*, parliamentarians of the fictional Purva Pradesh (which can here safely be interpreted as a representative of newly independent India—or at the very least, north India) debate on the Hindi Language Bill which seeks to formalise Hindi as the official language of the state. This is a reflection of such debates being fought at state and national level through the rest of the country. Hindi's strongest opponent, in Purva Pradesh, is Urdu, which—as we learn through the rest of the narrative—is being alienated and "de-nationalised" by certain Indian (mostly Hindu) nationalists—such as L. N. Agarwal—who seek to associate the language solely with Pakistan and the Muslim community. However, other Indian (here also Hindu—albeit a sceptic one) nationalists, such as Mahesh Kapoor,



stake a claim to Urdu, hence complicating the attempt at stream-lining the language with a particular religion and nation. Elsewhere, the authenticity, national credentials and class affinity of the English language are debated by various characters with different sympathies—including university academics who teach English (Pran Kapoor), English language Indian writers (Amit Chatterji), sworn Anglophiles (Arun Mehra) and anti-English nationalists (L. N. Agarwal, Begum Abida Khan). In *Midnight's Children* too, the language question is key, with the politics of the division of states along the lines of language occupying central stage in the narrative, and with language often being used as a measure for determining class and region-based identities. As I will illustrate later, the English language, Urdu, and the “Bombay” argot spoken by several of the principal characters in the novel are dramatised and reflect significantly on the politics depicted in *Midnight's Children*.

Benita Parry has pointed out that it is not necessary for the content of historical novels and the reality that they depict to be contingent:

Because fiction by working on ideology can reinvent, defamiliarise or undermine authorised versions, the uncertainty which is discernible in colonial writings should be read as a troubled response to a condition but not as testimony to the events of a historical moment with which it can be discontinuous.<sup>44</sup>

And yet, the significance of language issue in both of these novels is revealing of how *postcolonial* Indian English fiction needs to hark back to

---

<sup>44</sup> Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930* (London: Verso, 1998) 11.

the question of language—not *only* because the novel is by nature bound to “orchestrate all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types [...] and by the differing voices that flourish under such conditions”<sup>45</sup>—but because of the *centrality* of the topic of language to the conflicts that define the condition of the nation. In maintaining this, I follow Srivastava, who writes that *Midnight’s Children* and *A Suitable Boy* are “specific responses to India’s ‘present needs.’”<sup>46</sup> Thus, the reason why Indian English fiction writers and filmmakers incorporate *bhasha* languages is not only because they want to differentiate Indian English from other types of English by “chutnifying” the language<sup>47</sup> and writing an exotic *masala* fiction, nor because these novels are often written about people who are “originally” meant to be speaking *bhashas*, nor even just because English is surrounded by these languages and therefore feels the need to parade them. The more crucial intention of the politicisation of the subject of language in postcolonial fiction, and the representation of *bhashas* in English writing and films, and of English in *bhashas* (and of *bhashas* in other *bhashas*—though this aspect will be of lesser importance to our discussions here) is because the dynamic between these various languages encapsulates the

---

<sup>45</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 263.

<sup>46</sup> Srivastava, *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English* 4.

<sup>47</sup> The term “chutnification” was coined by Salman Rushdie in *Midnight’s Children*, referring to the historiographic metafictional narrative of the novel. The term has now evolved to describe the way in which the English language gets hybridised by importing syntax, words and variants from the *bhasha* languages into it—hence pointedly setting it against the standard English, which was imposed as the “norm” by the creators of the English language (who are, in this case, also the colonial masters of India).

complex histories of nationalisms in India—and hence is a core element of postcolonial India itself.

### C. Thesis Structure

The postcolonial literary debate about nationalism is often structured around the relationship between English and the *bhasha* languages. Rashmi Sadana in her article titled “A Suitable Text for a Vegetarian Audience: Questions of Authenticity and the Politics of Translation” (2007) cites the case of Marathi-turned-English language writer Kiran Nagarkar to illustrate how many in the *bhasha* literary world reacted aversely to Nagarkar’s decision to switch between the languages by interpreting it as a deliberate affront to Indian nationalism. Sadana surmises:

Nagarkar’s predicament [...] is a fairly straightforward example of the way literary writing in English is seen not only as being less authentic than vernacular or *bhasha* literatures, but also more specifically, as a betrayal of a particular linguistic community by one of its own. Writing in two languages raises important questions of readership, audience, and community that ultimately destabilise singular notions of identity and cultural authenticity. [...] (F)rom the purview of most *bhasha* literary communities, to write in English is to reject willingly (and perhaps wilfully) part of one’s Indianness.<sup>48</sup>

Conversely, the postcolonial English literary world has also staked claims for nationalist credentials. Thus Rushdie, in his now infamous

---

<sup>48</sup> Rashmi Sadana, “A Suitable Text for a Vegetarian Audience,” *Public Culture* 19.2 (2007): 309.

introduction to *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing: 1947-1997* (1997)

writes:

[T]he prose writing—both fiction and non-fiction—created in this period by Indian writers working in English, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the sixteen “official languages” of India, the so-called “vernacular languages” during the same time.<sup>49</sup>

Riding high on the success of the Indian English novel on the global stage, Rushdie’s claim seems to rest on the assurance that him and his peers are the “bona fide cultural representatives [of India]...simultaneously rewarded for their democratic worldview and for their emplacement within set hierarchies of metropolitan cultural taste.”<sup>50</sup>

Though both of the examples I have used above are borrowed from recent history, their lineage has to be traced back to the nationalism of the colonial and imperial eras. And while I do not seek to examine the fictional representation of languages in popular and literary cultural forms as historical source material here, I maintain that the representation of these debates across a wide range of literary and popular culture is key to understanding whether such political debates received any credence in cultural discourse—or whether there was a strong enough cultural movement to counter certain of these political trends. With this in mind, in my first chapter I analyse how the unresolved question of national language, which takes shape in the pre-independence nationalist period, is

---

<sup>49</sup> Rushdie, introduction, *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997*, ed. Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West (London: Vintage, 1997) x.

<sup>50</sup> Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001) 62.

consequently played out in some of the most significant cultural moments in postcolonial India—and how these moments are subsequently varyingly represented in literary fiction in the different languages of India—both in their form and content. Methodologically, I combine close attention to literary form and generic conventions with extensive archival research to study the political scenario alongside their representation, via language, in literary and popular culture. I here examine, in particular, parliamentary reports, political speeches and publications from that time (that is, pre- and immediately post-independence) in order to show not only how popular culture responds to broad movements of its time, but also how literature and films participate in the circulation of the particular collective concerns and ideological arguments about national language and the division of India across linguistic lines. This is a concern that occupies the rest of my chapters too, and when in the second chapter I analyse Seth's *A Suitable Boy* alongside its Hindi translation, I study it against the background of the 1980s/1990s linguistic politics of the right-wing, which was on the rise at the time. In this chapter, I illustrate how Seth's novel is a comprehensive reflection on the formative moments of the communalisation of language in India, even while, as Srivastava shows, it does so from a secular perspective.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, I show the ways in which the Hindi translation of the same novel, by Gopal Gandhi (1998) seems to serve a different god. I have picked the translation as a comparative study in this chapter because it is among the most effective demonstrations of the

---

<sup>51</sup> Discussing *A Suitable Boy* along with some other contemporaneous novels, including *Midnight's Children*, *A Fine Balance*, *The Shadow Lines* and *The Great Indian Novel*, Srivastava observes how these novels are "secular narratives of the nation-state, with strong ideas of what it means to be secular in India today." Srivastava 6.

diverse politics of language. In this case, I illustrate how English and Hindi end up rendering contradictory versions of the same text. In the last chapter, I explore the historic form of the class-caste-language yoke in India by studying linguistic conflicts as they occur even in relation to the same language. I analyse the case of the English language to show how some of the different causes that the language gets appropriated for sometimes sets English *against* itself on the basis of class and caste. In this chapter, I use more recent films from Bollywood, as well as the novels of Amitav Ghosh (and especially his *Sea of Poppies* [2008] and *River of Smoke* [2011]) and the poems of the Dalit writer Meena Kandasamy, to analyse this varying antagonisms concerning the existence of the English language in India.

“Nationalism,” “religion,” “class and caste:” these three frames, which I earlier identified as the most momentous unresolved issues in postcolonial India (in Fanon’s terms, they are among India’s “unfinished businesses”) are then the focus of each of my three chapters. In looking at these issues *through* the prism of language, my study seeks to establish that no question of language in India is ever “self-contained.” Language problems in India capture some of the more significant moments in the history of postcolonial India that are often only tenuously linked to the question of language and linguistics.

# CHAPTER 1

## NATION AND NATIONALISM

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

—“The Tower of Babel,” *Genesis* 11: 1-9.

This chapter examines the unique connection that exists in India between multi-lingualism, nation and nationalism. I say unique because India is probably the only country in the world to have survived independence and existed as a nation for 66 years with 22 official languages, but *no national* language, despite strong lobbies that have activated for a language-based, monolingual, nationalism (at national and sub-national level) from the time of the struggle for independence onward. In my analysis here, I mostly trace back and ascribe the credit for the success of this scenario to the language policies and linguistic values espoused by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Due to the proximity of India with the Soviet Union at the time of the independence, and especially due to Nehru's own regard for the linguistic politics of the Lenin-led Soviet Union,<sup>52</sup> its language policies and take on the question of national language will here

---

<sup>52</sup> See Robert King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1997).

act as a foil to generate my discussions on the language policies of post-independence India. I will however also refer heavily to the dictum of the “fathers” of European linguistic nationalism—notably Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Johann Gottfried Herder and Jean-Jacques Rousseau—who will be shown as having exerted a great influence on several nationalists activating for the establishment of a national language for India. In my final analysis here, I will however demonstrate how the Indian linguistic scenario that officially prevailed eventually veered *away* from the European model. Having evaluated the different positions occupied by politicians on this subject (especially Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, P. D. Tandon Ram Manohar Lohia, Raja Rajagopalachari and Nehru) I will examine how Indian fiction (especially, but not uniquely, in the English language) reflects and refracts these debates. I will also discuss how Indian fiction registers the question of linguistic nationalism by displaying its awareness of the iconicity of language in relation to nationalism, without however adopting this rigid linguistic nationalism in its form. I round up my discussion by showing the avant-gardism of Nehru’s language politics, and illustrate how his linguistic values only find a home in the generation of the Indian English writers of the 1980-1990s. Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy*, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Anita Desai’s *In Custody* (1984) are at the core of my analysis, though my discussion will also be aided by references to literatures from other eras (such as Bankim Chandra Chatterji’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* [1864], Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* [1938], and the writings of R. K. Narayan), as well other languages (such as Hindi poetry, prose and critical writing, Tamil and Telugu songs, as well as Bollywood films).



## 1.1. Language and the “Nation” Question

In his 1913 pamphlet titled “Marxism and the National Question,” Josef Stalin emphasised the centrality of language—expressly, *one* common language—to the formation of nations:

A national community is inconceivable without a common language. [...] [A] *common language* is one of the characteristic features of a nation. [...] There is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages. [...] *A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.*<sup>53</sup>

To put Stalin’s intervention in context, this pamphlet was written before the formation of the Soviet Union, with the encouragement of Vladimir Lenin. Lenin had advised Stalin to seek inspiration from the Austrian Socialist Party’s discussions on the multi-linguistic formation of the Austro-Hungarian empire in order to garner some ideas for forming their own policies.<sup>54</sup> For the Austrian Socialists, the struggle had been to transform the empire into a democratic federation of nationalities, so as to achieve the cultural and linguistic autonomy of each region.<sup>55</sup> Following an assessment of this system, Stalin’s article sought to lay the cultural foundation for a model that would comprise the union of the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual federated provinces, under the umbrella of the future Soviet state.

---

<sup>53</sup> J. V. Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question” (1913) *J. V. Stalin, Works*, vol. 2 1907-13 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1953) 307.

<sup>54</sup> See Helen Rappaport, *Josef Stalin: A Biographical Companion* (California: ABC Clío, 1999) 178.

<sup>55</sup> See Tony Cliff, “Lenin and the National Question,” *All Power to the Soviets: Lenin 1914-1917* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2004) 53-64.

It is important to emphasise that, for Stalin, language was by no means the sole determining factor. As he admits himself, language was merely *one* of the factors required in the making of the nation:

[T]here is in fact no *single* distinguishing characteristic of a nation. There is only a sum total of characteristics, of which, when nations are compared, sometimes one characteristic (national character), sometimes another (language), or sometimes a third (territory, economic conditions), stands out in sharper relief. A nation constitutes the combination of all these characteristics taken together.<sup>56</sup>

And yet, Stalin also warned that the *absence* of a common language was enough to impede the process of nation-formation:

It is possible to conceive of people with a common territory and economic life who nevertheless would not constitute a single nation because they have no common language and no common “national character.” Such, for instance, are the Germans and Letts in the Baltic region.<sup>57</sup>

Several years later, Benedict Anderson would gloss this as language’s ability to foster an “imagined community,” claiming that, “(f)rom the start nation was conceived in language, not in blood”<sup>58</sup>—a statement which I am prone to agree with, given the number of national boundaries that were drawn to coincide with linguistic boundaries, in a common quirk of the past century.

---

<sup>56</sup> Stalin 311.

<sup>57</sup> Stalin 307-8.

<sup>58</sup> Anderson 149.

In this way, Stalin's pamphlet had very much been a product of its own age. His thoughts reflected the general trend that had taken in its sweep a large part of nineteenth century Europe. Indeed, the nationalist ideology that was formed within the context of imperialism and the *longue durée* of capitalism at that time often declared itself precisely through this distinctive conjoining of nation and language.<sup>59</sup> The European Romantic nationalists and philosophers of the nineteenth century, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Johann Gottfried Herder and Jean-Jacques Rousseau provided the groundwork and prelude to Stalin. Long before Stalin wrote his pamphlet, these philosophers had theorised the relationship between language, nation and nationalism. Fichte, for instance, had proposed that the possession of a common language should be a sufficient ground for acknowledging a people as a single nation. In his 1806 address, "To the German Nation," he used commonality of language as a criterion for advocating the unification of Germany:

Those who speak the same language are already, before all human art, joined together by mere nature with a multitude of invisible ties; they understand one another and are able to communicate ever more clearly; they belong together and are naturally one, an indivisible whole.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> For example, see Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1944) and *Prelude to Nation States* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1967).

<sup>60</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Contents of the Thirteenth Address: Continuation of the Reflections Already Begun" (1806) *Fichte: Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. Gregory Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008) 166.

Developing this further, Herder argued that language was “the natural lifeblood of human culture and social demeanour in all its forms,”<sup>61</sup> and it followed from this that the language of a people (or the *Volk*, as he called them) was therefore the most “natural” type of language:

We think in language, whether we are explaining what is present or seeking what is not present. [...] Hence each nation speaks in accordance to its thoughts and thinks in accordance to its speech. However different was the viewpoint from which the nation took cognisance of a matter, the nation named the matter.<sup>62</sup>

Elsewhere on the continent, Rousseau too accepted the proposition that languages mirrored the character of the people who speak it:

Minds are formed by languages; the thoughts take on the colour of the idioms. Only reason is common; in each language, the mind has its particular form. This is a difference which might very well be part of the cause or the effect of national characters; and what appears to confirm this conjecture is that in all nations of the world language follows the vicissitudes of morals and is preserved or degenerates as they do.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, this equation made between “natural” language, people and nations is evident and constant in most of the nationalist tumult that gripped Europe throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Karel

---

<sup>61</sup> John H. Moran and Alexander Gode, introduction, *Two Essays: On the Origin of Language*, by Jean Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1966) v.

<sup>62</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) 49-50.

<sup>63</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: Or, On Education* (1762) trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979) 109.

Havlicek Borovsky's passionate appeal in 1848 for the consolidation of Czech "nationhood," the campaigns for the formal unification of Germany by Otto von Bismarck, and the renegotiation of national frontiers within Europe following the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 are all cases in point. In each of these instances, language was a decisive factor in demarcating the new territorial borders in these self-avowedly nationalist projects. D. A. Rustow summarises the force of this idea very aptly by writing that "in the heyday of European nationalism from 1848 to 1919, language was more frequently invoked than any other criterion" to define and determine nationality.<sup>64</sup> Robert King takes this a step ahead by claiming that, with time, the language factor had in fact become the *norm* for European nationalism: "By the first quarter of the twentieth century any other way of drawing national boundaries would have seemed queer, perverse, ahistorical."<sup>65</sup>

But Europe was not the only place that was gripped by these trends. With the expansion of international travel, trade, and conquest in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these ideas also found their ways to other countries across the world. The various colonies of European countries became obvious recipients of the ideas prevalent in their respective "mother countries" (to use Fanon's term for the colonising nation).<sup>66</sup> It is therefore hardly surprising that at a time when Europe was forming and consolidating its national identities over language, the Indian subcontinent too awakened to the functionality of language as a "weapon," and began to incorporate it in the nationalist struggle.

---

<sup>64</sup> D. A. Rustow, *A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernisation* (Washington: The Brookings Inst., 1967) 47.

<sup>65</sup> King 26.

<sup>66</sup> See Fanon, "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" 119-65.

## 1.2. Linguistic Nationalism in the Indian Subcontinent

When Abdul Haq—Urdu scholar and linguist, who was also known as *Baba-e-Urdu*, or the “Father of Urdu”—announced, retrospectively, in 1961, that “Pakistan was not created by Jinnah, nor was it created by Iqbal; it was Urdu that created Pakistan,” he seems to have inherited the linguistic ideology of European nationalism.<sup>67</sup> Though the new nation—geographically split into East and West Pakistan by the looming presence of India—was seemingly defined by religion (Pakistan was even officially declared the *Islamic Republic of Pakistan* under the Constitution of 1956)—language played no minor role in its creation. Organisations such as *Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu*, established by Haq himself for the promotion of the Urdu language and literature, were at the forefront of the politics of separatism, and the Urdu language got projected as a principal agent in the creation of the proposed state of Pakistan.<sup>68</sup> In the years leading to partition, the *Anjuman* became a close ally of the Muslim League (the political party which militated for the creation of Pakistan). The momentous break occurred in 1936, following a fateful confrontation between M. K. Gandhi and Haq, over Gandhi’s decision to chair the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* (an association founded by P. D. Tandon in 1910 for the promotion of the Hindi language and literature). Haq declared: “If he [that is Gandhi] cannot let go of Hindi, we cannot let go of Urdu either”<sup>69</sup>—hence spelling out the Hindi-Urdu/Hindu-Muslim/India-Pakistan divide that would contribute towards

---

<sup>67</sup> Abdul Haq, qtd. in Amrit Rai 264.

<sup>68</sup> Harish Trivedi “The Progress of Hindi Part 2: Hindi and the Nation,” *Literary Culture in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (California: U of California P, 2003) 966.

<sup>69</sup> Haq, qtd. in Trivedi, Pollock 977.

the so-called “Two Nations” theory. In 1944, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, commonly known as *Qaid-e-Azam*, or the “Founder of the Nation” of Pakistan, wrote to M. K. Gandhi the following lines underscoring this association between language, literature, and nationhood:

We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition, or test, of a nation. We [that is, Muslims] are a nation of a hundred million, and what is more, we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilisation, *language* and literature.<sup>70</sup> (emphasis mine)

Following up on this, once Pakistan was created, Jinnah proclaimed in true Herderian fashion:

There can [...] only be one lingua franca, that is, the language for inter-communication between the various provinces of the State, and that language should be Urdu and cannot be any other. The State language, therefore, must obviously be Urdu.<sup>71</sup>

The attempts of the Pakistani nationalists to emphasise the Pakistan-Urdu paradigm were mirrored by sectors within the Indian nationalist movement too, for whom the Urdu language had become metonymic with Pakistan (both before partition—with the appropriation of Urdu by the Muslim League—and especially after partition, with the officialisation of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan). Among others, prominent leaders of the Congress Party opposed the presence and use of Urdu in India. P. D. Tandon, who led the Congress wing opposing Urdu, argued that there should be

---

<sup>70</sup> Philip Oldenburg, “A Place Insufficiently Imagined:” Language, Belief, and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44.4 (1985) 717.

<sup>71</sup> Oldenburg 716.

complete congruence between the political and cultural identities of a nation, and since Pakistan claimed Urdu as its natural or organic language, Urdu could have no place in India.<sup>72</sup>

Such sentiments were often re-expressed with pedagogic force in didactic poetry for the children of the new nation, published in magazines such as *Balsakha*:

पाकिस्तानी उर्दू छोड़ो, हिन्दुस्तानी हिन्दी सीखो;

अपनी भाषा रीति-नीति को अपनाओ, हिन्दू से दिखो।<sup>73</sup>

Renounce Pakistani Urdu, learn Hindustani [Indian] Hindi;

Adopt your language, customs and ethics, look like a Hindu.

(translation mine)

In Tandon's view, even traces and fragments of Urdu could not be tolerated in independent India. As I mentioned briefly in the introduction earlier, Hindustani, the language that Nehru had described as the "golden mean between Hindi and Urdu,"<sup>74</sup> and of which another Congress Party politician, Zakir Hussain, claimed that "(i)t is the hallmark of Hindustani that neither those who speak Urdu nor those who speak Hindi should be able to find fault with it,"<sup>75</sup> attracted the wrath of the Tandonites for its inclusion of Urdu grammar and vocabulary. At one point in history, Hindustani could boast of being the language with the highest number of speakers in India. Granville Austin writes of it:

---

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

<sup>73</sup> *Balsakha* (Feb. 1948) qtd. in Krishna Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991) 153.

<sup>74</sup> Nehru, "The Question of Language" 245.

<sup>75</sup> Zakir Hussain, *National Language for India: A Symposium*, ed. Z. A. Ahmad (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1941) 98.



Gandhi claimed in 1928 that one hundred and twenty million persons spoke Hindustani and that eighty million more understood it. Nehru used the same figures in 1937. These estimates, in the light of the 1931 census, appear to be somewhat high, but nevertheless Hindustani speakers outnumbered Tamil speakers (twenty million) six to one and Bengali speakers (fifty-three million, halved by Partition) by more than two to one.<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, in the north Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, in the 1920s and 1930s, Hindi and Urdu were not even demarcated as separate languages, but instead classed together as “Hindustani.” Paul Brass writes: “In Uttar Pradesh, the census reported the absurdity that 99.75% and 99.68% of the population in 1921 and 1931 respectively spoke the same mother tongue, arbitrarily defined as ‘Hindustani.’”<sup>77</sup> And yet, after partition, Hindustani was barely acknowledged as a language in its own right. Brass continues with an analysis of the census figures in the first two decades following independence:

In 1951, the census authorities once again reverted to enumerating and recording Hindi and Urdu separately. In Uttar Pradesh, the consequence of this decision in 1951 was that there was a three-way division in the census returns, with 79.82% reported as returning Hindi, 6.80% returning Urdu, and 10.67% returning Hindustani. [...]

In 1961, when the instructions to the enumerators were the same as

---

<sup>76</sup> Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 273.

<sup>77</sup> Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974) 195.

in 1951, the Hindustani speakers practically disappeared, only 0.1% being so recorded.<sup>78</sup>

As Hindi and Urdu diverged, owing to perceived separate national appurtenances, Hindustani disappeared. Consequently, after 1961, Hindustani even ceased to be included as a category in any Indian national census. There are no current records of Hindustani in any official capacity. Nor has Hindustani figured as one of the official languages of India after independence. The Congress Party politician from South India, K. Santhanam, confessed to Granville Austin in a private interview: “If there had been no Partition, Hindustani would without doubt have been the national language [...] but the anger against Muslims turned against Urdu. [...] Hindustani became a bad word after Partition.”<sup>79</sup>

This equation of Urdu with Pakistan haunted the Indian literary sphere for several decades after the partition. Urdu writers in India, who were especially affected by this “alienation,” often mourned the consequences of this logic. In 1968, the Hindi and Urdu poet Sahir Ludhianvi wrote a poem titled “Jashn-e-Ghalib” (“The Celebration of Ghalib”) following a sudden decision by the Indian government to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the famous Urdu poet, Mirza Ghalib. In this poem, Ludhianvi lamented the Indian government’s early language policy, which had helped in estranging Urdu nationally in the first place:

जिन शहरों में गूंजी थी ग़ालिब की नवा बरसों  
उन शहरों में आज उर्दू बेनाम-ओ-निशान ठहरी।

---

<sup>78</sup> Brass 195.

<sup>79</sup> K. Santhanam, quoted in Austin 277.

आज़ादी-ए-क़ामिल का एलान हुआ जिस दिन,

मातृब ज़बान ठहरी, गद्दार ज़बान ठहरी।<sup>80</sup>

In the cities where Ghalib's voice echoed for ages

In those cities Urdu has become traceless today,

From the day when the attainment of independence was announced,

It became an oppressed language, a traitor language. (translation mine)

Anita Desai's 1984 novel, *In Custody*, does a comprehensive representation of the "Pakistanisation" of the Urdu language in post-partition India. The disputed status of Urdu in India is a recurrent concern in this novel. In the course of a conversation between two aficionados of Urdu, the status of the language in India is likened to cashew nuts: "Like cashew nuts? [...] Yes, Urdu is becoming a rarity—it is only grown for export. To Pakistan, or to the Gulf."<sup>81</sup> In a more brutal assessment of the situation, the characters in the novel even pronounce the Urdu language as being "dead" in India, and this "death" of Urdu is blamed on the birth of Pakistan: "Urdu is supposed to have died [in India] in 1947. What you see in the universities—in some universities, a few of them only—is its ghost, wrapped in a shroud,"<sup>82</sup> laments an Indian enthusiast of the Urdu language. The Urdu poet Nur (whose fame, at the time when the novel is set, is waning) claims to epitomise the death of Urdu in India. Nur calls himself the corpse of Urdu. He says to Deven (who has come to interview him on behalf of a magazine which is planning to publish a special issue on Urdu poetry in India):

---

<sup>80</sup> Sahir Ludhianvi, "Jashn-e-Ghalib" (1968) *Aao ki Koi Khwaab Bune* (New Delhi: Hindi Book Centre, 2007) 21.

<sup>81</sup> Anita Desai, *In Custody* (London: Heinemann: 1984) 97.

<sup>82</sup> Desai 56.

“How can there be Urdu poetry when there is no Urdu language left? It is dead, finished. [...] So now you see its corpse lying here, waiting to be buried.” He tapped his chest with one finger.<sup>83</sup>

Nur’s decrepit life and the fading glory of his art are then inseparable from the deplorable fate of the language which he claims to embody. Other characters in the novel, such as Abid Siddiqui, the head of the Urdu department in Mirpore University, confirm Urdu’s demise in India. Of Siddiqui, Desai writes:

[T]he head of the Urdu department, Abid Siddiqui who, in keeping with the size and stature of that department, was a small man, whose youthful face was prematurely topped with a plume of white hair as if to signify the doomed nature of his discipline.<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, this “Pakistanisation” of Urdu lies at the root of the angst and frustration felt by the main protagonist, Deven, in Desai’s novel. Even in the India of the 1980s, that is four decades after the partition of the country, Deven cannot express his passion for the Urdu language due to his (perceived) obligations as a lecturer of Hindi language and literature, as well as his demarcation as a Hindu. Both the proponents of Urdu (including Nur himself) as well as its opponents (such as Deven’s superior Trivedi, who is the Head of Department of Hindi at the University of Mirpore) look with suspicion at Deven’s admiration for the Urdu language and its literary culture. Trivedi duly accuses Deven of being a “traitor” to India.<sup>85</sup> Thus, throughout the novel, Desai aptly portrays how Urdu in India had become

---

<sup>83</sup> Desai 42.

<sup>84</sup> Desai 96.

<sup>85</sup> Desai 145.

the language “that had become doomed the day Muslims departed across the newly-drawn border to the new country of Pakistan.”<sup>86</sup>

As for the status of the Urdu language within Pakistan, the language had become so deeply entrenched in the national identity that challenging its hegemony was nigh impossible. In response to the demands from the (then) East Pakistan that Bengali be made a State language too, Jinnah declared, in a speech given on 21 March 1948 in Dacca (now Dhaka):

Let me tell you in the clearest language that there is no truth that your normal life is going to be touched or disturbed as far as your Bengali language is concerned. But let me make it clear to you that the State language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tried to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one State language, no Nation can remain tied up solidly together and function.<sup>87</sup>

This assertion once more confirmed that the founder of Pakistan was (intentionally or otherwise) following the path of the European nationalist-linguistic ideology. Jinnah’s decision to *not* recognise the Bengali language in any official capacity seemed designed to guard Pakistan against Fichte’s warning, about the dangers of “confusing” nations in their infancy:

No other nation of a different descent and language can desire to absorb and assimilate such a people without, at least temporarily, becoming confused and profoundly disturbing the steady progress of

---

<sup>86</sup> Desai 96.

It should also be clear by now that along with the nation, religion too became a part of the controversy around language. The nexus between language, religion and nation will be looked at in the second chapter.

<sup>87</sup> Mohammed Ali Jinnah, *Speeches as Governor-General of Pakistan: 1947-1948* (Karachi: Ferozsons, n.d.) 86.

its own culture. The external limits of territories only follow as a consequence of this inner frontier, drawn by man's spiritual nature itself.<sup>88</sup>

In the long run, Urdu nationalism in Pakistan led to the decisive political conflicts that redefined the nation. The *Bhasha Andolon* (or Bengali Language Movement) of 1952, which culminated in a riot on 21 February 1952 in which three students were killed, was a battle fought precisely over the conflicting linguistic identities.<sup>89</sup> This precipitated the secession of East Pakistan, and creation of Bangladesh—the land of Bengali speakers—as another nation that corresponded to a linguistic territory, in 1971. Ironically, like Pakistan, the creation of Bangladesh too demonstrated the diffusion of the European nationalist-linguist philosophy in the subcontinent, though through a different application. Effectively, the separation of Pakistan from India, and then of Bangladesh from Pakistan, illustrated Rousseau's point (quoted above) that language inherently demarcates nations from one another.

### **1.3. The Case of India**

Two of India's new neighbours therefore identified themselves as new nations at least in part on the basis of a shared language—thereby evoking memories of the nationalist struggles in nineteenth century Europe. In the case of India itself, however, the issue of language seemed to have been submerged at the moment of independence. There is no obvious

---

<sup>88</sup> Fichte 166.

<sup>89</sup> See Badruddin Umar, "The Anti-Heroes of the Language Movement," *Economic & Political Weekly* 33.12 (1998): 636-637.

mention of language in Prime Minister Nehru's famous "Tryst with Destiny" speech given at the midnight hour of India's independence, though the ambiguous word "utterance" could be interpreted as signalling Nehru's awareness of the problem:

A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends; and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds *utterance*.<sup>90</sup> (emphasis mine)

As is clear from much of his speeches and writing, such as *The Unity of India* and *The Discovery of India*, among others, Nehru was not unfamiliar with the theories and trends of European linguistic nationalism, or of their prevailing forms within the Indian subcontinent. (Later in this chapter, I will argue how it is in fact Nehru's astute awareness of the politics of linguistic nationalism in Europe that led him to fashion a different relationship between nationhood and language[s] in India). It is therefore possible that his decision *not* to engage with the language issue directly at the moment of independence was itself calculated.

The views of anti-colonial thinkers, such as Fanon who outlined the issues of the linguistic and cultural force of imperialism/colonialism are well known among theorists and critics of postcolonialism. For example, Fanon's observation that "[t]o speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles Negro who wants to be white will be the whiter [*sic.*] as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is,"<sup>91</sup> is an apt observation about the role that language plays in the process of colonisation. The

---

<sup>90</sup> Nehru, "A Tryst with Destiny," Constituent Assembly of India, New Delhi, 14 Aug. 1947.

<sup>91</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto, 1986) 38.

adoption of a different language results in the fact that the colonised is left bereft of his/her own culture. Fanon elucidates this further through an anecdote, in which the “Negro” can be perceived as a representative of the colonised:

I meet a Russian or a German who speaks French badly. With gestures, I try to give him the information that he requests, but at the same time I can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country [...]. When it comes to the case of the Negro, nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilisation, no “long historical past.”<sup>92</sup>

While it is arguable that the reason why the “Negro” has no language is because he was deprived of it through slavery, the “Negro” can here also be viewed as the representative of the colonised who has been robbed of his language, history and culture through colonisation, leading him to believe that civilisation only came to him *through colonisation*, and the adoption of the coloniser’s language. As Fanon hypothesised:

Every colonised people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilising nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country.<sup>93</sup>

Postcolonial theorists and critics have celebrated Fanon’s observations as foundational in spelling out the relationship between language and anti-colonial nationalism. But, before Fanon, Indian nationalists too had seen linguistic and cultural imperialism/colonialism in

---

<sup>92</sup> Fanon 34.

<sup>93</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 18.



a similar manner. M. K. Gandhi's anti-English language campaign had a distinct echo of Fanon to it. Gandhi had even famously refused to educate his children in the English language due to the associations of the language. As he admitted in his autobiography:

It has always been my conviction that Indian parents who train their children to think and talk in English from their infancy betray their children and their country. They deprive them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation, and render them to that extent unfit for the services of the country.<sup>94</sup>

The use of such strong terms as “betrayal” and “deprivation of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation,” in relation to the use of the English language, illustrates the seemingly antithetical relationship that he imagines between it and the Indian national consciousness. In *Hind Swaraj*, the small tract written by Gandhi in 1909, he categorically argued that the contribution of anglophile Indians was perhaps far greater than the contribution of the English themselves in “enslaving” India. Speaking about how the English language had percolated various aspects of the Indian public spheres, including the legal and political system, with the *consent* of the Indian elite and professionals (who did not object to the imposition of the foreign language) Gandhi writes:

Is it not a painful thing that, if I want to go to a court of justice, I must employ the English language as a medium, that when I become a barrister, I may not speak my mother tongue and that someone else

---

<sup>94</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927) 261.

should have to translate to me from my own language? Is this not absolutely absurd? Is it not a sign of slavery? Am I to blame the English for it or myself? It is we, the English-knowing Indians, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us.<sup>95</sup>

Gandhi was, of course, not alone in upholding these opinions, and was supported by various factions of Indians in pre- *and* post-independence India, consisting of a motley crowd of *bhasha* activists, nativist nationalists, as well as some far-right ideologues. The most notable of these were arguably the Hindi ideologues, commonly referred to as Hindi-*wallahs*. P. D. Tandon was their leader. Hindi-*wallahs* were mostly members of the right-wing of the Congress Party. Like Gandhi, their objection to the English language lay in the fact that the adoption of the English language connoted a compliance to the colonial masters (though unlike Gandhi, Hindi-*wallahs* also surimposed a religious dimension to this objection. The Hindi-*wallahs*' objection to the English language was largely premised on the perceived incompatibility of English with the dogmatic Hindu precepts, which were as elemental to their ideology as the Hindi language for which they militated. I discuss this in further detail on pages 69-74). Tandon maintained that: "I believe that political freedom cannot come out of cultural slavery to the English language and things English."<sup>96</sup> Indeed, in so far that it might help displace and dissipate the domination of the English language, *even* the hated Urdu was deemed passable by Tandon and his cohort. In his capacity

---

<sup>95</sup> Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj, and Other Writings* (1909) ed. Anthony J. Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) 104.

<sup>96</sup> Tandon, Ahmad 93.

as a spokesperson for the *Hindi-wallahs* and the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*, Tandon wrote in a letter to M. K. Gandhi on 8 September 1945:

राष्ट्रीय कामों में अंग्रेज़ी को हटाने में [हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन] [उर्दू] की सहायता का स्वागत करता है।<sup>97</sup>

In removing English from all national offices, the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* welcomes the help extended by Urdu. (translation mine)

But as suggested above, the *Hindi-wallahs* (in conjunction with the *Sammelan*, with whom—like Tandon—they were often attached) pushed for the adoption of Hindi as the national language of India and urged the majority Hindu population of India to seek their identity through the language as part of a larger plan to create India as an authentically Hindu space. Ranjit Sau (1999) points out how Madan Mohan Malviya, a Congress Party politician and prominent *Hindi-wallah*, saw Hindi and Hindu nationalism as being inherently connected, and how he argued that the advancement of one would automatically aid the other:

At the turn of the century the first regular Hindi magazines appeared, college curricula in Hindi were drafted and Madan Mohan Malviya, provoked by the inauguration of Aligarh Muslim University in 1898, initiated a protracted campaign for a Hindu university with Hindi as the sole medium of instruction. In 1915 Benaras [sic.] Hindu University came into existence and it became a central point in the movement for making Hindi a national language.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Tandon, letter to M. K. Gandhi, 8 Sept. 1945, *Gandhi Hindi Darshan*, ed. Gopal Prasad Vyas (New Delhi: *Dilli Pradeshik Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*, n.d.) 226-7, 227.

<sup>98</sup> Ranjit Sau, "From Sanskritisation to Hindi-Isation and Hindu-Isation: The 13<sup>th</sup> *Lok Sabha*," *Economic & Political Weekly* 34 (1999): 2981.

William Gould shows that Tandon's own championing of the Hindi language was also backed by religious rhetoric, so that "Tandon's nationalism was explicitly cultural in shape, and Hindi as well as Hindu religion were implicitly seen as the basis of the nation."<sup>99</sup> Tandon's deep involvement with the Congress Party, the *Sammelan*, and the *Arya Samaj* illustrates the entwinement of his political, linguistic and religious ideologies, which, together, informed his vision of the national culture of a Hindi-speaking Hindu India. The *Arya Samaj*, I should point out, was a Hindu revivalist organisation that "stressed the 'noble purity' (which is an approximate translation of the Sanskrit word 'Arya') of an 'original' Hinduism that could allegedly be found in the *Vedas*."<sup>100</sup> Along with organisations such as the *Hindu Mahasabha* and, later, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad*, the *Arya Samaj* endorsed a "nationalised" modern Hinduism, adapted to the modern age.<sup>101</sup> To this end, these organisations often ostensibly laid more emphasis on language and culture, than on the ancient dictates of religion per se. Significantly, the *Arya Samaj* campaigned actively for the national status of the Hindi language—which was in line with its agenda of "Hinduising" the nation. The *Arya Samaj* set up various educational institutions, such as the *Kanya Mahavidyalaya*, which was exclusively designed for girls, where they produced vast amounts of propaganda pamphlets and fiction to serve this purpose.<sup>102</sup> Krishna Kumar (1990) maintains that it was also the *Arya Samaj* that pushed for the creation of the *Nagari Pracharini Sabha*, the guard dog of

---

<sup>99</sup> Gould 188.

<sup>100</sup> Zachariah 15.

<sup>101</sup> See Sau.

<sup>102</sup> See Madhu Kishwar, "Arya Samaj and Women's Education: Kanya Mahavidyalaya Jalandhar," *Economic & Political Weekly* 21 (1986): 9-13.

the Hindi language and script, who Rai describes as the “sanctimonious abductors” of the Hindi language.<sup>103</sup>

Nehru then would have had to reckon with these different ideological positions of the members of his own party. Could his avoidance of the topic of language in his inaugural speech therefore not be interpreted as a part of an attempt to, at least momentarily, defuse the unrest around the issue of linguistic nationalism? Nehru himself acknowledged this dilemma when he admitted, during a Constituent Assembly debate on 8 November 1948:

Now, it is an obvious thing and a vital thing that any country, much more so a free and independent country, must function in its own language. Unfortunately, the mere fact that I am speaking to this House in a foreign language and so many of our colleagues here have to address the House in a foreign language itself shows that something is lacking.<sup>104</sup>

Yet, on another level, Nehru’s avoidance of the language issue could also point to the fact that a mono-linguistic nationalism in India might not have been a *fait accompli*. As Etienne Balibar points out: “Nationalism is not everywhere predicated on linguistic passions, nor does language loyalty necessarily or always induce a singular nation-state.”<sup>105</sup>

Now, India is a country in which the sheer number of languages spoken can be overwhelming. At present, 22 languages are officially recognised and listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. They

---

<sup>103</sup> See Krishna Kumar, “Hindu Revivalism and Education in North-Central India,” *Social Scientist* 18.10 (1990): 4-26; Alok Rai 6.

<sup>104</sup> Nehru, “On the Question of Linguistic Provinces,” 8 Nov. 1948, *Constituent Assembly Debates: Official Report*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, n.d.) 319.

<sup>105</sup> Etienne Balibar, “Racism as Universalism,” *New Political Science* 8.1-2 (1989) 19.

are (in alphabetical order): Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. These languages had been officialised in 1950. In 1967, Sindhi was added to the list; in 1992, Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali too joined it; and the final additions were Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santali in 2004.<sup>106</sup> These 22 *bhashas*, along with the English language, have equal statutory recognition at national level, with Hindi and English qualifying as the associate official (note: *not* national!) languages.<sup>107</sup> But the total number of languages prevalent in the country of course far exceeds this official list. According to the 2001 Census, 122 languages—which can further be broken down into 234 mother tongues—have been registered. In addition, there are numerous more regional and tribal languages that are not formalised, to say nothing of the hundreds more dialects and pidgins that form the sub-categories of these different languages.<sup>108</sup> Given this multi-lingual reality of India, could Balibar’s point not have rung true for India?

Lisa Mitchell categorically argues that a non-linguistic nationalism was indeed a distinct possibility for India. In contrast to scholars such as Partha Chatterjee (1986) who by and large argue that the nationalist discourse in India was decisively influenced by European models (“a

---

<sup>106</sup> Government of India: Ministry of Law and Justice, “Eighth Schedule,” *Constitution of India*: Updated up to 94<sup>th</sup> Amendment 1 Dec. 2007, 15 Oct. 2012 <<http://lawmin.nic.in/coi/coiason29july08.pdf>>.

<sup>107</sup> The refusal to *nationalise* any given language is significant, for it means that each of the 22 official languages have *equal* status at national level.

<sup>108</sup> To further illustrate the symbolism of these various less-recognised languages, it is perhaps worth pointing out how organisations led by G. N. Devy, among others, are still militating for the recognition of more *adivasi*, tribal and other such languages related to “subaltern” groups to attain official status, with a view to promote a fairer treatment of these groups at national level.

different discourse, yet one that is dominated by another”)<sup>109</sup> Mitchell proposes that there could only be “weak” forms of European linguistic nationalism in India. Firstly, she argues, language in India was not often a ground for separatism, as it had been in Europe (with the exception of course, of Pakistan, which had already been severed from India, and therefore does not bear on her analysis): “unlike the language-based political movements and nationalisms that swept through Europe from the late eighteenth century onward, language movements in India have not typically been separatist or nationalist movements.”<sup>110</sup> In fact, Mitchell proposes that it is because of Bernard Cohn’s pioneering work that scholars of modern South Asia have disproportionately focused on the affinity between Indian and European forms of nationalism.<sup>111</sup> In conjunction with Mitchell and using Meaghan Morris for critical support, Sumathi Ramaswamy (1997) also cautions against reading the “language and nationalism” relationship in postcolonial India as “known history, something which has already happened elsewhere, and which is to be reproduced, mechanically or otherwise, with local content,”<sup>112</sup> especially in relation to the complex nexus between linguistic identity and nationalism. “Passions of the tongue do not readily map onto the passions of the nation,”<sup>113</sup> Ramaswamy maintains. Ramaswamy’s study of the language movements in

---

<sup>109</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London: Zed, 1986) 42.

<sup>110</sup> Mitchell 21.

<sup>111</sup> “Bernard Cohn’s pioneering work on colonial constructions of knowledge in South Asia has alerted us to the role of colonialism in creating the categories through which India has been experienced and written about within such colonial disciplines as anthropology, historical linguistics, and comparative religion. A number of scholars who have followed him have argued that the emergence of linguistically grounded identities in the late nineteenth century was a result of the implementation of specific colonial administrative practices.” Mitchell 20.

<sup>112</sup> Ramaswamy 3.

<sup>113</sup> Ramaswamy 5.

South India—and especially of the Tamil language—seeks to establish how India’s case was not a mere rehearsal of European linguistic nationalism.

I concede *partially* to Mitchell’s and Ramaswamy’s point here and agree that, unlike Pakistan and Bangladesh, the formation of India had indeed *not* been predicated on the basis of a single language. That is, language in India had not been the *obvious* framework for national formation—in the way, perhaps, that Fichte, attempting to organise nation and language, had argued with regards to the German language for Germany:

Thus lay the German nation, sufficiently united by a common language and way of thinking, and clearly enough separated from the other peoples, in the middle of Europe, as a wall dividing unrelated tribes.<sup>114</sup>

Nor had language been the singular tool to mobilise masses towards the nationalist cause. Indians did not mobilise for independence under the banner of any specific language, in the way that the supporters of Pakistan were united by Urdu, or the creators of Bangladesh by Bengali afterwards. Given the number of languages prevalent in the country, it is doubtful whether such an attempt would even have had any strategic value.

Admittedly, the issue of language in post-independence India was contentious. For instance, in 1952, the freedom fighter and Gandhian follower, Potti Sriramulu, fasted to death for “Mother Telugu.” About a decade later, in 1964, a man, labourer by profession, named Chinnaaswami doused himself in petrol and set fire to himself, proclaiming his fidelity to

---

<sup>114</sup> Fichte 167.



the Tamil language. Chinnaswami's example was followed in the following year by eight others in Tamil Nadu: five young men also publicly immolated themselves, while the other three swallowed lethal pesticide—all proclaiming that their death was a profession of loyalty to the Tamil language.<sup>115</sup> In 1960-1, two more people attempted to kill themselves by threatening to fast unto death in honour of the Punjabi language, and demanding that a separate state be created for Punjabi speakers. Though this latter fast, undertaken by Sant Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh, was aborted before its fatal conclusion, its passion flowered in the *Khalistan* movement in the 1970s and 1980s—which, in the long run, claimed the lives of an Indian Prime Minister (Indira Gandhi) as well as thousands of soldiers and civilians. Such violent incidents, in the context of passionate attachments to these various Indian languages, have led Mitchell to describe the phenomenon as a “wave of language suicides.”<sup>116</sup>

But *despite* the gravity of these acts, none of the movements were seeking territorial *secession* from India, and they were therefore not only sub-nationalist (in so far that they operated below the level of the nation-state) but they were also still relatively weak in comparison with Europe, Pakistan or Bangladesh.<sup>117</sup> For example, Sriramulu's sacrifice was made in a fight for recognition of the Telugu language *within* the country and the region. Among the demands made during his fast was that the city of Madras

---

<sup>115</sup> Lisa Mitchell, *Language, Emotion, Politics in South India: The Making of a Mother Tongue* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010) 3.

<sup>116</sup> Mitchell 3.

<sup>117</sup> Admittedly, the *Bhasha Andolon* activists in former East Pakistan were not secessionists *per se* either, for they merely wanted the recognition of Bengali as an official Pakistani language—but the repercussions of the *Bhasha Andolon* slowly paved the way for the eventual secession from Pakistan in 1971.

(now Chennai)—where he undertook his fast—be included in the state that was to be created for Telugu speakers.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, Chinnaswami was not part of a fight for a nation organised around the Tamil language. His fight was against the imposition of Hindi as *the* national language. His cry, before his self-immolation, has been: “Death to Hindi! May Tamil flourish!”<sup>119</sup> His suicide, in many ways, was more a pledge for the preservation of Indian linguistic plurality, rather than the mono-linguistic nationalism organised around the Hindi language that was being enforced by Hindi-*wallahs* throughout India. During the independence movement, language had become a popular platform for expressing a new mass social consciousness. This is why demands for cultural and regional identities all began to be couched through language movements, *without* necessarily being separatist. The *Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission* in 1948 summed up the arguments of the agitators for linguistic regions thus:

Those patriotic persons, who fought the battle of freedom under the banner of the Congress, and who are now agitating for separate provinces, share the sentiments of their countrymen. They find it difficult to understand how they will become less national-minded and less patriotic by harbouring sentiments, which they had cherished all along and for which a linguistic province is a natural expression, when the sentiments did not stand in the way of their uniting and making immense sacrifices for the cause of Indian freedom in the struggle against British imperialism.<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> Mitchell 1.

<sup>119</sup> Ramaswamy 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission* 32.

The above report mentions the Congress Party, and it is pertinent to note here that the Congress, as the ruling party, was often viewed as going *against* the European prototype of linguistic nationalism by not (officially) endorsing a national language. Among others, Ramachandra Guha (2007) has suggested that the Congress Party in fact expressly stated their intent to unify people in India *across* linguistic, regional and communal lines.<sup>121</sup> Supporting this, Mukul Kesavan points out in his collection *Secular Common Sense: Interrogating India* (2001) that the “promiscuously plural, rhetorically socialist, piously non-aligned, spottily secular” Congress Party projected itself as a kind of political “Noah’s Ark,” which sought to keep every species of Indian on board.<sup>122</sup> To this end, the Congress Party took specific care to build bridges between the various linguistic communities, religious groupings and castes in India. Furthermore, unlike the examples set by Europe—or by Pakistan, which was emulating Europe’s example—the cultural and literary organisations with nationalist sympathies in India were often *not* linguistically closed, or allied to leading political parties. Hence, while Ireland had the Gaelic League and Pakistan had *Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu*, India had the All-India Progressive Writers’ Association (henceforth AIPWA) which operated at national level, and which took explicit care to outline its *pan-linguistic* agenda and had no formal connections with the Congress Party. In fact, on many occasions, AIPWA explicitly opposed the Congress Party’s policies and aligned itself to the Communist and Socialist parties instead.

---

<sup>121</sup> See Guha, *India After Gandhi* xiii-xiv.

<sup>122</sup> Mukul Kesavan, *Secular Common Sense: Interrogating India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2001) 89, 31.

Set up in the 1930s, the AIPWA stated that its aim was to bring together politically conscious writers who wrote in different languages and originated from different parts of India, in order to explore the limits of Indian nationalism. Sparked off by Urdu writers like Sajjad Zaheer, Ahmed Ali, Rashid Jahan and Mahmud-uz-Zafar who published a pioneering collection of short stories, *Angaare* (1932)<sup>123</sup> the AIPWA very early on clarified its credentials as a cross-linguistic national organisation by inviting a wide range of writers and scholars in different languages to join them. Thus, along with prominent Urdu writers like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ismat Chughtai, Saadat Hassan Manto, and Krishan Chander, the early associates of the AIPWA included Hirendranath Mukherjee (Bengali), Mulk Raj Anand (English), Bhisham Sahni, K. M. Munshi and Munshi Premchand (Hindi), Amrita Pritam (Punjabi), and Vijaydan Detha (Rajasthani), among others. Here is a description of the motley and pan-national crowd that gathered on the first meeting of the AIPWA in Kolkata:

Two or three front rows were occupied by delegates from Bengal, Madras, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Punjab and U. P. Nearby sat the fifteen or twenty persons of the reception committee. Two-thirds of the hall was filled with one-rupee ticketholders, consisting of visitors, students, office workers, journalists, lecturers, school teachers, lawyers—all lean and thin, somewhat bashful, fond of literature—communist and socialist party workers, trade union workers, people working among the peasants who were from different parts of India

---

<sup>123</sup> Carlo Coppola, "Premchand's Address to the First Meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers Association: Some Speculations," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 21.2 (1986): 21.

and were all interested in the new progressive literature of national and social freedom. These were the representatives of the intellectuals in our country who possessed a new national and social feeling and consciousness.<sup>124</sup>

From Premchand's Hindi, to the English of Mulk Raj Anand and the Urdu of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the questions raised by the writers who were members of the association shaped the language debate beyond the regional, communal and class paradigms. Hence Premchand's inclusion in the AIPWA was justified on the grounds that his Hindi fiction—from the abrasively nationalist *Soz-e-Watan* (1907) to the more reflective *Naya Zamana*, *Purana Zamana* (1919)—transcended the concerns of Hindi-speaking [Hindu] north Indians to a larger engagement with Indian nationalism.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, Anand's works, such as his English novel *Untouchable* (1935) ignored the stock subject of Indian elite lives (with which the English language often got exclusively associated) and introduced the issue of caste oppression to Indian writing in the English language.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, in an India where the status of Urdu was increasingly embattled, Faiz's inclusion in the AIPWA refuted the trend of communalisation of the Urdu language. The progressive message of his poems countered the attempts of the more conservative nationalists to restrict Urdu within a particular community. Unlike many other literary associations, the factor of

---

<sup>124</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *Roshnai* (Delhi: Azad Kitab Ghar, 1959) 115.

<sup>125</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this, see Sudhir Chandra, "Premchand and Indian Nationalism," *Modern Asian Studies* 16.4 (1982): 601-21.

<sup>126</sup> *Untouchable* is the story of a young man from the Dalit subcaste of Bhangi. Until the publication of this novel, the figure of the Bhangi (or Dalit, in general) had not only been unfamiliar in English language Indian fiction, but had been camouflaged in most *bhasha* literature too. I will develop this further in the third chapter. Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (1935) (London: Penguin, 2005).

language was therefore secondary to the AIPWA's foremost *national* aim. Premchand, who presided over the first meeting of the AIPWA, significantly noted:

[AIPWA ] claims to make literature a message and a song of action and adventure. It is not much concerned with language. When the ideal is broad, language becomes simply by itself [*sic.*].<sup>127</sup>

Hence, the AIPWA's struggle to promote a secular, progressive and *national* multi-lingualism points to a strong divergence from mono-linguistically determined European nationalism.

This is not to say, of course, that all nationalists in India were uniformly opposed to the idea of linguistic nationalism, for staunch champions of this European prototype *did* thrive in India too! I briefly touched on the politics of these champions when I mentioned Tandon, his Hindi-wallah politics, as well as the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan* above. While the AIPWA thrived on promoting linguistic syncretism in service of pan-Indian nationalism, other, more parochial, organisations, such as the *Sammelan* (which had a greater regional anchoring in the Hindi belt—or the area that encompasses states of central and north India, where Hindi is spoken as a first or subsidiary language) pushed for another kind of nationalism, which was monolingual and closer to what Herder, Fichte and Rousseau had envisaged. Tandon made this explicit in the same letter that he wrote to Gandhi, in which he had started by welcoming the help of Urdu towards displacing the English language:

---

<sup>127</sup> Premchand, "Adab ki gharaz-o-ghayaat," (1936) *Mazamin-e-Premchand*, ed. Qamar Rais (Aligarh: University Publishers, 1960) 252.

सम्मेलन हिन्दी को राष्ट्रभाषा मानता है। [...] स्वयं वह हिन्दी की साधारण शैली का काम करता है उर्दू का नहीं। आप हिन्दी के साथ उर्दू को भी चलाते हैं। सम्मेलन उसका तनिक भी विरोध नहीं करता। [...] भेद केवल इतना है कि आप दोनों चलाना चाहते हैं। सम्मेलन आरम्भ से केवल हिन्दी चलाता आया है।<sup>128</sup>

The *Sammelan* considers Hindi the national language. [...] In itself, it simply works for the Hindi form, not for Urdu. You support the cause of Urdu, along with Hindi. The *Sammelan* does not oppose this at all. [...] The only difference is that you want to advance the causes of both. The *Sammelan* has only supported Hindi from the beginning. (translation mine)

In the long run, the increasing involvement of the ruling Congress Party with the *Sammelan* meant that the voices in favour of mono-linguistic nationalism were not always “weak.” While Tandon and his cohort were by no means “representative” of the entirety of the Congress Party, the support that they garnered was not insubstantial either.

But given the influence and spread of Hindi-*wallahs* and their politics, would it be fair to surmise that the Hindi-*wallahs* represented the “strong” variant of linguistic nationalism in India? Perhaps because of the popularity of the linguistic-nationalist trope among Hindi writers and intellectuals, there has predictably been a tendency to ascribe the propagation of this linguistic-nationalist trend in India primarily to them. Indeed, to a large

---

<sup>128</sup> Tandon, letter to M. K. Gandhi, 8 Sept. 1945, *Gandhi Hindi Darshan*, ed. Gopal Prasad Vyas (New Delhi: *Dilli Pradeshik Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*, n.d.) 227.

It is possible that Tandon was here referring to Gandhi’s support for Hindustani, which embraced both the Hindi and Urdu causes. Gandhi advocated that Hindustani should be neither Sanskritised Hindi, nor Persianised Urdu, but an amalgam of both. It should also freely admit words from the different regional languages. See Gandhi’s essay on national language in Ahmad 31-44.

extent, the Hindi literary culture of the pre-independence era *does* seem indebted to European linguistic nationalism. The Hindi language writer, Chandradhar Sharma Guleri, declares that Hindi linguistic nationalism started as early as 1872 with Baba Kishan Das Niranjani, who asserted:

भाइयों जब तक कि हिन्दुस्तान में एक लिपि, एक भाषा, एक धर्म, ना होगा तब तक हिन्दुस्तान में पूर्ण सुधारना ना होगी।<sup>129</sup>

Brothers, so long as there isn't one script, one language, one religion in Hindustan [India], there won't be any complete reform in India.  
(translation mine)

From the rousing slogans of Pratap Narain Misra:

चहुँहुँ जुसोंचो निज कल्याण

तो सब मिलि भारत सन्तान!

जपो निरन्तर एक जवान

हिन्दी, हिन्दू, हिन्दूस्तान।<sup>130</sup>

If you really want your own welfare,

Then unite, O children of Bharat [India]!

Chant unendingly in one language

Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan! (translation mine)

to the more reasoned arguments of poets such as Sumitranandan Pant:

हमें भाषा नहीं राष्ट्रभाषा की आवश्यकता है पुस्तकों की नहीं मनुष्यों की भाषा<sup>131</sup>

We do not need language, but a national language; not a language of books, but of human beings (translation mine)

---

<sup>129</sup> Chandradhar Sharma Guleri, *Purani Hindi aur Shesh Rachnaayen* (Delhi: Kitab Ghar, 1988) 329.

<sup>130</sup> Pratap Narain Misra, qtd. in Alok Rai 90.

<sup>131</sup> Sumitranandan Pant, qtd. in Alok Rai 101.



certain Hindi writers *did* seem, in the same way as Hindi-*wallahs*, very keen on using language as the instrument for the making of a Hindu nation. Mahaveer Prasad Dwivedi's editorial involvement with the Hindi magazine, *Saraswati*—which had the blessings of nationalist stalwarts of the calibre of M. K. Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose<sup>132</sup> among others—shows how entrenched in him were the ideas of linguistic nationalism. Rai illustrates how Sridhar Pathak's advocacy for guarding the boundaries of the Hindi language was akin to his analogy of guarding the boundaries of the nation. The image of the "garden" that he uses, Rai argues, is symbolic of both the Hindi language and India:

A garden remains attractive only so long as every plant, every bud, every creeper, every shrub, every bed, every fruit, every flower is under constant supervision of a vigilant gardener. A little slackness in vigilance, and the situation deteriorates!<sup>133</sup> (translation Rai)

Such were the sentiments that found full expression after independence in declarations by Hindi-*wallahs*, such as Tandon who said:

Those who oppose acceptance of Hindi as the national language and Nagari as the single national script...are still following a policy of anti-national appeasement.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> It is stated on the website of *Saraswati* that the prominent nationalist, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, apparently praised the founder of the journal, Chintamani Ghosh, for the services he rendered the country through the publication of this journal:

"It will not be out of place to mention that on 29<sup>th</sup> December, 1928 [*sic.*] while addressing the Calcutta session of *Rashtra Bhasha Sammelan*, presided by M. K. Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose expressed—'Chintamani Ghosh, the proprietor of Indian Press in U. P. through the publication of the first Hindi magazine *Saraswati* has rendered that service to Hindi, which perhaps any Hindi publisher has not done so far.'"

"About us-*Saraswati*," *Indian Publishing House* (2011) 25 Mar. 2013

<<http://indianpublishinghouse.in/Saraswati.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>>.

<sup>133</sup> Sridhar Pathak, qtd in Alok Rai 102.

<sup>134</sup> Tandon, *The Hindustan Times* 8 Aug. 1949: n.p.

These sentiments echoed the longer struggle of Hindi language advocates, such as the Hindi poet Manoranjan Prasad, who had published the following lines in 1922:

हम हिन्द तन्य हैं—हिन्दी मात हमारी ।  
भाषा हम सब की एक मात्र हिन्दी है,  
आशा हम सब की एक मात्र हिन्दी है...  
भारत की तो वस प्राण यही हिन्दी है ।<sup>135</sup>

We are the sons of Hind—Hindi is our mother.

Our only language is Hindi,

our only hope is Hindi.

This Hindi is the life of India. (translation Charu Gupta)

The word “maatr” (“only”) is key in this poem. “Only” points to Prasad’s sympathy with the politics of Hindi-*wallahs*, and shows that, like Hindi-*wallahs*, some Hindi writers and intellectuals too shared the same ideological commitment to language as the European nationalists. Indeed, due to the combined efforts of these Hindi language nationalists, and the vigorous support they received, the Hindi project perhaps came *closest* to successfully emulating the European prototype in India.

But though militant linguistic nationalism came to be tied up with the Hindi literary scene, it is important to emphasise that Hindi writers did not all automatically subscribe to the politics of Hindi-*wallahs*, and that Hindi-*wallahs* were not, of course, representative of *all* Hindi speakers and writers in India. Among others, the famous Hindi writer and scholar, Suryakant Tripathi Nirala (the author of poems such as “Saroj Smriti,” “Anamika” and

---

<sup>135</sup> Manoranjan Prasad, *Rashtriya Murali* (Kashi: n.p., 1922) 51.

“Sneha Nirjhar Beh Gaya Hai”) pointedly refused to be associated with Hindi-*wallahs*’ politics. One possible way of explaining this would be to say that Nirala’s concerns and style set him apart from the afore-mentioned Hindi writers. Nirala is regarded as a pioneer of the *Chayavaad* (or “Shadowism”) era in Hindi writing—which despite being set squarely within the nationalist era (c. 1920s-1930s) seems to evade the nationalist cause by avoiding exploring its contemporary social and political concerns, and by concentrating on a more “personal” kind of aesthetic that was reminiscent of the Romantic literature of Europe from more than a century ago. But, as Scott Schlossberg (2010) points out, it is often forgotten that Nirala *did* engage with the topic of nationalism and contemporary social issues in literary forms other than the poetry for which he became famous. In fact, Schlossberg argues that Nirala’s prolific prose writings (in the form of short stories, novels, criticism and critical essays and commentaries on social and political affairs) was not only bold and formally original, but was also the most obvious platform that Nirala picked to contend with contemporary social issues, including those of nationalism, religious tolerance, caste and language.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, in stories such as *Chaturi Chamar* (1934) which is about a Dalit shoemaker, whose story unfolds amid the nationalist agitations that followed the “Simon Commission” of 1928-9, Nirala displays a sensibility that is akin to that of the writers of the AIPWA, by engaging with the more controversial and shameful aspects of Indian (including, and especially,

---

<sup>136</sup> Scott Schlossberg, “Suryakant Tripathi ‘Nirala:’ ‘Chaturi, the Shoemaker,’” *Nationalism in the Vernacular: Hindi, Urdu, and the Literature of Indian Freedom*, ed. Shobna Nijhawan (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010) 463-4.

Hindu!) society.<sup>137</sup> This was in contrast to the writers of the *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*, who tended to paint a hagiographic image of ancient Hindu society and its traditions in order to project Hinduism as a deserving candidate to hold together the nation (as with Prasad and Dwivedi, cited above). Unsurprisingly, Nirala clashed with the Hindi-*wallahs*, over their agenda of making the Hindi language the bearer of such communalism. Rai reports:

In May-June 1938, there was a meeting of the provincial *Sahitya Sammelan* in Faizabad, attended by many people including Nirala and Prushottan Das Tandon, Narendra Dev and Sampurnananda. Ramchandra Shukla was also present, but was marginalised by the politicians. It appears that Nirala—already one of the biggest names in Hindi literature—was alarmed by the way in which the organisation had been taken over by people with a political/communal agenda, and attempted to raise his voice against it. He was manhandled by the “schoolmasters” and their loutish acolytes and made to shut up. Talking about the incident later, Nirala was prescient about the emergent “Hindi” culture of intolerance and servility: “हिन्दी-वालों की एक अदृश्य दुम लगी होती है।” (that is “Hindi-*wallahs* are endowed with an invisible tail”).<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> Nirala's *Chaturi Chamar* came out around the same time as a novel by a member of the AIPWA, that is Anand's *Untouchable* (1935). *Untouchable* too, as I mentioned above, foregrounds the figure of the Dalit.

<sup>138</sup> Alok Rai 108.

## 1.4 English and *Bhasha* Nationalism

On the other hand, it is important also to emphasise that linguistic nationalism is *not* inherent to the Hindi-*wallahs* and their literary tradition either, and nor is it exclusive to it. While Hindi language writer Nirala veered away from the Hindi-*wallah* brand of nationalism, the ideas being propagated by the Hindi nationalists may be seen in the work of a pioneer of the Indian novel form, the Bengali writer, Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Bankim published the English language novel, *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864, and *Rajmohan's Wife* is often acknowledged (by Makarand Paranjape [2013] and Meenakshi Mukherjee [2008], among others) as the first Indian novel in any language.<sup>139</sup> Not only by dint of its language but in terms of its form and structure too *Rajmohan's Wife* can be recognisably placed in the European tradition of the novel. For example, Paranjape adjudges that the novel is “created from an amalgam of classical, medieval, and European sources<sup>140</sup>— which is apt, given the romance narrative mode of the novel, married to the realist tradition adopted by most contemporaneous European novels of the era. The omniscient narrator, who intersperses the narrative by addressing the reader (for example, the final chapter of *Rajmohan's Wife* begins with “And now good reader I have brought my story to a close”) has a distinct echo of the realist Victorian novel which used the same mode. The oft-quoted lines of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), “Reader, I married him,” comes to mind. On the other hand, Priyamvada Gopal (2009) and Mukherjee

---

<sup>139</sup> Makarand Paranjape, *Making India: Colonialism, National Culture, and the Afterlife of Indian English Authority*, *Sophia Studies in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures* 2 (New Delhi: Amaryllis-Manjul Publishing, 2013) 91.

<sup>140</sup> Paranjape 88.

(2008) read *Rajmohan's Wife* as primarily fitting the format of the gothic novel, especially in its creation of the aura of terror in which sole female characters are entrapped.<sup>141</sup> This too is a European tradition that *Rajmohan's Wife* does partially imbue, for instance in the depiction Matangini's solitary imprisonment by Mathur on an eerie, moonless night. But beyond that, the social and cultural values espoused by the European novel may also be found in *Rajmohan's Wife*, since, as Gauri Viswanathan (1989) had argued, the novel had been an effective and covert way of disseminating English and European values in India. By emulating the English novel and by engaging with the very themes and concerns which were trending in the writing of European novelists at the time, *Rajmohan's Wife* seems to illustrate Viswanathan's point. The priming of female subjectivity, through the character of Matangini, is one such example, for this was a subject that was being tackled by several best-selling English novels of the time, including the novels of Elizabeth Gaskell (such as *North and South* [1854] and *Wives and Daughters* [1865]), George Eliot (*The Mill on the Floss* [[1860]], Thomas Hardy (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* [1891]) among many others.

It would be pertinent to ask, at this point, whether, among the values imbued from the English novel, linguistic nationalism was also included, since Bankim himself wrote in at least three different languages—including English. After *Rajmohan's Wife*, Bankim took what seemed like a nationalist turn by rejecting the language of the coloniser and averring to write in

---

<sup>141</sup> Priyamvada Gopal, *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009) 29.

Bengali. In fact, in April 1872, he testified that this was indeed his motive, in the editorial to the first issue of *Bangadarshan*, a literary magazine that he edited:

I have no ill-feeling towards either English or Englishmen. It is very good to study English as much as possible (but) pure silver is better than gilt brass. A true Bengali is better than one who poses as an Englishman. Bengal will not progress as long as educated people and scholars do not express themselves in Bengali.<sup>142</sup>

This sub-nationalist sentiment, mostly concerned with regional rather than national emancipation, mutated to a more pan-Indian variety of linguistic nationalism in the later years of Bankim's life. Rai describes how, along with some other Bengali intellectuals, Bankim lent his firm support to Hindi which was acquiring the reputation of being the language of Indian nationalism, due to its patronage by nationalist stalwarts, including Gandhi.<sup>143</sup> All of this illustrates how Bankim was not very consistent with his notion of *what* the ideal nationalist language should be. And yet, it is arguable that even in his earlier writings, Bankim was marrying language with nationalism in India—and hence endorsing the same values as the English novel. The early stirrings of the linguistic nationalist consciousness were already manifest in *Rajmohan's Wife* in the character of the protagonist, Matangini. Paranjape argues that Matangini is the epitome of Indian nationhood:

---

<sup>142</sup>Bankim, qtd. in A. Deva Raju, "His Fight for Freedom," *The Hindu* 18 Aug, 2001, 10 Feb. 2013 <<http://hindu.com/2001/08/18/stories/13181105.htm>>.

<sup>143</sup> See, for example, Alok Rai 53.

Matangini, I contend, is not just Rajmohan's wife, but the "spirit" or personification" of modern India itself. This is an emergent, hesitant, yet strong-willed and attractive India. [...] But, this beautiful and powerfully drawn image of India is also shown as burdened by sorrow and anxiety. It is neither free nor happy, but its energies and powers are under the control of an unworthy "husband."<sup>144</sup>

The nationhood epitomised by Matangini is very clearly rooted in a modern *bhasha* (while not Hindi, in this case) sensibility, which is made to seem superior and preferable to the other options in the novel. We learn this very early on in the novel:

The dainty limbs of the woman of eighteen were not burdened with such abundance of ornaments, nor did her speech betray any trace of East Bengal accent, which clearly showed that this perfect flower of beauty was no daughter of the banks of Madhumati, but was born and brought up in the Bhagirathi in some place near the capital.<sup>145</sup>

Though she is situated within a regional Bengali milieu, Matangini's function in the novel fits the larger pan-nationalist framework that Bankim constructs in *Rajmohan's Wife*. Matangini becomes the generic representative of the indigenous *bhasha* sensibilities, not just of Bengali. The fact that most of the other characters—such as the dislikeable Mathur, who speaks an unconventional form of Bengali, as well as the English-speaking Madhav—are dull in comparison to Matangini's luminosity, suggests that Matangini is set out by Bankim to represent the ideal linguistic mean. Hence,

---

<sup>144</sup> Paranjape 93.

<sup>145</sup> Bankim Chandra Chatterji, *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) (New Delhi: Penguin, 2010) 3.



she becomes the rallying point for nationhood—which others are invited to revere, and to emulate. As Paranjape writes,

What Madhav lacks [...] is Matangini's energy and vitality: "His clear placid complexion had turned a little dull either through want of exercise or too much comfort." We will remember that Mathur's complexion has been described as "dull and dark" earlier. Thus, both men are dull, a quality which signifies *tamas* or lethargy, ignorance, sloth. Matangini, in contrast, is full of lustrous power and charm. Clearly, the *shakti* or the energy that both men wish to possess, she is seen as the person who can give value, meaning, and direction to the lives of these indolent men.<sup>146</sup>

So, Matangini is meant to be a desirable character, in part *because* of her language. Through his subsequent novels, Bankim would develop the model pioneered through Matangini even further. *Durgeshnandini* (1865), *Mrinalini* (1869), *Rajani* (1877), and most importantly, *Anandamath* (1882), all written in the Bengali language, feature strong female characters who are admirable for their courage and resilience, but, most importantly, for their dedication to a form of nationalism that is strongly ingrained and invested in *bhasha* protection and promotion. For instance, in *Anandamath*, Kalyani replaces Matangini, and the Sanskrit language replaces Bengali in becoming the symbol around which the female protagonist rouses the nationalist passions. Joshua Fishman writes:

Even those nations following the state-nation pattern toward nationality formation are often dependent upon vernacular literacy,

---

<sup>146</sup> Paranjape 94.

if not upon vernacular education, in order to secure the modern political-operational stability and participation without which ultimate socio-cultural integration cannot come to pass.<sup>147</sup>

In overtly committing himself to linguistic nationalism, by making language the rallying point for evoking all nationalist sentiments, Bankim then illustrates Fishman's hypothesis.

The incorporation of Sanskrit, specifically, played a significant role in confirming and clarifying Bankim's ideology. Through his Sanskrit poem, "Bande Mataram," Bankim's pan-nationalism was even further reinforced. This is because of the highly symbolical function of the Sanskrit language in the formation of linguistic nationalism in India. European colonialists had often ridiculed Indian nationalist aspirations by claiming that "there is not and never was an India, no Indian nation, no 'people of India' possessing, according to any *European* ideas, any sort of unity"<sup>148</sup> (emphasis mine). Some Indian nationalists reacted to this by re-interpreting the history of India to fit the European nation-state prototype. As Rai illustrates, the retort sometimes involved trying to prove that the instance of Sanskrit was the proof for the existence of the (proto-) nationalist entity of India because Sanskrit "belongs to a trans-historical realm, a magical cultural enclave wherein one finds sanctuary and redemption from the muddled compromises and corruptions of history."<sup>149</sup> Thus, the linguistic nationalists claimed that prior to the stages of colonisation by invading foreigners (firstly the Mughals, and then the British, among others) India had boasted

---

<sup>147</sup> Joshua Fishman, "Language and Nationalism," *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the Present: A Reader*, ed. Stuart Woolf (London: Routledge, 1996) 157.

<sup>148</sup> John Strachey, *India: Its Administration and Progress* (London: Macmillan, 1888) 4.

<sup>149</sup> Alok Rai 77.

of a national linguistic unity under the banner of Sanskrit.<sup>150</sup> The conservative politician, Seth Govind Das, is among those who maintained that Sanskrit had been the “great unifier of India” at a point in the past—since it was the language which “spanned all regions: the Hindu classics written in Sanskrit served as a common fount for regional cultural expression, which was most often a popularised variation on pervasive, Sanskritic themes.”<sup>151</sup> This theory about Sanskrit proposed that a nation and a language-area were co-terminal. As Fishman puts it, given these conditions, the formation of Indian linguistic nationalism is unsurprising:

For the “peoples without history,” history and language were two sides of the same coin. The vernacular was not merely the highroad to history, it was itself “the voice of years that are gone...” [...] Little wonder then that linguists were, on occasion, “compared to surgeons who restore to its natural function a limb which has been almost paralysed but not severed from the national body.”<sup>152</sup>

The fact that several European scholars such as William Jones and Max Mueller had “sanctioned” Sanskrit as proof of India’s pan-national history,<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup> This argument also relies heavily on the intricate relationship between the Sanskrit language and Hinduism—especially in explaining how Sanskrit straddled all regions of India, including the South. King writes:

“(T)he great unifier of India has always been ‘Brahmanical ideology;’ not only the familiar structures of Hinduism such as caste, cow worship, religious ceremonies, cremation, and so on, but the intellectual authority of the great classical texts, the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavadgita*. The instrument of penetration of Brahmanical ideology into the Deccan and the south was the Sanskrit language or the sacred texts written in Sanskrit.” King 11.

I will come back to this point in the next chapter.

<sup>151</sup> Seth Govind Das, quoted in Harrison 55.

<sup>152</sup> Fishman 158.

<sup>153</sup> For example, Nehru’s *The Discovery of India* makes frequent references to Mueller, and his views of the Sanskrit language, as though Mueller’s research bolstered Indian nationhood.

ironically, only served to vindicate the Indian nationalists' own convictions that

all languages (of India) are corruptions of a primordial, eternal Sanskrit. British scholar administrators and their brahman [*sic.*] teacher-assistants based in Calcutta's Asiatic Society and College of Fort William had declared Sanskrit as the fount of Indian "vernaculars," the sole generator of high Hindu civilisation.<sup>154</sup>

Subsequently, even the appeal of the Hindi language largely came to be derived from its closeness with Sanskrit. Alok Rai points out that several Hindi nationalists imagined a filial relationship between Hindi and Sanskrit. Hindi was posited as the "jyeshtha putri" (eldest daughter) of Sanskrit by some Hindi ideologues.<sup>155</sup> Tandon suggested an alternative, by imagining Hindi and Sanskrit as "sisters."<sup>156</sup> In yet another take on this Hindi-Sanskrit relationship, the *swaraj* activist, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, proffered:

The thread of all three [classical holy languages], Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, is woven into the very make-up of the soul of the Hindi language. Naturally, the same spirit of self-sacrifice, the same spirit of service and the same spirit of cooperation vibrates the innermost soul of Hindi. [...] It is the chord, softer than air and stronger than steel, that has united the hearts of the common people for thousands

---

<sup>154</sup> Ramaswamy 39.

<sup>155</sup> Alok Rai 78.

<sup>156</sup> Tandon, lecture delivered 20 Oct. 1938, *Sammelan Patrika: Gandhi-Tandon Smriti Ank* 55 (Allahabad: *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*, n.d.) 259.

of years. It has remained the support, the solace, vital force, and the inspiration of the common man's life.<sup>157</sup>

This is the kind of nationalism that sought to define the nation as a “majority community” (of Hindu, Hindi speakers)—which is exactly the same trend that prevailed in European linguistic nationalism—and later in Pakistani nationalism.

Disapproving of this trend, Nehru warned against such alignments of nationality with a majority identity:

For some years we have had to contend against the policy of hatred and violence and narrow communalism on the part of a section of the community. Now, that section has succeeded in forming a state carved out of certain parts of India. Muslim communalism, which had been such a danger and obstruction to Indian freedom, now calls itself a state. [...] I see something very similar to that flourishing in India today. It talks in the name of nationalism, sometimes of religion and culture, and yet it is the very opposite of nationalism, of true morality and of real culture.<sup>158</sup>

Yet, despite the fact that a mono-linguistic nationalism did not seem to bode well for the “unity” of India, even Gandhi, in the midst of ongoing discussions about the “Two Nation” theory, confidently held on to the belief that India *would* end up organically developing a “national language” to reflect its character:

---

<sup>157</sup> Bal Gangadhar Tilak [sic.] qtd. in Joshua A. Fishman, *In Praise of the Beloved Language: A Comparative View of Positive Ethnolinguistic Consciousness* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996) vii.

<sup>158</sup> Nehru, “Address to a Special Convocation of the University of Allahabad on 13 Dec. 1947,” *Jawaharlal Nehru: Selected Speeches*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1996) 329.

Ultimately, when our hearts have become one and we all are proud of India as our country, rather than our provinces, and shall know and practice different religions as derived from one common source, as we know and relish different fruits of the same tree, we shall reach a common language with a common script.<sup>159</sup>

This statement seems to anticipate (if through an inverted route) Herder's envisioning of the nation that thinks in accordance to the language it speaks. Herder would claim:

If words are not just signs but instead so to speak the shells in which we see thoughts, I look at an entire language as a great range of thoughts become visible, as an immensurable country of concepts. [...] Every nation has its own storehouse of such thoughts become words; this is its national language.<sup>160</sup>

Adhering to Herder's thoughts, several Indian nationalists admitted to holding Europe as inspiration (even as, ironically, they struggled to "undo" the grasp of Europe on India). For instance, along with the segregationist politics of *Hindi-wallahs*, Gandhi's *swaraj* movement adopted this particular route, in its advocacy of an "indigenous" national language, which would be a more faithful reflection of the nation's thoughts. In the entailing rejection of the language of the coloniser, in favour of an indigenous one, Gandhi toed the lines of European linguistic nationalism. On the English language, Gandhi had declared:

---

<sup>159</sup> Gandhi, essay in Ahmad 39.

<sup>160</sup> Herder, qtd. in Jurgen Trabant, "Herder and Language," *A Companion to the Works of John Gottfried Herder*, ed. Hans Adler and Wuld Koepke (New York: Camden House-Boydell and Brewer, 2009) 121.

To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us. I do not suggest that he had any such intention, but that has been the result.<sup>161</sup>

With Gandhi, the rejection of the language of the oppressor here connoted a larger rejection of an entire system, and language was here mobilised to reject imperialism. Macaulay's intention in arguing for the introduction of English as a tertiary teaching medium in India had been his unwavering confidence in the *hegemony* of the English language and culture:

The claims of our language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the west. It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence; with historical compositions, which, considered merely as narratives, have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled; with just and lively representations of human life and human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man. Whoever knows that language has ready access to all

---

<sup>161</sup> Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* 103.

the vast intellectual wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations.<sup>162</sup>

But Gandhi countered this by arguing how English in India was not the language of hegemony, but strictly of *dominance*: “It is worth noting that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc., have increased. English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into the people.”<sup>163</sup> According to Gandhi, it is therefore only through *resistance* to this sort of discourse that enlightenment for the native could at all be achieved.

It should be noted, however, that nationalism in India did not *always* challenge the hegemony of an imported language, nor routinely favour indigenous languages over foreign ones. Zakir Hussain, among others, cautioned against the reckless exclusion and expurgation of foreign elements:

And if we admit the validity of excluding foreign elements in principle, why should we stop at language? Why should we not each one of our different linguistic and racial groups have its own pure *swadeshi* culture, its separate country, its independent government? Our history will then have completed a silly circle, and we shall be where we began.<sup>164</sup>

Thus, several politicians also saw the imported English language as being a national “unifier.” In response to Tandon’s vociferous campaign against the retention of the English language in India, Abdul Kalam Azad, a liberal

---

<sup>162</sup> Macaulay 349-50.

<sup>163</sup> Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* 104.

<sup>164</sup> Zakir Husain, essay in Ahmad 101.



Congress Party politician who had opposed the partition of the subcontinent, replied that English was the factor which enabled the Sanskritic north and the Dravidian south of India to communicate with each other:

The Union of the north and south [of India]...has been made possibly only through the medium of English. If today we give up English, then this linguistic relationship will cease to exist.<sup>165</sup>

Another nationalist, C. Rajagopalachari, also saw in English the possibility of aiding, rather than harming, the nationalist cause in post-independence India. In an essay published in 1958, Rajagopalachari praised the binding and unifying powers of the English language, in the face of fissiparous sub-nationalist movements. Using a Biblical analogy, Rajagopalachari wrote:

Let English continue. 'This stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.' So the Psalmist sang. The builders had rejected it as being of curious shape, not rectangular and none of its sides square or oblong. But it became the key-stone of the arch and its strange shape was its merit. Not someone of our own language but this strange one will keep the arch firm and all the languages together. It is the lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes! So be it.<sup>166</sup>

This Indian attempt to incorporate the coloniser's language was indeed

---

<sup>165</sup> Abdul Kalam Azad to Tandon, 14 Sept. 1949, *Constituent Assembly Debates*, vol. 9, 1453.

<sup>166</sup> C. Rajagopalachari, "Panch-Maaya," *Swarajya* 15 Feb. 1958, n.p.

successful, as it culminated in the Munshi-Ayyangar formula in 1949.<sup>167</sup> According to this formula, the English language was to be retained in the country, first for a tentative fifteen years after independence, and subsequently until another language had been found to “replace” English in India. The Resolution on this language policy read:

[The State language] will be the language of correspondence with the Provincial and State Governments. All records of the Centre will be kept and maintained in that language. It will also serve as the language for inter-Provincial and inter-State commerce. During a period of transition, which shall not exceed fifteen years, English may be used at the Centre for inter-Provincial affairs, provided that the State language will be progressively utilised until it replaces English.<sup>168</sup>

This was in stark contrast to European nationalism, which had almost always derived its strength exclusively from the indigenous and the local, from the *Volk*. But unlike what the European romantic philosophers like Rousseau predicated for the fate of the colonising foreign language, the English language did not just remain in India as a vestige of India’s colonial past. Rajagopalachari again sums this up aptly:

English no doubt entered India as the language of the foreign people whom we allowed to take possession of India. But the secret of its strong entrenchment where it was placed, even though it was foreign soil, is that it has been to us the gateway of all modern knowledge

---

<sup>167</sup> The Munshi-Ayyangar formula was named after K. M. Munshi and Gopaldaswamy Ayyangar, who were the initiators of this compromise in 1949.

<sup>168</sup> Indian National Congress, *Resolution on Language Policy 1949-57* (New Delhi: Indian National Congress, n.d.) 1-3.

and modern progress. It is erroneous to suppose that it has struck root in India by reason of official patronage. That we stuck to it even after independence was not due to any pressure from abroad or force of habit only. It was due to our appreciation of its utility in more than one respect. All our hopes in the material plane are centered on the advancement of modern knowledge, and the English cannot but be associated intimately with those hopes. It is the vast new knowledge that it brought, and has yet to bring, that is the secret of the widespread attachment in India to the English language. These claims of mere patriotic sentiment must recognise and yield to this.<sup>169</sup>

With time, the English language even ended up acquiring a distinctly Indian identity (to supplement the various other local identities it had acquired around the world. This will be discussed in detail in the third chapter). What is crucial for us to keep in mind here is that the survival of the English language in India—ironically enough!—ends up contributing to illustrate the eventual failure of the European nationalist logic in India.

### **1.5. The Nehruvian Way**

It is apparent, from the discussion above that the question of language was one of the most contentious subjects of post-independence India—one which, in the early years of independence, pushed the country on the verge of political instability. It is therefore not surprising that the language debate is at the very centre of the narrative in many of the novels

---

<sup>169</sup> Rajagopalachari, *Swarajya*.

set around this era. I have discussed Seth's *A Suitable Boy* briefly earlier in this chapter and in the introduction, but others, such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Desai's *In Custody* also engage with the topic of language at their very core. If we were to demand a one word answer to the question: "do these novels sanction the "strong" European nationalism, espoused in India by the Hindi-*wallahs* and other proponents of mono-linguistic nationalism—or do they sympathise with a less regimented wielding of language?" the simple answer would be: neither. Following Srivastava, while the novel is endowed with the ability to represent the *differing* views on any topic by dint of its dialogic structure, the Indian English novel does *not* adopt the rigid nationalism of Hindi-*wallahs*, but they *do* display full awareness of the iconicity of language in relation to nationalism. In fact, I would argue that the ethos that the Indian English novel endorses is a variant of "non-linguistic" nationalism (that was not centred around a single language, culture, or community) epitomised by one person: Jawaharlal Nehru.

It is impossible to ignore the contribution of Nehru in the debates and eventual policies on linguistic nationalism in India. Not only by the dint of his endorsement of English language preservation in India, but also in his refusal to endorse mono-linguistic nationalism, Nehru generally defied most—if not all—of the other European nationalist dogmas. Sunil Khilnani agrees:

While Nehru was attracted by the political and economic examples of the modern West, he was far less taken by its cultural models. It was fundamental to him that Indian nationalism could not fashion itself

after European examples. In contrast to the academic analysts who see nationalism as the diffusion of a standard form devised in the industrialised West—whether in the Gaelic version of a community of common citizenship or the volkisch idea of a shared ethnic or cultural origin—Nehru self-consciously rejected the idea that Indian nationalism was compelled to make itself in one or another of these images.<sup>170</sup>

But contrary to popular notions that Nehru was unconcerned about the language issue, I would like to suggest that Nehru was in fact deeply committed to formulating a diglossic and multi-lingual Indian nationalism. Judging from the ways that he handled the two major issues related to language in independent India—namely the question of national language, and the formation of separate states and territories, based on the regional linguistic differences in language—Nehru's main interest might be seen as inventing a nationalism that departed from European norms. As Robert King says,

In Nehru's position as a leader of independent India, nine men out of ten would, in my opinion, have rushed to settle the linguistic problems as quickly as possible and hoped to be done with them whatever the eventual harm to the country. Nehru was however the tenth man, and his way laid the foundation for an India that is far less language-plagued and language-divided than anyone could have predicted during the worst of the linguistic battles of the 1950s and 1960s. He delayed when it was right to delay; he was willfully

---

<sup>170</sup> Khilnani 167.

obstinate when stubbornness was needed; he stood clear when it was time to let go. His instincts on language politics were perpendicular to those of his contemporaries, crossways, but those instincts were correct if not valued at the time, or later.<sup>171</sup>

Some of the most important dictates of European nationalism, as we have seen through this chapter, included the singularity of the national language, the consonance of a singular national identity in that language, and the hegemony of home grown languages within the country. Nehru subscribed to none of these. Instead, he continued to highlight the nefarious potentials and significance of such zeal over language. “Scratch a separatist in language and you will invariably find that he is a communalist and very often a political reactionary,”<sup>172</sup> he warned. Judging from the prevailing politics of groups such as the Hindi-*wallahs*, his observation was not unfounded.

While several politicians and writers battled among themselves to decide the national language of an independent India, Nehru relegated this issue as being of secondary importance to Indian unity. Speaking in the capacity of the head of the Congress Party, he said in a speech given in 1956:

If you see the Congress resolutions of the last three or four years, you will find that all of them have stated quite clearly that language is an important factor but that there are other economic, geographical and developmental factors which are equally important. Finally, the most important factor is the unity of India.<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>171</sup> King xv.

<sup>172</sup> Nehru, qtd. in J. C. Johari, *The Constitution of India: A Politico-Legal Study* (New Delhi: Sterling, 2004) 376.

<sup>173</sup> Nehru, “Growth of Violence,” 23 Feb. 1956, *Jawaharlal Nehru Speeches*, vol. 3 (n.p.: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1963) 193.

Nehru was of the opinion that the imposition of a single national language would harm the unity of a nation still in its infancy. Since he constantly sought to affirm—through his speeches, as well as in his proposed policies for the nation—his idea that India was built on inclusiveness, a national language would have had the very reverse effect on his plans for realising this. This is, again, clearly reflected in his statement that:

In these matters of language one has to be very careful. One has to be as liberal as possible and not try to suppress a language. We should not try to coerce anybody into using a language, as far as possible. [...] [T]he makers of our Constitution were wise in laying down that all languages were to be languages of equal status. There is no question of any one language being a more national language than another. I want to make that perfectly clear. Bengali or Tamil is as much an Indian national language as Hindi.<sup>174</sup>

And because he did not believe in its indispensability, Nehru also did not *elevate* the status of “national language” to a symbolical status of bearing the “soul” or “spirit” of the nation and its people—as many linguistic nationalists were wont to do, by deifying languages or granting them the honour of “motherhood,” among other things. As King points out:

[Nehru] continued the tradition of Panini for whom language was grammar, not political jurisdiction; and in this he resembles, too, the archetypal modern academic linguist for whom language is first and foremost a neutral object of description rather than an emotional outlet or the essence of one’s being. [...] Nehru *used* language with

---

<sup>174</sup> Nehru, qtd. in King 219.

emotion, but he did not *view* language with emotion. This lent him the shape of mind of the modern linguist; but it also put him profoundly at odds with those leaders of India in the post-independence era to whom language was politics and at times more than politics; something akin to religion.<sup>175</sup>

It is pertinent to point out here that Nehru did not endorse any of the territorial or communal affiliations of language either. When the “Pakistanisation” of Urdu was in vogue in India, Nehru refused to distance himself from the language that he spoke when he was growing up in Allahabad, and therefore maintained that Urdu was his “mother tongue.” He also asserted “Urdu, except for its script, is of the very soil of India and has no place outside India.”<sup>176</sup> The consequences of this obstinacy—which might be called an element of “Nehruvian nationalism”—will be seen in my subsequent discussions of the novels of Desai and Seth. And finally, an important testimony to Nehru’s refusal to “iconise” language and instead promote their free movement and circulation among all Indians can be seen in his setting up of the *Sahitya Akademi*. One of the core missions of this institution was to initiate a conversation, via the project of translation, between the various languages and literatures of India (including *bhasha* to *bhasha*). This would consequently specifically encourage the formation of “deep inner cultural, spiritual, historical and experimental links that unify India’s diverse manifestations of literature.”<sup>177</sup> These translation projects

---

<sup>175</sup> King 22.

<sup>176</sup> Nehru, “The Question of Language” 246.

<sup>177</sup> *Sahitya Akademi: National Academy of Letters*, ed. M. Musa Raza, 26 Mar. 2013 <[http://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/sahitya-akademi/cultural-exchange-programme/cultural\\_exchange.jsp](http://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/sahitya-akademi/cultural-exchange-programme/cultural_exchange.jsp)>.



would thus promote a national identity that refused the primacy of any one regional or local language—in the way that Nehru dreamt.

Unlike most other nationalists of his time, Nehru was also by far more comfortable in speaking the language of the coloniser than in doing so in any of the indigenous languages of India. His English-medium education in India, his stint in Harrow and Cambridge, among other things, had predictably made him familiar and comfortable with an anglicised cultural environment. Benjamin Zachariah writes:

[Jawaharlal Nehru] was educated into European cultural norms, and was quite comfortable in them. He was consequently not quite as comfortable in the North Indian elite tradition, though he could read and write Urdu [...] as well as Hindi [...]. The best and most useful education, according to Motilal [Nehru's father], was one that would empower his son to conduct his affairs efficiently in the language of power: English. Accordingly, a few Sanskrit lessons from a pandit [*sic.*] gave way to two English governesses in succession, to teach him English and basic arithmetic, and then an Irish-French private tutor to teach English literature and the sciences.<sup>178</sup>

The impact of these formative years was to be felt throughout Nehru's life. In a letter he wrote to Nehru from Pakistan in 1954, the famous Urdu writer, Sa'adat Hasan Manto points out how Nehru's English language influences were blatant:

You are a litterateur in English. Over here [that is, in Pakistan], I write short stories in Urdu, a language which is being wiped out in

---

<sup>178</sup> Zachariah 13.

your country. Pundit-ji, I often read your statements which indicate that you hold Urdu dear. I heard one of your speeches on the radio at the time the country was divided. Everyone admired your English. But when you broke into so-called Urdu, it seemed as though some rabid *Hindu Mahasabha* member had translated your English speech, which was obviously not to your liking. You were stumbling on every sentence.<sup>179</sup>

It is obvious that English language was an elemental part of Nehru's mentality. Nehru himself admitted this in his (now famous) confession to John Kenneth Galbraith: "You realise, Galbraith, I am the last Englishman to rule in India."<sup>180</sup> But Khilnani points out that it is crucial to realise that there was no implicit contradiction between Nehru's Englishness and his commitment to Indian nationalism:

Nehru too had the capacity to keep the centre, to find a cultural poise that allowed him to accept the presence of his Englishness as one more layer to his Indian self. There was, for Nehru, no return to a past purity, no possibility of historical cleansing.<sup>181</sup>

Unlike many of his contemporaries and peers (including M. K. Gandhi) who went through ostentatious acts of shedding the English language (and other things English) for Nehru, there was no guilt associated to his proficiency in English.

---

<sup>179</sup> Sa'adat Manto, letter to Jawaharlal Nehru 27 Aug. 1954, trans. M. Asaduddin, repr. in *Kafila* 1 Dec. 2011, 23 Mar. 2013 <<http://kafila.org/2011/12/01/pundit-mantos-first-letter-to-pundit-nehru/>>.

<sup>180</sup> Nehru, qtd. in interview with John Kenneth Galbraith, "It was India's Good Fortune to be a British Colony," *Outlook India* 20 Aug. 2001, 12 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?212952>>.

<sup>181</sup> Khilnani 171.

Among the reasons why Nehru supported the English language was the fact that, as well as acting as cultural glue within India, the English language was also India's passport to the world outside. He maintained:

We in India live in a large country and have been to a great extent inward-looking. [...] If we discard English, we will...be cut off from the outer world, to a large extent.<sup>182</sup>

Specifically, Nehru supported the retention of the English language because it was already the established language of science and technology, and for the access the English language therefore provided to scientific and technical research being carried out around the world:

English today is by far the more widespread and important world language and probably two-thirds of the scientific and technical books in the world are published in English.<sup>183</sup>

Most importantly, Nehru suggested that English would help improve the expressive power of the *bhashas*. In an essay called "The Place of English" (1956) Nehru wrote:

Personally I think that even from the cultural point of view of developing and widening the scope of Hindi and our other languages, it is necessary for us to keep in intimate touch with, and have adequate knowledge of foreign languages.<sup>184</sup>

The colonial roots of Nehru's cultural anglocentrism seem apparent. Had not Macaulay expressed similar confidence in the wealth of knowledge (scientific and otherwise) accessible through the English language? Had he

---

<sup>182</sup> Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers*, vol. 5, ed. Parthasarathi (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1988) 580.

<sup>183</sup> Nehru, "The Place of English," (1956) *Speeches*, vol. 3 422.

<sup>184</sup> Nehru, "The Place of English" 422.

also not claimed that the presence of the English language in India would aid the *bhashas* to improve their own lexicon by saying:

[To the class of English-educated Indians] we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.<sup>185</sup>

Yet, despite the apparent symmetry, I would like to argue that it is *not* Macaulay that Nehru looked back to. On the contrary, Nehru's vision of English being simultaneously a "world," "national," "regional" and "local" language looked forward to a cosmopolitan future for India—of the kind represented by "Bombay" (not "Mumbai") in which, as I illustrated in my introduction, different languages as well as the different "worlds" connoted through them coalesce. Nehru's nationalism was at home with this polyglossic cosmopolitanism which could accommodate the languages of India, as well as languages which came to India from outside. For this reason, Nehru lacked many of his contemporaries' defensiveness against using English. Even Mulk Raj Anand, one of the most prominent early Indian English writers, thought he had to seek the sanction of M. K. Gandhi for writing in the English language:

I asked Bapu Gandhi whether it was wrong for me to write in the English language. Gandhi replied: "The purpose of writing is to

---

<sup>185</sup> Macaulay 359.

communicate, isn't it? If so, say your say in any language that comes to hand. Only say it quickly. There is no time to lose."<sup>186</sup>

A contemporary of Anand, Raja Rao too appeared to have had similar reservations about English not being a language of "one's own"—as he ruefully writes in the preface to his 1938 English language novel, *Kanthapura*:

One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language.<sup>187</sup>

In contrast to this position adopted by contemporaneous Indian English writers, Nehru moved the House of Parliament to retain English in India—first, for fifteen years, to see if another language would emerge to replace or rival English—and then for an indefinite amount of time, when it was felt that English had made itself indispensable to India.

In another intervention on this politics of linguistic nationalism, Nehru confidently stated:

English is likely to remain in India for a long time. I do not know exactly what form it will take, but the mere fact of its being there will serve as a vitaliser to our languages.<sup>188</sup>

This speech shows him as looking *ahead* to the generation of Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry. It is *this*

---

<sup>186</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, "Pigeon Indian: Some Notes on Indian English Writing," *Aspects of Indian Writing in English: Essays in Honour of Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar*, ed. M. K. Naik (Madras: Macmillan, 1979) 36.

<sup>187</sup> Raja Rao, Foreword to *Kanthapura* (1938) (New Delhi: Orient, 1971) vii.

<sup>188</sup> Nehru, qtd. in King 218.

generation of writers whose English would be “vitalised” by the Indian languages, with which it was once considered to be in contest. It is, after all, precisely for their novel and innovative use of a “cosmopolitanised” kind of English language (notably the *Bombaiyya* of Rushdie’s and Mistry’s novels, the *Sahibish* and Creoles in Ghosh’s novels, as well as the Hinglish and Urglish in Seth—about which I will say a lot more in Chapter 3) that the later generation of Indian English writers initially received so much critical attention in the broader anglophone world, in the 1980s and 1990s. The renowned linguist Braj Kachru uses the term “contact literature”<sup>189</sup> to refer to the works produced by Indian English writers, and this term aptly illustrates the elements of collaboration and acculturation (values that were so prized by Nehru) implicated in Indian English writing. Thus, I would argue that it is precisely through this “contact literature” that Nehru’s dream of de-iconising the coloniser’s language was eventually achieved. Writers such as Rushdie seem to echo Nehru’s dream when they assert that “(t)he children of independent India seem not to think of English as being irredeemably tainted by its colonial provenance. They use it (...) as one of the tools they have at hand.”<sup>190</sup>

Rushdie’s claim is, of course, not without its problems. In talking about the “children of India,” he does seem to conveniently forget that most of the children of India are not literate in English (or literate at all, for that matter!). English literacy in India, even in recent years, has not exceeded the ten percent mark in relation to the entire population. Rushdie also seems to

---

<sup>189</sup> Braj Kachru, *The Indianisation of English: The English Language in India* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983) 44.

<sup>190</sup> Rushdie, “‘Commonwealth Literature’ Does Not Exist,” in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991) 64.

envisage a uniform welcoming attitude towards the English language—hence ignoring the substantial number of “children” who continue to reject the English language, not only by dint of its origin, but also for its lingering associations with a Euro-north American culture that is seemingly hegemonic in India, as well as its status as a marker of class and privilege even within India, among other things. And yet, Rushdie is not *completely* misleading with regards to Indian English writing. Contemporary Indian writing in the English language *does* seem more confident in appropriating English as a “natural” vehicle for transmitting the various aspects of Indian life-worlds, in comparison to the first generation of Indian English writing by Anand, Narayan and Rao, among others. In the third chapter, I will explore whether this might be because the English language had “diffused” among the various classes and communities in India in a more substantial way by the time Rushdie appeared on the Indian literary scene, or whether this might be because the generation of Rushdie and his peers were mostly writers “formed” through the English language. Talking about the process of writing his novels, Anand revealed

I found, while writing spontaneously, that I was always translating dialogue from the original Punjabi into English. The way in which my mother said something in the dialect of central Punjabi could not have been expressed in any other way except in an almost literal translation, which might carry over the sound and the sense of the original speech. I also found, that I was dreaming or thinking or

brooding over two-thirds of the prose narrative in Punjabi, or in Hindustani and only one-third in the English language.<sup>191</sup>

Writing in English, for the first generation of Indian English writers, was therefore mostly associated with class, and was a distinct writerly practice. However, the literary sensibilities of Rushdie, Seth, Mistry and Ghosh, among others, were *produced* by their English-medium education, their stints in British and American institutions, as well as their cosmopolitan lifestyles. They are therefore less likely to have navigated the gaps between thinking in one language and writing in another, as Anand had confessed to doing. In fact, in several interviews, Seth and Rushdie have admitted their greater level of comfort in the English language. For example, in an interview to Pavan Verma, Seth admits that writing in English was not even a question of choice for him, since English is the only language in which he could create fiction. The analogy that Seth uses is: “if you have been taught to play the sarangi, you cannot switch to sitar.”<sup>192</sup>

### **1.6. Nehru and the 1980s-90s Novel**

Earlier, we saw with King that “[Nehru’s] instincts on language politics were perpendicular to those of his contemporaries, crossways, but those instincts were correct if not valued at the time, or later.” I would like to end this discussion by suggesting that the vindication of Nehru’s multi-linguistic nationalism is in fact found in the Indian English novels written after the 1980s-1990s, with a particular focus on Seth and Rushdie again. Although, as Srivastava suggests, the novels that emerged in this era often

---

<sup>191</sup> Anand 36.

<sup>192</sup> Seth, quoted in Roopali Gupta, *Vikram Seth’s Art: An Appraisal* (Delhi: Atlantic, 2005) 1.



have as a common theme, “the construction of the narrator as historian,” and provide a “a stage for the representation of multiple or conflicting versions of historical events,”<sup>193</sup> it might be argued that in their representation of the language issue, their commitment remains Nehruvian. This is evident in Srivastava’s demonstration of their secularism:

All the novels mentioned [*A Suitable Boy*, *Midnight’s Children*, *A Fine Balance*] project a secular and multicultural vision of the Indian nation-state, which clearly reveals their debts to nationalism as articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru in *The Discovery of India*. *Midnight’s Children* and *A Suitable Boy* can be said to be Nehruvian epics, and both present, in very different ways, a reworking and a recuperation of Nehru’s ideas of the Indian nation-state. The incorporation of India’s multilingual diversity into the language of the novels helps to project the ideals of secularism and of pluralistic democracy at the basis of Seth and Rushdie’s political visions.<sup>194</sup>

Along with the language in which the novels were written, I am particularly interested in looking at the treatment given to the *topic* of language in these novels. Each of these novels were written at a time when language and national identity (and the relationship between them) were re-emerging as a subject of great discord in India. There were no less than *three* prominent language-based secessionist movements in the country during the time when *Midnight’s Children* and *A Fine Balance* were composed in the 1980s, and in each of these cases, language was the cultural

---

<sup>193</sup> Srivastava 4.

<sup>194</sup> Srivastava 6-7.

logic of deep structural, economic and social inequalities. The first of these was led by the *Telugu Desam Party* in Andhra Pradesh, which claimed to stand for “the honour and self-respect of the 60 million Telugu-speaking people.”<sup>195</sup> The second was the movement for autonomy in the state of Assam, which also revolved around language in a substantial way. The long history of hostility between the Assamese language speakers and the Bengali speakers of West Bengal and Bangladesh who were often economic migrants in Assam, was crucial in triggering this movement. The third, perhaps better-known segregationist movement was organised by the Sikh political party, the *Akali Dal*, which united around the Punjabi language in order to militate for an autonomous territory for Punjabi-speaking Sikhs. They proposed to name this territory Khalistan. Each of these three movements arguably peaked between the late 1970s and early 1980s—around the time when Rushdie and Desai would have been working on their respective novels. Seth’s 1993 novel, *A Suitable Boy*, was written against the backdrop of another powerful language based movement that emerged in the early-1990s—the Marathi *Shiv Sena* Party. The *Shiv Sena*, as we discussed in the introduction, did not agitate for a separate state, but for the reclamation of the state of Maharashtra to Marathi speakers. Essentially, each of these movements was an explicit denial of Nehru’s vision. Speaking during a debate about the reorganisation of states along linguistic lines in 1955, Nehru had unequivocally stated:

An Honorable member said that I used to go around shouting about linguistic provinces from the house tops and at street corners. I am

---

<sup>195</sup> See Guha 553.

not aware of having done so at all. In fact, I have never been very enthusiastic about linguistic provinces. [...] May I say quite briefly and precisely that I dislike the principle absolutely 100%, as it has tended to go?<sup>196</sup>

Among other things, the language movements of the 1980s and 1990s therefore heralded how India was increasingly veering further away from Nehru's idea of India.

In their responses to these emergencies, the three aforementioned novels decisively deny the logic of mono-linguistic nationalisms or sub-national movements. I agree with Srivastava when she argues that “*A Suitable Boy* shows how the eclectic and multicultural traditions of India can be channelled in such a way as to create a civilisational support for a viable state ideology, as Nehru did,”<sup>197</sup> and her subsequent illustration of how the enforcement of this idea is especially pertinent to the era in which the novel was written (that is the 1990s)—since the 1990s was the period when the Hindu-right was explicitly discrediting the values of Nehruvian secularism in order to promote a national ideology which was based on the precepts of the Hindu majority. As I will show in the next chapter, despite being set in an era that saw such strong variants of mono-linguistic nationalism, *A Suitable Boy* does not endorse this politics in his novel. Instead, though it is written in English and set (principally) in a Hindi/Urdu-speaking area of north India, the idea of India's “multilingual diversity” is celebrated in *A Suitable Boy* through its heteroglossic narrative. This heteroglossia is preserved even

---

<sup>196</sup> Nehru, Speech in *Lok Sabha* 21 Dec. 1955, *Lok Sabha Debates on the Report of the States Reorganisation Commission 14-23 Dec. 1955*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1956) col. 3493.

<sup>197</sup> Srivastava 49.

though Seth tends to translate *bhasha* dialogues and words into English when rendering these in his narrative.<sup>198</sup> Along with English, Hindi and Urdu which are amply represented (given how elemental these languages are to the very narrative) Seth also gives us a kaleidoscopic view of other Indian languages. For example, the episodes set in Calcutta often give a glimpse of the Bengali language: Bengali is spoken in the Chatterji household; Justice Chatterji's clerk, Biswas Babu, speaks a heavily "Banglicised" English that often gets reproduced phonetically in the text for comic effect (such as in the episode when Kakoli mocks Biswas Babu's accent: "Oh, gulab-jamun, [...] and the chumchum! And mishti doi. Oh—the bhery mmemory makesh my shallybhery juishes to phlow").<sup>199</sup> In other episodes, Haresh's interactions with his family and his ex-lover (and her own family) brings Punjabi into the text. The South Indian, Professor Jaikumar's advent, towards the end of the novel also introduces some elements of Tamil. This is by no means a comprehensive list. The dazzle created by the plethora of languages in the novel is aptly summed up in Lata's reaction to a party at the Chatterjis', where she feels as though she was "swimming in a sea of language."<sup>200</sup> Seth's novel duly gives that impression too.

As for Rushdie, he not only freely code-mixes and hybridises between English, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Marathi and other languages, but he too makes the politics of language central to his narrative by giving centre

---

<sup>198</sup> Srivastava has aptly pointed out that Rushdie and Seth differ substantially on this aspect: "The profound dialogism of *Midnight's Children* is exemplified linguistically by the constant use of code-mixing and hybridisation between English and Urdu in the text, which displays a deliberately jarring, expressionistic effect. When compared to *Midnight's Children*, *A Suitable Boy* has a stronger tendency towards linguistic uniformity, which tends to translate English dialogues and words "originally" in Hindi, rather than leave them untranslated in the text the way Rushdie does." Srivastava 3.

<sup>199</sup> Seth, *A Suitable Boy* (New Delhi: Viking-Penguin, 1993) 461.

<sup>200</sup> Seth 399.

stage to the contemporaneous language agitations within and outside India (in the form of struggles for separate linguistic states, as well as the war for Bangladesh, among others). These agitations indeed become precursors to the great tragedies that unfold in each ensuing episode in *Midnight's Children*. The episode narrating the demonstrations by the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti* and the *Maha Gujarat Parishad* for the formation of separate Marathi- and Gujarati-speaking states, is memorable in the novel for its depiction of senseless communal violence:

That afternoon, the head of the procession of the *Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti* collided at Kemp's Corner, with the head of a *Maha Gujarat Parishad* demonstration; S. M. S. voices chanted "Soo che? Saru che!" and M. G. P. throats were opened in fury; under the posters of the Air-India rajah and of the Kolynos Kid, the two parties fell upon one another with no little zeal, and to the tune of my little rhyme the first of the language riots got under way, fifteen killed, over three hundred wounded.<sup>201</sup>

This episode is tellingly juxtaposed with the revelations, in the next section, about Saleem's ability to transgress the barriers of Indian languages and geography (for Saleem's perceptions were nevertheless still "bounded by the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Himalaya mountains, but also by the artificial frontiers which pierced Punjab and Bengal")<sup>202</sup> to look into the "hearts and minds of men" who hailed from Old Delhi, to Kerala, Shillong, Calcutta, Kashmir and Orissa. Saleem's ability to rise above the boundaries

---

<sup>201</sup> Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981) (London: Vintage, 2006) 265.

<sup>202</sup> Rushdie 271.

of language is what succeeds in bringing together midnight's children. By thus staging the faults and vacuity of these regional or sub-national language movements, Rushdie's and Seth's novels thus make a case for Nehru's vision, arraigned against European nationalism.

Given that earlier I argued that the European model of mono-linguistic nationalism was evident as early as in the first Indian English language novel (*Rajmohan's Wife*) my choice of Indian English novels to illustrate the opposite here might rightfully seem paradoxical. However, it must be remembered that Bankim was writing at a time when the Indian novel was in its infancy, and this includes the Indian novel in any language in India, for—as pointed out by Meenakshi Mukherjee in *Realism and Reality* (1985)—the nineteenth century English realist novel was the model that was adapted by writers in *bhasha* languages in order to launch the Indian novel form.<sup>203</sup> Its reliance on the European model was therefore thorough. At this stage, the Indian English novel, though not necessarily complicit in the task of colonialism, would still not have developed a way of questioning the European norms it was implicitly emulating. To take just one example, Bankim's novel is considerably less linguistically experimental than a novel by R. K. Narayan, writing a generation later. Narayan would be more "subversive" in introducing *bhasha* words and phrases in his writing, which shows that Narayan was perhaps more sure-footed in veering away from some of the European stylistic norms. And yet Narayan was still a few steps behind Rushdie, in so far that he was still cautious about the language he

---

<sup>203</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1985).

was using being not entirely his own. He was therefore happy to let Graham Greene manipulate his work in order to make it “more acceptable” in the European tradition. He writes in a letter to Greene:

I have no objection to have my English corrected by you; on the contrary I shall feel honoured by it. [...] Please hack down mercilessly any atrocities of language that you may find in the book.<sup>204</sup>

None of this abidance to the norm imposed by the English would figure in the work of Rushdie and his peers, who in fact often toy with language for stylistic effect. Thus, it is arguable that Rushdie would outdo Narayan in so far that the former’s use of *chutnified* English language can be interpreted an assertion of almost complete independence from its European precedent. From Bankim to Rushdie, the Indian English novel seemed to had developed along divergent lines and into different traditions. I uphold that Nehru’s linguistic values only find a home in the Rushdie generation.

Throughout his life, Nehru had actively promoted exchanges and borrowings from different languages. Among many other instances, this is clear in the letters that he writes to his daughter Indira. The letters are invariably written in more than one language—sometimes with Nehru addressing Indira in different languages (Indu Darling, *Pyari beti*, Indu *bien aimée*, *Cara mia*) and often with quotes from multiple languages, from the various literatures that father and daughter read together. Indeed, a page of these letters could look remarkably similar to a page from a Rushdie novel

---

<sup>204</sup> Narayan, qtd. in G. J. V. Prasad, *Writing India, Writing English: Literature, Language, Location* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011) 105.

where languages are similarly interlaced.<sup>205</sup> The letters themselves regularly conveyed encouragement on Nehru's part about the need for Indira to learn more languages. He asks Indira, who was then studying in Shantiniketan under the tutelage of Rabindranath Tagore: "Of the Indian languages, I understand you are taking up Bengali and Hindi. French of course you are taking and presumably English literature. Are you doing German also?"<sup>206</sup> Sentiments such as these were repeated many times by Nehru to the rest of India on larger public platforms. He particularly abhorred the idea of an "essential" or "pure" linguistic quality:

It is clear that when two languages come together, they strengthen each other. The idea of pulling down a language and thinking that your language will profit by it is utterly wrong.<sup>207</sup>

*Midnight's Children*, *A Suitable Boy* and *In Custody*, among others, each profit from Nehru's vision by lacing their writing with various such borrowings and acculturations from different languages.

In its conclusion, especially, Seth's novel epitomises the victory of this Nehruvian idea. The main plot of *A Suitable Boy* involves the search for a husband for the female protagonist, Lata. The suitable boy, it emerges towards the end, is Haresh Khanna, who is an epitome of linguistic hybridity. As well as fitting the Nehruvian ideal of being secular, socialist and anti-caste,<sup>208</sup> Haresh harbours no desire for purity of language. It is in

---

<sup>205</sup> Indira Gandhi, *Freedom's Daughter: Letters between Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru 1922-39*, ed. Sonia Gandhi (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989).

<sup>206</sup> Nehru, *Freedom's Daughter* 140.

<sup>207</sup> Nehru, qtd. in King 221.

<sup>208</sup> Haresh's pragmatic view of the issue of the Shiva Temple (which otherwise has an emotional appeal for many Hindus), his relationship with his subordinates (especially Jagat Ram, with whom he develops a friendship that is very unusual for a caste and class-riven



fact revealed, in an instance of free indirect discourse, that Haresh feels a greater level of comfort at being able to switch between languages. During a meeting in which he struggles to make conversation with Lata, Haresh ruminates: “had he been with Simran [his former lover], he would have known what to talk about; in any case they would have been talking in a mixture of Hindi, Punjabi and English. But talking to Lata was different.”<sup>209</sup> Indeed, Lata herself is remarkably sterile in comparison to Haresh, with regards to her ability to use and learn more languages. She is presented as speaking “very good” English, and some Hindi, but Lata does not pick up languages in the way that Haresh does. Amit Chatterji’s suggestion that Lata should learn Bengali falls on flat ears. Haresh, on the other hand, starts picking up Bengali as soon as he moves to Prahapore (fictional town, meant to be in the suburbs of Calcutta) in order to communicate with his colleagues. In order to aid his professional skills, he also picks up Mandarin from his Chinese colleague. Overall, along with his secularism and socialist penchant (which are obvious in his transcendence of class hierarchies within his organisation and his business, as well as his transgression of the boundaries of caste—among other things), Haresh is the embodiment of Nehru’s ambition to be *improved* through language acquisition. It is therefore indeed very significant that Haresh is the character who emerges as the “suitable boy” of the novel.

Moreover, as if to illustrate their trans-regionality, these aforementioned Indian English novels accordingly base themselves in different

---

society), as well as his general defiance of religious and caste dictates through his professional and social interactions, prove Haresh to live up to these ideals espoused by Nehru.

<sup>209</sup> Seth 1145-6.

parts of India—from Bombay in *Midnight's Children*, to the Hindi belt<sup>210</sup> and Calcutta in *A Suitable Boy*, to Delhi and Mirpore setting of *In Custody*. Written in the 1980s and 1990s, they actively tried to deconstruct and point to the hollowness of the communal and territorial associations of languages in general. For example, Desai's *In Custody* not only evaluates the problematic equation of Urdu with Pakistan and Islam, but in the closure of the novel, reiterates Nehru's view on Urdu's autochthonous status in India. This passage appears in the final pages of the text:

[Deven] thought of Nur's poetry being read, the sound of it softly murmuring in his ears. He had accepted the gift of Nur's poetry and that meant he was the custodian of Nur's very soul and spirit. It was a great distinction. He could not deny or abandon that under any pressure.<sup>211</sup>

Nur himself, as we saw earlier, personifies Urdu. It is thus significant that it is Deven—an Indian Hindu—who becomes the custodian of Urdu, through Nur. In showing Deven as suitable for this role, Desai reverses the prejudices that had projected Urdu as the language of Muslims and supporters of the idea of Pakistan.

Various sub-plots in Seth's *A Suitable Boy* also show a similar engagement with the Nehruvian ideal. Set in the 1950s, the novel showcases the rich Urdu culture that continued to thrive throughout India after

---

<sup>210</sup> The novel's main setting, Brahmur, has characteristics of some real, principally Hindi-speaking north Indian cities, such as Varanasi and Patna. Christopher Rollason argues that Brahmur is in fact a hybrid of various such cities, for the characteristics of Brahmur point to "Varanasi (the festival on the Ganges); to Agra (the leather industry); and, anticipat(e) the Babri Masjid controversy of the 1990s, to another city of epic associations, Ayodhya." Rollason, "'Swimming in a Sea of Language:' Linguistic Aspects of Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*," *Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*, ed. Murari Prasad (New Delhi: Pencraft, 2005) 63.

<sup>211</sup> Desai 204.

partition. Nationalist Hindus (such as the freedom fighter and Congress Party minister, Mahesh Kapoor), Muslims (such as the Nawab Sahib, who refuses to migrate to Pakistan after partition, though his brother and larger family does), minority rights' activists (such as the politician Begum Abida Khan), leftist and socialist activists (such as Maan's Urdu teacher Rasheed, who is an executive member of the Socialist Party student union, at the University of Brahmipur), along with the "traditional craftsmen" of the Urdu language (such as the Lucknowi courtesan, Saeeda Bai), are all shown to be users and lovers of Urdu in India. Some of them, such as Begum Abida Khan (who, admittedly, is rather communalist as a politician herself) explicitly reiterate the Indian credentials of Urdu:

[Urdu] is one of the glories of our province—it is the language of its finest poet, Mast. It is the language of Mir, of Ghalib, of Dagh, of Sauda, of Iqbal, of Hindu writers like Premchand and Firaq.<sup>212</sup>

Conversely, arguments seeking to ghettoise Urdu are made by the characters who receive a noticeably unsympathetic treatment in the narrative. L. N. Agarwal frequently makes such statements, maintaining that the spread and preservation of Urdu was not going to receive governmental aid or protection since it had the backing of communal institutions "There are many madrasas and religious establishments all over the state where Urdu may be taught."<sup>213</sup> But L. N. Agarwal hardly has any redeeming qualities (except perhaps in the episodes detailing his relationship with his daughter Priya). The ascription of this language politics to a generally

---

<sup>212</sup> Seth 1018.

<sup>213</sup> Seth 1017.

unpleasant character might thus be taken as a cue for the reader's interpretation of the larger language politics of the novel.

In addition, Seth is attentive to the general politics of mono-linguistic nationalists in his novel. Nehru and Tandon, in fact, briefly figure as characters in the story. The plotline involving Nehru and Tandon are based in actual facts: the power struggle within the Congress Party that ends with Tandon resigning as the President of the Congress Party:

[Tandon] reaffirmed the inflexibility of his own stand, which was based on principle; and he announced that if no acceptable formula could be reached by mediators, he would resign from the Congress Presidency the next day.

And this was what, the next day, with good grace—despite the many personal attacks against him in the press, despite what he saw as the impropriety of Nehru's tactics, and despite the bitterness and length of the battle—he did.

In a noble gesture, which did much to assuage any residual bitterness, he joined the Working Committee under the newly-elected Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru.

It was in effect a coup; and Nehru had won.

Apparently.<sup>214</sup>

The narrative here reveals a Nehruvian bias. Tandon's portrayal is outright unenthusiastic. The words "austere" and "intolerant" are used to characterise him in the novel,<sup>215</sup> and he is largely presented as a despot:

---

<sup>214</sup> Seth 992.

<sup>215</sup> Seth 953.

In the name of discipline and unity he [that is Tandon] attempted to suppress dissenting groups within the party [...]. Stay in the party and support the Working Committee, they were warned, or get out. Unlike his compliant predecessor in the job, Tandon also insisted that the party organisation as represented by its President had every right to advise, and indeed control, the policies of the Congress government headed by Nehru—down to the question of banning hydrogenated cooking oil.<sup>216</sup>

Nehru, on the other hand, is shown to be a more sensitive and likeable human being—not only in terms of his more inclusive politics, but also in his ability to empathise with other people. In one particular episode, Nehru is portrayed as being moved by the plight of a child who is brutalised by his *mali* (that is gardener):

Nehru, still furious, gathered the dirty and terrified little boy into his arms and, after talking to him gently, put him down. He told the mali to pluck some fruit immediately for the child, and threatened to sack him on the spot.<sup>217</sup>

It is arguable that Seth emphasises Nehru's humanity here in order to magnify his political credentials.

Hence, each of the three novels sustain the essential Nehruvian belief in the unfettered progress and free movement of all the languages in India, without positioning any specific one as being more “representative” of India than the other. Stalin, with whom we started this chapter, once claimed that

---

<sup>216</sup> Seth 954.

<sup>217</sup> Seth 988.

“(t)here is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages.”<sup>218</sup> The way in which Nehru led India, in some measure, helped the subsequent generations to resist this discourse of linguistic chauvinism.

### **1.7. After 2010**

In the past few years (after 2010) India has witnessed a resurgence of this linguistic chauvinism. With the *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*'s Tamil supremacist policies in Tamil Nadu, the Trinamool Congress Party's pledge to “re-centralise” the Bengali language in West Bengal (now renamed *Paschim Banga*) as well as populist leaders such as Anna Hazare chanting the virtues of one's *bhasha* “mother tongue,” it remains to be seen whether Indian fiction, and other cultural forms, will again veer towards Nehru to find a solution to India's fissiparous (sub-)nationalist forces. Perhaps the answer is already discernible in the way that recent Indian cinema has insisted on *resisting* these tendencies by pointedly foregrounding the linguistic plurality and multiplicity of India. For example, arguably, the most successful and popular Bollywood films of the past two years have been the ones that are not made in linguistic isolation, but have thrived in celebrating the ability of India's languages to mingle with—and acknowledge—each other. Hence, *Kahaani* (2012) integrates Hindi, English and the Bengali language in almost equal measure. Similarly, dialogues in *Aiyya* (2012) switch between Hindi, Marathi and Tamil throughout, while *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) sees Hindi, English, Bhojpuri and Urdu all mingling. All these films thereby illustrate how all these languages are capable of sharing

---

<sup>218</sup> Stalin 304.

the same cultural platform. The most popular songs of these past few years display similar *chutnification*. Along with the omnipresent English lyrics, words from Marathi (in “Mala jau de” and “Halkat jawani”), Punjabi (“Sadi galli,” “Ainvayi ainvayi”) and Bengali (“Ekla chalo re”) figure prominently. In so doing, these films refute mono-linguistic nationalist chauvinism. Nehru, I feel, would have been proud. But, then again, perhaps is it too early to comment?

## CHAPTER 2

### RELIGION AND SECULARISM

Safe, simple Hindi language, safe comfortable idea of cow worship and caste and the romance of Krishna.

—Anita Desai, *In Custody*

A translator acts also as a real or potential repository of knowledge [because] we [...] look up to the translator who can tell us how such questions [on a number of theoretical issues] have been asked or formulated and/or answered in other cultures.

—Probal Dasgupta, *The Otherness of English: India's Auntie Tongue Syndrome*

It is but a short step from being a secularist in religion to being a non-dogmatist in language.

—Robert King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India*

In this chapter, I examine the political debate around how language intersects with communalism and secularism in India. The English language and Hindi are the focus of my analysis here. I begin by questioning the popular notion that English and Hindi are somehow situated at diametric ends of a spectrum that covers secularism, at one extreme, and Hindu nationalism (or *Hindutva*), at the other. (An important demarcation that will be emphasised throughout here is that *Hindutva* is *not* the same as Hinduism!) Starting with an analysis of popular and political discourse through speeches, manifestoes and other publications, I show how English and Hindi—by dint of their origin and appropriation by different political parties in India—are often projected as being ideological opponents. Seeking to probe this opposition further, I offer translation as the most appropriate platform to examine the differences that emerge when writing about the same thing in two different languages: does writing in two languages, for example, also entail adhering to two different ideologies?



Through a step by step analysis in which I examine the ways in which religion, secularism, and gender roles and sexuality are translated, I analyse the extent to which Gopal Gandhi's Hindi translation of Seth's *A Suitable Boy* ends up rendering a version of the novel that is contradictory to the ethos of Seth's text. I argue that while Seth's English language novel is a largely secular narrative that is truthful to the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi's translation upholds another ideal in the form of Nehru's ideological political opponent: P. D. Tandon. However, I also go on to argue that the staging of this language/religion (or secularism) conflation is neither inherent to the said languages themselves, nor a component of the literatures that have thrived in these various languages over the years. Again, I use a plethora of examples from different genres (ranging from political writings, to internet blogs, to novels in Hindi and English) to show how there is no obvious logic to the perpetuation of the notion that marries Hindi with *Hindutva*, and English with secularism, other than the desire of a multilingual elite to capitalise on this perceived difference in view of peddling their own political precepts. Language, again, falls prey to politics, causing the literary representations of language to change according to the political sympathies of the author.

### **2.1. The Religion of Language**

When the leading Indian journalist Tarun Tejpal launched a Hindi language version of his weekly magazine, *Tehelka* in September 2007, he used the tagline: "Truth, Now in Hindi." This assumed discrepancy between

Hindi and English brings to mind the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis, according to which:

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.<sup>219</sup>

I have already discussed this in part in my introductory chapter, where I looked at how the anglicised name “Bombay” and the Marathi “Mumbai” each evoke different “worlds” though they are both names that refer to the same city. The same logic that divides “Bombay” from “Mumbai” also governs the “India” vs. “Bharat” divide at a national level, and like the MNS and the *Shiv Sena*, Hindu supremacist and nationalist organisations such as the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) peddle similar dichotomies. For example, in the wake of the brutal gang rape of a student in Delhi in December 2012, the RSS *sarsanghachalak* (RSS supremo) Mohan Bhagwat claimed that: “Such crimes hardly take place in ‘Bharat,’ but they frequently occur in ‘India.’”<sup>220</sup> In this imagination, Bharat stands for a monolingual, Hindi-speaking country of traditional Hindu values that is located in rural spaces, whereas cosmopolitan, polyglossic, urban, secular India is the space marked by transgressiveness, here in the form of sexual violence.<sup>221</sup>

---

<sup>219</sup> Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality*, ed. David G. Mandelbaum (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 162.

<sup>220</sup> “Rapes Happen in India, not Bharat: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat blames western culture for gangrapes,” *India Today* 4 Jan. 2013, 26 May 2013  
<<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/rapes-happen-in-india-not-bharat-rss-chief-mohan-bhagwat-blames-western-culture-for-gangrapes/1/240709.html>>.

<sup>221</sup> This is notwithstanding the fact that the bulk of rape in India is committed in non-urban spaces, most-often where Hindi is indeed spoken as the singular language—which Bhagwat completely misses here. Following the said brutal rape incident, the *Wall Street Journal India* had drawn a “rape map” of India. According to this map, it is the relatively less

Bhagwat's implication is that the choice of the name (whether English or Sanskrit) therefore reflects divergent ideas about the country itself.

Long before these recent upheavals, V. D. Savarkar, an Indian radical and an advocate of *Hindutva*—or a form of Hindu nationalism (on which I will elaborate further throughout this chapter)—had suggested that *bhasha* writers and scholars preferred the name Bharat for its “consonance with the established canons of elegance.”<sup>222</sup> However, the fact that the word Bharat itself is derived from the Hindu scriptures, the *Puranas* (which use the name “Bharata” to demarcate the territorial expanse of the Indian subcontinent),<sup>223</sup> would inevitably have influenced Savarkar's endorsement of Bharat over India. By its association with the *Puranas*, Bharat got tied in with the Hindu idea of India—and hence befitted Savarkar's *Hindutva* ideology. Though *Tehelka* claims to avoid the lexicon of schism, the rhetorical implication of its Hindi tagline seems to be analogous to this very logic of separation followed by the Hindi/Hindu nationalists, in so far that it too takes for granted the different truth claims of the different Indian languages.

Another recent political controversy brought home the potential of mischief implicated in this idea. In the lead up to the Indian General

---

“cosmopolitan” and *bhasha*-speaking states of Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh which emerged as having registered the highest number of rape cases in India: “A Rape Map of India,” *The Wall Street Journal India* 3 Jan. 2013, 12 Jun. 2013 <<http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/01/03/a-rape-map-of-india/>>.

Kavita Krishnan, Secretary of the All India Progressive Women's Association also commented on the absurdity and chauvinism of Bhagwat's claim, which seeks to project *bhasha*-speaking India as an haven against rapes and violence against women, but in fact just displays Bhagwat's ignorance about facts and statistics: “Capitalism, Sexual Violence, and Sexism,” *Kafila* 23 May 2013, 12 Jun. 2013 <<http://kafila.org/2013/05/23/capitalism-sexual-violence-and-sexism-kavita-krishnan/>>.

<sup>222</sup> V. D. Savarkar, “Essentials of Hindutva,” *Veer Savarkar*, 17 Feb. 2013 <[http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials\\_of\\_hindutva.v001.pdf](http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf)>.

<sup>223</sup> F. F. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1922) 131.

Elections of 2009, the BJP candidate Feroze Varun Gandhi attracted the wrath of several liberal commentators and minority rights' activists, got censured by the Election Commission, and ended up mired in a lawsuit for a speech he made in the Hindi language.<sup>224</sup> The tone of Gandhi's speech was profoundly inflammatory in its anti-Muslim sentiments:

Go to your villages and give the call that all Hindus must unite to save this area from becoming Pakistan. [...] This is not a (mere) "hand," this is the hand of the "lotus."<sup>225</sup> It will cut the throat of the "circumcised"<sup>226</sup> after the election. [...] Varun Gandhi will cut...that hand. [...] If any wrong element raises his hand on a Hindu...I swear on the Gita that I will cut off that hand!<sup>227</sup> (translation mine)

The speech was given in the electoral constituency of Pilibhit which is a borough in Uttar Pradesh, situated at the heart of the Hindi belt. (It must be noted here that the appeal of the BJP is strongest in the Hindi belt, which remains among the surest strongholds of the party's conservative, Hindi/Hindu-centric politics). Varun Gandhi seems to have assumed that his Hindi-speaking audience was necessarily conservative and anti-Muslim.

Given the religious demographic of Pilibhit, which reveals (according to the

---

<sup>224</sup> Unfortunately, following (what is obviously) a perversion of law, Varun Gandhi was acquitted by the Supreme Court earlier this year. Uddalak Mukherjee's article in *The Telegraph*, tellingly titled "Poison Fangs," draws attention to how the Varun Gandhi episode sullies the integrity of, and erodes public faith in, India's judiciary as a whole. Uddalak Mukherjee, "Poison Fangs," *The Telegraph Calcutta* 12 Jun. 2013, 20 Jun. 2013 <[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130612/jsp/opinion/story\\_16991983.jsp#.Ucc-LRbvwy4](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130612/jsp/opinion/story_16991983.jsp#.Ucc-LRbvwy4)>.

<sup>225</sup> The remark about the "hand" is no doubt directed at his Congress Party opponents, whose party symbol is an upraised hand. The lotus, on the other hand, is the symbol of the BJP.

<sup>226</sup> Varun Gandhi uses the term *katua*, which literally translates as "circumcised." It is an obvious reference to the Muslim community, among whom male circumcision is ritualistic.

<sup>227</sup> Varun Gandhi, "Varun Gandhi's Speech that Sparked Controversy," *IBN Live* 16 Mar. 2009, 12 Apr. 2010 <<http://ibnlive.in.com/videos/87851/varun-gandhis-speech-marks-a-new-low-in-indian-politics.html>>.

data collated in the 2001 census) that Hindus are the majority community, with a total percentage of 71.43, it is very likely that most of the audience would indeed have been Hindu. But what makes Varun Gandhi equate the religious affiliation of his audience with perverse and violent communalism? In a subsequent speech that he gave to further clarify and explain the above comments, Gandhi declared:

Each time anyone identifies with the Hindu community, there is a vigorous attempt to embarrass and brand him as communal. I am proud of my faith, not apologetic about it. I am a Gandhi, a Hindu, and an Indian in equal measure. [...] There is no question of my having any ill feeling towards [any] community. Yes, I am a proud Hindu, and as a proud Hindu, I stand by all members of all religions and all faiths.”<sup>228</sup>

It is obvious that Varun Gandhi *is* capable of adjusting his rhetoric in order to distinguish between religiosity and religious fundamentalism. Why, then, is the Hindi-speaking crowd in Pilibhit exempt from sharing his own professed religious tolerance?

Discussing Varun Gandhi’s off-record justification for his speech, where he claimed that “(h)e wanted to leach this fear of Muslim terror out of [the voters in his constituency] [and] consequently went into rhetorical overdrive because that’s the idiom that works in Indian politics,” Mukul Kesavan wrote:

---

<sup>228</sup> Varun Gandhi, “Varun Gandhi Cries Foul,” *Star News TV* 17 Mar. 2009, posted to *YouTube* 17 Mar. 2009, 13 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq1Xhni4AtY>>.

It is perhaps worth noting here that this speech was made in the English language. At the end, Varun Gandhi asks for a break of five minutes to go over the speech before he makes the same statement in Hindi. He explains that he had not written the speech in Hindi, and therefore needed the five minutes in order to be able to make the speech “extempore.”

This is the sort of justification that's only available to the English-speaking Indian politician. You're accountable for what you say in English because English is the language of seriousness and modernity. Anything you say in the vernacular can't be held against you because the point of using an Indian language (such as the Hindi that Varun Gandhi deployed in Pilibhit) is to establish an "emotional" connection. In this view Hindi becomes the language of political stagecraft, of stylised rhetorical excess and the politician temporarily becomes Prithviraj Kapoor. And just as no sophisticated film goer would expect realism from a Prithviraj Kapoor film, no sophisticated English-speaking Indian ought to expect a political speech in Hindi to be temperate or reasoned. [...] Hindi, for Varun Gandhi, is a transactional language, something he does political business in. Since he sees electoral politics as a jungly world where he has to growl and snarl to find traction amongst the unwashed and the low-born, he will say things that even Narendra Modi might hesitate to say in front of the television cameras because Varun lives in English and sees his Hindi-speaking political life as a series of necessary off-stage noises.<sup>229</sup>

Kesavan's analysis of Varun Gandhi's political prejudice rests entirely on the fact that he sees Gandhi as hailing from the "world" of the English language. As a member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, whose anglophone sympathies have never been camouflaged, Varun Gandhi was educated in the British

---

<sup>229</sup> Mukul Kesavan, "Tale of Two Worlds," *The Telegraph Calcutta* 9 Apr. 2009, 12 Apr. 2010 <[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090402/jsp/opinion/story\\_10756572.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090402/jsp/opinion/story_10756572.jsp)>.

School in New Delhi. He then went on to study in the London School of Economics and Politics and the School of Oriental and African Studies in England. He is also the author of a collection of English poetry, titled *The Otherness of Self* (2000). It is clear that English is likely to be a language that he uses as much as—if not more than—any of the *bhashas*. From this perspective, Varun Gandhi assumes that those who inhabit the world of *bhashas* as being fundamentally different from him, if not obviously inferior. The rural inhabitants of Pilibhit, Gandhi deems, are not likely to have been exposed to the other languages of India. In “his” world, fellow speakers of the English language ponder on the finer philosophical implications of “truth” while using complex images and analogies, such as the eucharist, or the idea of euthanising silence, as seen in his poetry such as “Of Stars or Stones:”

Of the end

Seems to be

Littoral noise

Wash down the eucharist with water

A euthanising silence strychnine

Key to Eugenics

Truth is the key to life and indignation.<sup>230</sup>

On the other hand, the Hindi speaker is seen as crude, hysteric, and prone to violence (which can be incited merely by subjecting them to strong and crude language that leeches on their [assumed] fears and prejudices).

---

<sup>230</sup> Varun Gandhi, “Of Stars or Stones,” Poetry by Varun, *Varun Gandhi: Official Website*, 10 Jan. 2013 <<http://varungandhi.net.in/poetry-by-varun.html>>.

Ashis Nandy suggests that “communal ideology, tinged with the language of religions and tradition, (is) usually crude, offensive and violent.”<sup>231</sup> Given that Varun Gandhi is a member of the right-wing BJP, which, as I mentioned earlier, is known for its Hindu supremacist beliefs, it might be argued that his speech was merely an instance of *realpolitik*. The BJP, as reflected in its manifesto, places Hinduism at the centre of Indian civilisation, and marginalises every other community by claiming that “(t)he civilisational consciousness of India has been well-defined by the sages and philosophers and has its roots in Bharatiya or Hindu world view.”<sup>232</sup> But as well as priming Hinduism at the national level, the BJP also celebrates aggression and violence. This is in accordance to the BJP’s *Hindutva* ideology. As the founding “father” of *Hindutva*, V. D. Savarkar, had been a great advocate of marrying religion, politics and physical might, in order to lionise the nation. His slogan, “Hinduse Politics, and Militarise Hinduism,” aptly sums up this entire idea. Indeed, in Savarkar’s analysis, force and aggression had arguably been *more* important than the spirituality and philosophy of Hinduism itself, since Savarkar himself was a hard-boiled atheist.<sup>233</sup> Hence, the BJP’s intent to “Hinduse” India, in keeping with their

---

<sup>231</sup> Ashis Nandy, Shikha Trivedy, Shail Mayaram and Achyut Yagnik, *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1995) 11.

<sup>232</sup> BJP, Election Manifesto 2009 (English), 12 Jun. 2013  
<<http://www.bjp.org/content/view/2836/394/>>.

<sup>233</sup> Nandy writes that: “Savarkar’s atheism was not the philosophical atheism associated with Buddhism and Vedanta, but the anti-clerical, hard atheism of fin-de-siècle scientism, increasingly popular among sections of the European middle class and, through cultural osmosis, in parts of modern India.”

Ashis Nandy, “The Demonic and the Seductive in Religious Nationalism: Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and the Rites of Exorcism in Secularising South Asia,” *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* 44 (2009), 26 Mar. 2013  
<[http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/9086/1/HPSACP\\_NANDY.pdf](http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/9086/1/HPSACP_NANDY.pdf)>.



*Hindutva* politics, must also be understood as, *per se*, an aggressive act.

Tapan Basu *et al.* explain:

The programme of Hinduisation involves a specific construction of a Hindu self—a virile, masculine, aggressively communal self which is intolerant of other faiths, even of other conceptions of Hinduism.<sup>234</sup>

In addition to their infamous and long-standing *Ramjanmabhumi* campaign (to have a temple constructed in honour of the Hindu god Ram, in lieu of the mosque that currently stands on his alleged birthplace—whose destruction they called for) the BJP's religious fundamentalism and communalism can also be seen in events like the Gujarat riots of 2002. The large-scale violence unleashed on the Muslim community, which involved the looting, killing and sexual assault of Muslims by Hindu mobs, was conducted with the active help of BJP party members and parliamentary representatives. The complicity and sanction of Chief Minister Narendra Modi, a member of the BJP has been since revealed and confirmed, especially as of 2012 when a Member of the Legislative Assembly from his party, Mayaben Kodnani, was finally convicted for her involvement in the massacre that took place in the Naroda Patia area, along with Babu Bajrangi, who testified that he had Modi's support in orchestrating and overseeing the carnage.<sup>235</sup>

---

<sup>234</sup> Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, and Sambuddha Sen, *Khakhi Shorts, Saffron Flags* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993) ix.

<sup>235</sup> Babu Bajrangi, "To get me out on bail, Narendrabhai changed judges thrice," (transcript) *Tehelka* 3 Nov. 2007, 10 Feb. 2013  
<[http://archive.tehelka.com/story\\_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107To\\_Get.asp](http://archive.tehelka.com/story_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107To_Get.asp)>.

In itself the Modi phenomenon is indicative of the Hindu-centricity of the BJP. Modi's popularity largely rests on his communal and divisive politics. He is seen as a "leader" and "saviour" of the Hindu majority. Most of his election campaigns have even been organised around this image. The election campaign of 2002, in the aftermath of the pogrom, was especially indicative of this. It would not be far-fetched to say that Modi's brand of anti-Islamic and *Hindutva* politics here emerged as the trump card of the BJP. As put by Luke Harding in an article published in *The Guardian* in 2002,

The BJP's stunning triumph was clearly down to one man—Gujarat's chief minister Narendra Modi. Nine months ago Mr. Modi presided over the worst religious riots in India's recent history. Hindu mobs enraged by the Muslim burning of 59 Hindu pilgrims on a train in the town of Godhra, went on the rampage—burning, killing and raping more than 2000 of their Muslim neighbours. Mr. Modi's administration and police force were complicit in the carnage. Mr. Modi did not apologise for the riots. *Instead he scented a political opportunity. In the run-up to the polls the chief minister campaigned on [a] new, aggressive platform of "Hindutva"—or chauvinist Hindu supremacism.*<sup>236</sup> (emphasis mine)

This image of Modi as a Hindu leader has hardly been altered since 2002. In a recent party advertisement published in a local Gujarati newspaper in April 2012, he was depicted as the Hindu god, Krishna (while

---

<sup>236</sup> Luke Harding, "Dark Days for India," *The Guardian* 16 Dec. 2002, 10 Feb. 2013  
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/dec/16/worlddispatch.india?INTCMP=SRCH>>.

the other candidates from his party were the *Pandavas*—the five brothers who are the heroes of the epic *Mahabharata*):



Image 2: Narendra Modi Depicted as Krishna in BJP Advertisement

More recently, the “Vibrant Gujarat” summit organised by the Government of the state in January 2013 to showcase business opportunities saw the industrialist Anil Ambani praising Modi by saying, “Narendrabhai has the Arjuna-like clarity of vision and purpose.”<sup>237</sup> Arjuna was the most valiant of the Pandava brothers, and particularly known for his precision and far-sightedness as an archer, as well as his piety. The comparison with Arjuna again clinches Modi’s image of a Hindu leader.

What is of particular interest to me here, however, is that in 2012, when Narendra Modi was elected Gujarat’s Chief Minister for the fourth

<sup>237</sup> “Narendra Modi a ‘king among kings,’ says Anil Ambani at Vibrant Gujarat Summit,” *NDTV* 11 Jan. 2013, 13 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/narendra-modi-a-king-among-kings-says-anil-ambani-at-vibrant-gujarat-summit-316267>>.

time, he delivered his victory speech in *Hindi*, not in the regional Gujarati language. This is significant because Hindi is seen here to support his plan to project himself as a pan-Hindu leader (rather than just a regional politician)—especially in view of the upcoming General Elections in 2014, in which Modi is likely to contest as the Prime Ministerial candidate. The use of Hindi is therefore deliberate, because the language is seen to be convergent with his Hindu image, in the same way that P. D. Tandon and his allies had predicated in the early years of independence, and in the same way that L. K. Advani had advanced in the BJP campaigns of the 1990s during which speeches about the party's *Hindutva* ideology and cultural nationalism were unfailingly delivered in Hindi (while messages more secular in their intent were reserved for other languages such as English).

To use just one illustrative example, it is pertinent how the Hindi and English language manifestos of the BJP differ. The BJP tempers its message according to the language of the target audience. Unlike what one would expect, one is not a direct translation of the other. The differences between the two become clear from the very onset. The English manifesto begins on a cautious note: "Indian civilisation is *perhaps* the most ancient and continuing civilisation of the world"<sup>238</sup> (emphasis mine). The Hindi manifesto, on the other hand, harbours no such doubts and emphatically proclaims: "विश्व की प्राचीनतम और जीवित सभ्यताओं में भारतीय सभ्यता का स्थान अप्रतिम है,"<sup>239</sup> that is "of all ancient and living civilisations in the world, the Indian civilisation has the foremost place" (translation mine). The forcefulness of

---

<sup>238</sup> BJP, Election Manifesto 2009 (English).

<sup>239</sup> BJP, Election Manifesto 2009 (Hindi), 12 Jun. 2013  
<<http://www.bjp.org/content/view/2836/394/>>.

the Hindi reinforces the prejudices and stereotypes about Hindi (and other *bhasha*) speakers: that not only are they more liable to be provoked, but that they are also more “nationalist” than the more “cosmopolitan” English-speaking Indians. The association of Hindi with the glorious past is also taken for granted in the manifesto. It is perhaps assumed that there is no need to set the scene or tone in Hindi, and it therefore begins *in media res*. The English manifesto, on the other hand, is given an explanatory subtitle: “To Build a Prosperous, Powerful Nation, Recall India’s Past.” English-speaking Indians are assumed to be more removed from an awareness of Indian history and the subtitle seems to have been inserted in order to outline the shape of the agenda for the “not-as-Indian” English speaker who needs to be coerced to look back at India’s pre-colonial (and pre-English language?) past, in order to revisit India’s ancient national cultural glory. The manifestoes differ too in their treatment of specific subjects pertaining to the nation. On “National Security,” the Hindi manifesto loudly censures alleged Pakistani involvement in some of the terrorist attacks in India, underscoring not only territorial distinctions between the countries but also their religious differences. Again, the India/Bharat divide is noticeable here, with the propaganda subtly adjusted according to the assumed sensibilities of the speaker of each language.

It is conspicuous in all of the above instances how language becomes the battlefield for opposing values, with Hindi being conflated with religious nationalism. But following the V. D. Savarkar logic, religiosity and patriotism are married too, and Hindi, by virtue of its religious association, thus also

becomes the parameter for measuring degrees and kinds of “Indianness” and levels of national “authenticity.” As I touched on in the previous chapter, the autochthonous national *and* religious credential of Hindi was precisely what was underlined by *bhasha* activists—and especially by Hindi-*wallahs*—when militating for a national language. This attitude inevitably seeps into and affects literary and popular culture, and its effects are perceptible in the different treatments accorded to the literatures written in the various languages of India. As Makarand Paranjape observes, “linguistic positions...are important determinants in the problematic of representing India, which all Indian literature must willy-nilly do,”<sup>240</sup> wherein it often emerges that *bhasha* literature is on the side of an authentically religious India while English is married to a kind of secular cosmopolitan version of the nation. Because of this, Indian English writing often gets tested for its patriotism, or lack thereof. “Indian English literature [has] to strive to prove its Indian credentials, as it were, just as other literatures in Indian languages have to strive to prove their modernity or internationality,”<sup>241</sup> explains Paranjape. To this, G. J. V. Prasad adds:

Indians who write in English are seen as the literary heirs of Mir Jafar (who betrayed the Nawab of Plassey against the British), as self-serving individuals who will sell their country in the market-places of the West. So writing India is seen as impossible when you write

---

<sup>240</sup> Paranjape, “Vernacularising the Mother Tongue,” *The Official Makarand R. Paranjape’s Website*, 20 Jan. 2012

<<http://www.makarand.com/acad/VernacularisingtheMasterTongueIndianEnglishanditsCon-texts.htm>>.

<sup>241</sup> Paranjape, “Indian English and Its Contexts,” 20 Jan. 2012

<<http://www.makarand.com/acad/IndianEnglishanditsCon-textsRepresentingIndiainourTime.htm>>.

English. At best, the writers are seen as native informants giving ethnographic briefs to a western audience, and at worst, they are seen as constructing an image of India that the West wants to see.<sup>242</sup>

66 years after independence, this paranoia about the foreign secularism of English, and the religious homeliness of Hindi and the *bhashas* still prevail and the quintessential upholder of this union in India arguably remains the *Hindutva* politics of Hindu right-wing parties, with their triple endorsement of language, religion and nation: Hindi, Hindu and Bharat.

Before proceeding further, it is important to point out that *Hindutva* and Hinduism are distinct categories. Indian secularism is *not* incompatible with the existence of *Hinduism* because secularism in India is not averse to religion—unlike, say, the Russellian understanding of the term, which sets “secularism” up against “theologism.” In his famous lecture, “Why I am Not a Christian” given on 6 March 1927 at the National Secular Society, it is very clear that Bertrand Russell premises “secularism” precisely by *refuting* Christianity.<sup>243</sup> But, in the case of Indian secularism, religion is not rejected. Nehru had explained it thus:

Some people think it [that is, “secularism”] means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal

---

<sup>242</sup> G. J. V. Prasad, *Writing India, Writing English* ix.

<sup>243</sup> Bertrand Russell, “Why I Am Not a Christian,” (1957) *“Why I Am Not a Christian:” And Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004): 1-19.

opportunities; that, as a state, it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion, which then becomes the state religion.<sup>244</sup>

In view of the above, Rajeev Bhargava is right in asserting that “(i)f secularism meant the general separation of religious and non-religious practices, then, at least in India, it would be a political non-starter.”<sup>245</sup> Indian secularism *does*, however, regulate the involvement of Hinduism (or any other religion) in matters of the running of the state. As Bhargava explains:

The philosophy of secularism that grounds such a state accommodates religious orthodoxy, heteronomous interdependence and tradition because it does not presuppose a high degree of autonomy, full-blooded egalitarianism or mandatory and intense political participation. Thus, even believers can accept the separation of religion from politics, even they can be secular.<sup>246</sup>

In contrast to this, *Hindutva* ideology is decisively in conflict with Indian secularism—and this, despite the fact that there are many disagreements regarding the definition of *Hindutva* itself. For example, in a judgment delivered in 1995, Justice J. S. Verma ruled:

Considering the terms Hinduism or *Hindutva* per se as depicting hostility, enmity or intolerance towards other religious faiths or professing communalism, proceeds from an improper appreciation and perception of the true meaning of these expressions. [...] Misuse of these expressions to promote communalism cannot alter the true

---

<sup>244</sup> Nehru, Statement of 1961, quoted in T. N. Madan, *Locked Minds, Modern Myths: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1997) 238.

<sup>245</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, “Giving Secularism its Due,” *Economic & Political Weekly* 29.28 (1994): 1785.

<sup>246</sup> Bhargava, “Giving Secularism its Due” 1787.



meaning of these terms. [...] It is, therefore, a fallacy and an error of law to proceed on the assumption that any reference to *Hindutva* or Hinduism in a speech makes it automatically a speech based on the Hindu religion as opposed to the other religions or that the use of [the] words *Hindutva* or Hinduism per se depicts an attitude hostile to all persons practising any religion other than the Hindu religion.<sup>247</sup>

Justice Verma's argument reveals his *conflation* of the terms Hinduism and *Hindutva*: both terms are treated as implicating nationalism, but *not* communalism. This is in contrast to the definition offered by the founder of the *Hindutva* ideology. In his pamphlet, "Essentials of *Hindutva*" V. D. Savarkar explicitly writes that *Hindutva* is *not* analogous to Hinduism:

*Hindutva* is not identical with what is vaguely indicated by the term Hinduism. By an "ism" it is generally meant a theory or a code more or less based on spiritual or religious dogma and creed. Had not linguistic usage stood in our way then "Hinduness" would have certainly been a better word than Hinduism as a near parallel to *Hindutva*.<sup>248</sup>

In contrast to Verma, Savarkar's argument was that Hinduism, or the philosophy of the Hindu religion, was distinct from *Hindutva*. Unlike what Verma suggests too, *Hindutva* was conceived by Savarkar as a nationalist *and* communalist movement. Savarkar explains *Hindutva* as a kind of political action that organised *Hindus* into a single community:

---

<sup>247</sup> J. S. Verma J, "Judgement: Meaning of 'Hindutva' and 'Hinduism,'" 11 Dec. 1995, repr. in *News Analysis India*, 13 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.newsanalysisindia.com/supremcourt.htm>>.

<sup>248</sup> Savarkar  
<[http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials\\_of\\_hindutva.v001.pdf](http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf)>.

This one word, *Hindutva*, ran like a vital spinal cord through our whole body politic and made the Nayars of Malabar weep over the sufferings of the Brahmins of Kashmir.<sup>249</sup>

When the BJP places *Hindutva* at the core of its political programme, it is therefore making a larger statement—not only about “nationalism”—but also about Hindu communalism, and thereby explicitly refuting Indian secularism:

*Hindutva* will not mean any Hindu theocracy or theology. However, it will mean that the guiding principles of Bharat will come from two of the great teaching of the Vedas, the ancient Hindu and Indian scriptures.<sup>250</sup>

Despite the protestations to the contrary from the reference to “Bharat,” to the reverence with which Hindu scriptures are held, it is clear that *Hindutva* is the ideology of a *Hindu* state in BJP jargon. According to the BJP website, it sees India doing for Hinduism what Israel did for Judaism:

*Hindutva* awakened the Hindus to the new world order where nations represented the aspirations of people united in history, culture, philosophy and heroes. *Hindutva* successfully took the Indian idol of Israel and made Hindus realise that their India could be just as great and could do the same for them also.<sup>251</sup>

---

<sup>249</sup> Savarkar

<[http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials\\_of\\_hindutva.v001.pdf](http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf)>.

<sup>250</sup> BJP, “Hindutva: The Great Nationalist Ideology,” 12 Jun. 2013

<[http://www.bjp.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=369:hindutva-the-great-nationalist-ideology&catid=92&Itemid=501](http://www.bjp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=369:hindutva-the-great-nationalist-ideology&catid=92&Itemid=501)>.

<sup>251</sup> BJP

<[http://www.bjp.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=369:hindutva-the-great-nationalist-ideology&catid=92&Itemid=501](http://www.bjp.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=369:hindutva-the-great-nationalist-ideology&catid=92&Itemid=501)>.

*Hindutva* therefore violates secularism's basic premise of the "neutrality" and commitment to non-sectarianism of the state towards all religious communities (which are written into the Constitution of India). Indeed, it is obvious that in a state where one religion is to be considered the parameter for imposing the rules that everyone is expected to follow, impartiality of treatment to members of other religious communities, or non-religious communities, is not to be expected. It is also revealing that *Hindutva* activists in India have questioned and rejected secularism. Rajeev Bhargava sums up some of the accusations pertaining to secularism:

These critics of secularism claim that with the help of a series of legislative acts, the state has attempted to neutralise the communal identity of Hindus. While the Hindus have been compelled, so the argument goes, to view themselves primarily as non-religious individuals, the Muslims are sometimes permitted and often encouraged to frame their identity purely in terms of their religion. In sum, the secular state in India is far from neutral. While its official doctrine professes neutrality, it is both anti-religious and pro-Muslim. A vociferous section allegedly representing the entire Hindus claims that a Hindu society is saddled with an anti-Hindu state.<sup>252</sup>

Thus, when Varun Gandhi and the BJP position the English language and Hindi on the opposite ends of this spectrum covering religious and secular nationalism, they also end up setting up the two languages as ideological opponents, whereby Hindi gets equated to *Hindutva*, and English gets

---

<sup>252</sup> Bhargava, "Giving Secularism its Due" 1784.

equated with secularism. And this is where the politics of translation becomes pertinent.

## 2.2. Translation as Test Case: “One But Unequal”

Translations perhaps provide the most immediate and effective platform to stage the politics of how different languages can get manipulated as ideological tools. Indeed, as theorists from Herder to Fanon have repeatedly told us, every language operates in different cultural, territorial and historical contexts. Mikhail Bakhtin famously postulated:

For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have a “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. [...] Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions: it is populated, overpopulated—with the intentions of others.<sup>253</sup>

With such a view in mind, translations effectively become “contact zones”—to borrow the term used by Mary Louise Pratt—where “cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other.”<sup>254</sup> But since cultures too operate within given material and economic hierarchies, translations negotiate more than just

---

<sup>253</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 293.

<sup>254</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) 7.

linguistic differences—they also negotiate the asymmetrical power relations embedded in all cultures. Talal Asad explains this in the global context as follows:

To put it crudely: because the languages of Third World societies...are “weaker” in relation to Western languages (and today, especially to English) they are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around. The reason for this is, first, that in their political-economic relations with Third World countries, Western nations have the greater ability to manipulate the latter. And, second, Western languages produce and deploy *desired* knowledge more readily than Third World languages do.<sup>255</sup>

According to this hypothesis, being translated *into* English becomes a sign of *elevation* in a global cultural hierarchy.

Of course, what holds for power dynamics *across* national and geographical boundaries is also true regarding the situation *within* such boundaries. In India, translation into the English language, it is frequently believed, marks a *bhasha* writer as one who has “arrived.” Being translated in English means a writer’s work is *not* “incomprehensible” or “alienating” for an audience beyond a given provincial linguistic region. As put by Paranjape,

Vernacular texts that are not translated remain a part of what is pejoratively termed “regional” literature. [...] It is only when they are

---

<sup>255</sup> Talal Asad, “The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology,” *Writing Culture: The Poetics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (California: U of California P, 1986) 158.

translated [into English] that these texts begin to mean so much more and something quite different. Their identity changes in translation and gets augmented and amplified in some ways.<sup>256</sup>

Translation into English is also held to be commercially sensible. Francesca Orsini has illustrated how *bhasha* writers struggle to keep up with English writing: “a novel [in Hindi] will break even if it sells 500 copies a year; at 5,000 it is a bestseller.”<sup>257</sup> This is, of course, not comparable to the readership that original English writing in India enjoys. For example, much hype has been created around the writer, Chetan Bhagat’s unprecedented commercial success—mostly in the domestic market. According to figures released by his publisher, Rupa and Co., by 2008 Bhagat’s books had sold over ten *lakh* (one million) copies. An indication of how many Indians were reading Bhagat is that, at its peak, one copy of *One Night @ the Call Centre* (2005) was being sold every three seconds.<sup>258</sup> This is the kind of readership that *bhasha* language novels can only dream of aspiring to—both within the country and abroad. However, some of these privileges may be enjoyed via English translation. For example, it is telling that it is only after being translated into English (by Gayatri Spivak) that the Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi received the national and international attention that has now made her writing a staple presence in bookshops, literary festivals, university syllabi etc., across the world. Hence, despite the presence of such institutions as the *Sahitya Akademi* (discussed in the previous chapter) the

---

<sup>256</sup> Paranjape, “Vernacularising the Mother Tongue”  
<<http://www.makarand.com/acad/VernacularisingtheMasterTongueIndianEnglishanditsCon-texts.htm>>.

<sup>257</sup> Orsini, “India in the Mirror of World Fiction,” Prendergast 329.

<sup>258</sup> “Priceless @ 95,” *The Telegraph Calcutta* 11 May 2008, 13 Jun. 2013  
<[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1080511/jsp/7days/story\\_9254827.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1080511/jsp/7days/story_9254827.jsp)>.

traffic of translation in India has tended to be heavier while heading *towards* English—as critics such as Meenakshi Mukherjee begrudgingly acknowledge.<sup>259</sup> (Begrudgingly, because the trending directionality of translation here points to the reinforcement of the power imbalance between English and *bhashas* in India. I will discuss this in further detail in the third chapter.) The reverse (that is, Indian English writing into *bhashas*) is a much rarer occurrence. According to Harish Trivedi though, that is no bad thing either: “[English language Indian writings] don't need to be translated; they are doing nicely enough already, thank you.”<sup>260</sup>

The case of the translation of Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* into *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka* (1998) is therefore atypical, in that it follows the reverse trend. Here was a novel, which had tasted success—nationally *and* internationally—in an almost unprecedented manner. As well as the millions of copies of the novel sold across the world, the advance of £250,000 offered by the British publishing house, Orion, is a sum that had hitherto been unheard of in the history of Indian English writing. It was also to be published by an American publisher, along with a British and Indian one. This *global* English language novel was now seeking to reinvent itself as more *local* through the deployment of Hindi. Seth himself hinted at such an intention in the preface to the Hindi translation by reiterating how important it was for him that the “small-town” Hindi-speaking audience (who, largely—but not exclusively—populate much of the narrative of *A Suitable Boy*) be able to approach the novel and relate to it:

---

<sup>259</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee, quoted in Rashmi Sadana, *English Heart, Hindi Heartland: The Political Life of Literature in India* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2012) 168.

<sup>260</sup> Harish Trivedi, “Translation as Recovery: *A Suitable Boy* as *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka*,” *Book Review* 22 (1998): 30-31, at 30.

मगर मैं मानता हूँ कि जो पाठक अपने रोज़मर्रा के अनुभवों से जानते हैं कि जिस दुनिया में हमारे चरित्र रहते हैं वहाँ कैसी है—मसलन छोटे शहरों कस्बों और गाँवों की दुनिया वे इस किताब को ज़्यादा आंतरिकता और अपनेपन से समझ सकेंगे, बनिस्वत उनके जो उसके बाहर के हैं। अगर ऐसे पाठक भी इस उपन्यास का आनंद ले पाते हैं तो मुझे इस से ज़्यादा कुछ नहीं चाहिए। पर अगर ऐसे पाठक इसका आनंद नहीं ले पाते तो आमतौर पर होनेवाली प्रशंसा का मेरे लिए कोई मतलब नहीं।<sup>261</sup>

But I believe that the readers who, from their daily experiences, know the type of world in which our characters live—that is the world of small towns and villages—those readers will be able to understand this book with more depth and familiarity, compared to those who are outside it. If such readers are also able to enjoy this novel, then I do not want anything more. But if such readers are not able to enjoy this, then there is no meaning to all the usual praise for me.

Accordingly, Gopal Gandhi, the translator of the novel, imagined himself to be “*un-translating*” the novel:

मेरे लिये यह अनुवाद का काम सरल नहीं था। [...] इसलिए कि यह कृति हमारे समय के एक अद्भुत लेखक की है जोकि बरसों भारत के बाहर रहते हुए भी उसके हृदय से अभिन्न रहे हैं। उनके इस उपन्यास का हर एक तर्जुमा ज़िम्मे का काम है। लेकिन उसका हिन्दुस्तानी अनुवाद विशेष रूप से भीषण उत्तरदायित्व रखता है। क्योंकि यह अनुवाद अनुवाद ही नहीं बल्कि पुस्तक को उसके आधारों को लौटाने का प्रयास भी है। और वहाँ, जहाँ अनुवाद को पुस्तक की जड़ों और स्रोतों की स्वीकृति मिलने को है, यह अनुवादक अवाक और कम्पायमान खड़ा है।<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>261</sup> Seth, preface, *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka [A Suitable Boy]*, trans. Gopal Gandhi (New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 1998) 7.

<sup>262</sup> Gopal Gandhi, “Anuvaadak ke Aabhaar” [Translator’s Acknowledgements], Gandhi n.p.



For me, this translation was not easy. [...] Because this creation is by a remarkable author of our times who, despite having lived outside India for years, has been very close to its heart. Each translated part of this novel of his, is therefore a great charge. But its Hindustani translation is a particularly terrible responsibility. Because this translation is not a mere translation, but also an attempt to return the book to its foundations. And there, where the translation needs to find acceptance for the roots and sources of the book, there the translation stands speechless and tremulous. (translation mine)

Analysing this process of “un-translation,” Trivedi, in a review of the translation tellingly titled “Translation as Recovery” suggests:

[Gandhi] translates not as a slave to the original text but as its rightful possessor, appropriating it for his new readership with verve and relish and with a reservoir of creative energy rarely to be found among “mere” translators.<sup>263</sup>

But the highest praise for Gandhi’s effort arguably came from Seth himself, who said that Gandhi had managed to restore the novel in the language that had been “resonating in the ears of [his] mind,”<sup>264</sup> while he was writing it—hence redefining the “ownership” of the novel by Hindi:

चूँकि उपन्यास में घटित अधिकांश घटनाएँ हमारे देश के हिन्दीभाषी क्षेत्र से सम्बन्धित हैं, इसलिए एक तरह, हमारे अनुवादक ने यहाँ उन्हें उनका मौलिक चरित्र प्रदान किया है। संवाद का एक बड़ा हिस्सा यहाँ उस भाषा में पुनर्निर्मित किया गया है, जो मेरे मन के कानों में बजती रही है। बहुत सी राजनीतिक बहसें [...] यहाँ हिन्दी में ज़्यादा प्रामाणिक प्रतीत होंगी। कविताएँ, जिन्हें मैंने हिन्दी

---

<sup>263</sup> Trivedi 31.

<sup>264</sup> Seth, Gandhi 7.

उर्दू से अंग्रेज़ी में रूपांतरित किया था अब कहीं ज़्यादा समृद्ध स्वर में अपना आशय व्यक्त कर सकेंगी। एक लेखक के रूप में यह स्वीकार करते हुए मुझे थोड़ा अचरज भी हो रहा है कि हिन्दी अनुवाद में मेरी मूल कृति की बनिस्वत कहीं मजबूती से सामने आनेवाली हैं।<sup>265</sup>

Because most of the events occurring in the novel are related to the Hindi-speaking areas of our country, in a way, our translator has restored them to their original character. A large part of the translation was reassigned to the language in which it had been resonating in the ears of my mind. A lot of the political discussions [...] will prove to be more credible here in Hindi. Poems, which I had altered from Hindi-Urdu into English, may now assert their stance in a firmer tone. As a writer, I am also a little surprised to admit that some things in this Hindi translation will emerge much more strongly in comparison to my original creation. (translation mine)

Seth's preface seems to confirm the old idea of the "authenticity" and "legitimacy" of *bhashas* and their writing. Rashmi Sadana reminds us:

Seth is not saying that he should not have written the original novel in English or that those copies should now be taken off the shelves, but he is making a value judgment about the worthiness of his own novel and detailing his responsibility to the Hindi-speaking world.<sup>266</sup>

And yet, Seth's comments strengthen claims, such as the following made by Meenakshi Mukherjee, that Indian English writing inevitably suffers from that fact that the writer "has to overcome the difficulty of conveying through English the vast range of expression and observations whose natural vehicle

---

<sup>265</sup> Seth, Gandhi 7.

<sup>266</sup> Sadana 318.

is an Indian language.”<sup>267</sup> All of this perhaps explains the fact that in the case of *A Suitable Boy*, it is the *translation* that seems to apologise for the lacuna of the original. In the words of Trivedi, “in popular prejudice, translation has always been seen as a loss-making enterprise but here, paradoxically, are the gains of translation, the profit on it, the bonanza.”<sup>268</sup>

However, I hesitate to take this “bonanza” for granted, and would like to argue that Gandhi’s, Trivedi’s, and even Seth’s sanctioning of the translation as an improved version of his novel is necessarily problematic for the key reason that through the way in which the novel and its translation “wield” language, Gandhi’s Hindi ends up reproducing a different version of the novel which replaces Seth’s view. This is especially obvious in the treatment of the question of language in postcolonial India, which in Gandhi’s translation is endowed with a religious and communalised paradigm. The translation is premised on the kind of ideological divide between *bhasha* and the English language that the BJP and other communalist ideologues subscribe to. Gandhi generously adds certain events and details to the narrative while censoring others in order to produce what we might call a *Hindutva* version of the novel. This is especially problematic, given that, as argued convincingly by Neelam Srivastava, *A Suitable Boy* actively works towards *undoing* the harmful effects of the increasingly popular *Hindutva* flagbearers at the time when the novel was published in the 1990s:

---

<sup>267</sup> Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English* (New Delhi: Heinemann, 1971) 173.

<sup>268</sup> Trivedi, “Translation as Recovery” 30.

The novel can be read as a way of addressing the perceived “present needs” of the Indian polity by proposing a return to Nehruvianism, by recreating a national narrative set in the heart of the Nehru era, the heyday of secular nationalism in the aftermath of Partition. Thus, contrary to *Hindutva* ideology, Seth proposes not a break with the nation’s secular past, but a return to it in order to address the present needs of the polity, which is being fragmented along communal lines.<sup>269</sup>

When translated into Hindi however, I argue that the same narrative carries the sentiments of Hindu majoritarianism championed *not* by Nehru but by his arch-rival, Tandon. As I will argue in the rest of this chapter, the shared vocabulary of Hindu conservative values, the preferential and sympathetic treatment of members of the Hindi-speaking community—and especially Hindi-*wallahs*—among other things, illustrate how the Hindi translation ties Hindi up with conservative Tandonite values, especially on grounds of religion and social and cultural mores.

Walter Benjamin famously argued that a translation should represent the *intentio* of the original in the translation: “the task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect [*intentio*] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original.”<sup>270</sup> Rather than attempting to iron out the “foreignness” of the language of the source text, for Benjamin, the source language should rather modulate the target language:

---

<sup>269</sup> Srivastava 11-2.

<sup>270</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator” (1923) trans, Harry Zohn, *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000) 79.

Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, with this touch rather than with the point setting the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity, a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux.<sup>271</sup>

This failure to emulate the sense of the original is precisely where the problem with Gopal Gandhi's translation lies, for regardless of minor textual or linguistic lapses, the translation does not succeed in conveying the *intentio* of Seth's novel and instead reconceptualises the narrative according to, what it imagines as, the dictates of the Hindi language as the language of *Hindutva*.

Before proceeding further, I would like to point out here that it is perhaps not a matter of coincidence that Gopal Gandhi's career parallels that of Varun Gandhi. Both are scions of families with unimpeachable nationalist credentials: while Varun Gandhi is the great grandson of Nehru, Gopal Gandhi is the grandson of M. K Gandhi (his father's father) and C. Rajagopalachari (his mother's father). Gopal Gandhi, of course, precedes Varun Gandhi by approximately a generation. But like the younger Gandhi, Gopal Gandhi was also educated in English-medium elite schools in Delhi, before going on to acquire a Masters degree in Literature in the prestigious St Stephen's College. As a member of the Indian Administrative Service, Gopal Gandhi also spent a considerable number of years living outside India, including in English-speaking countries—such as the United Kingdom and

---

<sup>271</sup> Benjamin 82.

South Africa—where he held civil and diplomatic posts. Like Varun, Gopal Gandhi is an accomplished writer and has a longer list of publications to his credit, including the novel *Saranam (Refuge)*, the verse-play, *Dara Shukoh*, and non-fictional works such as *Gandhi and South Africa*, *Nehru and Sri Lanka*, *Gandhi is Gone: Who will guide us now?* The celebrated politician and academic Ranga Rao hailed the novel *Saranam* as “(a) rare Indian novel, a multi-world, international novel.” Gandhi’s *alma mater*, St Stephen’s, of course has produced the anglophone “Stephenian School of Literature”—which includes prominent Indian English writers such as Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Rukun Advani, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and Vikram Seth. Leela Gandhi emphasises the strongly anglophone bias of St Stephen’s by designating the college as the “(deracinated) running dog of western imperialism:”

“St Stephen’s” of course, is a code for writing which is reminiscent of privileged, bustling quads and redolent jockstraps and cynical, brilliant undergraduates hyped up by their gonads and their wit.<sup>272</sup>

It is clear from all of the above that Gopal Gandhi’s formative influences are largely anglophonic, and it is therefore from a very similar premise to that of Varun Gandhi that he sets out to imagine the values and preferences of his Hindi reader.

In the rest of this chapter, I will look at how *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka* establishes its *Hindutva* credentials by comparing it to *A Suitable Boy* and analysing, in particular, the representation of secularism and Hinduism

---

<sup>272</sup> Leela Gandhi, “Indo-Anglian Fiction: Writing India, Elite Aesthetics, and the Rise of the ‘Stephanian’ Novel,” *Australian Humanities Review* 8 (Nov. 1997) 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-November-1997/gandhi.html>>.

along with certain cultural and social norms. The specific involvement of a certain type of Indian elite intellectual (epitomised here through the translator, Gopal Gandhi) who is multilingual and cosmopolitan but whose projection of the monolingual Hindi speaker is rather conservative, will then be analysed in depth.

### 2.3. Translating Nehruvianism into Tandonism

Commending Gopal Gandhi's "acts of cultural recovery," Trivedi writes in praise of *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka*,

It is as if all these icons of our culture, aptly evoked in this exceptionally polyglot and inter-textual work, had been to a glittering fancy-dress party where they had had fun, but had now come home to relax and be themselves again.<sup>273</sup>

Trivedi's use of the phrase "icons of our culture" is baffling here. The review was published in an English language Indian journal. His use of the possessive adjective "our" could thus lead us to surmise that the culture to which he is referring might be pan-Indian, transcending linguistic, communal, and regional boundaries. But his designation of Hindi as a more natural habitat for the narrative suggests that "home," paradoxically, *excludes* the English language. Furthermore, Trivedi projects "culture" in the singular, as though it was exclusive and could be expressed through a single language. The assumption seems to be that Hindi *restores* the cultural integrity of the novel, if it does not bestow it upon the narrative in the first place.

---

<sup>273</sup> Trivedi, "Translation as Recovery" 30.

This reading of the singularity of culture in the translation is extremely problematic, for it reflects how the translation defies the Nehruvian position of Seth's novel. Nehru's reading of culture was defined by its comprehensiveness of the multiple linguistic, regional and religious aspects of the nation. This is the thesis he supported throughout the debates on the division of India along linguistic lines. In one such speech given in the *Lok Sabha* during a debate on the *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission* in 1955, Nehru stated:

Culture is not an exclusive thing. The more inclusive you are, the more cultured you are. [...] This whole outlook of one language trying to push out the other is a wrong outlook.<sup>274</sup>

As it is clear here, *inclusiveness* (of the various aspects of the nation) was key for Nehru, and this inclusiveness is what Seth is extremely meticulous about depicting in his own novel. Srivastava explains:

Though exploring the tentative status of the Indian citizen, Seth ultimately encompasses all the problematic figures of this Indianness—the chamars, the Muslim landowners, the Muslim courtesan and her entourage—within an ecumenical, inclusive notion of a single nationhood.<sup>275</sup>

I will use one brief example to illustrate this point here: in the course of their first meeting Haresh and Kedarnath (both *khatri* Hindus,<sup>276</sup> working

---

<sup>274</sup> Nehru, "Speech in the *Lok Sabha* during a debate on the Report of the States Reorganisation Commission 21 Dec. 1955, cols. 3493-514.

<sup>275</sup> Srivastava 50.

<sup>276</sup> *Khatri*, or *kshatriya*, is the second *varna* (of the four *varnas*) of Hinduism. The fact that *khatri*s were traditionally the military and ruling elites of the Hindu social system (as outlined in the Vedas) makes them count among one of the upper castes in India still. *Khatri*s would traditionally not be involved in the shoe-business, which was usually



in the production and retailing of the shoe-business respectively) set out to visit the shoemaking area of Ravidaspur. On the way, Haresh convinces Kedarnath to stop by in a village of leather workers. There, they meet an old tanner who is quite aggressive towards them. This, they presume, might be due to the fact that their dress and manners code them as belonging to the more exclusive “town” of Brahmpur, and they therefore presume their class differences to be the source of this animosity. Seeking to bridge this perceived gap between them, and establish a link by showing his interest and participation in the leather trade, Kedarnath tells the tanner of his intention to visit Ravidaspur next. At this point, the narrator intervenes:

Ravidaspur was almost entirely a shoemaker’s neighbourhood. But if Kedarnath imagined that by implying that another leatherworker was a colleague of his he would win acceptance here among the tanners, he was mistaken. Even among the leatherworkers or chamars, there was a hierarchy. The shoemakers—like the man they were going to visit—looked down upon the flayers and tanners. In turn, those who were looked down upon expressed their dislike of the shoemakers.<sup>277</sup>

We subsequently learn that the shoemakers of Ravidaspur were *jatavs*—and hence of a different *jati* to that of the tanners. Consequently, their cultural norms are distinct too. The old tanner’s response to Kedarnath’s conciliatory remark is:

---

reserved for *shudras*, placed lowest in the *varna*, so Haresh and Kedarnath are atypical in this respect. See Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1996).

<sup>277</sup> Seth, *A Suitable Boy* 201.

“You go to Ravidaspur. We don’t like the jatavs, we are not like them, they eat the meat of buffaloes. Chhhi!” He spat out a syllable of disgust. “We only eat goats and sheep.”<sup>278</sup>

Though nominally Hindus, it is impossible to see these different *jatis* as belonging to the same “cultural niche.” Following Raymond Williams’ hypothesis that “culture” is not only differentiated through language, geography, ethnicity and religion, but also through factors such as modes of habitation and labour,<sup>279</sup> it is *division* of labour and their hierarchisation within the social system to which they belong (both belong to the same Hindu *varna*) that here determines the different cultures of the tanners and the Ravidaspur dwellers. Seth is meticulous about detailing these differences in his narrative. But Trivedi’s phrase “icons of our culture,” which presumes a single, shared Hindi/Hindu sense of India, suggests that Gandhi’s vision of India in the translation is less differentiated.

It is significant that often, Gandhi does not translate caste differences into Hindi. Many of the details pertaining to caste are in fact categorically omitted. For example, Enakshi Chatterjee, who translated *A Suitable Boy* into Bengali as *Sat Patro* (1999) points out how Gandhi leaves out certain gruesome and graphic details of the skinning and leather-making process, pertaining to Haresh’s and Kedarnath’s visit to the tanning pits.<sup>280</sup> The deleted passage is as follows:

Just as the opening of a lane, at the periphery of the open pit-riddled ground, Haresh noticed a large red stone, flat on the top. On it a boy

---

<sup>278</sup> Seth 202.

<sup>279</sup> See Raymond Williams, *Culture* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981).

<sup>280</sup> See Sadana 311.

of about seventeen had laid a piece of sheepskin, largely cleaned of wool and fat. With a fleshing knife, he was removing the remaining pieces of flesh off the skin. He was utterly intent upon what he was doing. The skins piled up nearby were cleaner than they could have been if they had been fleshed by a machine. Despite what had happened before, Haresh was fascinated. Normally he would have stopped to ask a few questions, but Kedarnath hurried him on. The tanners had left them. Haresh and Kedarnath, dust-covered and sweating, made their way back through the dirty parts.<sup>281</sup>

Right after this, Gandhi makes the rickshaw-*wallah* accompanying them express relief when asked to leave:

इस सुखद सन्देश को सुनकर रिक्शाचालक भी अपनी सवारियों को उस जगह से दूर ले चला।<sup>282</sup>

On hearing this good news, the rickshaw-*wallah* also took his passengers far away from that place.

This is an addition.

These alterations, as well as being slightly inconsiderate towards Seth (who actually lived with a family of shoemakers to perfect its verisimilitude in his story) corrupt Seth's text in another way too. Seth's vision behind including these details—about a *khatri* Hindu eschewing caste restrictions by going into a trade generally proscribed to his caste—is of a piece with his secular agenda. Gandhi—in *not* including them—goes the other way, positing a north-Indian, elite, upper caste Hindu as the ideal

---

<sup>281</sup> Seth 203.

<sup>282</sup> Gandhi 248.

reader, and guarding against offending such a reader by not bringing up the contentious issues related to the caste system. Sadana explains:

North India has long been the site of upper caste Brahman hegemony, especially in the making of a pan-Hindu identity, hence its appellation as not only the Hindi belt but also the Cow belt, referring the sacred status allotted to cows by Brahmanical Hinduism. Thus, these descriptions of animal fleshing and the disposal of carcasses have a very particular meaning and resonance in Hindi that they might not have in English. Their resonance is a question of both language and location.<sup>283</sup>

It should also be pointed out that Trivedi's perspective in ascribing one "home" to the "icons of our culture" in the translation is itself arguably closer to Gopal Gandhi's than Seth's. Like Gandhi, Trivedi too subsumes a single cultural home for the narrative. The un-Nehruvian nature of Trivedi's perspective is proven by the fact that even the praise that he chooses to bestow on Seth's "exceptionally polyglot and inter-textual work" is eventually valued mostly for its closeness to Hindi literature—which is presumably set up as the national parameter for works written about India. Thus, Trivedi applauds Seth's novel for its "twice-born sanskar"—for the way in which it has a resonance of the Hindi in which Seth must have "thought out" the story before "translating" his thoughts into English:

Of all the spectacularly successful Indian novels in English of recent years, it is *A Suitable Boy* which is most deeply embedded in the theme and context which it depicts, and the most intimately complicit

---

<sup>283</sup> Sadana 322.

in a local language. Seth's English has a doubleness, a twice-born sanskar and the resonance of cultural heritage, which should be the envy of some other Indian novelists in English such as Rushdie and Roy.<sup>284</sup>

While Trivedi here concentrates on style, it is interesting to analyse the other ways in which Gopal Gandhi proves the non-Nehruvian nature of his translation. I will argue here that Gandhi does so not only by Hindi/Hinduising the style and language, but also the theme and content of the narrative.

In Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, the Hindi language has several rivals. For example, the episodes set in the Bengali- and English-speaking Calcutta remain a significant deterrent in the establishment of the "homeliness" and superiority of Hindi. In a letter to her elder daughter Savita, Mrs. Rupa Mehra complains:

Amit says Lata should learn Bengali, it is the only truly civilised language in India. He himself as you know writes his books in English, so why does he say that only Bengali is civilised and Hindi is not?<sup>285</sup>

This jibe at Hindi sees Seth addressing the contentious issue of the national language which was a raging debate at the time when the novel is set. Amit's statement echoes the anti-Hindi sentiments that prevailed among a substantial portion of non-Hindi-speaking India who suggested that Hindi lacked the refinement of languages such as Bengali, and hence the necessary

---

<sup>284</sup> Trivedi, "Translation as Recovery" 30.

<sup>285</sup> Seth 310.

credentials of a national language. In *The Hindi Public Sphere*, Orsini illustrates some of the cultural smugness of the Bengali elites:

Not only were they [Bengalis] quite bilingual in English and Bengali, they had also been successful in nurturing their mother tongue equally with English and using it to spread “modern knowledge,” *nai vidya*. The spread of education (also among women), and the growth of the press, theatre, and literature in Bengal testified to their advanced state and made the Hindi area appear distinctly “backward” by comparison.<sup>286</sup>

In the space of the novel, the culturally sophisticated attitudes of the elite Bengali characters (such as the Chatterji household) stand out in sharp contrast to those of the Hindi speakers (such as L. N. Agarwal, Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, old Mrs. Tandon and Mrs. Rupa Mehra) for whom caste and communal affiliations remain of singular importance.<sup>287</sup> To use but one example, the respective attitudes displayed by both groups of speakers towards the subject of marriage establish the liberalism of one against the conservatism of the other. The indifference with which the Chatterji family treat the question of caste and community is reflected in the fact that their daughters, Meenakshi and Kakoli, both marry outside their religious and racial community without any significant objections from their parents. The Hindi speakers, on the other hand uphold the many values of conservative

---

<sup>286</sup> Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2009) 4.

<sup>287</sup> It does need to be pointed out, as an aside here, that language is, of course, not the *singular* element in establishing the “cosmopolitanism” of the characters. It is significant that the Chatterjis are *urban* intellectual Brahmins—characteristics which, arguably, add to their cosmopolitanism. And yet, as I will go on to illustrate, the contribution of language in establishing characters’ cosmopolitanism is foregrounded by Seth himself in the novel.

Hinduism. Mrs. Rupa Mehra's concern with finding a *khatri* boy for Lata is reflective of her concern with caste. On finding out about Lata's affair with Kabir, Mrs. Rupa Mehra ruminates:

Even marrying a non-khatri Hindu was bad enough. But this was unspeakable. It was one thing to mix socially with Muslims, entirely another to dream of polluting one's blood and sacrificing one's daughter.<sup>288</sup>

Arguably, the fact that Mrs. Rupa Mehra (as well as Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, as I will demonstrate later) is portrayed in a comic way that often invites the reader to laugh at her histrionics—rather than sympathise with her—can be interpreted as proof enough of Seth's own way of censuring this attitude. Even her discovery about Lata's affair with Kabir—which, given her prejudices, is meant to be dramatic, if not downright tragic—is portrayed by Seth in a way that is laced with humour:

Mrs. Rupa Mehra's nose started to redden with unhappiness and shame. Two tears rolled down her cheeks, and she reached into her capacious handbag for an embroidered handkerchief.

[...]

This was what happened when you trusted your children, when you let them roam around, taking walks everywhere. Nowhere was safe.

[...]

---

<sup>288</sup> Seth 183.

Mrs. Rupa Mehra was very alarmed, gulped down her tea, even sweetening it with sugar by mistake, and went home as soon as she politely could.<sup>289</sup>

Of course, though this does not mean that *all* of these Hindi speakers are subjected to Seth's censure in *A Suitable Boy*, I have already established above that Seth's own sympathy remains for the more liberal and secular values of India. It is therefore significant that these values are more willingly espoused by the Bengali speakers in the novel, in comparison to the fewer liberal and secular Hindi speakers who are included in the narrative, such as Mahesh Kapoor and Haresh Khanna who are significantly polyglot—unlike Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor and old Mrs. Tandon. There is thus an argument to be made for the way in which the Bengali language and its speakers in the novel challenge the purported natural fit between India and Hindi.

Other substantial points of departure from the Hindi-Hindu equation in Seth's novel can be found in episodes set in cities such as Lucknow. Lucknow, despite its proportionately larger Hindu population, is a principally Urdu-speaking city. Similarly, the Rudhia province within Purva Pradesh, where Rasheed's village, Baitar is situated, is predominantly Urdu-speaking. Even in Brahmipur—situated within the Hindi belt—Urdu language and culture have considerable presence in the songs of Saeeda Bai, as well as the poems of Dagh and Mir, which appeal greatly to Muslim *and* non-Muslim members alike of the town's gentry. Maan's status as a connoisseur of Urdu poets (despite his appellation as a Hindu) is a case in

---

<sup>289</sup> Seth 179.



point. All of the above clearly point to a departure from the Hindi-Hindu (as well as Hindi-India) paradigm.

As far as the novel's intertexts are concerned, Seth catalogues other *bhashas* and maintains a conversation with various Indian authors such as Ghalib, Tulsidas, and Tagore. Non-Indian writers also figure heavily. Shakespeare gets quoted, lectured on, and acted. A storm brews around the inclusion of James Joyce on a syllabus of Modern British Literature at the University of Brahmipur. Pran wonders about the inviolability of T. S. Eliot for Indian intellectuals ("What is it about Eliot...that makes him such a sacred cow for us Indian intellectuals?"). John Donne and the metaphysical poets are studied—Dr. Ila Chattopadhyay writes a book on them. Sandeep Lahiri reads E. M. Forster's *Howard's End* for pleasure; Jane Austen provides solace and comfort to Lata while she travels alone on the train across north India; Amit reveals that he bears the "scars of *Middlemarch*." Even non-English language writers are read and discussed. An enthusiast asks Amit about his views on the writings of Marcel Proust. Arun urges Meenakshi to read Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*. All in all, it is fairly clear that the function of these various literary texts in the novel is to consolidate the cosmopolitan credentials of the characters mentioned—whereby it emerges that the readers of such literature are themselves essentially liberal and secular characters, who abide by the Nehruvian vision. (I have already explored on page 111 how it was a particular concern of Nehru's to urge Indians to constantly update and rejuvenate their literary and linguistic repertoires by reading outside their regional, national, or cultural orbit.)

However, none of these literary references are included in Seth's translation, where the bias ostensibly remains in favour of Hindi. Indeed, the intertextual references that Gandhi not only preserves, but also *adds*, are the references to Hindi films of the 1940s-50s, and the Bombay cinema of that era arguably (which, bar a few exceptions, was usually marked by conservatism of various kinds) becomes Gandhi's primary frame of reference. (I will develop this point more substantially later in this chapter.) Trivedi and Sadana have both flagged up the instance where Seth merely replicates the first line of a song being sung by a *tonga-wallah* ("A heart was shattered into bits—and one fell here, and one fell there"),<sup>290</sup> Gandhi not only generously reproduces a longer stanza but also includes the name of the Hindi film in which the song is found, as well as *reminds* his readers of who the singer and lyricist were:

“प्यार की जीत” फिल्म का यह गाना तौंगेवाला बड़े मज़े से गा रहा था। कमर जलालावादी के ये लफ़्ज़ तौंगे पर सवार वरूण पर सवार हो गए। न तौंगेवाला मुहम्मद रफी था, न ही वरूण [...]<sup>291</sup>

The *tonga-wallah* was singing this song from the film “Pyar Ki Jeet” with great relish. These lyrics by Kamar Jalalabadi rode onto Varun who was riding on the *tonga*. Neither the *tonga-wallah* nor Varun were Mohammad Rafi [...] (translation mine)

These additional references to Bombay cinema, as argued by both Trivedi and Sadana, are assumed to form part of the cultural repertoire of the Hindi reader and thereby add to the Hindi-centricity of the translation. The sole

---

<sup>290</sup> Seth 23.

<sup>291</sup> Gandhi 45-6.

*literary* references that are preserved from Seth's text are the references to the literature belonging to the Hindi/Hindu realm. Thus, the *religious* poems of Tulsidas and the verses of the *Ramcharitmanas* are translated, but the more secular narratives that Seth includes are not.

But my point here has been that the *Hindi*-centricity of the translation is actually an assumption, on Gandhi's and Trivedi's behalf, about its *Hindu*-centricity too. As argued by Sadana,

[Trivedi] appears to see the Hindi translation of *A Suitable Boy* as a kind of restoration of the novel to its "proper cultural context," where culture equals language and, to some extent, religion.<sup>292</sup>

Trivedi's equation of Hindi with Hinduism and Indianness—which is itself a reflection of what Gandhi does in the translation—precisely echoes the politics of the *Hindi-wallahs*, as I have already demonstrated in the previous chapter. In Seth's novel the divisive effects of the cultural politics of the *Hindi-wallahs* are accurately represented. Begum Abida Khan observes the Hinduisation of Hindi when she notes the tendency of the *Hindi-wallahs* to quote from the Hindu scriptures whenever they speak. L. N. Agarwal tries to move a bill for making Hindi the official language of the state, whereby it becomes clear that his nationalism (like Tandon's) is communalist.<sup>293</sup> As Begum Abida Khan points out:

---

<sup>292</sup> Sadana 320.

<sup>293</sup> In the novel, Begum Abida Khan begins her speech in the Assembly by attacking L. N. Agarwal's invocation of Gandhi's nationalist vision in aid of his communalist proposal: "It is all very well for the honourable Minister to take the name of Gandhiji when espousing the cause of Hindi. [...] Does the honourable Minister imagine that the Father of the Nation, who was willing to give his life to protect the minority community, would countenance a bill like the present which will cause our community and our culture and our very livelihood to die a lingering death? [...] It is a sin to take the name of Gandhiji in this context." Seth 1016.

Listen to All India Radio and try to understand its news bulletins. Read the Hindi versions of our bills and acts—or, if like me and other Muslims and even many Hindus of this province, you cannot read them, then have them read out to you. You will not understand one word in three. It is all becoming stupidly and stiltedly Sanskritised. *Obscure words are being dug out of old religious texts and being reburied in our modern language.*<sup>294</sup> (emphasis mine)

Gopal Gandhi's treatment of the Hindi-*wallahs* in his translation, however, deliberately avoids the critical charge of Seth's original. For example, Seth's first description of Tandon is:

a bare-footed, bearded, austere and rather intolerant man, seven years Nehru's senior and, like him, from Allahabad...<sup>295</sup>

This, Gandhi translates as:

टंडनजी की सादगी प्रसिद्ध थी। खड़ाऊँ पहनते थे, चप्पल नहीं। पंडित जवाहरलाल नेहरू से सात साल बड़े थे और इलाहाबाद से ही थे।<sup>296</sup>

Tandonji's soberness was well known. He wore wooden footwear, not sandals. He was seven years older than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and hailed from Allahabad. (translation mine)

Tandon becomes a respectful Tandonji; the austerity and intolerance which are the *only* personality traits that Seth mentions, are omitted and Tandon is now given the quality of "soberness;" finally, Tandon is shown wearing the wooden footwear associated with Hindu hermits (*khadaon*) rather than leather sandals, which are deemed impure by the orthodox Hindus. Indeed,

---

<sup>294</sup> Seth 1018.

<sup>295</sup> Seth 953.

<sup>296</sup> Gandhi 956.

Gandhi's image of Tandon has a very specific appeal to orthodox Hindus. At the time when the novel is set, the historical Tandon would have been in his seventies. According to the *Ashram* system laid out in the Hindu scripture, the *Manusmriti*,<sup>297</sup> Tandon would be at the fourth stage of his life: *sanyaas*. Solemnity, detachment from material things and piety are the fundamental qualities that are expected of the person at this stage. Gandhi's Tandon thus emerges as the epitome of this ethical Hindu behaviour, rather than the conniving and communalist man whose bigotry is emphasised in Seth's novel.

Gandhi's portrayal of Seth's other major *Hindi-wallah*, L. N. Agarwal, is equally compassionate. While Seth presents L. N. Agarwal as a complex character who is not above xenophobia, Gandhi does not translate passages that might risk giving his readers such an unfavourable impression. During a parliamentary session, Mahesh Kapoor's secretary Abdus Salaam interrogates L. N. Agarwal about his security measures (or lack thereof) in the violence-prone areas of the city. L. N. Agarwal interprets this as an allegation of communalist sympathies on behalf of a *Muslim* parliamentarian (notwithstanding the fact that Abdus Salaam was also a fellow Congress Party member):

---

<sup>297</sup> The *Manusmriti*, or *Laws of Manu*, sets the laws for the ways of living by various groups and classes of Hindu society. According to the *Ashram* system, life was imagined to be divided into four stages (of around 25 years each). These stages are (1). *Brahmacharya* (or student life), whereby the child dedicates his time to the acquisition of knowledge and is celibate; (2). *Grihastha* (or household life) during which family life is the primary concern; (3). *Vanaprastha* (or retired life), at which stage the *vanaprasthi* is required to gradually start withdrawing himself from the world, guided by the wisdom acquired during the first two stages; (4). *Sanyaas* (or renounced life) whereby one is completely withdrawn from mundane concerns and dedicated to spiritual and ethereal pursuits. See *Manusmriti*, ed. and trans. Ramchandra Varma Shastri (n.p.: Vidya Vihara, 2000).

He [that is L. N. Agarwal] was convinced that this was indeed a plot by Muslims and so-called secular Hindus to attack him—and that his own party had been infected with treason. Looking with calm hatred first at Abdus Salam, then at Begum Abida Khan, he said: “I can merely reiterate—wait for the report.”<sup>298</sup>

Gandhi omits this passage—there is no mention of L. N. Agarwal’s suspicions about a Muslim “plot” nor of the hateful gaze he directs at Abdus Salam and at Begum Abida Khan. The translation only picks up at “I can merely reiterate.”

There is also an attempt in the translation to iron out L. N. Agarwal’s caste prejudices, in order to present him as a more “sensible” and likeable Hindu. In *A Suitable Boy*, Seth gives us these through frequent recourses to free indirect discourse:

[L. N. Agarwal] received a number of phone calls at home and decided that something by way of a salutary example needed to be provided. These jatavs had disrupted the trade of the city long enough with their frivolous complaints and their mischievous strike.<sup>299</sup>

However, neither this passage nor any of the other details pertaining to L. N. Agarwal’s musings on caste issues gets translated in *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka*. Instead, Gandhi concentrates on sentimentalising L. N. Agarwal’s relationship with his *guru*, the late Sardar Patel:

---

<sup>298</sup> Seth 256.

<sup>299</sup> Seth 230.

निश्चय ही, भारत के लौहपुरुष, राजनीति के कुशल खिलाड़ी, सरदार पटेल भी यही कहते। आज वे यहाँ इस जगह इस कुर्सी पर होते तो क्या करते? गृहमन्त्री जी ने आँख मूँदकर अपने उस आदर्श नेता, अपने परामर्शदाता सरदार पटेल की छवि को मन में चित्रित किया। उनका वह सख्त, गम्भीर चेहरा मन्त्री जी के मन मन्दिर में उभरा।<sup>300</sup>

Without doubt, the Iron Man of India, the efficient political player, Sardar Patel too would have said the same thing. If today he had been here in this place, on this chair, then what would he have done? The Home Minister closed his eyes and pictured his ideal leader, his mentor's image, in his mind. That severe and serious face of his emerged in the Minister's mind. (translation mine)

Historically, Sardar Patel was famously opposed to Nehru on many issues of ideology as well as political strategy. He is often held responsible for "safeguarding" Hindu interests in India, and more lenient on Hindu extremism than Nehru.<sup>301</sup> (Seth himself acknowledges Nehru's ideological differences with Patel in his narrative: "Prime Minister Nehru, already upset by Tandon's election, which he rightly interpreted as a victory not only for Tandon but for Sardar Patel, his own great conservative rival, had at first refused to join a Working Committee that excluded Kidwai.")<sup>302</sup> So, in Seth's version of the passage about Agarwal's musings, there is no reminiscence of Patel's character, or of his efficiency and idealism. But in his translation of Tandon and L. N. Agarwal in this light, Gandhi actively seeks to trigger what

---

<sup>300</sup> Gandhi 273.

<sup>301</sup> See Balraj Krishna, *India's Bismarck: Sardar Vallabhai Patel* (Mumbai: Indus Source Books, 2007).

<sup>302</sup> Seth 954.

he sees as a set of Hindu sympathies premised on an assumed relationship between language and religion.

## 2.4. Translating Secularism

In Gandhi's translation, Seth's secular Nehruvian characters receive a radically different treatment. For example, as the author of the Purva Pradesh Zamindari Abolition Bill in the novel, Mahesh Kapoor emphasises his staunch Nehruvian credentials. The legal measure is an initiative to oust the autocratic and exploitative landholding system by giving the tenant some measure of security against the will of the (usually) high caste landlord. This Act is crucial to the narrative of Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. As Srivastava explains:

The Zamindari Abolition Act, which took place state by state rather than on a federal level, is a central event in *A Suitable Boy*, whose narrative adopts a teleological and developmental view of historical progress very similar to Nehru's own.<sup>303</sup>

In addition to his intimate association with his act, Mahesh Kapoor's Nehruvian secularism—as I have argued in the previous chapter already—is deliberately highlighted by Seth. Reflecting on Nehru's efforts to hold the country, Mahesh Kapoor's thoughts are as follows:

All these actions infuriated people who saw Nehru as a rootless, deracinated Indian, whose sentimental creed was a pro-Muslim secularism, and who was divorced from the majority of his own Hindu citizenry. The only problem for his critics was that his

---

<sup>303</sup> Srivastava 8.



citizenry loved him and would almost certainly vote for him [...] Mahesh Kapoor knew this—as, indeed, did anyone with the faintest knowledge of the political scene.<sup>304</sup>

Thus, Mahesh Kapoor’s overall portrayal shows him to be complicit in upkeeping the Nehruvian ethos of *A Suitable Boy*.

However, in Gandhi’s translation Mahesh Kapoor is a deluded and misguided soul rather than the rational and admirable political figure of Seth’s novel. In Seth, he wards off his wife’s suggestion about hosting a religious ceremony at his residence by saying: “I have a secular image—and in a town like this where everyone is beating the drum of religion, I am not going to join in with the shehnai.”<sup>305</sup> Gandhi translates this same sentence as follows:

“पहले से ही शहर में धर्म को लेकर ऊधम मचा हुआ है। मैं उसे बढ़ावा नहीं दे सकता। मेरी आखिर सेक्युलर इमेज है।” (श्रीमती महेश कपूर समझ गई कि उनकी इस सेक्युलर इमेज में धर्म-सम्बन्धी अरुचि और साथ ही कुछ राजनैतिक पहलू निहित हैं।)<sup>306</sup>

“As it is, there is much commotion in town on the subject of religion. I can’t incense it. I have a *secular* image after all.” (Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor understood that behind this *secular image* of his was apathy regarding religion, as well as some political motive).<sup>307</sup> (translation mine)

There are two issues here. Firstly, Gandhi *transliterates* rather than translates, the word “secular.” And secondly, he adds the parenthetical

---

<sup>304</sup> Seth 955.

<sup>305</sup> Seth 328.

<sup>306</sup> Gandhi 378.

<sup>307</sup> The italicised words are transliterated, not translated, by Gandhi.

sentence, in free indirect discourse. By keeping the term “secular” in English, Gandhi brackets it off from a presumed Hindi-speaking sensibility to which, it is assumed, both the language and the concept are “foreign.” Bakhtin proposed:

Not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker.<sup>308</sup>

By not translating the term, Gandhi indeed alienates it for the Hindi audience—when an accepted corresponding term for it, in Hindi, would have been धर्मनिरपेक्ष (*dharma nirpeksh*).<sup>309</sup> The social relevance of this decision not to translate the term “secular” into Hindi is clear in contemporary India, for it is based on the assumption that secularism only belongs to the English-speaking sphere. As Alok Rai puts it,

The social privilege enjoyed by [the English-speaking] elite becomes...a serious liability for the secular and modern value package espoused by them. So long as the reactionary NPS [*Nagari*

---

<sup>308</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 294.

<sup>309</sup> The term *dharma nirpeksh* admittedly has its limitations. Indira Gandhi was of the opinion that the word *dharma*—by dint of its centrality in Hinduism—foregrounds a very specific religion. *Panth nirpeksha*—literally translatable as “non-aligned to any path, or neutrality, regarding the choice of path”—was therefore picked as the substitute for including in the Constitution. M. K. Gandhi’s suggestion for the translation of this term had been *sarva dharma samabhavana* (literally, “equal treatment of all religions”) but this term is only applicable to the state, and not to any given person.

*Pracharini Sabha*]/ HSS [*Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*] Hindi-wallahs are left in a position to speak for and to appropriate Hindi's energies, the "English" struggle for "secular values" must, willy-nilly, be counterposed *against* Hindi.<sup>310</sup>

This is confirmed by Nandy *et al.* in *Creating a Nationality*:

In fact, not only is secularism associated with the English-speaking, but the very notion of secularism...is viewed as one of these "foreign" imports, absorbed in India during the period of colonialism, which, post-independence, only ever appealed to a selective, cosmopolite elite—and hence did not gain ground in popular ideology.<sup>311</sup>

Thus "secular" characters in the novel, such as Meenakshi and Arun are subject to nuanced disapproval in the Hindi translation, and usually retain many English words in their speech—perhaps as a marker of their "outsider" status due to being secular characters. The conversation between Arun and Meenakshi's are even more excessively laced with English terms of endearment than in the original, such as "darling" or "sweetheart," especially in episodes when they are out in public spaces. In the same way, descriptions of Meenakshi and Arun socialising in secular and elite gatherings in the Calcutta Club or the Tollygunge Race Club are completely censored, perhaps because this world is assumed to be inaccessible and incomprehensible to the Hindi reader. Overall, Gandhi's translational interventions show the secular to be exclusively the affair of India's anglophile ruling classes, and not that of the "real" people.

---

<sup>310</sup> Alok Rai 7.

<sup>311</sup> Nandy *et al.* 57.

A further problem with Gandhi's translation of the passage quoted above has to do with the parenthetical addition: "Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor understood that behind this *secular image* of his was apathy regarding religion, as well as some political motive." Secularism is here treated as a matter of political manoeuvre and not a part of sincerely held personal values or convictions. Mrs. Kapoor sees it as a posture, recalling the historical *Hindi-wallahs'* accusation against Nehruvian secularism as a strategic attempt to secure the votes of the Indian religious minorities at the expense of the Hindu majority. Crucially, Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor also equates secularism with irreligiousness, not with religious non-bias:

She believed—though she would not have voiced the belief—that her husband was quite wrong-headed in divesting himself of the religious rites and ceremonies that gave meaning to life and donning the drab robes of this new religion of secularism.<sup>312</sup>

This, in Gandhi's translation, becomes a more forthright statement—self-righteous, and emotional:

श्रीमती महेश कपूर को इस बात का रंज था कि उनके स्वामी को पूजा-पाठ में, रीति-रस्म में विश्वास नहीं हैं। धर्मनिरपेक्षता के नाम पर ये अपने पूर्वजों की संस्कृति को भूल रहे हैं।<sup>313</sup>

Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor was upset by the fact that her lord did not have faith in prayers and ceremonies, and customs and rituals. In the name of secularism, he was forgetting the culture of his ancestors.

(translation mine)

---

<sup>312</sup> Seth 329.

<sup>313</sup> Gandhi 379.

Even discounting the archaic reference to her husband as her “lord,”<sup>314</sup> Mrs. Kapoor’s evocation of ancestors and their traditions makes her the “simple” representative of the autochthonous presumed Hindu *Volk*. Indeed, it is clear from the ways in which she is used as a symbol that Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor embodies the desirable religious and cultural parameters in the translation.

It is significant that Gandhi’s “translation” of secularism is focalised by the pious, Hindi-speaking, Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor—the character to whom Seth dedicates the translation:

इस उपन्यास को लिखते हुए मैं अक्सर यह सोचकर दुखी होता था कि श्रीमती महेश कपूर, जो इस उपन्यास की एक चरित्र हैं, और जिन्हें मैं बेहद प्यार करता हूँ, यह सब नहीं पढ़ पाएँगी, जो मैंने लिखा है। लेकिन अब मैं वास्तव में खुश हूँ कि मेरी किताब के इस हिन्दी संस्करण के प्रकाशित होने पर यह बाधा दूर हुई। [...] और इस हिन्दी संस्करण को मैं श्रीमती महेश कपूर को समर्पित करता हूँ, जिन्होंने शान्त स्थिर और सहनशील भाव से अपना जीवन बिताया।<sup>315</sup>

While writing this novel, I was often saddened by the thought that, Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, who is a character in this novel, and whom I love very much, would not be able to read all that I have written. But I am indeed happy now that that with the publication of this Hindi translation, that barrier has been removed [...] and I dedicate this Hindi version to Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, who led her life in a peaceful, stable and tolerant way. (translation mine)

---

<sup>314</sup> Seth includes a passage in his novel where he elaborates on how Mrs Mahesh Kapoor refers to her husband. “Lord” is, notably, *not* among the terms that he specifies: “Mrs Mahesh Kapoor...when referring to her husband, often called him ‘Minister Sahib.’ Sometimes, in Hindi, she even called him ‘Pran’s father.’ To refer to him by name would have been unthinkable. Even ‘my husband’ was unacceptable to her, but ‘my this’ was all right.” Seth 177.

<sup>315</sup> Seth, Gandhi 8.

Trivedi does an interesting analysis of this dedication:

Seth's playfully self-reflexive dedication of the Hindi avatar of his English novel to this exclusively Hindi-speaking character marks the moment of Hindi in Indian English fiction, in a creative reversal which exposes the very basis of the dominance of the Indian languages by Indian English.<sup>316</sup>

While Trivedi's point about the hegemony of languages in India is well made, as I have been showing, it is tied to a specific set of ideological assumptions about Hindi language and its speakers.

Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, who is the representative of what we might call "hindi-ism" in the novel, is further embellished in the translation in order to be seen as an earnest custodian of the Hindu heritage. Hence, the humour and irony directed at her in the English original is carefully excised by Gandhi. For example, during a trip to the Ganga *ghat* on the occasion of the Hindu festival, *Dussehra*, old Mrs. Tandon and Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor have an argument about a particular aspect of Hindu mythology. While they both agree that the river Ganga is meant to have trickled out from sage Jahnu's ear according to mythology, they have diverging opinions over the origins of the religious festival that is associated with this particular myth—that is the *Pul Mela*. Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, we are told, believes that "The Pul Mela legend [...] was pure fiction. Where in the Puranas [*sic.*] or the Epics or the Vedas was any such thing mentioned?"<sup>317</sup> A few passages later, Seth glosses her belief thus:

---

<sup>316</sup> Trivedi, "Translation as Recovery" 31.

<sup>317</sup> Seth 722.

She could not bring herself to believe in the spiritually unsanctioned myth of the pipal bridge which was supposed to have spanned the Ganga on this particular day. Jahnu's ear was one thing, the pipal bridge another.<sup>318</sup>

But in the translation, Gandhi glosses Seth's ironic distance from Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor's belief by ascribing reason and logic to Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor in the case of the first passage, and omitting the second passage altogether.<sup>319</sup> Hindi, through Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, thus becomes entwined with a conservative Hindu world view, which is intolerant of any censuring or mockery of religious sentiments.

Gandhi deliberately adds emphasis on certain episodes in the narrative to further cement the Hindi-Hindu equation. For instance, the songs that Saeeda Bai sings during Holi celebrations, which Seth explains as "descriptions of young Krishna playing Holi with the milkmaids of his foster-father's village"<sup>320</sup> becomes "यशोदानन्दन का गोपियों से होली खेलना"<sup>321</sup> ("Yashodanandan playing Holi with milkmaids"). In another instance, Veena admonishing Maan for sleeping through her visit to Prem Nivas ("What kind of brother are you, sleeping for hours on end when you know that we're bound to visit Prem Nivas")<sup>322</sup> becomes Gandhi's "कैसे भाई हो जो होली भर कुम्भकरण की तरह ऊँघते रह"<sup>323</sup> ("what kind of brother are you that, throughout Holi, you kept sleeping like Kumbhakaran?"). Both are synthetic translations which take for granted that the Hindi readers will automatically know who

---

<sup>318</sup> Seth 730.

<sup>319</sup> Gandhi 771.

<sup>320</sup> Seth 81.

<sup>321</sup> Gandhi 115.

<sup>322</sup> Seth 92.

<sup>323</sup> Gandhi 127.

Yashodanandan is, in contrast with the English version which explains that Krishna lives with foster parents. The reference to Kumbhakaran too presumes shared knowledge of the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*. These seemingly minor points make Gandhi's presumptions about his audience clear. He inserts these references to acknowledge his envisaged Hindu audience, based on the assumption that only a Hindu versed in Hindu mythologies and epics would comprehend them. The authority to introduce these exclusively Hindu-audience-targeted references seems to be derived from Gandhi's confidence that these Hindu references form part of the lexicon of Hindi and strengthen the novel's appeal to familiarity for the Hindi-Hindu audience. However, I should add that in India's necessarily impure cultural vocabulary, Gandhi's attempts to achieve a Hindu sensibility through Hindi is not necessarily a foregone conclusion.

In Gandhi's Hinduised text, blasphemy or irreligious sentiments get systematically written out. Haresh's use of the expression "damn,"<sup>324</sup> in reference to the Shiva Temple being constructed by the Raja of Marh is *transliterated* and not translated, as if to imply that such profanity is foreign to a Hindi sensibility. The Rajkumar of Marh's desecration of the Hindu hymn, the *Gayatri Mantra*, is also left out:

The Rajkumar was quoting from the curious and detailed rules of conduct promulgated for the students of Brahmpur University. This particular rule sounded so vague and yet at the same time so delightfully draconian that the Rajkumar and his friends had learned

---

<sup>324</sup> Seth 217.



it by heart and used to chant it in chorus to the lilt of the Gayatri Mantra whenever they went out to gamble or drink or whore.<sup>325</sup>

If we were to believe Homi Bhabha that

(b)lasphe<sup>m</sup>y is not merely a misrepresentation of the sacred by the secular; it is a moment when the subject-matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation<sup>326</sup>

then Gandhi's translation suggests that he is guided by his self-imposed duty to re-familiarise the Hindi audience with what has been "alienated" by Seth's English language.

Gandhi panders to many of the stereotypes about the provincialism of the Hindi reader. Passages in Seth's novel that deal with specialised knowledge such as scientific extracts, technical and mechanical explanations and legal proceedings are often not translated. The following paragraph from a mathematics textbook which Lata picks up in a bookshop (in a moment that is pivotal to the narrative, since Lata's smile about the difficulty of mathematical formulae catches the eye of Kabir) is not translated:

It follows from De Moivre's formula that  $z^n=r^n(\cos n+\sin n)$ . Thus, if we allow complex number  $z$  to describe a circle of radius  $r$  about the origin,  $z^n$  will describe  $n$  complete times a circle of radius  $r^n$  as  $z$  describes its circle once. We also recall that  $r$ , the modules of  $z$ , written  $|z|$ , gives the distance  $z$  from  $0$ , and that if  $z'=x'+iy'$ , then  $|z-z'|$

---

<sup>325</sup> Seth 343.

<sup>326</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994) 323.

is the distance between  $z$  and  $z'$ . With these preliminaries we may proceed to the proof of the theorem.<sup>327</sup>

Nor are the ruminations of Professor Durrani, the eccentric mathematician, reproduced with any of the precision and detailing that Seth invests in them. Descriptions of certain skills and trade also suffer from Gandhi's attention. Haresh's fascination with shoemaking occupies a substantial part of the narrative of *A Suitable Boy*: he often talks about the technicalities of each stage and process with painstaking precision. There is even a lengthy section describing him making a shoe from scratch. But the equivalent of three pages of such description in the English original is condensed into two small paragraphs in the translation (presumably in view of sparing the "vegetarian" audience that Sadana describes these unpalatable details).

National and international historical references in Seth's *A Suitable Boy* very rarely find their way into the translation too. Political upheavals such as the Czechoslovakian revolution (which occupies the minds of the Czechs who work in Prahapore) or the discussions of contemporary British politics (by Arun and his cohort) are all excluded. In this way, the translation is parochialised by sieving through these references to only reproduce in the translation what is assumed to be culturally and politically warrantable in Hindi. One such significant condensation is the court and parliament proceedings of the Zamindari Abolition Act. These too get reduced to a brief overview. The legal arguments of G. N. Bannerji, the cross-examination of Advocate-General Shastri, and even the media coverage which the Zamindari case are mostly left out of *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka*. This is especially

---

<sup>327</sup> Seth 45.

significant, as the censoring of the details about this particular Act can be interpreted as revealing Gandhi's manipulation of the translation to reflect a certain class and caste bias too. Benjamin Zachariah explains the significance of the Act as follows:

Even for the minimalist programme of Nehruvian economic and social engineering to work, the first steps would have had to be abolishing vested interests—some would have said “feudal” remnants—in the countryside; in effect dismantling the “feudal-imperialist alliance:” *zamindars*, *talukdars* and various other intermediaries who exacted various kinds of payments from the actual producers. Land reforms were the basic minimum for this.<sup>328</sup>

In effect, this Act sought to “even out” the hegemony of class *and* caste in India. Gandhi's omission of these details can therefore be read as being empathetic to the upper classes and the upper caste Hindus, who in theory would have suffered a loss of power and prestige as a consequence of the passing of this Act.

## **2.5. Hinduising Gender and Sexuality**

Finally—and crucially—it is Gandhi's conservative depiction of gender roles and sexual mores in accordance to *Hindutva* precepts, which reveal his commitment to the Hindi-Hindu equation. *Hindutva*, of course, assigns ultra-conservative patriarchal values to gender. Emphasis is often placed on the need for women to model themselves as *seva*-oriented

---

<sup>328</sup> Zachariah 153.

beings,<sup>329</sup> and thereby demarcate themselves from those women whose demands and struggles for minimum rights and empowerment are interpreted as abhorrent “individualists.” The model of the ideal *Hindutva*-moulded woman is the *grihalakshmi*, or housewife, who is understood to be “the upholder of the welfare and prosperity of the home.”<sup>330</sup> Among the peddlers of *Hindutva*, the subject of sexuality, though broached, is often limited to discussions about abstinence and reproductive health. Swati Dyahadroy (2009) points out how “Sex Education and Gender Training Workshops” (problematic choice of term in itself!) organised for the benefit of young adults, are restricted to “safe” topics, which seek to uphold the *Hindutva* status quo:

The workshop covers themes like introduction to the human anatomy, sexual abuse, heterosexual friendships, concept of beauty, bodily and experiential characteristics, media, and choosing a life partner.<sup>331</sup>

As obvious through Dyahadroy’s comment, the entire focus of *Hindutva* remains on heterosexuality as well as the physiology of human reproduction. Homosexuality or women’s sexual choice is not even acknowledged. Consequently, given the *Hindutva* sympathies of Gandhi’s translation, it is no surprise that in the translation the cleanest cuts from Seth’s text are the passages that refer to homosexuality.

---

<sup>329</sup> The sense of *seva*, or service, to family, community and society—even at the expense of their own comfort—are among the virtues sought in the ideal woman, according to *Hindutva* precepts. See Swati Dyahadroy, “Exploring Gender, Hindutva and Seva,” *Economic & Political Weekly* 44.17 (2009).

<sup>330</sup> Dyahadroy 65.

<sup>331</sup> Dyahadroy 68.

While there are no explicit homosexual acts anywhere in *A Suitable Boy*, it is impossible to avoid reading the homoeroticism associated with some of the characters such as the Rajkumar of Marh. In Seth, the Raja of Marh's acknowledgement of his son's homosexuality is unequivocal: "I don't care how many boys he sleeps with as long as he gives me a grandson as well."<sup>332</sup> This sentence is left out of Gandhi's translation, and instead the Hindi reader finds the prince a victim of his father's machismo as he is unwillingly dragged to the courtesan Saeeda Bai to be "taught" about sex. Seth gives us:

A few days ago the Raja had taken him to Saeeda Bai to make a man of him. The Rajkumar had almost run out in terror!<sup>333</sup>

While Gandhi produces:

कुछ ही दिन हुए राजा माढ़ अपने पुत्र को "मरद" बनाने सईदाबाई के पास ले गए थे। पर वह बेचारा मारे डर के भाग निकलना चाहता था।<sup>334</sup> (emphasis mine)

Just a few days ago, the Raja of Marh took his son to Saeeda Bai to make him into a "man." But the *poor* thing wanted to run away from there out of fright. (translation mine)

The implications of these moves are further clarified in the light of Seth's comments on historic Indian attitudes to homosexuality:

If you look at India historically, at the *Kamasutra* or the statues of Khajuraho, both of which also depict gay sex, it shows Hinduism has a tradition of tolerance. And this is true even in the tradition of other religions, like Islam—for example much Arabic, Persian and Urdu

---

<sup>332</sup> Seth 704

<sup>333</sup> Seth 704.

<sup>334</sup> Gandhi 751.

poetry. One of the greatest Urdu poets, Mir Taqi Mir, was clearly writing about his love for other men. I don't think people give Indian society enough credit.<sup>335</sup>

The qualities of sexual tolerance that Seth attributes to India are precisely the ones that Gandhi does not attribute to contemporary Hindi readers, despite assertions about their "traditional" Hindu values. Heterosexual physical intimacy too is heavily censored. As far as the Hindi translation goes, sex might never even have been an aspect of Maan's and Saeeda Bai's relationship. The details of their lovemaking do not figure anywhere in *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka*. Seth's

But Maan knew that Saeeda Bai, though hard-hearted, was—at least to him—tender-hearted; and although he knew that she did not believe that he was in any danger from himself if she refused to make love to him, he also knew that she would take it as more than merely flattering figure of speech.<sup>336</sup>

becomes Gandhi's

सईदाबाई जानती थीं कि मान खुदकुशी की बात करता है तो वह ऐसा कुछ नहीं करनेवाला।<sup>337</sup>

Saeeda Bai knew that since Maan talked about suicide, he was not going to do anything of the sort.

Elsewhere, Seth's "*After they had made love, she became more than everything for him,*" (emphasis mine) is translated by Gandhi as "*अब तो सई*

---

<sup>335</sup> Seth, interview with Sheela Reddy, *Outlook India* 2 Oct. 2008, 28 Dec. 2011 <<http://www.outlookindia.com/printarticle.aspx?232671>>.

<sup>336</sup> Seth 301-2.

<sup>337</sup> Gandhi 346.

दाबाई मान का सर्वस्व थीं” (“*Now Saeeda Bai was everything for Maan*”). Here, time, and not sex, is posited as the bonding factor between Maan and Saeeda Bai.

Not just the act of sex, but its preambles too suffer the brunt of Gandhi’s editorial knife. For instance, Maan’s sexual arousal becomes Maan’s “दिककत”<sup>338</sup> (*dikkat*—literally, “inconvenience”). Gandhi refrains from even naming the act to the Hindi reader. The aftermath of sex is, predictably, censored too. Here is a passage from Seth, describing Meenakshi’s and Billy’s lovemaking:

He [Billy] began to withdraw.

“No Billy, just stay where you are,” said Meenakshi in a sighing voice.

“You feel so nice.” Billy had been at his athletic best.

“All right,” Billy consented.

After a few minutes though, as he softened, he had to pull out.<sup>339</sup>

This is how Gandhi translates it (the last line, in particular, receives an interesting translation):

अब बिलि ने उठना चाहा ।

“नहीं बिलि, जैसे हो वैसे ही रहो!” मीनाक्षी ने दबे स्वर में कहा । अखाड़े में उतरे मँजे खिलाड़ियों

की तरह बिलि नरम भी था, सख्त भी ।

“अच्छा!” उसने मीनाक्षी का अनुरोध स्वीकारा ।

पर कुछ ही देर बाद बढ़ती शिथिलता ने दोनों को वियोजन के लिए मजबूर कर दिया ।<sup>340</sup>

Now Billy wanted to get up.

---

<sup>338</sup> Gandhi 169.

<sup>339</sup> Seth 1131.

<sup>340</sup> Gandhi 1095.

“No Billy, just stay where you are!” said Meenakshi in a muffled voice.

Like experienced athletes who had stepped into the arena, Billy was both soft and rough.

“All right!” Billy granted Meenakshi’s request.

But just a little later, increasing relaxation forced them to disconnect.

(translation mine)

This description of a sexual withdrawal could not have received a more thorough camouflaging!

Gandhi’s assumptions about the ideological bias of the Hindi reader also make him portray the nature of the inter-racial relationship between Kakoli and the German diplomat, Hans, in an elliptical manner. Gandhi does not translate any of the episodes detailing their encounters, when they sing and play music to each other even before they are romantically involved. Their courtship itself which leads to an engagement at the end of the novel, is completely left out of the translation though these passages are no more risqué than the following:

Hans blushed once more and offered Kakoli a drink. Although he was expert at kissing the hands of married women, he had not kissed Kakoli yet. He did not think she would approve of it; but he was wrong.<sup>341</sup>

Hans’s gallantry (such as kissing the hands of married women) is ascribed to his “सांस्कृतिक परम्परा,”<sup>342</sup> that is, his “cultural traditions.” This presumably helps in making the act more understandable by *alienating* it from the Indian

---

<sup>341</sup> Seth 451.

<sup>342</sup> Gandhi 501.



context and ascribing it as a norm of a different culture. Significantly, Kakoli's willingness to be kissed is left unmentioned, for, according to the principles of *Hindutva*, unmarried girls of respectable families were expected to *evade* physical contact rather than pursue it. In keeping with the same principles, women are more subordinated in *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka* than they are in *A Suitable Boy*. Seth portrays Kedarnath as being "henpecked" by Veena—and content at being so. This is explicitly pointed out twice in the narrative: "[Kedarnath] enjoyed being mildly henpecked;" "Kedarnath, who was usually quite henpecked, was putting up a good fight."<sup>343</sup> But Gandhi does not so much as bring up the term to describe him—hence denying Veena her position of power over her husband. The same treatment is given to the depiction of power relations in the Khandelwal household, where patriarchal hierarchies are not observed in Seth's text. Hence, all details pertaining to Mrs. Khandelwal's supremacy in the conjugal relationship—such as the following—are outright removed in the translation:

Mrs. Khandelwal, horrified, turned on her husband. "Mr. Khandelwal," she said in a tone of absolute authority, "do you know what you have done? Do you have any idea?"

"No," said Mr. Khandelwal in fear and trembling.<sup>344</sup>

As well as not trying to undermine their husbands, the women in the translation are also depicted as paragons of "good" erotic behaviour. They are portrayed as rising above supposedly base sexual instincts. On Holi, while watching Maan smear coloured powder on Savita's neck and breasts,

---

<sup>343</sup> Seth 21, 94.

<sup>344</sup> Seth 931.

Gandhi's Lata does not imagine "Maan's hands on her;"<sup>345</sup> nor does she later fantasise on how "it would have felt like to be rubbed and smeared by the cheerful Maan in such a public and intimate way."<sup>346</sup> Gandhi's Lata, instead expresses her reaction with an added "छिः!"<sup>347</sup> Lata's *chii* sums up the disgust that Gandhi thinks she is expected to conjure at such unabashed behaviour by the Hindi reader. In another instance, while Seth's Lata responds to flirtations with kindness or mirth, Gandhi's Lata is shown to be affronted, as obvious in the translation of the following passage which depicts the scene of Lata's and Kabir's first meeting:

"Aren't you going to ask me mine [that is, my name]?" asked the young man, his smile broadening amiably.

"No," said Lata, *quite kindly* and rejoined Malati...<sup>348</sup>

Gandhi translates Lata's response as:

"नहीं।" लता की आवाज़ में अब ज़रा कठोरता थी।<sup>349</sup>

"No." Now there was some *severity* in Lata's voice. (translation mine)

The kindness Seth's Lata displays is metamorphosed into a "severity" deemed a more appropriate reaction from an unmarried Hindu girl. All in all, Gandhi's characters stick to the "decorum" prescribed by the *Hindutva* ideologues, including the denial of the existence of female desire and maintaining the patriarchal status quo in the family. Once again, the mere premise on which Gandhi constructs these characteristics is the difference that he imagines prevail between the English language and Hindi. So while a

---

<sup>345</sup> Seth 74

<sup>346</sup> Seth 75.

<sup>347</sup> Gandhi 107. *Chii* is a sound of disgust.

<sup>348</sup> Seth 47.

<sup>349</sup> Gandhi 79.

certain sexual liberty (and even agency) is imaginable for the woman when she is spoken of or written about in the English language, in Hindi her role has to be changed and her agency curbed in keeping with the cultural norms that supposedly accompanies the Hindi language.

The intertext for these additions and subtractions in the translation could not have been Hindi literature. From Sanskrit epics to Hindi literature, *bhasha* literature has not refrained from acknowledging and depicting sexual desire—both as initiated by men, and by women. For example, the plays of pre-independence writer, Jaishankar Prasad, especially *Dhruvswamini* (c. 1923) include a female protagonist who does not shy away from sexual agency. She rejects her impotent husband, Ramgupta, for the more virile Chandragupta. It turns out that Chandragupta is also her former lover, and she is often depicted as ruminating on what she knows of his “manhood.” Even homoeroticism *has* been part of the modern Hindi literary tradition. The Hindi language collection of stories, titled *Chaaklet* or *Chocolate*, by Pandey Bechan Sharma “Ugra,” published in 1927, includes frank details of homosexual intimacy. The translator of the stories, Ruth Vanita, points out how although Sharma’s stories in *Chocolate* did not lend themselves to advocacy for gay rights in colonial India, the portrayal of same sex desire in the stories—where cosmopolitan and educated men quote homoerotic Hindi and Urdu poetry to express longing for each other—were risqué and not unsympathetic, on the whole, to homosexuality:

The stories depict male homoeroticism in quotidian situations: a man brings a lover to his disapproving friend’s house; a good-looking young man becomes the object of desire at his school. The love never

ends well but the depictions are not always unsympathetic. [...] Cosmopolitan, educated and hedonistic, the Hindu and Muslim men he portrayed quote Hindi and Urdu poetry to express their love, and they justify same-sex desire by drawing on literature, philosophy and world history.<sup>350</sup>

But Gandhi ignores such a vast body of literature and constructs his text by using 1950s Bombay cinema as an intertext. On page 161, I briefly made this point by stating the example of the addition of the Mohammad Rafi song and references to the film in the *tonga-wallah* episode. But more instances of this nature figure in the translation. For example, the figure of the mother in the translation is recognisably modelled on the prototype of the mother in Bombay cinema of the 1950s. In those early days of independence, the figure of the mother, sourced in the elite and conservative imagination, was produced as the pan-national representative. This image was circulated as a popular anchoring for the masses via popular culture, whereby Bombay cinema remained a strong medium. Mothers, in films of that time, therefore reflected the toils and pride of a nation which had borne/was bearing the burden of its slavery, and now surviving the cost of her independence, in order to appeal to the national pride of the masses. Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor (the bearer of the Hindu rituals so prized by the conservative elite) is one of Gandhi's primary targets to suffer this portrayal. In *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka*, her dedication and attentiveness to her family and their needs is even more exaggerated than in *A Suitable Boy*: whereas Pran's

---

<sup>350</sup> Ruth Vanita, introduction, *"Chocolate" and Other Writings on Male Homoeroticism*, by Pandey Bechan Sharma "Ugra," trans. Vanita (Durham: Duke UP, 2009) 84.

cough is merely mentioned in passing by Seth, this is how Gandhi represents the incident of Pran coughing at the altar, on his wedding:

श्रीमती महेश कपूर ने उसकी ओर घूमकर मातृवाणी में उससे कुछ कहा। पलने से वेदी तक माँ की चिन्ता, उसकी सतर्कता, बेटे को घेरे हुए थी।<sup>351</sup>

Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor turned to him and said something to him in a motherly way. From the cradle to the altar, his mother's concern and her alertness had surrounded the son.

None of these details figure in Seth's text. These additions about a mother's concern (which ranges from the time her child is in a cradle to when she has to give him away to his spouse at his wedding altar) renders the scene overtly mawkish, in view of a maudlin, feminised, audience. The translation is melodramatised in the same way that scripts of many films produced around that time were. The aggrandised depiction of the figure of the mother (especially Mrs. Mahesh Kapoor, but also the widows, Mrs. Rupa Mehra talking about how she single-handedly struggled to bring up her four children after her husband's demise, and Old Mrs. Tandon with her haunting memories of India's partition) brings to mind films like *Anmol Ghadi* (1946), *Dillagi* (1949), *Bazaar* (1949) and *Aar Paar* (1954). In these films, mothers (mostly portrayed by actresses Amir Banu, Leela Mishra, and Leela Chitnis) were over-sentimentalised, larger-than-life figures. Their largesse, their dedication to their children and their selflessness were pivotal and unsurpassable.

It is clear from all of the above how Bombay cinema of the 1950s was indelibly patriarchal and insensitive to issues of gender and sexuality.<sup>352</sup>

---

<sup>351</sup> Gandhi 34.

This is further reflected in the depiction of women. Jerry Pinto writes of the Hindi film heroines

As the positive moral pole of the universe, the heroine cannot move too far from her position. She's right, she's always right, and the right-wing will keep her there."<sup>353</sup>

Following these very precepts, Lata, Meenakshi and all the other female characters in Gandhi's translation shy away from expressing or talking about sexual desire since, according to the standards of good behaviour depicted by the heroines of the 1950s, female desire was unspoken of, based on the assumption that sexuality is obscene and that sexual references dishonour women. In fact, other than when portraying westernised or "fallen" characters (such as the villains, vamps, courtesans, or prostitutes),<sup>354</sup> most films of the 1950s would treat of the subject of passion in an attitude best summed up in the 1957 song from *Paying Guest*: *Chod do aanchal zamana kya kahega?* Romance and intimacy in relationships were not to be displayed on a public platform; it had to be restrained, for fear of

---

<sup>352</sup> I would not like to suggest that present-day Bollywood is ideal. Even in Bollywood films being produced in 2013, stereotypes about gender are not really addressed—least of all challenged. However, these facets of present-day Bollywood will not bear on my discussion of the *language* of Bollywood later.

<sup>353</sup> Jerry Pinto, "Bollygood Stereotypes," *Tehelka* 29 Nov. 2009, 28 Dec. 2011 <[http://www.tehelka.com/story\\_main40.asp?filename=hub291108bollygood\\_stereotypes.asp](http://www.tehelka.com/story_main40.asp?filename=hub291108bollygood_stereotypes.asp)>.

<sup>354</sup> If some more sensual sequences or suggestive songs were at all included, they would be attributed to the "westernised" characters (such as Madhubala's character, Edna, in *Howrah Bridge*, who is a cabaret dancer in a Calcutta nightclub. And Calcutta—as seen through the Chatterjis in *A Suitable Boy*—is where anglophile influences lingered, which is what made her sensuous rendering of the song, *aayiye meherbaan* (welcome, benefactor") more tolerable. Helen, as Miss Chin Chin Chu was also recognisably non-Indian enough to excuse her bold rendering of *Mera naam Chin Chin Chu*, in which she makes overt advances to men to join her on a moonlit night. Helen, again, plays the part of a dancing girl in a Calcutta night-club. The other women allowed bolder scenes were the "fallen" women, such as courtesans, and prostitutes doing their *mujras* and mouthing audacious lyrics, such as the drunken Beena, as Anarkali, in *Anarkali* (1953), singing *Mohabbat mein aise kadam dagmagaye* ("my steps faltered thus in love") whereby the faltering steps in the path of love suggest a potential loosening of morality.

the judgemental and moralistic gaze of the world. Raciness was thus limited to coy and covert looks that heroes and heroines gave each other, while singing soulful songs, mostly in open spaces, such as gardens, streets or balconies—where the level of physical proximity being depicted could be kept in check. Women, especially—as paragons of virtue—would be shown to recoil in fear and shyness at the slightest hint of physical intimacy. Sexuality was explicitly denied entry into the public space of cultural discourse, because it was assumed to be disruptive to social boundaries. Since these standards, which Gandhi sets for himself in the translation, are reflective of a very particular and closed patriarchal mindset, Gandhi's choice of intertext shows him as anticipating the Hindi reader as being socially conservative and a seeker of unpoliticised cultural and emotional solace and nostalgia—in effect, a creature from the 1950s world Hindi cinema world.

Sujit Mukherjee once claimed that it is only in translation that we may even realise that India exists.<sup>355</sup> However, from the examples that are set above, the conclusion that appears to emerge is that translation is less an activity which familiarises Indians with each other than one which *differentiates* them, by showing their “social realities” to be distinct from each other. In a sense, translation does not so much mark the fundamental unity of India as gives access to the *incompatible* “Indias” that exist under the umbrella of the nation. Hence, in the above examples, the English language apparently opens up a social reality that is defined by Nehru,

---

<sup>355</sup> See Sujit Mukherjee, *Translation as Discovery and Other Essays on Indian Literature in English Translation* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1994).

secularism and liberalism, while Hindi's reality is conditioned by Tandon, and *Hindutva* conservatism. However, I would like to maintain that the juxtaposition of these two languages in this way is necessarily facile. These gross generalisations pander to a stereotype (usually generated by a certain kind of multilingual and cosmopolitan elite), which ignore the larger body of literature and political material that defy such strict categorisations. In the rest of this chapter, I will first give a brief overview of instances—across a significant chunk of India's history—which counter the “English=secular and Hindi=*Hindutva*” equation, before analysing why Gopal Gandhi becomes a victim and perpetrator of these awkward stereotypes in his translation.

## **2.6. The Case of Anti-Secular English Speakers**

The assumption that the English language is indiscriminately the guardian and carrier of the concept of secularism in India—as Gopal Gandhi, Varun Gandhi and the BJP would have us believe—is misleading in so far as it glosses over the existence of the privileged middle class and English-speaking elite, who are distinctly and pointedly anti-secular. Such a group contributed to the “saffronisation” of India in the 1990s (around the time of the Babri Masjid crisis), both within India and from abroad. The Indian media has aptly reported the international mobilisation of Hindu expatriate groups in English-speaking countries, in support of the *Ramjanmabhumi* movement.<sup>356</sup> Moreover, if the logic that equated secularism to the English language is to be believed, no one speaking or writing in the English language should ever have expressed any emotion that was contrary to the

---

<sup>356</sup> See Ramachandra Guha, “Who Milks This Cow?” *Outlook India* 19 Nov. 2012, 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?282904>>.



spirit of secularism. And yet, literature continues to be churned out by the Hindu right in the English language on their website, in pamphlets, posters, billboards, etc. For example, the English-speaking intellectual, former Harvard professor and *Janata Party* chief, Subramaniam Swamy (who has published extensively in the English language and is most often heard communicating to the general public in English) has openly held forth on the necessity of ensuring that India remains an overwhelmingly Hindu population. In an article titled “How to Wipe out Islamic Terror” (2011) published in the English language newspaper, *Daily News & Analysis*, Swamy expressed distinctly anti-secular opinions by calling for the demolition of hundreds of mosques across India. This was meant as retaliation for the Mumbai blasts of 13 July 2011 suspected to be orchestrated by the Islamic extremist group, *Indian Mujahedeen*. In the same article, he also said that only Muslims and other non-Hindu Indians who acknowledge Hindus as their ancestors ought to be allowed Indian voting rights in India:

If any Muslim acknowledges his or her Hindu legacy, then we Hindus can accept him or her as a part of the *Brihad Hindu Samaj* (greater Hindu society) which is Hindustan. India that is Bharat that is Hindustan is a nation of Hindus and others whose ancestors were Hindus. Others, who refuse to acknowledge this, or foreigners who became Indian citizens by registration, can remain in India but should not have voting rights (which means that they cannot be elected representatives).<sup>357</sup>

---

<sup>357</sup> Subramaniam Swamy, “How to Wipe out Islamic Terror?” *Daily News & Analysis* 16 Jul. 2011, 27 Mar. 2013  
<<http://thefire.org/public/pdfs/6e0cda48154d74f6cf97b0f73d058de1.pdf?direct>>.

The parallels between Swamy's comments and V. D. Savarkar's *Hindutva* ideology cannot be missed, for Savarkar too had embarked on a programme of establishing the essentially Hindu ancestry of the "original" and "true" citizens of India.

"Internet Hindus"—who admittedly, are a more recent phenomenon—are another interesting example of the English-speaking, non-secular, specimen. Journalist Sagarika Ghose, in a Twitter update on 23 January 2010 coined the term to describe the voices online who oppose India's secular and plural identity. To quote her tweet: "Internet Hindus are like swarms of bees. they come swarming after you at any mention of Modi Muslims or Pakistan! [*sic.*]"<sup>358</sup> Internet Hindus are vociferous about their fundamentalist Hindu and anti-secularist views on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and through blogs. In an article titled "Who Milks This Cow?" (2012) Ramachandra Guha gives some examples of the kinds of hate mails that he receives from Internet Hindus for publishing articles and books that are essentially secular in their outlook (though Guha's understanding of "secularism" and his hate-mailers' usage of the term does tend to connote different things):<sup>359</sup>

Ramachandra is very much a Hindu name. Please don't insult that name, and show your secularism by changing your name to rahim or rehaman anyway... sanatana dharma does not want cowards like you!!! especially cowards who rape their own mother(land)!!! [*sic.*]

Another mailer writes:

---

<sup>358</sup> Sagarika Ghose (@sagarikaghose) "Internet Hindus are lik swarms of bees. they come swarming after you at any mention of Modi Muslims or Pakistan!" 23 Jan. 2010, 10.41 p.m., Tweet.

<sup>359</sup> Many adherents of *Hindutva* often interpret "secularism" as irreligiousness and atheism.

Westernised seculars like Ramachandra Guha are mere third-rate stool pigeons who could not move to the richer West on their own but would say anything to harm the core of India for a few dollars as baksheesh!<sup>360</sup>

As is clear from the above examples, the majority of these Internet Hindus write their tweets, posts and blogs in the English language—perhaps with a view of augmenting their own “global credibility” vis-à-vis the liberal secular advocate’s wide appeal. In a sense, since English is undeniably the language of power (I will dwell extensively on this point in the next chapter), the Internet Hindu’s use of the English language might be functional. It might be intended as a tool for ascertaining their own sphere of influence. It is possible that the English language is seen as giving them the credibility that counters the notion that their fundamentalism might be a sign of their parochialism, demotic nature, lack of exposure, or education. Interestingly, the Internet Hindus are often found to be living in English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. For example, the exclusively English language blog, “The Internet Hindus,” is based in the United Kingdom. Guha writes how several of his hate-mailers are keen to specify their location in English-speaking countries, as well as their anglophone education:

One of my regular mailers writes from his home in 1650 Voyager Avenue, Simi Valley, CA, USA. A second [...] signs his name and then adds, by way of further identification, “Out West, USA.” A third [...] writes from Canada and always reminds me that she is a “Ph.D,

---

<sup>360</sup> Guha <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?282904>>.

Western Ontario.” [...] A sixth first asked: “Who cares about your opinion, man? You speak as if you are representing a billion plus Hindus! Dimwits and slaves like you sit in a corner of your dimly lit houses and pontificate to others;” and then offered his own, rather, better qualifications for speaking about the subject at hand: “I am educated, young, well read (with 3 masters degrees) and residing in the west. Yet I have great pride and respect for my country, its culture, my Hindu religion, its Heroes, God and philosophies.” [sic.]<sup>361</sup>

All of the above instances contribute in dispelling the notion that the English language is characteristically secular—or that speaking English is necessarily an indication of anyone’s “secular” bent of mind.

## 2.7. Secular Hindi Writing

Similarly, a substantial body of work in the Hindi language written over a long period is available to counter Gopal Gandhi and the BJP’s equation of Hindi with *Hindutva* beliefs. Such assumptions follow the tradition of Hindi-*wallahs*’ politics but the Hindi language has a *longer* history that precedes its “Hinduisation” by the Hindi-*wallahs*. To name but a few instances, the first published story in Hindi—scripted in Devanagari—was *Rani Ketki ki Kahani* (or *The Tale of Queen Ketki*). It was written by a Muslim writer, Insha Allah Khan, circa 1803.<sup>362</sup> Khan’s story starts with an entreaty to Allah (though—following a conscious choice by Khan—without

---

<sup>361</sup> Guha <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?282904>>.

<sup>362</sup> Christopher Shackle and Rupert Snell, *Hindi and Urdu Since 1800: A Common Reader* (New Delhi: Heritage, 1990) 89.

any of the Arabic or Persian terminology that usually abounds in writings on Islamic topics, in the languages of India):

सिर झुकाकर नाक रगड़ता हूँ उस अपने बनानेवाले के सामने जिसने हम सब को बनाया और बात की बात में वह कर दिखवाया कि जिसका भेद किसी ने न पाया। आतियाँ जातियाँ जो साँसें हैं; उसके विन ध्यान यह सब फाँसे हैं। यह कल का पुतला जो अपने उस खिलाड़ी की सुध रक्खे तो खटाई में क्यों पड़े और कड़वा कसैला क्यों हो। उस फल की मिठाई चक्खे जो बड़े से बड़े अगलों ने चक्खी है।<sup>363</sup>

I bow my head and rub my nose in front of that creator of mine who created all of us and, so to speak, did such a thing whose secret no one could grasp. These breaths are just coming and going; without him [that is, the creator] the mind is all trapped. This mere puppet [that is the human being], if he were to abide by the dictates of its player [god], should not end up in sourness, nor have to face any bitterness. It should only be able to taste that sweetness which has been tasted by the high and mighty. (translation mine)

The act of rubbing the nose on the ground, among other things, makes it quite clear that the devotion being offered here follows the Islamic tradition, where it is ritualistic to bow down and touch one's forehead to the ground while praying. Analysing Khan's preface to the narrative, Christopher Shackle and Rupert Snell point out the explicitly Islamic references:

The first section is a formulaic expression of humble supplication to Allah and of eulogy of the Prophet and Ali, and a statement of allegiance to the Shia tradition; all the Islamic references are

---

<sup>363</sup> Sayyed Insha Allah Khan, *Rani Ketki Ki Kahani*, ed. Shyamsundar Das (Kashi: *Nagari Pracharini Sabha*, 1925) 17.

necessarily expressed euphemistically, in conformity with the author's self-imposed ban on Arabic and Persian vocabulary.<sup>364</sup>

However, the rest of the tale does not carry on in the same vein. The protagonist of Khan's story is a Hindu, Queen Ketki. It is her romance with a Hindu prince that forms the crux of the story. The tale also includes markedly "Hindu" elements, such as the presence of yogis dwelling in the Himalayas. While analysing the content of *Rani Ketki Ki Kahani*, T. W. Clark suggests that "(t)he subject matter clearly reflects the same oral narrative tradition hinted at by the *vata* fragments, and its choice suggests that it enjoyed a certain vogue among Hindus."<sup>365</sup> The syncretic nature of Khan's tale demonstrated by the co-existence of both Islamic and Hindu elements in his story, thus gives proof of the essentially secular tradition to which Khan belonged—provided we accept that the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity and harmony is itself an elemental part of secularism's intent in India. It is important to emphasise here that, as well as the neutrality of the state in the domain of religion, Indian secularism is specifically extended as a commitment towards maintaining social peace among all the communities of India—and especially between Hindus and Muslims. In fact, as put by Bhargava, the initial formulation of Indian secularism was driven by the very need to harmonise Hindus and Muslims:

The character of [the] Indian constitution [...] was decisively shaped not only by a diffused social-democratic impulse but also by contextual secularism, predominantly in response to deteriorating

---

<sup>364</sup> Shackle and Snell 89.

<sup>365</sup> T. W. Clark, *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development* (California: U of California P, 1970) 146.

Hindu-Muslim relations. Secularism anywhere in the world is required to check the growth of fanaticism and to manage inter-religious conflicts. It must everywhere prohibit the persecution of religious groups and individuals on grounds of religion but in India it has had to take on this additional burden of ensuring that the conflicts between religious communities, even when they are not purely religious in character but ensue from the identification of people by religious markers do not cross a threshold that threatens a larger pattern of living together.<sup>366</sup>

With this in mind, it would not be far-fetched to say that Hindi writing was born in a *secular* rather than in a religious tradition.

Not just in terms of its content, but in its style too, *Rani Ketki ki Kahani* is essentially secular. This is the first couplet of *Rani Ketki ki Kahani*:

यह वह कहानी है कि जिसमें हिंदी छुट  
और न किसी बोली का मेल है न पुट।<sup>367</sup>

This is that story in which except for Hindi

No mixture or trace from another language figures. (translation mine)

In the original Hindi, the couplet is in *doha* metre. Karine Schomer describes the *doha* metre as follows:

(a). it is a rhyming couplet (with, as is usual in Hindi, rhyme in the last *two* syllables of each line); (b). there is a clearly marked caesura

---

<sup>366</sup> Bhargava, "Is There a Place for Secularism in India?" Conf. on Trans-cultural Studies, The Centre for Trans-cultural Studies Chicago and the Centre for Cultural Studies Hawaii, East-West Centre Hawaii, Dec. 1994

<[http://www.law.uvic.ca/demcon/victoria\\_colloquium/documents/WhatIsSecularismforPreSeminarReading.pdf](http://www.law.uvic.ca/demcon/victoria_colloquium/documents/WhatIsSecularismforPreSeminarReading.pdf)>.

<sup>367</sup> Khan, *Rani Ketki Ki Kahani* 17.

or rhythmic break (*yati*) in the middle of each line (after the thirteenth *matra*), which also marks a syntactic break in the sentence; and (c). within each half line, there is a tendency for a rhythmic pause after the first six *matras*, a pause which also marks the end of a phrase or clause within the sentence.<sup>368</sup>

What is noteworthy here is that *dohas* are most often associated with a secular tradition. The earliest instance of the deployment of the *doha* metre is in the secular Sanskrit epigram collections known as *subhaasita kosas*.<sup>369</sup> Subsequently the *doha* metre came to be associated most closely with the *bhakti* poet of the fifteenth/sixteenth century, Kabir. And it is a widely accepted fact that Kabir's "secular" and non-sectarian impulses—derived from the fact that he acknowledges both Islamic and Hindu religious and cultural traditions —was the main characteristic that came to define his work. *Rani Ketki Ki Kahani's* emulation of Kabir's style is therefore deliberate and meaningful. In this way, Khan's position as a Muslim writer of the Hindi language, who wrote stories which had elements that reminded the reader of "secular" writing, unsettles the Hindi-Hindu equation.

Several modern Hindi writers have carried Khan's legacy forward. One such writer, closer to our time, was the Muslim writer Rahi Masoom Raza who wrote in Hindi as well as in the Urdu language. Harish Trivedi writes:

Rahi was probably unique in writing all his poetry in one language, Urdu, and all his fiction in another, Hindi. This may seem to suggest

---

<sup>368</sup> Karine Schomer, "The Doha as a Vehicle of Sant Teachings," *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Schomer and W. H. McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987) 63.

<sup>369</sup> Schomer 66.



that Rahi was an acute example of a dissociation of sensibility caused by the split between these two languages, a case perhaps of certifiable linguistic schizophrenia.<sup>370</sup>

However, rather than linguistic schizophrenia, I would like to posit that the fluctuation between Hindi and Urdu illustrates Raza's intention to render hollow and pointless the communal ascription to language. Raza wrote the script for the televised version of the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*—which became hugely popular in the late 1980s. His involvement with the scripting of the Hindu epic displays how it was perfectly possible for an Indian Muslim to confidently pen a Sanskritised Hindi script—hence denying the assertion that Hindi could only be a Hindu language, or that the mastery of Sanskritised Hindi had to be achieved through religious instruction within Hindu institutions such as the *Arya Samaj*. Language here *becomes* an agent of Raza's secularism. Trivedi himself acknowledges this, when he says that:

(T)here is no doubt that [Raza] belongs to the sturdy secular tradition of Hindi writers who spanned religions or languages or both. But he also has a unique and pioneering place of his own in the history of contemporary Hindi literature, for he was the first Muslim writer of any significance to write in Hindi rather than in Urdu ever since Urdu emerged as an alternative language of literary expression nearly two hundred years ago.<sup>371</sup>

Raza's secular Hindi novel *Topi Shukla* specifically addresses the question of the "religion" of language, unsettling various established notions

---

<sup>370</sup> Harish Trivedi, introduction, *Topi Shukla* (1966) by Rahi Masoom Raza, trans. Meenakshi Shivram (Delhi: Oxford UP, 2005) 7.

<sup>371</sup> Trivedi, introduction, Raza 13.

that tried to affiliate particular languages with a specific community and ideology. On the one hand, the Maulvi who teaches Urdu in Iffan's school notices the decreasing numbers of Hindus who are interested in studying the Urdu language in the immediate aftermath of the partition,

Whenever he took the roll call, his heart would become heavy. Muhammed Haneef, Akarmullah, Badrul Hassan, Nazaf Abbas, Bakaulah, Muhammed Umar Siddiqui, Hizbr Ali Khan Tokhi. [...] He would get bored calling out the same kind of names. What happened to all those Aasharam, Narbada Prasad, Matadeen, Gaurishankar Sinha, Madholal Agarwal, Maseeh Peter, Raunak Lal...<sup>372</sup>

On the other hand, Topi's Daadiji (paternal grandmother) prides herself on her mastery of Persianised Urdu:

Subhadradevi [that is Daadiji] [...] was an admirer of Phaarsi and hated Hindi. Her father, grandfather of the Blue Oil Doctor, Pandit Balmund, was a Persian-Arabic scholar and an Urdu-Persian poet. Subhadra was his only daughter. He taught her Phaarsi to his heart's content. Subhadradevi even started writing couplets in Phaarsi on the sly. The family she was married into also encouraged the Phaarsi influence. Doctor Bhrugu's father was himself a lover of Urdu-Phaarsi. Whenever Subhadradevi wanted to say something that was not meant for the ears of her servants and orderlies, she would speak with her husband in Phaarsi. The husband and wife looked upon Hindi as the language of the illiterate.<sup>373</sup>

---

<sup>372</sup> Raza 51.

<sup>373</sup> Raza 29.

However, unlike Mahesh Kapoor of *A Suitable Boy* or Nehru himself, Topi's Daadiji is no secularist. On the very contrary, Daadiji is an Urdu-speaking *Hindu bigot* who has a particularly unfavourable opinion of Muslims—which is why she objects to Topi's friendship with Iffan so vehemently. The following passage illustrates Daadiji's complex biases (her belief in the superiority of the Urdu language, and her communal bigotry). In response to Topi's jeering remark that "Daadiji, you pray to that dark god Krishna na, see, one day, your prayers will all, *jaroor*, definitely, get blackened," she reacts as follows:

That day Daadiji was angry on two counts. One was that her grandson pronounced "zaroor" as "jaroor." [...] And the other was that he had made fun of her God.<sup>374</sup>

Ironically, it is partially in rebellion against his grandmother's bigotry that Topi rejects the Urdu language and deliberately mispronounces Urdu words (such as *zaroor* above). Daadiji's example thus testifies how the equation of Hindi with Hindu could not be taken for granted. It is worth mentioning that Topi is attracted to Salima, who appears towards the end of the novel as the harbinger of another generation of Indian who are removed from the immediate aftermath of the partition. It is the 1960s, and the Muslim Salima joins Aligarh University—formerly the cradle of the Muslim League—to pursue a PhD *in Hindi!* Her example defiantly disputes the communal associations of languages and presages a generation which would try and erase the boundary between *bhasha* and community. Raza himself, of course, forms part of such a generation, as do Hindi novelists who were

---

<sup>374</sup> Raza 30.

Muslim by faith, such as Gulrez Khan, Shahni Asgar Wajahat, Abdul Bismillah, and Manzoor Ehtesham.<sup>375</sup>

So much for Muslim writers defying the appropriation of the Hindi language by bigoted Hindus. However, Hindi writers who were Hindu by faith were not automatically sympathetic to the *Hindutva* politics either. The famous Hindi writer Premchand (who, meaningfully, had started his career by writing in the Urdu language and script) had a distinctly secular conviction. As well as portraying and encouraging Hindu-Muslim camaraderie in his stories, such as “Mandir-Masjid” and “Hajj-I-Akbar,” Premchand’s fiction shows equal empathy for Hindu and Muslim plight without identifying closely with one or the other. “Idgah” is a short story about a little Muslim boy who uses his savings to buy a *chimta* (that is clipper) for his grandmother so that her fingers do not get burnt while she makes *chappatis*. “Idgah” is as moving and sympathetic to its protagonist as, for example, “Thakur ka kuan,” which narrates the plight of a Dalit woman, Gangi, and her frustration at not being able to procure drinking water for her dying husband. Premchand’s pen sparred no one in its censure of social injustice. To assign to him a *Hindutva* creed merely for the fact that he was a Hindu writing in Hindi would therefore be grossly misleading.

And finally, closer to the context of *A Suitable Boy’s* narrative, is the Hindi literature of the 1940s-50s. Rather than conservative and *Hindutva*, the trend in Hindi literature in the 1940s and 1950s was in fact progressive and secularist, with *Pragativada* (or the Progressive Movement) and *Prayogvada* (or the Experimental Movement) being the leading literary

---

<sup>375</sup> Trivedi, introduction, Raza 13.

movements of the period. Authors such as Sachidanand Vatsyana Agyeya, Rameshwar Shukla Acala and Harivansh Rai Bachchan formed part of these movements. Even if we only regarded sexual mores, Bachchan's and Acala's poems often figure female figures whose eroticism is spelt out and praised without them being demarcated as "fallen" women. Bachchan's popular poem "Madhushala" for example includes such a woman protagonist who not only sexually teases the poet but also encourages him on in his intoxication.<sup>376</sup> Yet there is no judgment of her morality in the poem as Bachchan's Hindi writing is not moulded by *Hindutva* precepts.

It is clear from the above that the Hindi language by itself does not militate against secularism or the possibilities of expressing female sexuality. It is *Hindutva* ideology, when married to the Hindi language, which does. Hence, regardless of its alleged coding of "social reality," the ways in which languages are manipulated can yet reflect the structural tensions pertaining to the politics of the time. In the first chapter, I argued how Indian languages got recruited to the service of, or in defiance of, nationalist agendas around the time of the struggle for Indian independence. In this chapter, I have shown how languages get usurped in the context of given religious and social ideologies—which does not necessarily imply that the given languages are innately "tuned in" to them. More often than not, the ideologies turn out to be constructs imposed by the user of the language, especially by a kind of elite who thrives on perpetuating the stereotypes

---

<sup>376</sup> Harivansh Rai Bachchan, *Madhushala: The House of Wine*, ed. Marjorie Boulton and Ram Swaroop Vyas (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989).

about languages for its own vested interest. My concluding remark will be a brief analysis of this particular kind of elite.

## **2.8. Divide and Rule**

In a country where one's native language is given the status of motherhood and where "children" of these mothers die in service of language, it is obvious how it is beneficial for fundamentalist and nationalist or fascist parties to make sure that the spheres of *bhashas* are kept pristine, and not allowed to overlap with languages such as English, which are seen not to carry the same "emotional" baggage. Given their packaging with specific aspects of "Indian culture," *bhashas* become means of appealing to one's sense of communal identity in a way that the "imported" English language—product of a different culture—supposedly cannot. The proposition of English as the language which espouses "non-Indian" values, far removed from the concerns of the common man, is thus offered by specific interest-groups so that *bhashas* can be exploited to woo the mono-lingual *bhasha* speaking "common man" into a sense of ease and belonging within which communal ideology can most easily be disseminated. And yet, as I have illustrated above, *Hindutva* versions of the English language are prominent too. I therefore uphold that the mentality that creates a chasm between the two sets of languages is primarily the creation of an elite imagination. I use the term elite here not only with regards to its class specific location, but in the sense that Antonio Gramsci uses it in his *Prison Notebooks* to refer to the "vanguard of a social class [which is] in constant

contact with its political and intellectual base.”<sup>377</sup> As the class who interacts with various regional, communal and social groups for political and intellectual ends, the elites are also the ones who have assured contact with the various languages of India. And though they project themselves as rising *above* the prejudices of linguistic chauvinism (as Varun Gandhi and Gopal Gandhi do) their familiarity with the different languages also permits them to construct the “worlds” of these languages as being distinct from each other. So elitism, in this case, is indicated not merely through one’s proficiency in the English language (though English does remain the language of the urban, middle-class or bourgeois Indian), but also through the multilingualism of this class. In the final analysis then, while the English narrative remains a Nehruvian socialist rendition of the 1950s, Gopal Gandhi’s version becomes prey to the translator’s elitist prejudices, given his position of power and privilege that enables him to straddle the “worlds” of these different languages.

---

<sup>377</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1929-35), ed. and trans., Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: ElecBook, 1999) 33.

## CHAPTER 3

### CLASS AND CASTE

That English will rise to the level of an international medium is a myth.

—Ram Manohar Lohia, “Banish English Movement”

English! Six-armed god,  
Key to a job, to power,  
Snobbery, the good life,  
This separatedness, this fear.

—Vikram Seth, “Divali”

In this chapter, I look at the connection between class, caste and language in India. The English language, which is often hailed as the language of prestige and dominance, is examined here for its relationship with hegemonic groups (such as class and caste elites). The hegemony of the English language in a world that is increasingly dependent on English as the language of globalisation is then evaluated. I put forth the cult of worship of Goddess English language by a group of Dalits as a foil to the notion that the English language is strictly the prerogative of upper class and caste elites in India, whereby the newly deified Dalit Goddess English language is hailed as an icon of the arrival of the Dalit community in the transnational circulation of the English language as global capital. I then examine how Indian English writing has represented these various politicisations of language in relation to class and caste. Arguing that contemporary Indian English literature seems to sanction the association of the English language with the elite in India, I analyse how the dream of equality and integrality, coded in the modeling of Goddess English on the Statue of Liberty, is not necessarily achieved by the lower classes and castes, because the *kinds* of English



wielded by elites and lower class Dalits tends to be distinct. Elite Indian English writers, I argue, have attempted to transform English as a literary language through code-mixing and chutnification of languages to produce “English.” Dalit writing, on the other hand, has preserved an older idea of English, as promulgated by Macaulay (who is saluted as a hero in the circles where the English Goddess is worshipped). Using the writing of Salman Rushdie, Aravind Adiga, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and Meena Kandasamy as prisms, I show how elite “English” and Dalit “English” reflect the divergences between the two groups. Language, once again, becomes a front for ulterior class and caste politics in India.

### **3.1. The English Advantage**

Class is a recurring factor in any Indian discussion about the English language. As the excerpt from Seth’s poem above illustrates, English is commonly understood as an indispensable social capital that, in turn, secures economic and political power in independent India. This association, of course, also has a long colonial ancestry, given that the English language is tied up with the history of the imperial mission in India. But as well as being the language of the foreign colonisers, English has been perceived as the language of the upper class Indians. Upper class Indians initially acquired English either because they needed it for professional or social interaction with the British (and sometimes others, within and outside India), or simply because they could afford the luxury of learning it. (As an aside, I should point out here that learning English was a prospect that was attractive to elite Indians since the colonisers had set English up as

the language of culture and civilisation. As a result of this, Gauri Viswanathan illustrates how Indians often willingly upheld English language instruction as “an instrument of authenticity” which placed “the Indian reader in a position where he renews contact with himself, recovering his true essence and identity from the degradation to which it had been subject through native despotism.”<sup>378</sup> Swayed, elite Indians, such as the *bhadralok* poet Madhusudan Dutt (discussed earlier in this thesis on pages 24-5), admitted the great regard and admiration in which he—and other *bhadralok* and upper class Indians like him—held the English language:

I acknowledge to you, and I need not blush to do so—that I love the language of the Anglo-Saxon. Yes—I love the language—the glorious language of the Anglo-Saxon. My imagination visions forth before me the language of the Anglo-Saxon in all its radiant beauty; and I feel silenced and abashed.<sup>379</sup>

In this way, English education was rarely unrelated to social and economic power in India. Macaulay himself admitted as much in his “Minute” when he pointed out that, by 1835, English was already an established language among the powerful Indian upper classes, who were sometimes demarcated as empowered *because* they spoke the English language: “In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government.”<sup>380</sup> Macaulay’s equation of class and language was descriptive, as well as

---

<sup>378</sup> Viswanathan 141.

<sup>379</sup> Dutt, qtd. in Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2000) 49.

<sup>380</sup> Macaulay 350.

aspirational and strategic. This is revealed further on in the “Minute,” when he says:

[W]e [that is, the British in India] must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.<sup>381</sup>

Through this, Macaulay revealed his intention of creating Indian mimic men, or brown sahibs, who would be charged with maintaining this class stratification precisely through their linguistic ability.

It is partially this compelling and early association of the English language with class and privilege, in addition to the colonial association, that led to the powerful and popular objection against the preservation of the English language in independent India. Speaking against its retention and usage in all official matters, M. K. Gandhi declared:

It [that is, the English language] has produced a gulf between the educated classes and the masses. The people look on us as beings apart from them. It is my considered opinion that English education in the manner it has been given has emasculated the English educated Indian, has put a severe strain upon the Indian students' nervous energy and has made us imitators. [...] No country can become a nation by producing a race of imitators.<sup>382</sup>

Even Nehru—who was in fact in favour of retaining the English language in India—conceded that English was markedly elitist:

---

<sup>381</sup> Macaulay 359.

<sup>382</sup> Gandhi, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: The Voice of Truth*, vol. 6 (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968) 527.

Some people imagine that English has served as [a common all-India medium of communication], and to some extent English has served as such *for our upper classes* and for all-India political purposes. But this is manifestly impossible if we think in terms of the masses.<sup>383</sup>  
(emphasis mine)

In this light, even the University Education Commission, set up by the Congress government, ruled in 1949:

Use of English as such divides the people into two nations, the few who govern and the many who are governed, the one unable to talk the language of the other and mutually uncomprehending. This is the negation of democracy.<sup>384</sup>

The socialist politician Ram Manohar Lohia agreed. In a speech made to support his “Banish English Movement” in the 1950s, he claimed:

Out of 40 crores, English has touched a fringe of 40 lakh Indians only. The government has its eyes set on this privileged class of 40 lakhs. Towards the rest it has turned its back. The problems that concern the 40 crore underdogs go neglected, their needs remain unanswered. What matters to the government are the interests of 40 lakhs which alone seem to assume an all-India character and hence, national importance.<sup>385</sup>

On this issue, even opposite extremes of right and left wing politicians sometimes converged. Along with the *Hindutva* organisations such as the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, the communist parties also

---

<sup>383</sup> Nehru, “Question of Language” 244.

<sup>384</sup> Government of India: Ministry of Education, *The Report of the University Education Commission*, Dec.: 1948-Aug. 1949 (New Delhi: Govt. of India P, 1962) 276.

<sup>385</sup> Lohia 11.

campaigned for the abolition of the English language in India. Nor was this a trend that was restricted to the immediate post-independence era. It carried on in postcolonial India decades after the country had received independence. For example, in the 1980s, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu, from the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) seemed to carry on Lohia's campaign in the 1950s with his English language policy for primary schools. Lohia had suggested that the study of the English language be removed from school curricula: "Rescue the Indian schoolboy, his mind and body, from the inhuman burden of English."<sup>386</sup> Taking a strikingly similar step, Basu also proposed that English language teaching in state-funded primary schools in West Bengal should be abolished. As the leading anti-CPI-M newspaper, *The Telegraph* reported:

[O]ne of the primary intentions of abolishing English was to increase enrolment of students in primary classes in state-aided schools located in rural districts, as the Left leaders wanted to earn brownie points with higher enrolments.<sup>387</sup>

Clearly, Basu and the CPI-M's assumption was that lower class enrolment (or the lack thereof) in schools had to do with the elitist association of the language of instruction itself. And yet, Basu himself maintained his ties with the English language, and ensured that his children have access to it too—since English was seen as being both a badge of, and means to, privilege and elitism. Graffiti that mushroomed all over Kolkata protested against the inherent injustice of this action of their Chief Minister: "My son won't learn

---

<sup>386</sup> Lohia 11.

<sup>387</sup> "Lest We Forget: English Blunder," *The Telegraph Calcutta* 14 May 2011, 15 Sept. 2012 <[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110514/jsp/frontpage/story\\_13981600.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110514/jsp/frontpage/story_13981600.jsp)>.

English, your son won't learn English. But Jyoti Basu will send his son abroad to learn English."<sup>388</sup>

In this regard, Basu's actions were ironically similar to that of the leading right-wing politicians of the time, whose children also continued to attend English medium schools even as the politicians themselves lashed out against the unfair social advantages accrued by English language speakers in India. The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and BJP politician Shivraj Singh Chouhan protested that English-speaking elites did not want the "compulsion of English to end" because "they fear that if that ever happens, even people from remote villages would become IAS or IPS officers."<sup>389</sup> And yet, Chouhan's own sons, as pointed out by a politician from the opposition, Ajay Singh, attended English medium schools:

The children of the chief minister [*sic.*], other ministers, as well as BJP and RSS leaders, all study in English medium schools and some of them even study abroad, [Singh] said. This led to a situation of "class struggle" as children of common people were forced to study in Hindi medium schools.<sup>390</sup>

I should emphasise, as an aside here, that I am *not* advancing the argument that the English language ever had a monopoly on class hierarchy in India. Francesca Orsini has aptly illustrated how, since the colonial times already, along with the rise of an English-speaking Indian elite, *bhasha*

---

<sup>388</sup> Qtd. in Salman Rushdie, "introduction," *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997*, ed. Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West (London: Vintage, 1997) xii.

<sup>389</sup> "CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan Lashes out against English," *Hindustan Times* 11 Sept. 2012, 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Bhopal/CM-Shivraj-Singh-Chouhan-lashes-out-against-English/Article1-958034.aspx>>.

<sup>390</sup> "Stop Sending RSS, BJP Kids to English language Schools: Cong," *The Indian Express* 12 Nov. 2012, 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/stop-sending-rss-bjp-kids-to-english-language-schools-cong/1030463>>.

languages were also nurtured by Hindi, Urdu and other *bhasha*-speaking elites. Indeed, Orsini shows that the preservation of the privileges of Hindi and Urdu had even been fundamental to the colonial policy of “divide and rule” of the British and their supporters:

It has repeatedly been stressed that, far from being a neutral arbiter, British administration exploited the tensions between Indian languages, in our case between Hindi and Urdu, to pursue a policy of *divide et impera*. By distinguishing the two languages in education but not in administration, they “fostered a Hindi-speaking elite by providing Hindi speakers with employment in the education system, and simultaneously favoured an Urdu-speaking elite by retaining Urdu as the only official vernacular for many years.<sup>391</sup>

And yet, in the final instance, the *bhasha* elites have been “subservient” to the English, and to the English language. As Orsini continues to explain, “the ideologues of both languages [that is whichever *bhasha* and English] took as ‘official authority’ the views of colonial officers who supported their own views and claims.”<sup>392</sup> One consequence of this was the bilingualism (at least!) of the Indian ruling elites. The historical model that Orsini proposes is that of the Bengali *bhadralok*:

Distinctively urban and anglicised in clothes and lifestyle, often highly educated and at the forefront of public sphere activities, Bengalis appeared very much the direct model to imitate. [...] The shrillness of Hindi’s demands and the grandness of its aspirations

---

<sup>391</sup> Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere* 24.

<sup>392</sup> Orsini 24.

may be related to the ambition and frustration of a “subordinate elite.” Compared to Bengal, only very few scions of landed or moneyed families, or highly placed government servants, were actively involved with Hindi. Even the few exceptions did not display the kind of “cultural bilingualism” we find in the Bengali *bhadralok*, at ease in both the English and the vernacular world.<sup>393</sup>

To date, this carries on with the bilingualism or multilingualism of the upper classes. This we can infer not only from the cases of Basu and Chouhan, but also from the cases of Gopal Gandhi and Varun Gandhi, discussed in the previous chapter, who may use *bhashas* functionally, but for whom English is still the language of their social and economic class. The clear conclusion to which these various scenarios point is that, though speaking English has not been the *sole condition* for being an elite in colonial India, one could still not be a proper member of the elite club until one spoke the English language (too).

Unsurprisingly, postcolonial Indian fiction—including, and especially, the Indian English novel—has been interested in examining and dramatising the class associations of the English language. I am here going to briefly discuss three specific novels (Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, Seth’s *A Suitable Boy*, and Adiga’s *The White Tiger*) which explore the nexus between class and the English language across 3 different eras: the colonial era, the newly post-independence era, and the contemporary era. In Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, English is the language of the clearly demarcated elite, namely the British themselves, but also that segment of the Indian—and specifically Bengali—

---

<sup>393</sup> Orsini 4, 14.



bourgeoisie who are commonly known as the *bhadralok*. Though not a homogeneous entity, the *bhadralok*, as Tithi Bhattacharya points out, was composed of the urbane educated and cultured Bengali gentry, who almost invariably happened to be the aristocratic and upper caste Hindus.<sup>394</sup> The English language had a significant role in defining the *bhadralok*, and Priyamvada Gopal in fact discerns a continuity between English language education, Indian English language literature and the birth of this elite group:

The rise of prose and prose fiction in nineteenth century India is intimately connected to the growth of a bilingual native middle-class, specifically a Hindu middle-class, intelligentsia in Bengal, the first region to come under formal British rule. The city of Calcutta, which generated this English-educated intelligentsia, was at the centre of commerce as well as the seat of colonial government. The Permanent Settlement imposed by the British Crown in 1793 had created a class of wealthy absentee proprietors of land who lived in the city where they pursued commercial activities as well as literary and intellectual interests. The less wealthy worked as teachers and lower-level functionaries for the East India Company.)<sup>395</sup>

In Ghosh's novel, Raja Neel Rattan Halder, the "zemindar [*sic.*] of Raskhali, who is from "one of the oldest and most landed families of Bengal,"<sup>396</sup> is a representative of the *bhadralok*. Ghosh explicitly emphasises Neel's

---

<sup>394</sup> Tithi Bhattacharya, *The Sentinels of Culture: Class, Education and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal 1848-85* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2005) 4.

<sup>395</sup> Gopal 17.

<sup>396</sup> Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (New Delhi: Viking-Penguin, 2008) 39.

investment in the English language, in the interest of being seen as a bona fide member of the upper class by the British. We learn that Neel's father

had hired a British tutor for his son, to make sure that he had a thorough schooling in English. This tutor, Mr. Beasley, had much in common with Neel, and had encouraged his interests in literature and philosophy.<sup>397</sup>

On the other hand, non-elite characters, such as Baboo Nobokrishna Panda—who is a clerk, or “gomusta” [*sic.*] to Mr. Burnham in the novel, is taken by the need to acquire the English language—so much so, in fact, that he “preferred to be spoken to in English, and liked to be addressed by the *anglice* of his name, which was Nob Kissin Pander.”<sup>398</sup> But for the latter, English is explicitly shown to be an aspirational language which would open for him the portals to accede the world of the upper class. Writing about what led him to learn the English language, the journalist Lal Behari Dey had stated:

A knowledge of English education, he [Dey's father] said, was necessary to enable a man to earn a competence in life. People ignorant of English no doubt got berths, but berths to which only paltry salaries were attached. He felt his want of English everyday, and was therefore resolved to remedy that defect in the education of his son.<sup>399</sup>

Baboo Nobokrishna's case is similar here. English is his source of livelihood and permits him entry among the upper classes. Through several such

---

<sup>397</sup> Ghosh 88.

<sup>398</sup> Ghosh 133.

<sup>399</sup> Lal Behari Dey, qtd. in B. T. McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1940) 44.

associations of English-speaking characters with the upper class (or, at the very least, upper class aspiration) Ghosh maintains the perceived linkage between the English language and the upper class.

As with Baboo Nobokrishna, a similar drive to acquire English in view of climbing the social and economic ladder is displayed by Arun Mehra in Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. Arun is already a distinct member of the professional elite in newly independent India (we learn that, after his English missionary-school education, Arun lands himself a job in a Calcutta-based English company, Bentsen Pryce, where he is one of the few Indian executives in their prestigious and largely white firm), who uses the English language strategically, in view of positioning himself among the upper classes. For this reason, Arun even picks his social circle to strictly include members of the English-speaking elite. His colleagues and larger social circle are either English expatriates such as Basil Cox, who is Arun's department head at Bentsen Pryce, or Indians of the upper class such as with Billy Irani and Bishwanath Bhaduri who "lead" their lives in the English language more than in the *bhashas*. Even the spaces where Arun and his surrounding gather (including the Calcutta Club, nightclubs such as Firpos and Golden Slipper, or the "exclusively European" Tollygunge Race Club where he is admitted as a guest of his English colleagues) are not only elitist, but also primarily—if not exclusively—English-speaking.<sup>400</sup> Tellingly, Arun, in his "native-proof casing" hesitates to converse in anything but the English language.<sup>401</sup> In a scene set in the Calcutta Club, he lowers his voice when using two words in

---

<sup>400</sup> Seth 440.

<sup>401</sup> Seth 1025.

Hindi while conversing with an Indian businessman he is half ashamed to be seen associating with.<sup>402</sup> Thus, through Arun's calculated wielding of the language, in view of being recognised as a bona fide member of the upper class, and through the fact that it is indeed mostly the elites who speak English in the novel (notably the St Stephen's-educated and England-return Haresh Khanna, the English language poet and Oxford-educated Amit Chatterji, the English literature lecturer Pran Kapoor, and the Minister of Revenue of Purva Pradesh, Mahesh Kapoor—among others)<sup>403</sup> Seth too upholds the upper class and elitist associations of the English language in *A Suitable Boy*.

Finally, Adiga's novel also lingers on the class associations of the English language in contemporary India. "(T)here are some things that can only be said in English,"<sup>404</sup> Adiga's protagonist, Balram, writes in a letter to Wen Jiabao, the Premier of China, at the beginning of *The White Tiger*. Balram's intent behind speaking English to Jiabao is to emphasise (however delusionally) that he is speaking to the Premier of China as an equal, as someone who belongs to the same socio-economic class as Jiabao—a fact, he presumes, that will only be driven home if he speaks in the language of the upper class, English. Thus, English is crucial for Balram here because it helps him justify his new class status, since for most of his life, Balram had occupied the lowest echelons of class and status hierarchy. He had been a poor villager who subsequently moves to the city to join the swelling ranks

---

<sup>402</sup> Seth 1006.

<sup>403</sup> Admittedly, there are some non-elitist characters (such as the masseur Maggu Gopal, Justice Chatterji's clerk Biswas Babu, among others) who speak English too, but their English is deliberately made to seem un-idiosyncratic and often becomes a source of comedy in the narrative. This will be discussed in further detail throughout this chapter.

<sup>404</sup> Aravind Adiga, *The White Tiger* (New York: Free Press, 2008) 3.

of exploited domestic workers, taking up employment as a driver for a wealthy businessman. And yet, Balram is powerfully drawn to the English language, and to the world that is accessible through the language even as a poor uneducated villager. Indeed, his attraction to English language disputes Jyoti Basu's assumptions about the inherent class antipathy towards the elite language. A significant episode in the novel demonstrates Balram's early attraction to the English language. This is worth reproducing at length:

A small man sat cross-legged on a stack of magazines in the centre of the square of books, like the priest in charge of this *mandala* of print. The books drew me towards them like a big magnet, but as soon as he saw me, the man sitting on the magazines snapped, "All the books are in English."

"So?"

"Do you read English?" he barked.

"Do *you* read English?" I retorted.

There. That did it. Until then his tone of talking to me had been servant-to-servant; now it became man-to-man. He stopped and looked me over from top to bottom.

"No," he said, breaking into a smile, as if he appreciated my balls.

[...]

"I just want to stand around the books. I had a book once. When I was a boy."

"Suit yourself."

So I stood around that big square of books. Standing around books, even books in a foreign language, you feel a kind of electricity

buzzing up towards you, Your Excellency. It just happens, the way you get erect around girls wearing tight jeans.

Except here what happens is that your *brain* starts to hum.<sup>405</sup>

Balram extracts respect and acceptance because of his ability to decode the social distribution of the cultural prestige of English. Merely being in the presence of the language triggers a kind of osmosis for Balram whereby he absorbs its hegemonic powers. Being in its presence makes his brain “hum.” The “humming,” as we learn in the subsequent passages, leads him to detect the real nature of the business investments of his employer. And thus begins Balram’s ascent towards the status of the “White Tiger,” overcoming the limitations of his class, and (as I will show later) also transcending the boundaries of caste!

Globally then, contemporary Indian English writing seems to endorse the association of the English language with the upper class, and class ascendancy. It would therefore be interesting to analyse, in this light, how Indian English writing would accommodate and represent a movement that idolises the English language as a class mascot, and a symbol of class empowerment of one of the most downtrodden classes and castes of India: the Dalits. But before prodding into the literary analysis, I will elaborate on the cult that seems to have formed around the English language among some Dalit groups, and seek to analyse its logic.

---

<sup>405</sup> Adiga 205-6.

### 3.2. Goddess English and Caste

On 25 October 2009, in a small village situated in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh called Banka, a new festival of “English Day” was celebrated for the first time. A part of the celebration involved the inauguration of a temple dedicated to the new deity—“Goddess English language.”<sup>406</sup> The goddess was modelled on the Statue of Liberty: dressed in a flowing robe and a large floppy hat, she held the Constitution of India in the left hand and a pen in her outstretched right hand. Her pedestal was a desktop computer, complete with monitor, keyboard and mouse. The following poster, circulated by the founders of this temple, is a representation of the statue:



Image 3: Dalit Goddess English

---

<sup>406</sup> Chandra Bhan Prasad, “English Day Today,” *Chandra Bhan Prasad Website* 25 Oct. 2009, 25 Jun. 2012 <<http://chandrabhanprasad.com/frmEnglishDay.aspx>>.

However ludicrous this may seem to the non-Indian (and indeed, also to a substantial part of the Indian) audience, the notion of deifying language is itself not new in India. As I have illustrated in my discussion of Tamil *Tay* and Telugu *Talli* in the first chapter, temples and monuments have been erected in honour of language goddesses in the past too—especially during the years that immediately followed independence when different groups were agitating for the formation of separate states on the basis of linguistic and cultural specificities. However, while the *bhasha* goddesses were celebrated because they expressed the ethno-socio-linguistic identity of a community, English has no such metonymic attachment to any specific community in India—unless, as I illustrated above, it is to the ruling classes. And yet, it is interesting to note that the Dalit community who consecrated the “English goddess” occupies the lowest echelon of the class/caste hierarchy. (One of the reasons why I conflate the categories of class and caste here is because, unfortunately even today caste continues to determine, and in turn be inflected by, class positions in India. To date, Dalits often find themselves doing the lowest paid and least secure jobs, which consequently hampers their class mobility. As illustrated by Anand Teltumbde, “(m)ore than 75 per cent of the Dalit workers are still connected with land—25 per cent being the marginal and small farmers and balance over 50 per cent are the landless labourers. In urban areas, they work mainly in the unorganised sector.”)<sup>407</sup>

---

<sup>407</sup> Anand Teltumbde, “Globalisation and the Dalits,” *A Dalit-Bahujan Media: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and His People*, 13 Jun. 2013  
<<http://ambedkar.org/research/GLOBALISATIONANDTHEDALITS.pdf>>.



The subalternity of the Dalit caste makes their turn to the English language seemingly paradoxical—given the elitist assumptions about the English language established earlier in this chapter. However, Macaulay himself has been “appropriated” by Dalits who call themselves “Macaulay’s children.”<sup>408</sup> Bibek Debroy, who spoke at the English Day celebrations, declared to the festive crowd:

Macaulay never married. As far as I know, he had no children. But, let me tell you, we all gathered here this evening, are *Children of Macaulay*.<sup>409</sup> (emphasis mine)

The organiser of the festivities and founder of the temple, Chandra Bhan Prasad, claimed to have picked the 26<sup>th</sup> of October as English Day precisely because that is the date of Macaulay’s birthday. As Prasad reports: “The event began at 8pm when noted social scientist Professor Gail Omvedt was invited to cut the cake for Lord Macaulay.”<sup>410</sup>

The Dalit claim of kinship to Macaulay is, predictably, based on a radically different understanding of Macaulay’s body of work, including his momentous “Minute.” First, Chandra Bhan Prasad points out that it has often gone unnoticed that Macaulay “scripted the Indian Penal Code [of 1862] which made all Indians equal before the law.”<sup>411</sup> Prasad seeks to insinuate that this same egalitarian impulse can be found in his proposals for educational reform. The Dalit argument is that Macaulay’s introduction of

---

<sup>408</sup> C. B. Prasad, “English Day Today”

<<http://chandrabanprasad.com/frmEnglishDay.aspx>>.

<sup>409</sup> C. B. Prasad <<http://chandrabanprasad.com/frmEnglishDay.aspx>>.

<sup>410</sup> C. B. Prasad <<http://chandrabanprasad.com/frmEnglishDay.aspx>>.

<sup>411</sup> C. B. Prasad “The Vilification of Lord Macaulay,” *Centre for the Advanced Study of India-University of Pennsylvania* 18 Nov. 2007, 27 Mar. 2013  
<<http://casi.ssc.upenn.edu/node/135>>.

the English language in tertiary education institutions served to loosen the stranglehold of Brahmanic and classical languages which were more rigidly aligned to elite prerogatives. Narendra Jadhav, an activist and participant in the “English Day” celebrations, explains: “Under Gurukula system, Dalits had a zero chance of entering the indigenous school system,” before elaborating on how Macaulay’s intervention thereby facilitated Dalits’ entry into schools.<sup>412</sup> Macaulay’s “Minute” is thus construed by the Dalit community not as a triumph of elitism, but as the mechanism that enabled (in theory) Dalits to be part of a system from which they had previously been barred. This is a visibly different reading of the English language to the one peddled in popular parlance, according to which the language is married to elitism and class dominance. This association—as I demonstrated above—is the one that tends to get absorbed in Indian English writing too. How then, does Indian English writing negotiate and accommodate the language politics of the Dalits, which is ostensibly different—if not contradictory—to the politics espoused by non-Dalits? In order to be able to answer this properly, I will first analyse and compare the literary dramatisation of the caste and language association in Indian writing in general—including in English and *bhashas*.

### **3.3. Integral Hegemony of English Language**

In his 2008 novel, *Between Assassinations*, Aravind Adiga includes a long passage on how the use of *bhasha* signals caste and community

---

<sup>412</sup> C. B. Prasad <<http://casi.ssc.upenn.edu/node/135>>.

affiliations even within the same geographical region in India. This is worth quoting at length here:

Kannada, one of the four major languages of South India, is the official language of the state of Karnataka, in which Kittur is located. [...] Although understood by virtually everyone in the town, Kannada is the mother tongue of only some of the Brahmins. Tulu, a regional language that has no written script [...] is the lingua franca. Two dialects of Tulu exist. The “upper-caste” dialect is still used by a few Brahmins, but is dying out as the Tulu-speaking Brahmins switch to Kannada. The other dialect of Tulu, a rough, bawdy language cherished for its diversity and pungency of expletives, is used by the Bunts and Hoykas [lower castes]—this is the language of the Kittur street. Around Umbrella Street, the commercial centre of town, the language changes to Konkani: this is the language of the Gaud-Saraswat Brahmins, originally from Goa, who own the shops here [...]. A very different dialect of Konkani, corrupted with Portuguese, is spoken in the suburb of Valencia by the Catholics who live there. Most of the Muslims, especially those in the Bunder, the port area, speak a dialect of Malayalam as their mother tongue; a few of the richer Muslims, being from the old Hyderabad kingdom, speak Hyderabad Urdu as their native language. Kittur’s large migrant worker population, which floats around the town from construction

site to construction site, is Tamil-speaking. English is understood by the middle class.<sup>413</sup>

Albeit the repeated emphasis on the English language and class yoke laid through the last sentence, it follows from the situation described in the passage above that speech in a particular *bhasha* language exposes the social vulnerability of the downtrodden castes. In certain contexts the boundaries of some *bhasha* languages are so ruthlessly patrolled that crossing them comes at the cost of much social trauma. Let me cite the example of Sanskrit here. Sanskrit is often viewed as a marker of Brahmanical Hinduism, and Richard Salomon writes, confirming this in his *Indian Epigraphy* (1998):

It is certainly true that, on the whole, Sanskrit was first and foremost employed epigraphically in Brahmanical circles (as in Ayodhya, Hathibada/Ghosundi etc.), and that any of the earliest and best specimen of Sanskrit from subsequent sites, such as Mathura and Nagarjunakonda are in Brahmanical records.<sup>414</sup>

Such associations often result in bigoted calls to protect the “sanctity” of Sanskrit against “soiling” by lower castes. Kumud Pawde, Dalit and a professor of Sanskrit, writes in a very eloquent essay titled “The Story of My Sanskrit” about the ordeal that followed her decision to learn the language:

Sanskrit and the social group I come from don’t go together in the Indian mind. Against the background of my caste, the Sanskrit I have learned appears shockingly strange. [...] “Well, isn’t that amazing! So

---

<sup>413</sup> Adiga, *Between Assassinations* (London: Picador-Pan Macmillan, 2008) 139.

<sup>414</sup> Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of the Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 55.

you're teaching Sanskrit...are you? That's very gratifying, I must say."

The words are quite ordinary; their literal meaning is straightforward. But the meaning conveyed by the tone in which they are said torments me...! "In what former life have I committed a sin that I should have to learn Sanskrit even from you?" "All our sacred scriptures have been polluted." [...] The frustration of the defeated, the fury of the traditionalist, the respect of some acquaintances, the hostility and disgust of others, are obvious to my experienced eye.<sup>415</sup>

Recounting the story of her persistence against all odds and her eventual success, Pawde concludes her essay by saying that it was not her stoicism that finally managed to win the respect of her colleagues (even less so, the demolition of the orthodox caste boundaries). Instead, it was the adoption of her husband's (who is from a higher caste) name, which thereby served to camouflage her own social origins:

The credit for Kumud Somkuwar's job is not hers, but that of the name Kumud Pawde. I hear that a woman's surname changes to match her husband's—and so does her caste. That's why I say that the credit of being a professor of Sanskrit is that of the presumed higher status of Mrs. Kumud Pawde. The caste of her maiden status remains deprived.<sup>416</sup>

What complicates the issue of caste and *bhasha* is that it is not merely an issue of contested "ownership" of *languages* but often that of individual words too. So, should it happen that Hindus of the higher castes and those of

---

<sup>415</sup> Kumud Pawde, "The Story of My 'Sanskrit,'" Dangle 110, 111, 113.

<sup>416</sup> Pawde 122.

the lower castes have the “good fortune” of sharing the same language there will still be a different set of vocabulary, or a different syntactical norm, assigned to each, in order to differentiate them. G. J. V. Prasad testifies to this process of granularity:

Our school had Tamil students from all strata of society—children of road workers, construction labourers and maidservants as well as children of upper-middle-class families. This meant a difference in caste and a difference in the kind of Tamil we spoke, since Tamil is a caste- and region-marked language. [...] To speak mainly in Tamil was to give in to the hierarchisation implicit in the language as well as its tensions and prejudices.<sup>417</sup>

To take a few examples, Tamil has several choices of words for greeting but the use of *vanakkam* or *namaskaram* will often reflect whether one is of a low (*vanakkam*) or high (*namaskaram*) caste. As Prasad’s term “hierarchisation” implies, caste prejudices are engrained in the everyday use of *bhasha* words—in a way that they perhaps cannot be, in their English counterparts.

In the previous chapter, I discussed an instance of translation into Hindi of a passage from *A Suitable Boy* about Dalits involved in the process of leather making. I showed how certain *bhashas*, in that particular case Hindi, tend to be used to soothe higher caste sensibilities by downplaying or omitting any detail pertaining to the kind of Dalit labour. For example, the translator Gopal Gandhi does not register the term *jatav* to describe Jagat Ram, a term that is pointedly used by Seth in the original. He replaces it with

---

<sup>417</sup> G. J. V. Prasad, *Writing India, Writing English* 32.

the relatively neutral term “मोची”—*mochi* (that is shoemaker).<sup>418</sup> While not translating words such as *chamar*<sup>419</sup> is understandable in the context of Hindi where the term has acquired offensive connotations, *jatav* need not have suffered a similar treatment. In another instance, while Seth’s narrative in English includes a comprehensive description of the process of a lower caste child cleaning sheepskin, the Hindi translation rushes over the passage omitting the details and paraphrasing it in a line or two. By doing away with several such details, Gandhi, as Sadana points out, produces the Hindi version as “culturally inauthentic in terms of hiding caste and caste relations of production as described in the novel.”<sup>420</sup> (I am grateful to Orsini for pointing out to me that this particular detail need not have been caste offensive at all, since the process being described is of the scraping of *sheep* skin—not cow skin. And yet, the Hindi translation burdens the act with added significance by omitting this detail, whereas the English version had not ascribed to it any such kind of importance.)

What becomes explicit through these examples is that, at least in literary practice, the English language in India emerges as relatively unburdened by “context” in comparison to *bhashas*. Thus, the English language potentially models equitable human relationships in Indian literature, because caste and class do not determine its “ownership” to the same degree as that of *bhashas*. Following A. K. Ramanujan’s demarcation between “context-sensitive” and “context-free” rules among languages, *bhashas* seemingly turn out to be “context-sensitive” while the English

---

<sup>418</sup> Seth 200.

<sup>419</sup> Seth 201, 524.

<sup>420</sup> Sadana 325.

language is “context-free.”<sup>421</sup> Ramanujan writes: “In traditional cultures like India, where context-sensitivity rules and binds, the dream is to be free of context.”<sup>422</sup> As it emerges from a lot of Dalit writing in English, the English language encapsulates that particular “dream” for Dalit, which is coded in the modelling of “Goddess English” on the Statue of Liberty. In literary dramatisations, this “liberty” emerges strongly. For instance, in her poem “Once my Silence Held you Spellbound,” Dalit poet and activist Meena Kandasamy celebrates this new-found liberty and voice through the acquisition of the English language:

You wouldn't discuss me because my suffering  
was not theoretical enough. Enough. Enough.  
Enough. Now I am theoretical enough.  
I am theatrical enough.  
I have learnt all these big big words.  
I can use them with abandon.  
I can misuse them. I can refuse them.  
I can throw them about and one day,  
I can throw them out.  
I am the renegade who can drop  
these multi-syllable monsters  
for stylistic, studied effect.

---

<sup>421</sup> A. K. Ramanujan, “Is There An Indian Way of Thinking?,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 23 (1989), 14 Sept. 2012  
<[http://silk.arachnis.com/anthro/Is\\_there\\_an\\_Indian\\_Way\\_of\\_Thinking\\_An\\_Informal\\_Essay.pdf](http://silk.arachnis.com/anthro/Is_there_an_Indian_Way_of_Thinking_An_Informal_Essay.pdf)>.

<sup>422</sup> Ramanujan  
<[http://silk.arachnis.com/anthro/Is\\_there\\_an\\_Indian\\_Way\\_of\\_Thinking\\_An\\_Informal\\_Essay.pdf](http://silk.arachnis.com/anthro/Is_there_an_Indian_Way_of_Thinking_An_Informal_Essay.pdf)>.



I am the rebel who can drop them altogether.

I invent new ones every passing day.

FYI, OED consults me. Roget's Thesaurus

finds it tough to stay updated.<sup>423</sup>

Though it is arguable that the poem is actually ironic about the putative power of the English language, in another sense the poem also *celebrates* the integral hegemony of English, which issues a substantial degree of moral and intellectual integrity between elites and Dalits, granting the Dalit subject the opportunity here to articulate certain issues where earlier there had only been gaps.<sup>424</sup> In this particular case, English is not feted for its prestige or lucrateness (both elements of a hegemony Joseph Femia reads as “minimal”).<sup>425</sup> Nor is the English language admired here for the platform it offers for being “noticed” and “heard” by a larger group of people—as has been argued and demonstrated by many writers and scholars already.<sup>426</sup> The celebration of the English language by Kandasamy is instead for expressing the individual subjectivity of the Dalit speaker. G. J. V. Prasad advances:

---

<sup>423</sup> Meena Kandasamy, “Once My Silence Held You Spellbound,” *Ms. Militancy* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2010) 39-40.

<sup>424</sup> Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process* (Clarendon: Oxford UP, 1981) 46.

<sup>425</sup> Minimal hegemony, according to Femia, preserves the “exclusivity” of the ruling elites and deters the integration of the masses in activities in which the elites indulge. According to this logic, speaking English could therefore not be spread out to subalterns. Femia 47.

<sup>426</sup> Theorists such as Gayatri Spivak have argued this by showing how the need to be heard in English is essentially a matter of convenience, because of the reach of the English language. Here, she makes the point in relation to feminist writing:

“It is more just to give access to the largest number of feminists. Therefore, these texts must be made to speak English. It is more just to speak the language of the majority when through hospitality a large number of feminists give the foreign feminist the right to speak, in English.” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Politics of Translation,” *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 182.

If English is seen as a language of power and hegemony, as it must, it will also be seen as a language of appropriation, a language that homogenises disparate experiences, a language that creates an India, one India, but an English India, out of specific local experiences.<sup>427</sup>

However, as illustrated by Kandasamy above, the Dalit reading of the English language is not so much for social equity that it offers as a language, but more for the fact that it autonomises the Dalit subject, making him/her visible and audible on issues where they had earlier been silenced in other languages. The lines “Now I am theoretical enough/I am theatrical enough” therefore invite to be read as implying the Dalit’s individuality through access to the hegemonic English language.

Are we then to conclude that English solves all caste and class discrepancies in India, enabling a certain amount of class and caste anonymity—if not neutrality—to the elites and non-elite groups alike, in their writing? In fact, is the entire body of Indian English writing democratic and integral in overhauling the class and caste demarcations between Dalits and non-Dalits? In just a word, I would argue that the answer is: no. The Dalit subject, and the subject of the Dalit, are both represented differently from the ways in which non-Dalit subjects are in Indian English writing. Firstly, Indian English writing that explicitly presents itself as Dalit literature (such as the poems of Meena Kandasamy, which constitute my primary subject of analysis here) use a kind of English that is not the same as the English of the “elite” Indian English writers. I should specify here that I want to resist defining the “elite” Indian English writers merely as the

---

<sup>427</sup> G. J. V. Prasad 25.

breed of St Stephen's/Oxford/Cambridge-educated novelists who are most often seen as the obvious revelers of the financial and cultural currencies of the English language, by dint of their education in elite English-medium institutions and their movement in elite, English-speaking, social and professional circles etc. In my analysis, what differentiates elite Indian English writers—a group in which I include writers such as Rushdie, Seth, Ghosh and Adiga—from Dalit writers like Kandasamy, Chandra Bhan Prasad and Sakya Mohan, among others, is not so much their economic and social capital, but the ways in which they present themselves as writers. Indeed Kandasamy and Mohan are arguably as cosmopolitan, and can boast of as much international success and access to selective literary and social circles as elite writers such as Ghosh and Seth. But what differentiates them is that Kandasamy, Prasad and Mohan are overtly conscious of writing *Dalit literature*—as a Dalit, and *about* Dalits. On the other hand, the literature produced by the afore-mentioned elite writers does not push nearly enough against the broad narrative limits of its own elitism. That is, since Indian English writing has traditionally been hailed, by critics such as Edward Said and Gauri Viswanathan, among others, as being inextricably tied with the Indian bourgeoisie—and the bourgeoisie's willing compliance to the intents of their imperial masters—the endorsement of the English language-upper class/class ascendancy connection in elite Indian English writing (discussed above) is seen as merely conforming to the conventions of Indian English writing.

Over the past few decades, elite Indian English writers have sought to transform English as a literary language (in keeping, perhaps, with the

increasing linguistic hegemony of Indian English as a world language), whereas Dalit writers have tended to stick to an older, more traditional idea of English in their writing. This in itself seems to point to the material process of globalisation: the wealth cornered by the ruling classes and castes enable them to experimentally use cultural capitals such as the English language. As for the Dalits, though they can aspire to the same kind of wealth, they only ever seem to be marginalised by the process—which is arguably why their cultural capital turns out to be “outmoded,” and “safe.” And since both types of English (“experimental” or “safe”) operate in different spheres, this means that often the caste and class boundary remain unaffected—if not reaffirmed. In the rest of this chapter, I will illustrate this hypothesis by analysing the functionality and symbolism of both types of English in literary writing, and at the same time show how access to the hegemonic language does not necessarily entail the same level and kind of empowerment for the different groups.

### **3.4. Elite English and Dalit English**

In *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001) Graham Huggan has convincingly illustrated how the “exoticisation” of certain indigenous products has aided the commercial solvency and admission of the postcolonial nation on the global market. With the liberalisation of the economy, and the opening of portals to foreign investors in India in the early 1990s, there was both an emphasis on needing to “keep up” with the rest of the world, as well as the underlying, equally urgent, need to showcase and preserve one’s uniqueness, in order to ensure marketability. As put by Huggan:

The postcolonial exotic represents the interface between two apparently incompatible systems—the oppositional system of postcolonial resistance and the profit-driven system of the transnational culture and global trade. Arising from the clash between these two contending systems is a series of exotically hybridised or, perhaps better, “transcultured” products.<sup>428</sup>

Indian English—or Inglish—is one such “transcultured” product that came into vogue with national and international audiences with the rise of the economic hegemony of India. On the one hand, as (a version of) the English language, it was already part of established global cultural capitals. But Inglish was also recognisably “domesticated” by the Indian elite who used and wielded it in order to posit its lure as the “exotic.”

To analyse the content of the language itself, “Inglish” is the trendy collision of the English language with various *bhasha* languages to produce a variety (or indeed, several varieties) of Indianised English. In fact, the term Inglish cannot merely point to one homogeneous form of the language, but signals several versions of these Indianised Englishes. G. J. V. Prasad goes as far to argue that there are so many varieties of Inglish that they can only be referred to in the plural.<sup>429</sup> Hence, Inglish is as much defined by Rushdie’s *chutnified* English, as by Hinglish/Banglish/Urglish and other such varieties of English code-mixed with *bhashas*, which is now espoused as the language of Bollywood, FM radio, and of national advertising. Indeed, it is arguable that Inglish coat-tailed on Indian English writing, cinema and popular

---

<sup>428</sup> Huggan 263-4.

<sup>429</sup> G. J. V. Prasad 35.

culture to acquire the national and international popularity that it boasts of today. Ranging from the language of the novels of Rushdie *et al.*, to titles of Bollywood films [*Jab We Met, Love Aaj Kal, Kya Super Kool Hai Hum*], to the lyrics of the ubiquitous songs in Bollywood ["Dil garden garden ho gaya;" "Ooh la la ooh la la, tu hai meri fantasy;" "Oh eco-friendly, nature ke rakshak..."], to dialogues in these films, and to the splendid timbre of slogans in Indian advertising, [such as Pepsi's "Yehi hai right choice, baby!" or Maggi's "Taste Bhi, Health Bhi"] English percolates most aspects of literary and popular culture in India. English news channels, such as NDTV and IBN India—which are also symbolically elite sites (as evident in their Target Rating Points and in the fact that subscribers to these languages are mostly concentrated in urban areas)—liberally incorporate Hindi and other *bhasha* words in their reporting without any concern about the "impurity" of their language. Words such as "bandh" (for strike) or "latthi-charge" (for baton-charge), among others, now figure freely and without translations. The clipped Victorian style English perfected by a previous generation of English language news reporters in India has been replaced by a more fluid English which allows *bhasha* words to be integrated. A scene from a Hindi film, *Peepli Live*, dramatises this. A conversation between an English language television channel news reporter and the Union Minister of Agriculture (both markedly "elitist" characters, considering their social, political and intellectual privileged position) sees them liberally swapping between languages over the course of a televised interview. The Minister speaks with an impeccable and unaccented English, but his speech is interspersed with Hindi words, such as in this instance: "The people are fed up of the *goonda-*

*raaj* of this casteist, communalist government...” On being questioned on another issue, he replies: “There is a saying in Hindi, you know, *ke rajneeti mein matt-bhed hota hai, dushmani nahin hoti...*”<sup>430</sup> The ease in the process of hybridisation is conspicuous.

As reflected in the above examples, “hybridity” is an essential aspect of English that makes up its postcolonial appeal. Indeed, English, with its “borders left open for the language to be ‘biryanised’ with the specific flavours of the parts of India that are being represented,”<sup>431</sup> befits Bakhtin’s definition of a hybrid language almost to the letter:

It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differences, or some other factor.<sup>432</sup>

Bakhtin emphasises “separateness” within the hybrid language, arising from temporal and social differences—among others things—but English is instead often hailed as the answer to the internal problems of India. Indeed, the supporters of English have sought to argue that English is the fulfillment of the long lost dream of India’s founding fathers to come up with an option in which the different languages of India merge. This is, for instance, Gurcharan Das’ argument, when he says that English fills the internal fissures within Indian society (in the way, perhaps, that Gandhi and Nehru had envisaged “Hindustani” before the latter became a lost cause with the partition of India):

---

<sup>430</sup> *Peepli Live*, dir. Anusha Rizvi (UTV Motion Pictures/Amir Khan Productions) 2010.

<sup>431</sup> G. J. V. Prasad 35.

<sup>432</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 358.

In English, perhaps for the first time in our history, we may have found a language common to the masses and classes, acceptable to the South and North. We are used to thinking of India in dualisms—upper vs. lower caste, urban vs. rural, India vs. Bharat—but the saddest divide, I always thought, is between those who know English and those "who are shut out" (the phrase of a deaf friend, Ursula Mistry, in Mumbai, who deeply feels the tragedy of those who can't participate). The exciting thing about English is it may even unite Indians in the same way as cricket. We may thus be at a historic moment.<sup>433</sup>

Seen as such, it might be hard to reconcile the image of English as an aspirant "world language" that marks the convergence of former colonial and present postcolonial ruling classes in the globalised world. In fact, given its seeming disregard for the hierarchical boundaries of class, caste, region, which its supporters flaunt, it might even be tempting to interpret English as being "counter-hegemonic." Admittedly, English does, up to a point, read like a counter-hegemonic language, in so far that it does partially seem like an "appropriation" of the English language, in the sense that Ashcroft *et al.* use the word in their *Empire Writes Back* to describe the procedure involving the "reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages," where "language is 'made to bear that burden' of one's cultural experience."<sup>434</sup> Interestingly, English has even borrowed from and subverted more than one hegemonic "centre." As

---

<sup>433</sup> Das, "English as She is Spoke" <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?227252>>.

<sup>434</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, New Accents (London: Routledge, 1989) 37-8.



well as reacting to the language of the British Empire, English also recast American English, which had acquired a stronghold over the nation following America's global dominion, especially after the Second World War. So, when Upamanyu Chatterjee, at the beginning of his *English, August* (1981) writes of this English: "Amazing mix, the English we speak. *Hazaar fucked. Urdu and American...a thousand fucked, really fucked. I'm sure nowhere else could languages be mixed and spoken with such ease,*"<sup>435</sup> he is acknowledging the different "hegemonies" (including American and Urdu) that penetrated English, and which English subsequently subverted and challenged. Moreover, along with drawing from those at the top of the linguistic and cultural hegemony, English modulated syntax, imposed expressions translated directly from *bhashas*, and invented "Indianisms" (which are words and expressions in English that are only used in the given context in India) to give the English language a new identity.

And yet, the ways in which English is disseminated around the world, with a logic that seeks to establish its global dominance, justifying and taking pride in its capitalist orientation—rather than challenging it—means that English *cannot* be counter-hegemonic. Among others, Gurcharan Das argues for the hegemony of English, by positing that English can democratically claim this right due to the sheer number of English speakers within India and abroad. This, according to Das, is seemingly sufficient to establish English as more "representative" of English speakers than any other types of English. Seeking credence in David Crystal's hypothesis, Das posits: "If 100 million Indians pronounce an English word in a certain way,

---

<sup>435</sup> Upamanyu Chatterjee, *English, August* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988) 1.

this is more than Britain's population—so it's the only way to pronounce it."<sup>436</sup> Das also goes on to argue that:

If British English was the language of the world at the end of the nineteenth century after a century of imperialism, and American English is the world language today after the American twentieth century, then the language of the twenty-first century might well be English, or at least an English heavily influenced by India (and China, to a lesser extent).<sup>437</sup>

Das' assumption about the imminent global rule of the Indian (and Chinese) influenced variety of English in the twenty-first century clearly follows the logic that the twenty-first century is going to be dominated by the economic and political prowess of India and China, who will assume dominant positions within the capitalist world-system, which in the preceding two centuries had been led by Britain and the United States respectively. The case of China is, of course, not the same as that of India—given that China's experience of English hegemony is different to that of India—and I will therefore leave China out of my study here. But, following Das's argument, the anchorage of English in a capitalist order disrupts any notion that it might be the ideal tool for social equity—whether in eroding class or caste bias. English blatantly derives its power from, and prides on, its association with the economic hegemony of India—an idea, which, as I briefly mentioned above—receives the endorsement of elite Indian English writers,

---

<sup>436</sup> Das, "English as She is Spoke" <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?227252>>.

<sup>437</sup> Gurcharan Das, "English as She is Spoke," *Outlook India* 2 May 2005, 15 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?227252>>.

whose contribution, I will here argue, is both pertinent and significant in creating and preserving the elite credentials of English.

Among contemporary Indian English novelists, Amitav Ghosh is the author who is perhaps most prominent in his use and questioning of English, while at the same time connecting it to the larger issues of globalisation and power. Through the language of his novels, Ghosh effectively and explicitly excavates the prehistory of contemporary globalisation in modern imperialism. Especially in his last two novels, *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*, Ghosh extensively deals with the interrelatedness of language, hegemony, and global superpowers. Though both novels are set during the nineteenth century, the novels provide a comprehensive chronicling of the relationship between power and language, along with a range of reflections on current and future linguistic mutations. Across these two novels Ghosh depicts an era when the term “globalisation” and “global hegemony” might just about have been starting to gain a certain resemblance to today’s world. The story of *Sea of Poppies* and of its sequel *River of Smoke* is set in the nineteenth century, at a time when Britain is the dominant global power, by the dint of its cultural, political and economic potency as the leading imperial power. Nayan Chandra in fact argues that the hegemony of Britain at the time was indeed an attestation to its rise as a global powerhouse, akin to the phenomenon of globalisation, aided by the activities of the East India Company which, Chandra argues, is an initial instance of a giant enterprise along the lines of today’s multinational companies.<sup>438</sup> But the dominance of

---

<sup>438</sup> Nayan Chanda, “Globalisation has a Long History,” (transcript), *Social Science Research Council*, ed. Mary Lea-Cox, 30 Apr. 2007, 12 Jun. 2013  
<<http://www.ssrc.org/features/view/globalization-has-a-long-history/>>.

Britain is also being maintained by a simultaneous working of coercion and cultural power, often through the collaborative efforts of the ruling classes across the colonies (in this case, India and China—even though the latter is, admittedly, not a “formal” colony). Both *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* portray an alliance between the various elites of Britain, India and China: English traders such as Mr. Burnham collaborate with local, upper class, traders like Mr. Bahram Modi and the richer merchants of Canton; local *zemindars*—including, at first, Raja Neel Rattan—and upper caste elites—such as Deeti’s relative, the Brahmin *subedar* Bhyro Singh—become complicit with the activities of the colonisers, while exercising their own dominance on other the Indians who are subordinated to them (notably the lower classes and castes). The networks and relationships that develop out of these collaborations result in a form of dominance that comes close to Femia’s definition of a “minimal hegemony,” which Femia describes as resting on the

ideological unity of the economic, political and intellectual elites” whereby rule is maintained through “*trasformismo*—the practice of incorporating the leaders—cultural, political, social, economic—of potentially hostile groups into the elite network.<sup>439</sup>

The language of both novels, internalise this politics. Sameer Rahim, writing a review on *Sea of Poppies* in *The Telegraph*, rues that the hybridity, the “pukka old pishpash” language of the novel fails to strike a chord with readers because it is beyond their imaginative reach, “even with the help of the OED.” Writing in England and operating with the paradigm of “English,”

---

<sup>439</sup> Femia 47.

Rahim has no tolerance of English. Significantly, the only aspects of the language of the novel that Rahim praises are the parts written in Oxford style “proper” English prose:

At points though, there are brilliantly clean pieces of writing. In an opium factory: “Stretching away, on either side, reaching all the way to the lofty ceiling, were immense shelves, neatly arranged with tens of thousands of identical balls of opium, each about the shape and size of an unhusked coconut, but black in colour, with a glossy surface.”<sup>440</sup>

*River of Smoke*, potentially the more linguistically diverse of the two, also received its share of criticism. Among others, Chris Patten thought that the merit of the novel is perhaps lessened by Ghosh’s far too experimental use of language:

Occasionally, Ghosh’s tale sags under the weight of its own scholarship. This is particularly true of the author’s somewhat self-indulgent use of the period pidgin, creole and patois slang that he has studied. Without one’s own lexicon, to hand a passage like the following is incomprehensible: “[George Chinery’s] household was as chuck-much as any in the city, with paltans of nokar-logue doing chukkers in the hallways and syces swarming in the istabbul.”<sup>441</sup>

However, to displace the hegemony that accords standard British English the top position in the global hierarchy (questioning its supremacy

---

<sup>440</sup> Sameer Rahim, “A Pukka Old Pishpash,” *The Telegraph* 20 Jun. 2008, 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/fictionreviews/3673625/A-pukka-old-pishpash.html>>.

<sup>441</sup> Chris Patten, “*River of Smoke*: Review,” *Financial Times* 24 Jun. 2011, 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/b5898cee-9b4a-11e0-a254-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1vSYZdvPP>>.

even at the height of its power) is in my view, Ghosh's precise aim. It is telling that Ghosh discerns the language wielding power not as the "pure" or "essential" variety of standard English, but as a hybridised version of it. He stages this within the narrative through a speech accorded to a veteran of the East India Company, Mr. Doughty. Mr. Doughty educates Zachary Reid, an American newly enlisted in the Company on the necessity of mastering the Indianised English, spoken by the British in India, in order to ensure his hold over the natives:

This was India, where it didn't serve for a sahib to be taken for a clodpoll of a griffin: if he wasn't fly to what was going on, it'd be all dickey with him, mighty jildee. This was no Baltimore—this was a jungle here, with biscobras in the grass and wanderoos in the trees. *If he, Zachary, wasn't to be diddled and taken for a flat, he would have to learn to gubbrow the natives with a word or two of the zubben.*<sup>442</sup>

(emphasis mine)

This Kiplingesque-style "zubben" (language) that Doughty refers to is a marriage of Victorian English grammar with *bhasha* vocabulary, spoken by the British sahibs in India. For this reason, it came to be known as *Sahibish*. There is much here that Henry Yule and Arthur C. Burnell would have taken delight in explaining and including in the Hobson-Jobson dictionary. What is particularly interesting about this nineteenth century *Sahibish* is that it is a direct ancestor of Inglish, in which, I have been arguing, the elite writers of India (including Ghosh himself) write. Historically, this blend of language prevailed as a tool of governance and a means of ensuring the perpetuation

---

<sup>442</sup> Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 49.

of one's power over the ruled. Interestingly, Mr. Doughty uses the word "gubbrow," that is, "to frighten." Hence, it emerges that British imperial awe and fright rested not in being able to speak a pure variety of the language—as Fanon posited that it does, in the imperial world—but in speaking a *hybridised* variety of it here. While the younger relative of this language exists in this day and age as India's "own" answer to the "clean" English bestowed unto India by the Raj, a similar kind of hybridised English (demarcated as a "pidgin," a *mélange* mainly of English, Portuguese, Hindustani and Cantonese) is shown to be the preferred language when negotiating at an international stage in *River of Smoke* too:

Even though many Chinese spoke English with ease and fluency, they would not negotiate in it. [...] In pidgin they reposed far greater trust, for the grammar was the same as that of Cantonese, while the words were mainly English, Portuguese and Hindustani...<sup>443</sup>

In this way, the parameter of "brilliantly clean pieces of writing," from which Rahim and Patten write their review has very little sway in both novels, for it is this symbiosis of languages in their hybridised versions rather than in any "pure" form that is a significant element in both novels. In fact, I would even argue that linguistic hybrids are the norm in both novels, while the "pure" varieties of languages are treated as the exception. This is made clear in both novels through their visual differentiation on the printed page. "Pure" (that is unhybridised) samples of languages reproduced in their inviolate form are represented in the text in an italicised font—and often include an immediate translation in English within the narrative. Hence,

---

<sup>443</sup> Ghosh, *River of Smoke* (New Delhi: Hamish Hamilton-Penguin, 2011) 171.

Munia asking Deeti, in standard Bhojpuri, “*E, tohran jaat kaun ha?*” is followed immediately by its translation within the same line: “And your caste?” The Latin “*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum...*” is followed immediately by “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee...” Paulette’s French, Neel’s Bengali, Mr. Bahram Modi’s Gujarati, Fanqui’s Cantonese—in short, all the languages which exist in a formalised form with set grammar—find themselves visually underscored in Ghosh’s texts. The mixed argots in the narrative, however, are neither italicised, nor glossed. The *Sahibish* of the East India Company officials (“Has he been given the kubber that my bunder-boat has lagowed?”);<sup>444</sup> the Laskari language of the Ibis’s ship crew (“Must too muchi shout: planter-bugger, you go barnshoot sister”);<sup>445</sup> the creole spoken on the island of Mauritius (“Don’t be ridikil: the whole thing, from start to fini took just a few minits, and all that time, it was nothing but jaldi-jaldi, a hopeless golmal, tus in dezord”); the pidgin spoken by the Hongists in Accha Hong (“That blongi nothing, Mister Barry. Come from fog. Happen allo time”)<sup>446</sup>—none are ever annotated or made to stand out as sub-standard in the novel. Moreover, as pointed out by Christopher Rollason, even sympathy for the characters is determined by the level of their linguistic hybridity:

Multilingualism rules: the Indians of the Hong (to their Chinese hosts, apparently all the same) spoke between them more than a dozen different languages,” exhibiting a linguistic diversity running counter

---

<sup>444</sup> Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 25.

<sup>445</sup> Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 20.

<sup>446</sup> Ghosh, *River of Smoke* 303.



to the “commonalities” forced on them by being subcontinentals in China.<sup>447</sup>

Interestingly, the greater import given to the symbiosis rather than singularity of languages in the novels is also proved by the fact that the characters who travel across the two novels are the characters who are adept at hybridising. Paulette, Deeti and Neel, for instance, are all three characters who are present in both *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*. Their “survival” across the two novels is largely dependent on their ability to pick up languages and hybridise them, as they go along. Hence, the key to Paulette’s survival in *Sea of Poppies* lies in her ability to smuggle herself as a local Indian woman through hybridising her Bengali with the language of the other inmates of the ship with whom she travels—because of which she is able to escape the attention that her difference (through speaking a “pure” form of Bengali, or—even worse—English or French) would otherwise have attracted. When she reappears in *River of Smoke*, Paulette is again shown to be surviving—this time in the disguise of a young boy on the island of Mauritius—due to her ability to hybridise English and French (which brings her closer to the hybridised creole spoken on the island). Similarly, Neel, the Bengali Raja of Raskhali who is convicted by the East India Company in *Sea of Poppies* is able to survive after his escape from the ship that was carrying him to Mauritius to serve his punishment, due to his ability to function in and mix several languages. When he reappears in *River of Smoke*, his

---

<sup>447</sup> Christopher Rollason, “‘Apparently Unbridgeable Gaps of Language:’ Amitav Ghosh’s *River of Smoke* and an Emerging Global English?” *Dr Christopher Rollason: Bilingual Culture Blog* 23 Sept. 2011, 12 Jun. 2013 <<http://rollason.wordpress.com/2011/09/23/«-apparently-unbridgeable-gaps-of-language-»-amitav-ghosh’s-river-of-smoke-and-an-emerging-global-english/#comments>>.

proWess in the English language secures him employment with Mr. Bahram Modi, but it is his capacity to pick up the hybrid pidgin of Canton that earns him the friendships with the locals and inhabitants, due to which he is able to pre-empt some of the calamities that strike his employer later in the novel. It emerges from all of this that Ghosh seems to be insinuating that collaboration and hybridisation is the way forward—if not the only hope for “survival.”

Though the English language pervades many of these hybrids, the centrality of the hybrids in the novel sends out a challenge to smugly anglocentric notions of British English as a global language (both in the nineteenth century, and now). Two hybrids, especially, speak of Ghosh’s language politics in the contemporary era, and they are (1). the Chinese-English pidgin and (2). Mauritian Creole. Christopher Rollason has lucidly argued that the Chinese-modified English pidgin of *River of Smoke* “offers a foretaste of possible mutations to linguistic power structures, with the resurgence of India and China in a newly multi-polar world.”<sup>448</sup> To Rollason’s argument I would like to add that the incorporation of other hybrids, such as Deeti’s Mauritian Creole, might be read as analogous to other Indian popular cultural forms (such as Bollywood) in displaying an awareness of the Indian diasporic linkages which, in the past few years, have become a matter of increasing interest for India. This is due to the present geopolitical context in which having a network of allies to support it in its march to the “super power” status has become increasingly important for

---

<sup>448</sup> Rollason, “Apparently Unbridgeable Gaps of Language”  
<<http://rollason.wordpress.com/2011/09/23/«-apparently-unbridgeable-gaps-of-language-»-amitav-ghosh’s-river-of-smoke-and-an-emerging-global-english/#comments>>.

India. Here, Mauritius becomes a representative of such allies and the language politics then becomes an expression of India's regional geopolitical clout. Thus, in a lot of ways, Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* can be read as experimentations and reflections on a transition from hegemonic (British) English, to trying to induce the hegemony of a more hybrid English.

However, as I mentioned above, in Indian English writing—whether set in the colonial or the contemporary era—linguistic creativity and hybridity can only be the prerogative of the elite. To use an example from another author, when the elite students of Indian Institute of Technology and Indian Institute of Management populating the novels of the commercially successful author Chetan Bhagat chutnify the English language by adding *bhasha* words and deliberately mispronouncing English words in a Hindi accent, it is considered to be a sign of their rightful ownership of the cultural capital which permits them to manipulate the English language in the way that they like. Most of the dialogues in *Five Point Someone* and *Two States*, set in an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) respectively, are cases in point. It is worth pointing out here that Bhagat himself, in various interviews, and more recently in his collection of essays, *What Young India Wants* (2012) has made it clear that he is writing for the elitist, young, urban and male Indians: “Today's youth wants a good well-paying job (“naukri”) and a nice girlfriend (“chokri”) in a decent urban city.”<sup>449</sup>

---

<sup>449</sup> See Chetan Bhagat, *What Young India Wants: A Voice for Change* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2012).

This is markedly different from the ways in which Dalit writers use English, where standard Oxford-style English is often the norm, and pollinated language rarely ever figures. This is, for example, a sample from Meena Kandasamy's writing (from a poem titled "Why She Writes of Her Love") which is in stark contrast to Ghosh's flamboyant experimentation with language discussed above:

*~with submissive indrawn breath on nights that smell of freshcut red,  
she writes of a love to which her language denied even words~*

[...]

it was no country for old men or old women.

sugar daddies and cougars were banished and

the hunchbacked and the handicapped found

themselves in this lackluster blocklove list.

the rulebook forbade poets to patronise them.

no history—no hyperlinks—no tv—no twitter

no news of this love being refused redemption.

This love, for twisted souls; this love, the lost cause.

Though the ironic perspective on the adoption of English as a language is unmissable here, the narrator's mourning for the insufficiency of "her language" (undeniably a *bhasha*) is still telling. There is none of the celebration of possibilities discernible in the narrative of Ghosh, where all was expressible because of the endless potential provided by the freedom to merge different languages. In Kandasamy's case the limitations in "her language" are defined and rigid. It is only in the English language—the world of "hyperlinks," of "tv" and "twitter"—that she is able to express the

non-representability of this love in the world of her language. The radical absence of any *bhasha* word from the entire poem suggests that the world she chooses to express her inexpressibility is that of standard English language—and not English.

In another poem, “Mulligatawny Dreams,” while deploring the insufficiency and strict regimentation of the English language the poet still finds herself speaking a fairly standard British variety of English:

*anaconda. candy. cash. catamaran.*

*cheroot. coolie. corundum. curry.*

*ginger. mango. mulligatawny.*

*patchouli. poppadum. rice.*

*tatty. teak. vetiver.*

i dream of an english

full of words of my language.

an english in small letters

an english that shall tire a white man's tongue

an english where small children practice with smooth round

pebbles in their mouth to spell the right zha

an english where a pregnant woman is simply stomach-child-lady

an english where the magic of black eyes and brown bodies

replaces the glamour of eyes in dishwater blue shades

and the airbrush romance of pink white cherry blossom skins

an english where love means only the strange frenzy

between a man and his beloved, not between him and his car

an english without the privacy of many rooms  
an english with suffixes for respect  
an english with more than thirty-six words to call the sea  
an english that doesn't belittle brown or black men and women  
an english of tasting with five fingers  
an english of talking love with eyes alone  
and I dream of an english  
where men  
of that spiky crunchy tongue  
buy flower-garlands of jasmine  
to take home to their coy wives  
for the silent demand of a night of wordless whispered love...<sup>450</sup>

The only *bhasha* words that Kandasamy uses here are the words that have already been canonised and are officially recognised as borrowed words in English language (notably, the list at the beginning of the poem). However, she still refrains from experimenting and diversifying her English in the way that Bhagat or Ghosh do. The constant evocation of the “english” that she dreams of suggests her longing to write such a language, but she still finds herself unable to do so. Significantly, this “english in small letters...that shall tire a white man’s tongue” is arguably the same English that already exists in India—and indeed, in Indian literary writing. “(A)n English with suffixes for respect...” brings to mind the prose of numerous writers, including Rushdie and Seth, among many others where “ji,” “bhai,” “saab” etc. already work to denote that respect. In the light of what I have argued about English being

---

<sup>450</sup> Meena Kandasamy, “Mulligatawny Dreams,” *Kavya Bharati* 18 (2006) 41.

projected as the torchbearer and global trendsetter from India, a case can also be made for how English is Kandasamy's English which "doesn't belittle brown or black men and women." But the absence of any code-mixing and pollination, and rigid adherence by the standard of a more "traditional" writing (in the style advocated by Macaulay—and in unequivocal defiance of the hegemony of English) in Kandasamy's language, I would argue, is deliberate and political.

Gramsci, once hypothesised:

If it is true that every language contains elements of a conception of the world and of a culture, it could also be true that from anyone's language one can assess the greater or lesser complexity of his conception of the world. Someone who only speaks dialect, or understands the standard language incompletely, necessarily has an intuition of the world which is more or less limited and provincial, which is fossilised and anachronistic in relation to the major currents of thought which dominate world history.<sup>451</sup>

Along with a more direct concern with access to social and material capital, this fear of being left out of the "major currents of thought which dominate world history," is arguably the very formative factor in the Dalit preference of an older, more traditional idea of the English language. Though not "hung up" on the hegemony of Britain, the Dalit still emulates the "British" variety of English rather than English. Dalits acquiring English now in India are, in this way, very much like the first generations of Indian English speakers, with enormous concern for preserving the "essentialism" of the language of

---

<sup>451</sup> Gramsci 629.

power and quasi-Brahmanical fanaticism for its “purity.” We can once again turn to Fanon to seek an explanation for why this may be so. Fanon writes:

To speak pidgin to a Negro makes him angry, because he himself is a pidgin-nigger-talker. [...] This absence of wish, this lack of interest, this indifference, this automatic manner of classifying him, imprisoning him, primitivising him, decivilising him, that makes him angry. [...] Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him fifty years ago. In the Antilles Negro who comes within this study we find a quest for subtleties, for refinements of language—so many further means of proving to himself that he has measured up to the culture.<sup>452</sup>

The applicability of Fanon’s remarks about the Negro to the linguistic situation of the Dalits in India is obvious: English, which does not follow a standard grammar rule or abide by the lexicon of any single language, risks to be interpreted, when used for the Dalit, as a proof of the Dalit’s non-proficiency in the English language. Thus, albeit the fact that cultural hegemony is aligned to material domination, the need to “measure up” to a global hegemonic culture also becomes a raging subject of debate among Dalits because of the rigid caste boundaries that, for so long, kept them distinctly away from the “cultured” world. Hybridised language can seem patronising for the Dalit because it carries the assumption that the Dalit might not have enough control on the language, and might therefore need to be “helped along” by obligingly inserting familiar *bhasha* words in order to

---

<sup>452</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* 32.



aid its assimilation by the subaltern figure. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as comedic and a sign of the linguistic impoverishment on the part of the speaker. Dalit characters speaking a mixture of English and other *bhashas* are *still* invariably portrayed as buffoons, both in literature and in films. The example of Balram in Adiga's *The White Tiger* comes to mind. Even though English is shown to be acceptable for the elites in the novel, Balram finds himself being humiliated for speaking an English word with an Indian accent:

"It's not *maal*, it's a mall," [Ashok] said. "Say it again."

I kept saying "*maal*," and they kept asking me to repeat it, and then giggled hysterically each time I did so. By the end they were holding hands again. So some good came out of my *humiliation...*"<sup>453</sup>

(emphasis mine)

In Seth's novel too, while the *bhadralok* and other upper class and caste members are free to hybridise and use English in their speeches and dialogues, the lower class masseur, Maggu Gopal, is portrayed as a buffoonish-character precisely through his use of pollinated English. Thus, rather than being a democratic medium that helps the speaker switch between languages by skirting caste and class boundaries, in literary representation, English *reinforces* caste and class boundaries for the Dalit. When employed by the elite, English is the language of "movers and shakers."<sup>454</sup> But when the Dalit uses it, it risks being interpreted not as

---

<sup>453</sup> Adiga 147.

<sup>454</sup> See Baljinder K. Mahal, *The Queen's Hinglish: How to Speak Pukka* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2006).

“English,” but as *bad* English. For all its merits, therefore, democratic is what English is precisely not!

Kandasamy is adamant in her assertion that poetry such as hers has “the pressing responsibility to ensure that language is not at the mercy of the oppressors.” It is therefore telling that she deliberately rejects English—the tool of the caste and class Indian elite. Between the dream of the “english” that Kandasamy dreams of in “Mulligatawny Dreams” and current facts lies the unfinished business of social and economic justice, which in turn lead to the opportunity to master the standard language first, in order to subvert it. In a sense, it is only after the mastery of the language that the Dalit can think of modifying it. As put by G. J. V. Prasad in *Writing India, Writing English*, “[l]inguistic creativity is the preserve of people who have mastered languages and not been mastered by them.”<sup>455</sup> The insistence of Dalit writers to follow a more traditional and standard style of the English language shows Prasad’s point to be pertinent.

### **3.5. Unfinished Businesses**

In *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, Selig Harrison made the following observations:

India’s dilemma today lies in the fact that the same industrial age that provides the technological basis for a unified subcontinental state also emancipates low-caste millions whose cultural energies are now

---

<sup>455</sup> G. J. V. Prasad, *Writing India, Writing English* 49.

self-generating, and must now find expression in newly vitalised regional languages.<sup>456</sup>

That was in 1960—that is, a mere decade or so after independence. Since then, the Dalits have had plenty of “catching up” to do, so that the current grounds to be “shared” with Dalits are no longer just the “newly vitalised regional languages” but also include the once-exclusive English language. Yet, the ways in which the elite groups’ usage of the English language continues to differ from that of the subalterns shows that there is a perpetuation of the language politics, here along the lines of class and caste. Language has still not been able to “solve” the fissiparous divisions within India—be they those related to nationalism, religion, class or caste. Instead, language itself has continuously got roped into this politics, and often been wielded as a weapon in ensuing tussles. Yet, Indian literature and its allied forms have often staged their resistance to these politics by taking a stance that shows *awareness* of, and *critiques*, these reactionary politics. The tension emanating from the agendas behind the manipulations of the various languages, as well as the resistance provided by the literature composed in some of these very languages (and especially in English) is what opens up the Indian literary and popular cultural scene of the postcolonial era to an informed study of the various “unfinished businesses” of India.

---

<sup>456</sup> Harrison 16.

## CONCLUSION

A language may carry a singular name—its “proper” name—but this does not necessarily translate into a singular body of sentiments that connect it to its speakers. Instead, as languages are subjected to the passions of all those interested in empowering them, they attract multiple, even contrary, imaginings. The power that they exercise over their speakers is correspondingly varied, multiplex, and historically contingent.

—Sumathi Ramaswamy

Let me conclude by evoking a recent event which encapsulates all the issues I have raised in this thesis. In July 2010, the prestigious Hindi journal *Naya Gyanodaya* published an interview with Vibhuti Narain Rai, a Hindi novelist (and former Police Director General). At the time of the interview, Rai was also the vice-chancellor of India’s only Hindi university—the Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University. The interview became the subject of much controversy—dividing journalists, academics, politicians, amongst others, for the outrageous remarks made by Rai on women writers writing in Hindi:

पिछले वर्षों में हमारे यहां जो स्त्री विमर्श हुआ है वह मुख्य रूप से शरीर केन्द्रित है। यह भी कह सकते हैं कि यह विमर्श बेवफाई के विराट उत्सव की तरह है। लेखिकाओं में होड़ लगी है यह साबित करने के लिए उनसे बड़ी छिनाल कोई नहीं है। मुझे लगता है कि इधर प्रकाशित एक बहु प्रमोटेड और ओवर रेटेड लेखिका की आत्मकथात्मक पुस्तक का शीर्षक “कितने विस्तरों पर किली बार” हो सकता था। इस तरह के उदाहरण बहुत सी लेखिकाओं में मिल जाएंगी।<sup>457</sup>

Over the past years, the female discourse that has come up here [that is, in Hindi writing] has mainly been centered on the body. It can even be said that this discourse is like a grand celebration of

---

<sup>457</sup> “‘Filhaal stri vimarsh bewafaai ke viraat utsav ki tarah hai:’ Vibhuti Narain Rai” [“Nowadays Female Discourse is like a Grand Celebration of Infidelity: Vibhuti Narain Rai”], repr. in *Lekhak Manch* 5 Aug. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://lekhakmanch.com/फलिहाल-स्त्री-विमर्ष-बेव.html>>.

infidelity. There is a clamber among female writers to prove that there is no greater hussy<sup>458</sup> than them. I feel that the title of the autobiography of a much-promoted and over-rated female writer published here could have been “In How Many Beds, How Many Times.” Such examples can be found among several female writers. (translation mine)

Rai’s remarks cannot be brushed off as the opinions of an individual—whatever influential social or pedagogic position he may occupy. Though Rai is, of course, not the sole representative for all Hindi language writers (he is, after all, attacking other Hindi writers himself!) the bluntness and confidence of his comments suggest that he thrives from within a certain environment where such beliefs prevail. The press coverage that followed the publication of this interview was a war waged from different perspectives about the larger implications of Rai’s comments, and they indeed brought out the existence of competing and contradictory positions.

On the whole there was a tendency in the Indian media to project the Rai controversy either as an issue about the sexism in the Hindi literary world and/or a justified criticism about the erosion of Indian moral and ethical values, depending on where the sympathy of the journalist reporting the issue lied. There is no denying that the issue certainly *is* (at least partially) about the clash of these different value systems. But what I want to show here is that the backlash that followed Rai’s controversial

---

<sup>458</sup> The word that Rai uses is “chhinaal.” The translation that *Bhargava’s Standard Illustrated Dictionary: Hindi-Urdu* offers for *chhinaal* is “adulterous, lewd, (woman), a trollop, a harlot.” *Bhargava’s Standard Illustrated Dictionary of the Hindi Language: Hindi-English Edition*, comp. and ed. R. C. Pathak (Varanasi: Bhargava Book Depot, 2009) 251. As I will discuss on page 265, there was much controversy surrounding the translation of the word in English too.

comments, in which different Indian language medias were unwittingly embroiled, also presented this issue as being as much about the contested “ideas” of a particular language (including Hindi). In this case, the contention was in relation to how Hindi was imagined and represented through speakers of the language as well as through other languages. I will concentrate on the ideas of three main groups: two different groups of Hindi speakers, and the English language group.

The English language press unanimously and uniformly condemned Rai. From left-leaning and independent newspapers such as the *Economic & Political Weekly*, *The Hindu* and *Tehelka* to newspapers with a more conservative bias such as *Times of India* and *The Indian Express*, the censure of Rai’s comment was uniform. The *Economic & Political Weekly* ran the story as an editorial with the title “A Patriarchal Script” and denounced Rai’s statement as “[a] patronising and sexist attitude towards women writers in Hindi [attempting] to pass as literary criticism.”<sup>459</sup> *Tehelka* ridiculed, if not reprimanded Rai and attacked his orthodox sensibilities, branding him as a “dinosaur” as well as an “old-fashioned Tamil movie villain.”<sup>460</sup> *The Indian Express* especially took note of the derogatory language that Rai uses several times in the interview when referring to women Hindi writers. Ashutosh Bhardwaj writing for *The Indian Express* pointed out that along with the passage quoted above Rai also uses the term “nymphomaniac kutiya”<sup>461</sup>

---

<sup>459</sup> “A Patriarchal Script,” editorial, *Economic & Political Weekly* 45.33 (2010): 8.

<sup>460</sup> Gaurav Jain, “How Many Times, How Much Rage,” *Tehelka* 4 Sept. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://tehelka.com/how-many-times-how-much-rage/>>.

<sup>461</sup> Ashutosh Bhardwaj, “Women Hindi Writers Vying to be seen as Prostitutes: V-C,” *The Indian Express* 1 Aug. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/women-hindi-writers-vying-to-be-seen-as-prostitutes-vc/654432/>>.

(that is nymphomaniac bitch) to describe one of the oeuvres of a woman Hindi writer.

The reactions of the Hindi language media were, however, rather more varied. One group, consisting of such names as the journalist and poet Vishnu Khare and Mrinal Pande (a prominent journalist as well as the chair of the *bhasha* Broadcasting Corporation of India, *Prasar Bharati*) were outright critical of Rai and added their voices to the women writers' protests against Rai. Pande, in an interview to the Hindi newspaper, *Dainik Bhaskar*, called Rai "साहित्य का हिटलर"—that is, the "Hitler of literature"<sup>462</sup>—while Khare even questioned Rai's authorial credentials. Khare also wondered whether Rai's statement could just be written off as the idiocy of one person or should rather be analysed for its implied aspirations to be a spokesperson for "Hindi" when it is in fact *fascism* masquerading behind Hindi:

क्या यह मस्ला सिर्फ एक बदजुबान, बददिमाग कुलपति-नर्मित-आईपीएस की सार्वजनिक मौखिक-लिखित अशिष्टता का था, जिसे खुद को लेखक-बुद्धिजीवी समझने की खुशफहमी भी है, जिसकी नाबदानी फासिस्ट फूहड़ता को रफा-दफा और दाखिल-दफ्तर कर दिया गया है?<sup>463</sup>

Was this merely an issue of the public oral and written vulgarity of one foul-mouthed, brainless IPS nominated as vice-chancellor, who also fancies himself as a writer-intellectual, whose filthy fascist dirt has been dismissed and filed away? (translation mine)

On the other hand, some other Hindi language groups were sympathetic with Rai. One such group was comprised of a substantial

---

<sup>462</sup> "Vibhuti Narain Sahitya Ka Hitler: Mrinal Pande," repr. *Mohalla Live* 10 Aug. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://mohallalive.com/2010/08/10/mrinal-pande-react-on-vibhuti-narayan-rai/>>.

<sup>463</sup> Vishnu Khare, "Lekhak hone ke vahem ne iss kulpati ki sanak badha di hai," *Mohalla Live* 10 Aug. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://mohallalive.com/2010/08/10/vishnu-khare-react-on-vibhuti-narayan-rai/>>.

number of Hindi writers and journalists who interfered in Rai's favour and defended his position. For a start, Ravinder Kalia the editor of *Naya Gyanodaya* chose to ignore the sheer callousness of Rai's remark and went ahead and published the interview without editing it. He neither censored words such as "chhinaal" (as some of the offended readers of Rai's interview suggested should have been the case) and nor did he reprimand Rai anywhere in the issue. Instead Kalia made the subject of "infidelity" the focus of the entire issue of the journal in an attempt, perhaps, to contextualise and "justify" Rai's remarks. While Kalia, admittedly, later offered a public apology, several other supporters of Rai did not follow him with such a gesture. In another article written for *The Hindu*, Pande points out how Rai received much support from Hindi language writers and bloggers:

More surprisingly, during the course of a war of words that has since broken out in the world of Hindi writing, including on numerous blog-sites, it seems Mr. Rai has many male sympathisers who agree with his view that feminist women writers must be controlled. They say that women's increasingly vivid and frank writings about female sexuality posed a threat to India's noble traditions and outraged their sense of moral propriety. Mr. Rai, they say in blog positions and letters to editors, is a real man, courageous enough to articulate what many of them wanted to but could not.<sup>464</sup>

---

<sup>464</sup> Mrinal Pande, "The Mindset of a Man," *The Hindu* 18 Aug. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-mindset-of-a-man/article580487.ece>>.



It is interesting to analyse here why Pande might have resorted to an *English* language newspaper to censure Rai. One could argue that Pande's choice to attack Rai from the platform of *The Hindu* was a deliberate attempt to display to other language groups the criticism of Rai by a Hindi language speaker in order to dispel any notion of Rai's views as being representative of *all* Hindi writers. To this end, she pointedly signed her article in *The Hindu* as "senior Hindi journalist and writer." But on the other hand, it could also be argued that Pande's choice to attack Rai from behind the "barricade" of English reflects an attack on the "idea" of Hindi that Rai represents—which is different from her own "idea" of Hindi. This might be why there was a need for her to distance herself from Rai's "Hindi" by representing the language through a different linguistic medium. It could even be argued that, seen in this light, Pande's (and Khare's) idea of "Hindi" are shown to be closer to the idea of the language (and the speakers of that language) that the English press was defending rather than to their fellow Hindi speaker's (that is Rai's) projection of Hindi.

By and large, what emerged from the media coverage about these distinct ideas of "Hindi" is broadly this: the English press was fighting for a progressive and liberal idea of "Hindi" epitomised by the confident feminist discourse of the writers who Rai condemns. Pande and Khare also arguably stood for a similar idea of "Hindi" from *within* the orbit of Hindi language speakers. On the other hand, Rai, Kalia and their supporters, who also operated in the Hindi language, imagined "Hindi" as guarded by the boundaries of patriarchy, orthodoxy and conservatism. Hence, the women

writers who dared to explore outside these boundaries were immediately branded as transgressive and “un-Hindi-like.”

Each of these groups upholds an idea of the Hindi language that is distinct from the other. It is therefore not surprising that a lot of controversy is generated when it comes to the question of “representing” the language to another language group. For example, there was much criticism in certain forums about how English language journalists were misrepresenting Rai’s Hindi. Rai himself raised this objection by stating that the Hindi word “chhinaal” for example, was being mistranslated as “prostitute” or “whore” in English when in fact the word only meant “adulteress.” We should note that *Economic & Political Weekly* had explained “chhinaal” as “an adulterous woman; a whore,” and while Pande did not actually use a direct translation of “chhinaal” in her article, she glossed it as an “astonishingly crude word [...] [which] conveyed the image of sex-hungry women with loose moral values.”<sup>465</sup>

Objecting to such a representation of the word, Rai flourished Premchand’s name to bolster his argument, and argued that respectable and celebrated Hindi writers such as Premchand would freely use the word “chhinaal” in their own writing, and that the word could therefore not be as offensive a term as it was being made out to be. In a later interview to clarify his comments, Rai told the English newspaper *Daily News & Analysis*:

Premchand has used the word more than 100 times in his stories and novels. In my interview, I had protested against the writing of a few

---

<sup>465</sup> Pande “The Mindset of a Man” <<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-mindset-of-a-man/article580487.ece>>.

women writers in Hindi who believe that feminist discourse is the discourse of the female body and focus only on certain issues relating to it [...] [T]here are thousands of other issues to be taken up, that of tribal women, poverty, etc.<sup>466</sup>

Through such statements, Rai tried to show that it was such mistranslations that had led to a wanton misrepresentation of his Hindi as crude and chauvinistic, when in fact his comment were an attempt at equating Hindi with the patriarchal status quo that he no doubt thought was inherent in the nature of the language itself. But, as I have illustrated above, each of the representatives of the other language groups were also confident and adamant about the veracity of their own idea of “Hindi.” Thus, the entire basis of Pande’s and Khare’s, as well as the English language press’s criticism of “Hindi” rested on the notion that Rai and Kalia had misrepresented the language in the first place by labouring it with the duty of bearing conservative and patriarchal values when in fact, according to their idea of the language, Hindi was perfectly suited to progressive feminist and liberal ideas too.

Now, in a country where daily survival is largely dependent on being able to negotiate in more than one language (especially in urban and cosmopolitan spaces such as the world of academia, publishing and media) the assumption—emanating from the various accusations of misrepresentation of Hindi—that languages are somehow “closed off” from each other should be difficult to make. It displays an investment in belief in

---

<sup>466</sup> Rai, qtd. in Vineeta Pandey, “Writers Want Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Hindi University Sacked for Insulting Women,” *Daily News & Analysis* 2 Aug. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/1417636/report-writers-want-vice-chancellor-of-mahatma-gandhi-hindi-university-sacked-for-insulting-women>>.

the “essentialism” and purity of language, which, one would have thought, should have been outmoded in the past century with the defeat of *Hindiwallahs* and their politics of setting up language as the bearer of a specific set of nationalist, religious, caste and class ideology. And yet, this trend seems to have survived, with political parties continuing to depend on this notional purity of language and the cultural and moral values they code to secure their votes and popularity. I discussed the regional parties such as the MNS, the Trinamool Congress Party and *Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*, who peddle such views in this thesis. These parties indeed continue to advance their policies of linguistic chauvinism, militating for a mono-linguistic nationalism, and the support that they garner is unfortunately not negligible.

As recently as 15 June 2013, Bandaru Srinivas, a young university student of Osmania University in Hyderabad, committed suicide over his frustration at the delay in the formation of a separate Telangana state for Telugu speakers. Pro-Telangana groups claim that Srinivas’s suicide joins six hundred other people who have died for this very cause over the past three years.<sup>467</sup> Parties at national level, including the *Bharatiya Janata Party*, have expressed their intention to support the formation of a new state on the basis of Telugu. To this end, the BJP has even forged alliances with pro-Telangana groups, including the merger of the *Telangana Nagara Samithi*

---

<sup>467</sup> “Student Commits Suicide over Telangana,” *Daily News & Analysis* 15 Jun. 2013, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/1848453/report-student-commits-suicide-over-telangana>>.

with the BJP.<sup>468</sup> This is even more worrying given that the popularity of the BJP, in coalition with the other right-leaning parties that form the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has been on the rise of late in India. Their increasing popularity can be discerned from the fact that the NDA has recently been winning in several of the pre-poll surveys preceding next year's General Elections.<sup>469</sup> Furthermore, the new national face of the conservative Indian politics, Narendra Modi, himself embodies the concentration of his politics in a mono-lingual and mono-cultural nationalism. This nationalism, as I illustrated earlier in this thesis, marries language (Hindi—which Modi has lately adopted over Gujarati) with nation, religion (Hinduism) and class. (Modi's alliances with the upper class is more than obvious, given his focus on business accrument and economic "development".)

So what does this trend portend? Politically, this is likely to be destructive. The rise in popularity of Modi, the DMK and the Telangana Movement are signs of the *strengthening* of the trend that, since the liberalisation of the Indian economy, has moved the country further and further away from the Nehruvian linguistic ethos. Robert King argues that it had perhaps been this linguistic vision of Nehru solely that had ensured the unity of India in its early stages as a nation (which was also the time when language wars were tearing the country asunder):

---

<sup>468</sup> "If UPA Tables Bill to Create Telangana, BJP will Support it: Rajnath Singh," *Firstpost* 4 Jun. 2013, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.firstpost.com/politics/if-upa-tables-bill-to-create-telangana-bjp-will-support-it-rajnath-singh-838933.html>>.

<sup>469</sup> "If Elections were to Happen Today, UPA would Lose," *India Today* 21 May 2013, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/assembly-elections-2014-upa-congress-bjp-headlines-today-cvoter-opinion-poll/1/272335.html>>.

It is my considered opinion that if the first prime minister of India had been a linguistic naïf rather than a linguistic sophisticate like Nehru, then we should have today not a unified India with a strong government at the centre but an India weakly divided along linguistic and cultural lines into two or three semi-autonomous regions. The unity of India would be as a faded dream. It is a dark scenario that does not reward contemplation. That this dark scenario did not materialize owes more to Jawaharlal Nehru than anyone else, and is perhaps his most enduring bequest to the Indian nation.<sup>470</sup>

Nehru, as I showed in this thesis, had advocated that languages be “opened” to each other. His philosophy about languages can aptly be summed up in the speech that he gave at the *Lok Sabha*, during the debate that followed the publication of the *Report of the States Reorganisation Commission*:

[I]t does not follow in my mind that in order to make [a people] grow and their language, you must put a barrier between them and others, that you must put a wall around and call that this is this language area or that. [*sic.*] [...] [E]very encouragement, development and growth of the language results in the other Indian languages also getting some advantage of growing.<sup>471</sup>

The current political tendency to “close off” languages is a negation of this philosophy. In 1955, when the lobbies advocating for the formation of separate linguistic states had been at their zenith, the prominent linguist K. Mukherji had proffered:

---

<sup>470</sup> King xvi.

<sup>471</sup> Nehru, “Speech in the Lok Sabha during a debate on the Report of the States Reorganisation Commission 21 Dec. 1955, *Lok Sabha Debates 1955*, vol. x Part II, cols. 3493-514.

Let us be frank and accept the *dal-roti* basis of this enthusiasm. It is the middle class job hunter and place hunter and the mostly middle class politician who are benefitted by the establishment of a linguistic state, which creates for them an exclusive preserve of jobs, offices and places by shutting out, in the name of promotion of culture, all outside competitors.<sup>472</sup>

What Mukherji hypothesised for 1955 is also true of 2013. To date, the “dal-roti” (that is, bread and butter, or essence) of the matter is still that a bourgeois nationalist, religious, caste and class fraction have been serving their own ends by isolating and manipulating languages for ends that have little, or nothing, to do with languages per se.

Culturally, however, things do not seem all that bleak. It is interesting to note that every political attempt in India that has been made to “close off” languages over the years has presaged the advent of a kind of cultural discourse that has been in opposition to such attempts. That is, while linguistic chauvinism (operating under the guise of nation, religion and/or caste and class) gained credence politically, the literary and popular cultural discourse concurrently became more pluralistic and pollinated. We saw this of the different language writers of the All India Progressive Writer’s Association, before independence—whose open endedness and inclusiveness, with regards to language, countered the chauvinistic political movements of their time. To look at just one specific set of writers, at a time when several political parties were militating for a single and authentic national language as well as separate linguistic states in the 1950s, Indian

---

<sup>472</sup> K. Mukherjee, *Reorganisation of Indian States* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1955) 31.

English language writers and poets—then increasing in number—were promulgating the birth of a “national literature. As G. J. V. Prasad rightly points out:

We don't have Indian literature written in Gujarati or Mewari, but we have an Indian literature written in English. In fact it is only in English that we have an Indian literature at all! Absurd as that may sound, one only has to look at the titles of influential poetry anthologies that came out during the second half of the twentieth century to realise that Indian English poets considered themselves to be the only truly Indian poets. However, seriously, it should be quite clear by now that its lack of a major cultural location, and the fact that writers in English in India are spread all over the country, makes English the only language whose writers have no unqualified affiliation to local formations less than the nation.<sup>473</sup>

While this statement is clearly to be taken with a pinch of salt, it is still true that no literature in any other Indian language has laboured as much as Indian English writing to prove its national (and often nationalist) credentials. This is especially true of the Anand-Narayan-Rao generation, who often explicitly tried to address pan-Indian national concerns and topics (such as the nationalist movement, the oppressive caste system, the question of class elitism among Indians) despite writing stories that might often seem restricted to a particular geographical area.

Furthermore, rather than putting up barriers against each other, the Indian English writing of this generation also invited *other* languages to be

---

<sup>473</sup> G. J. V. Prasad, *Writing India, Writing English* 76-7.



represented in the medium in that they were writing. From the celebrated R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao, to lesser talked about authors such as Attia Hosain and Kamala Markandaya, Indian English authors of this generation wrote in a way that mirrored the plurality of their linguistic surroundings, as well as the cultural forces that shaped their creativity. To quote Prasad again (who is here specifically talking of the great trinity—Rao, Narayan and Anand—but whose observation is equally applicable to other writers of that time, such as Kamala Markandaya, Arun Joshi and Bhabhani Bhattacharya, among others):

Their texts are located in terms of geography as well as religion, caste and gender. And this location is carried out in the language itself, in the writers' construction of regional Englishes.<sup>474</sup>

As the political movements to isolate (while supposedly “priming”) individual languages gained *ampleur* in the 1980s, the linguistic experimentations in the cultural discourse of India became bolder. Thus, as I illustrated in my second chapter, with the renewed zeal of mono-linguistic movements such as the rise of the Khalistan, Telangana and *Shiv Sena* movements came Rushdie, Seth and Ghosh. This generation of writers did not only retaliate mono-linguistic nationalism or sub-nationalisms with an Indian English literature that had become more culturally “representative” of India (both on national and international platforms)<sup>475</sup> but they also pioneered a discourse that was pointedly cross-fertilised and hybridised with languages that not only carried their regional contexts, but also

---

<sup>474</sup> G. J. V. Prasad 82.

<sup>475</sup> This was, at least, Rushdie's controversial claim in his anthology of Indian writing published in 1997—which I have already discussed earlier.

transcended boundaries of religion, class and caste. In my second chapter, I discussed this especially with regards to Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, and the representations of Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and various other languages in his writing.

Even, or especially, the popular cultural discourse of India registered these literary trends. By the 1980s-1990s, Bollywood was producing films that experimentally showcased the non-Hindi speaking regions of India, even while nationally the chauvinism of Hindi language speakers (and that of the speakers of various other *bhashas*) grew proportionally. Mani Ratnam's trilogy—*Roja* (1992), *Bombay* (1995) and *Dil Se* (1998)—each of which were among the most successful Bollywood films of that decade, can be evoked as examples here. Firstly, the presence of Ratnam himself in Hindi cinema is reflective of popular culture's autonomy from prevailing political cultures. Before making films in Hindi, Ratnam had mostly been affiliated with the Kannada and Tamil film industry. His cross over to Hindi cinema therefore shows collaborations forming at a time when politically, the situation seemed to be headed the opposite way. Ratnam's films also represent and integrate features of various other *bhashas*. *Roja*, *Bombay* and *Dil Se* all dramatise the linguistic pluralism of India, but end up by emphasising the message about India's essential unity behind these distinct languages. In *Roja*, the eponymous heroine's journey from her small village, Sundarapandianpuram in Tamil Nadu, to Madras (now Chennai) and then to Kashmir, is marked by the different languages that she encounters on her way. In *Dil Se* too, Ratnam uses languages effectively to trace the protagonist, Aman Verma's, search for the woman he loves all over India.

Aman is a programme executive for the Hindi channel of All India Radio. While he treks around India, interviewing political leaders, heads of terrorist organisations and others, Aman speaks in Hindi and English while his interviewees answer in different (*bhasha*) languages, which translators and interpreters then convey to him. Ratnam preserves these different languages and does not homogenise the linguistic experience of the film—not even in their dubbed Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu versions.

While these linguistic differences sometimes risk to come across as seemingly alienating and divisive (especially in the scenes when Roja is unable to convey her plight to the Kashmiri Indian officials due to linguistic differences for example, or when Aman is unable to comprehend, through means of an interpreter, why Meghna—the woman he loves—may have left Ladakh without informing him) the message about Indian unity, over and above these differences, are made evident in the climax of each of these films. To use just one example, *Bombay*, which is partially set against the backdrop of the communal riots that occurred in the city in December 1992-January 1993, especially hammers home this point. The riots of 1992-1993 were orchestrated by the *Shiv Sena* and other such right-wing organisations who, as I have already shown in the introduction, use language as a front for their communal and (sub)nationalist politics. But the protagonists of *Bombay*, a Hindu from South India who lives in Bombay with his Muslim wife and their two children, radically dispute these communal and divisive intents. The protagonists set an example for the communally and linguistically divided city during the riots by integrating these seemingly disparate elements within the single unit of their family. In the final scene of

the film, the different communities—which had been at war after falling prey to the divisive politics—are shown to be joining hands against the background of the debris left over from the riots. Thus the films of Ratnam (who I am here using as an prototype for the popular cultural discourse of the time) pioneered a trend that countered the contemporaneous political discourse.

What of post 2000? A brief look at a sample from the literature and cinema produced in the past few years suggests that much of India's cultural discourse *continues* to resist the mono-linguistic nationalism championed by figures such as Modi at national level. From the wilfully experimental and plural linguistic styles in the novels of Aravind Adiga and Kiran Desai to the lively display of linguistic heterogeneity in recent films such as *Ra.One*, *Kahaani* and *Aiyya*, this contemporary cultural discourse continues to refuse to be complicit in any political agenda of (mono-)linguistic nationalism. Indeed, I would go so far as to assert that in all these years since independence, despite the strong currents in its favour from regional and pan-national nationalist groups operating under the aegis of language, one of the reasons why a mono-linguistic political culture has *not* been fully implemented in India is because of this kind of literary and cultural discourse prevalent in the country. This discourse, which sets an example for linguistic plurality and multiplicity, aiding and supporting the material (often non-literary) professions, activisms and modes of being—has been locked in contest with these political and cultural nationalisms from before the time of the independence to now. And so long as this contest continues, linguistic boundaries within India will continue to be disputed—preventing

any finite mapping of perceived dichotomies between *bhashas* and English, as “home” and “world.”

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Primary Texts

### *Print*

Adiga, Aravind. *Between Assassinations*. London: Picador-Pan Macmillan, 2008.

---. *The White Tiger*. New York: Free Press, 2008.

Ahmad, Z. A., ed. *National Language for India: A Symposium*. Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1941.

Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. 1935. London: Penguin, 2005.

Aurobindo, Sri. *The Upanishads*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1996.

Bachchan, Harivansh Rai. *Madhushala: The House of Wine*. 1935. Ed. and trans. Marjorie Boulton and Ram Swaroop Vyas. New Delhi: Penguin, 1989.

Bajrangi, Babu. "To get me out on bail, Narendrabhai changed judges thrice."

Transcript. *Tehelka* 3 Nov. 2007. 10 Feb. 2013

<[http://192.168.150.199/story\\_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107To\\_Get.asp](http://192.168.150.199/story_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107To_Get.asp)>.

Bhagat, Chetan. *Five Point Someone: What Not to do at IIT*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2004.

---. *One Night @ the Call Centre*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2005.

---. *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2009.

*Bhagavad-Gita: As It Is*. Trans. A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. N.p.: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1986.

*Bharatiya Janata Party*. 2013. *Bharatiya Janata Party Website*. 20 Jun. 2013

- <<http://www.bjp.org>>.
- Chatterjee, Upamanyu. *English, August*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988.
- Chatterji, Bankim Chandra. *Rajmohan's Wife*. 1864. New Delhi: Penguin, 2010.
- Dangle, Arjun. *Poisoned Bread: Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature*. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2009.
- Desai, Anita. *In Custody*. London: Heinemann, 1984.
- Gandhi, Gopal, trans. *Koi Accha-Sa Ladka*. Trans. of *A Suitable Boy*. By Vikram Seth. New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 1998.
- Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. *Hind Swaraj, and Other Writings*. 1909. Ed. Anthony J. Parel. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- . *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: The Voice of Truth*. Vol. 6. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1968.
- . *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Trans. Mahadev Desai. Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House, 1927.
- Gandhi, Varun. 2013. "Of Stars or Stones." Poetry by Varun. *Varun Gandhi: Official Website*. 10 Jan. 2013 <<http://varungandhi.net.in/poetry-by-varun.html>>.
- . "Varun Gandhi Cries Foul." *Star News TV* 17 Mar. 2009. Posted to *YouTube* 17 Mar. 2009. 13 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq1Xhni4AtY>>.
- . "Varun Gandhi's Speech that Sparked Controversy." *IBN Live* 16 Mar. 2009. 12 Apr. 2010 <<http://ibnlive.in.com/videos/87851/varun-gandhis-speech-marks-a-new-low-in-indian-politics.html>>.

- Ghosh, Amitav. *River of Smoke*. New Delhi: Hamish Hamilton-Penguin, 2011.
- . *Sea of Poppies*. New Delhi: Viking-Penguin, 2008.
- India. *Constituent Assembly Debates: Official Report*. Vols. 1-12. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, n.d.
- . *Lok Sabha Debates on the Report of the States Reorganisation Commission 14-23 Dec. 1955*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1956.
- . Ministry of Education. *Report of the University Education Commission*, Dec. 1948-Aug. 1949. New Delhi: Govt. of India P, 1962.
- . Ministry of Home Affairs. *Census of India*. 20 Jun. 2013  
<<http://censusindia.gov.in>>.
- . Ministry of Law and Justice. "Eighth Schedule." *Constitution of India*. Updated to 94<sup>th</sup> Amendment 1 Dec. 2007. 15 Oct. 2012  
<<http://lawmin.nic.in/coi/coiason29july08.pdf>>.
- . *Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission*. New Delhi: Govt. of India Press, 1948.
- Indian National Congress. *Resolution on Language Policy 1949-57*. New Delhi: Indian National Congress, n.d.
- Jinnah, Mohammed Ali. *Speeches as Governor-General of Pakistan: 1947-1948*. Karachi: Ferozsons, n.d.
- Kandasamy, Meena. *Ms. Militancy*. New Delhi: Navayana, 2010.
- . "Mulligatawny Dreams." *Kavya Bharti* 18 (2006): 41.
- Khan, Sayyed Inshallah. *Rani Ketki Ki Kahani*. Ed. Shyamsundar Das. Kashi: Nagari Pracharini Sabha, 1925.
- Lohia, Ram Manohar. "Banish English." *Language*. Hyderabad: Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyalaya Nyas, 1986. 10-20.



- Ludhianvi, Sahir. "Jashn-e-Ghalib." 1968. *Aao ki Koi Khwaab Bune*. New Delhi: Hindi Book Centre, 2007.
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Minute on Indian Education." 1835. *Speeches by Lord Macaulay, with his "Minute on Indian Education."* Introd. and notes, G. M. Young. London: Humphrey Milford-Oxford UP, n.d. 345-361.
- Mahabharata*. Trans. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari. Chennai: *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan*, 1953.
- Maharashtra Navnirman Sena*. 2013. *Maharashtra Navnirman Sena Website*. 20 Jun. 2013 <<https://www.manase.org/en/home.php>>.
- Manto, Sa'adat. Letter to Nehru 27 Aug. 1954. Trans. M. Asaduddin. Repr. in *Kafila* 1 Dec. 2011. 23 Mar. 2013 <<http://kafila.org/2011/12/01/pundit-mantos-first-letter-to-pundit-nehru/>>.
- Manusmriti*. Ed. and trans. Ramchadra Varma Shastri. n.p.: Vidya Vihara, 2000.
- Misra, Pratap Narain. *Granthavali*. Varanasi: *Nagari Pracharini Sabha*, 1992.
- Mistry, Rohinton. *A Fine Balance*. London: Faber and Faber, 1996.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. "A Tryst with Destiny." Constituent Assembly of India, New Delhi. 14 Aug. 1947.
- . *Jawaharlal Nehru Speeches*. Vol. 3. Mar. 1953-Aug. 1957. n.p.: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1963.
- . *Letters to Chief Ministers*. Vol. 5. 1958-1964. Ed. Parthasarathi. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1988.
- . *Selected Speeches*. 6 vols. New Delhi: Publications Division, 1996.
- . *The Discovery of India*. 1946. New Delhi: Penguin, 2004.
- . "The Question of Language." *The Unity of India: Collected*

- Writings 1937-1940*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Lindsey Drummond, 1942. 241-61.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, and Indira Gandhi. *Freedom's Daughter: Letters between Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, 1922-39*. Ed. Sonia Gandhi. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989.
- Pillai, Sundaram. *Manonmaniyam*. 1891. Ed. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai. Trivandrum: n.p., 1922.
- Prasad, Chandra Bhan. 2009. *Chandra Bhan Prasad Website*. 25 Jun. 2012 <<http://chandrabhanprasad.com/index.aspx>>.
- . "The Vilification of Lord Macaulay." 18 Nov. 2007. *Centre for the Advanced Study of India-University of Pennsylvania*. 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://casi.ssc.upenn.edu/node/135>>.
- Prasad, Manoranjan. *Rashtriya Murali*. Kashi: n.p., 1922.
- Premchand. "Adab ki gharaz-o-ghayaat." 1936. *Mazamin-e-Premchand*. Ed. Qamar Rais. Aligarh: University Publishers, 1960. 234-53.
- . *The Oxford India Premchand*. Ed. Francesca Orsini. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2004.
- Rajagopalachari, C. "Panch-Maaya." *Swarajya* 15 Feb. 1958. n.p.
- Rao, Raja. *Kanthapura*. 1938. New Delhi: Orient, 1971.
- Rao, Velcheru Narayan, and David Shulman, eds. *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2001.
- Ray, Raja Ram Mohan. *The Essential Writings of Raja Rammohan Ray*. Ed. Bruce Carlisle Robertson. Delhi: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Raza, Rahi Masoom. *Topi Shukla*. 1966. Trans. Meenakshi Shivram. Introd. Harish Trivedi. Delhi: Oxford UP, 2005.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. 1981. London: Vintage, 2006.

- . *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. 1999. London: Vintage, 2000.
- . *The Moor's Last Sigh*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995.
- . *The Satanic Verses*. 1988. New York: Random House, 1988.
- Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar. "Essentials of *Hindutva*." *Veer Savarkar*. 17 Feb. 2013  
 <[http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials\\_of\\_hindutva.v001.pdf](http://www.savarkar.org/content/pdfs/en/essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf)>.
- Seth, Vikram. *A Suitable Boy*. New Delhi: Viking-Penguin, 1993.
- Sharma, Pandey Bechan "Ugra." *"Chocolate" and Other Writings on Male Homoeroticism*. Trans. Ruth Vanita. Durham: Duke UP, 2009.
- Singh, Manmohan. Address. University of Oxford. 8 July 2005. Repr. *The Hindu Online*. 25 June 2012  
 <<http://www.hindu.com/nic/0046/pmspeech.htm>>.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *The Broken Nest*. 1901. Trans. Mary M. Lago and Supriya Bari. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1971.
- Tandon, Purushottam Das. Article. *The Hindustan Times* 8 Aug. 1949.
- . Lecture Given on 20 Oct. 1938. *Sammelan Patrika: Gandhi-Tandon Smriti Ank* 55. Allahabad: *Hindi Sahitya Sammelan*, n.d.
- The Laws of Manu*. Trans. and introd. Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith. London: Penguin, 1991.
- Tripathi, Suryakant Nirala. *Chaturi Chamar*. 1934. New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2010.
- Tulsidas, Goswami. *Shri Ramcharitmanas*. c. 1574. n.p: Star Publications, 1994.

## **Film**

*Aiyya*. Dir. Sachin Kundalkar. ShowMaker Pictures. 2012.

*Bol Bachchan*. Dir. Rohit Shetty. Shree Ashtavinayak Cine Vision Ltd. 2012.

*Bombay*. Dir. Mani Ratnam. Ayngaran International. 1995.

*Boxer*. Dir. Raj N. Sippy. Gautam Guha. 1984.

*Chupke Chupke*. Dir. Hrishikesh Mukherjee. Hrishikesh Mukherjee. 1975.

*Deenabandhu*. "Maa Telugu Talliki" song. Lyrics by Shankarambadi

Sundarachari. Dir. M. L. Thandham. 1942.

*Desi Boyz*. Dir. Rohit Dhawan. Eros International. 2011.

*Devdas*. Dir. Bimal Roy. Bimal Roy Productions/Mohan Films. 1955.

---. Dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali. SLB Films. 2002.

*Dil Se*. Dir. Mani Ratnam. Madras Talkies/Eros International. 1998.

*Gangs of Wasseypur*. Dir. Anurag Kashyap. Viacom 18 Motion Pictures. 2012.

*Hum Hai Raahi Pyar Ke*. Dir. Mahesh Bhatt. T. V. Films. 1993.

*Kahaani*. Dir. Sujoy Ghosh. Viacom 18 Motion Pictures/Pen India Pvt. Ltd.,

2012.

*Kaminey*. Dir. Vishal Bhardwaj. UTV Motion Pictures. 2009.

*Kranti*. Dir. Manoj Kumar. Manoj Kumar Films. 1981.

*Mughal-e-Azam*. Dir. K. Asif. Shapoorji Pallonji. 1960.

*Munna Bhai M. B. B. S.* Dir. Rajkumar Hirani. Vinod Chopra

Productions/Entertainment One. 2003.

*Mr India*. Dir. Shekhar Kapur. Narasimha Enterprises, 1987.

*Namak Halal*. Dir. Prakash Mehra. Satyendra Pal. 1982.

*Peepli Live*. Dir. Anusha Rizvi. UTV Motion Pictures/Amir Khan Productions.

2010.

*Ra.One*. Dir. Anubhav Sinha. Eros International Ltd. 2011.

*Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi*. Dir. Aditya Chopra. Yash Raj Films. 2008.

*Sahib, Bibi Aur Ghulam*. Dir. Abrar Alvi. Guru Dutt. 1962.

*Sarkar*. Dir. Ram Gopal Varma. K Sera Sera/Sahara One. 2005.

*Sholay*. Dir. Ramesh Sippy. Sippy Films. 1975.

*Singh is Kingg*. Dir. Anees Bazmee. Reliance Entertainment/Viacom 18 Motion Pictures/Hari Om Productions. 2008.

*Umrao Jaan*. Muzaffar Ali. Muzaffar Ali. 1981.

*Utsav*. Dir. Girish Karnad. Shashi Kapoor. 1984.

*Wake Up Sid*. Dir. Ayan Mukherjee. UTV Motion Pictures, 2009.

## Secondary Texts

"A Patriarchal Script." Editorial. *Economic & Political Weekly* 45.33 (2010): 8.

"About us: *Saraswati*." *Indian Publishing House*. 2011. 25 Mar. 2013  
<<http://indianpublishinghouse.in/Saraswati.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>>.

"A Rape Map of India." *The Wall Street Journal India* 3 Jan. 2013. 12 Jun. 2013  
<<http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/01/03/a-rape-map-of-india/>>.

Adigal, Sivananda. "Tanakkuvamai Illatatu Tamil Moli." *Centamilic Celvi* 15 (1937-8): 601-4.

Adler, Hans, and Wuld Koepke, eds. *A Companion to the Works of John Gottfried Herder*. New York: Camden House-Boydell and Brewer, 2009.

Alexander, Neville. "After Apartheid: The Language Question." *Yale*

- Macmillan Centre. 12 Jun. 2013  
 <<http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/apartheid/alexanderp2.pdf>>.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. "Pigeon India: Some Notes on Indian English Writing."  
*Aspects of Indian Writing in English: Essays in Honour of Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar*. Ed. M. K. Naik. Madras: Macmillan, 1979.
- Ananthamurthy, U. R. "Responsibilities of a Writer." 30 Sept. 2002. Repr. *The Hindu* 3 Nov. 2002. 25 Dec. 2012  
 <<http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/lr/2002/11/03/stories/2002110300010100.htm>>.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1993.
- Annadurai, C. N. "Open Letter to Party Members." 26 Sept. 1960. *Tampikku Annavin Katitankal [Letters of an Older Brother to his Younger Brother]*. Madras: *Paarinilayau*, 1981. 56-7.
- Appadurai, Arjun. "Is Mumbai's Resilience Endlessly Renewable?" *The Immanent Frame* 7 Dec. 2008. 26 May 2013  
 <<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/12/07/is-mumbais-resilience-endlessly-renewable/>>.
- Asad, Talal. "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology." *Writing Culture: The Poetics of Ethnography*. Ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. California: U of California P, 1986. 141-64.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. New Accents. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Austin, Granville. *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. 1965. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.
- . *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 2004.
- Balibar, Etienne. "Racism as Universalism." *New Political Science* 8.1-2 (1989): 9-22.
- Barron, Denis. "All Hail Goddess English." *OUP Blog* 9 Nov. 2010, 25 Jul. 2012 <<http://blog.oup.com/2010/11/all-hail-goddess-english/>>.
- Bassnett, Susan, and Harish Trivedi, eds. *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Basu, Tapan, Pradip Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar, and Sambuddha Sen. *Khakhi Shorts, Saffron Flags*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator." 1923. Trans. Harry Zohn. *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. Abingdon: Routledge, 2000. 75-83.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge, 1994.
- Bhagat, Chetan. *What Young India Wants*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2012.
- Bhardwaj, Ashutosh. "Women Hindi Writers Vying to be seen as Prostitutes: V-C." *The Indian Express* 1 Aug. 2010, 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/women-hindi-writers-vying-to-be-seen-as-prostitutes-vc/654432/>>.
- Bhargava, Rajeev. "Giving Secularism its Due." *Economic & Political Weekly* 29.28 (1994): 1784-91.
- . "Is There a Place for Secularism in India?" Conf. on Trans-cultural Studies Chicago and the Centre for Cultural Studies Hawaii. East-West Centre

- Hawaii. Dec. 1994
- <[http://www.law.uvic.ca/demcon/victoria\\_colloquium/documents/WhatsSecularismforPreSeminarReading.pdf](http://www.law.uvic.ca/demcon/victoria_colloquium/documents/WhatsSecularismforPreSeminarReading.pdf)>.
- Bhargava's Standard Illustrated Dictionary of the Hindi Language: Hindi-English Edition*. Comp. and ed. R. C. Pathak. Varanasi: Bhargava Book Depot, 2009.
- Bhattacharya, Tithi. *The Sentinels of Culture: Class, Education, and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal 1848-85*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2005.
- "Bombay Lands Karan Johar at Raj Thackeray's Door." *The Indian Express* 3 Oct. 2009. 18 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/-bombay--lands-karan-johar-at-raj-thackeray-s-door/524459/>>.
- "Bombay Says Sorry to Mumbai." *The Hindu* 3 Oct. 2009. 13 Oct 2012 <<http://www.hindu.com/2009/10/03/stories/2009100356650100.htm>>.
- Borovsky, Karel Havlicek. "Norodni Noviny." April 1848. *Duch Norodni Novin*. Eds. Jaromir Elic and Jiri Skalicka. Prague: Odeon, 1971. 13-14.
- Bose, Sujit. *Michael: His English Literature*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2007.
- Brass, Paul. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974.
- Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Catt, Helena, and Michael Murphy, ed. *Sub-State Nationalism: A Comparative Analysis of Institutional Design*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Chanda, Nayan. Globalisation has a Long History. Transcript. *Social Science*



- Research Council*. Ed. Mary Lea-Cox. 30 Apr. 2007. 12 Jun. 2013  
<<http://www.ssrc.org/features/view/globalization-has-a-long-history/>>.
- Chandra, Sudhir. "Premchand and Indian Nationalism." *Modern Asian Studies* 16.4 (1982): 601-21.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*. London: Zed, 1986.
- Clark, T. W. *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development*. California: U of California P, 1970.
- Cliff, Tony. "Lenin and the National Question." *All Power to the Soviets: Lenin 1914-1917*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2004. 53-64.
- "C.M. Shivraj Singh lashes out against English." *Hindustan Times* 11 Sept. 2012. 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Bhopal/CM-Shivraj-Singh-Chouhan-lashes-out-against-English/Article1-958034.aspx>>.
- "Controversy Over Singing of 'Vande Mataram' Rocks both Houses." *The Hindu* 23 Aug. 2006. 20 Jun. 2013  
<<http://www.hindu.com/2006/08/23/stories/2006082311121200.htm>>.
- Coppola, Carlo. "Premchand's Address to the First Meeting of the All-India Progressive Writers Association: Some Speculations." *Journal of South Asian Literature* 21.2 (1986): 21-39.
- Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003.
- Das, Gurcharan. "A Sense of Possibilities." *Times of India* 1 Jun. 2003. 15 Sept. 2012 <<http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-06-01/all-that->

- matters/27180414\_1\_shashi-kumar-bpo-middle-class>.
- . "English as She is Spoke." *Outlook India* 2 May 2005. 15 Sept. 2012  
<<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?227252>>.
- Dasgupta, Probal. *The Otherness of English: India's Auntie Tongue Syndrome*.  
New Delhi: Sage, 1993.
- Desai, Jigna. *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic  
Film*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Dyahadroy, Swati. "Exploring Gender, Hindutva and Seva." *Economic &  
Political Weekly* 44.17 (2009): 65-73.
- EF-EPI 2011 Report. *English First-English Proficiency Index*. 1 Sept. 2012  
<[http://www.ef.co.uk/sitecore/\\_/~\\_/media/efcom/epi/pdf/EF-EPI-  
2011.pdf](http://www.ef.co.uk/sitecore/_/~_/media/efcom/epi/pdf/EF-EPI-2011.pdf)>.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. 1952. Trans. Charles Lam  
Markmann. London: Pluto, 1986.
- . "Pitfalls of National Consciousness." *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans.  
Constance Farrinton. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967. 119-65.
- Femia, Joseph, V. *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and  
the Revolutionary Process*. Clarendon: Oxford UP, 1981.
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. "Contents of the Thirteenth Address: Continuation of  
the Reflections Already Begun." 1806. *Fichte: Addresses to the German  
Nation*. Ed. Gregory Moore. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. 166-182.
- "Filhaal stri vimarsh bewafaai ke viraat utsav ki tarah hai:' Vibhuti Narain  
Rai" ["Nowadays Female Discourse is like a Grand Celebration of Infidelity:  
Vibhuti Narain Rai"]. *Lekhak Manch* 5 Aug. 2010. 20 Jun. 2013  
<<http://lekhakmanch.com/फलिहाल-स्त्री-वमिर्ष-बेव.html>>.

- Firth, John Rupert. *Paper in Linguistics 1934-1951*. London: Oxford UP, 1957.
- Fishman, Joshua. *In Praise of the Beloved Language: A Comparative View of Positive Ethnolinguistic Consciousness*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996.
- . "Language and Nationalism." *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the Present: A Reader*. Ed. Stuart Woolf. London: Routledge, 1996. 155-70.
- Forster, Michael, ed. *Herder: Philosophical Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Friedman, Thomas. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005.
- Gaganiya, Eash Kumar. "D is for Dalits." *Times of India* 9 May 2010. 25 June 2012 <[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-05-09/special-report/28295913\\_1\\_english-medium-chandra-bhan-prasad-dalits](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-05-09/special-report/28295913_1_english-medium-chandra-bhan-prasad-dalits)>.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006.
- . "Indo-Anglian Fiction: Writing India, Elite Aesthetics, and the Rise of the 'Stephanian' Novel." *Australian Humanities Review* 8 (Nov. 1997). 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-November-1997/gandhi.html>>.
- Ganti, Tejaswini. *Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2012.
- Ghose, Sagarika (@sagarikaghose). "Internet Hindus are like swarms of bees. they come swarming after you at any mention of Modi Muslims or Pakistan!" 23 Jan. 2010, 10.41 p.m. Tweet.
- Gopal, Priyamvada. *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009.

Gould, William. *Hindu Nationalism and the Language Politics in Late Colonial India*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. 1929-35. Ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: ElecBook, 1999.

Guha, Ramachandra. *India After Gandhi: History of the World's Largest Democracy*. London: Picador-Pan Macmillan, 2007.

---, ed. *Makers of Modern India*. Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2011.

---. "Who Milks This Cow?" *Outlook India* 19 Nov. 2012. 27 Mar. 2013  
<<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?282904>>.

Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1983.

---, ed. *Subaltern Studies I: Writing in South Asian History and Society*. New York: Oxford UP, 1982.

Guleri, Chandradhar Sharma. *Purani Hindi aur Shesh Rachnaayen*. Delhi: Kitab Ghar, 1988.

Gupta, Charu. "The Icon of Mother in Late Colonial North India: 'Bharat Mata,' 'Matri Bhasha' and 'Gau Mata.'" *Economic & Political Weekly* 36. 45 (2001): 4291-4299.

Hansen, Thomas Blom. *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

Harding, Luke. "Dark Days for India." *The Guardian* 16 Dec. 2002. 10 Feb. 2013  
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/dec/16/worlddispatch.india?INTCMP=SRCH>>.

Harrison, Selig. *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*. Princeton: Princeton UP,

- 1960.
- Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2001.
- “If Elections were to Happen Today, UPA would lose.” *India Today* 21 May 2013. 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/assembly-elections-2014-upa-congress-bjp-headlines-today-cvoter-opinion-poll/1/272335.html>>.
- “If UPA Tables Bill to Create Telangana, BJP will Support it: Rajnath Singh.” *Firstpost* 4 Jun. 2013. 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.firstpost.com/politics/if-upa-tables-bill-to-create-telangana-bjp-will-support-it-rajnath-singh838933.html>>.
- Illiah, Kancha. “When We Delete Religion from our Textbook, We Teach Dignity of Labour.” *Indian Express* 11 Nov. 2005: 2.
- “It was India’s Good Fortune to be a British Colony.” *Outlook India* 20 Aug. 2001. 12 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?212952>>.
- Ives, Peter. *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci*. London: Pluto, 2004.
- Jain, Gaurav. “How Many Times, How Much Rage.” *Tehelka* 4 Sept. 2010. 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://tehelka.com/how-many-times-how-much-rage/>>.
- Jameson, Frederic. “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism.” *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65-88.
- Johari, J. C. *The Constitution of India: A Politico-Legal Study*. New Delhi: Sterling, 2004.
- Kachru, Braj. *The Indianisation of English: The English Language in India*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983,
- Kesavan, Mukul. *Secular Common Sense: Interrogating India*. New Delhi:

- Penguin, 2001.
- . "Tale of Two Worlds." *The Telegraph Calcutta* 9 Apr. 2009. 12 Apr. 2010  
 <[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090402/jsp/opinion/story\\_10756572.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090402/jsp/opinion/story_10756572.jsp)>.
- Khare, Vishnu. Lekhak hone ke vehem ne iss kulpati ki sanak badha di hai." *Mohalla Live* 10 Aug. 2010. 20 Jun. 2013  
 <<http://mohallalive.com/2010/08/10/vishnu-khare-react-on-vibhuti-narayan-rai/>>.
- Khilnani, Sunil. *The Idea of India*. London: Penguin, 1998.
- King, Robert. *Nehru and the Language Politics of India*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Kirkpatrick, Andy. *World Englishes: Implications for International Communications and ELT*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Kishwar, Madhu. "Arya Samaj and Women's Education: Kanya Mahavidyalaya Jalandhar." *Economic & Political Weekly* 21 (1986): 9-13.
- Kohn, Hans. *Prelude to Nation States: The French and German Experience, 1789-1815*. New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1967.
- . *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background*. New York: Macmillan, 1944.
- Krishna, Balraj. *India's Bismarck: Sardar Vallabhai Patel*. Mumbai: Indus Source Books, 2007.
- Krishnan, Kavita. "Capitalism, Sexual Violence and Sexism." *Kafila* 23 May 2013. 12 Jun. 2013 <<http://kafila.org/2013/05/23/capitalism-sexual-violence-and-sexism-kavita-krishnan/>>.
- Kumar, Krishna. "Hindu Revivalism and Education in North-Central India."

- Social Scientist* 18.10 (1990): 4-26.
- . *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*.  
New Delhi: Sage, 1991.
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich. "Is a Compulsory Official Language Needed?" 1914.  
*Lenin Collected Works*. Vol. 20. Trans. Bernard Isaacs and Joe Fineberg.  
Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972. 71-3.
- "Lest We Forget: English Blunder." *The Telegraph Calcutta* 14 May 2011. 15  
Sept. 2012  
<[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110514/jsp/frontpage/story\\_13981600.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110514/jsp/frontpage/story_13981600.jsp)>.
- Lorenzen, Mark. "Go West: The Growth of Bollywood." *Creative Encounters*  
April 2009. 13 Jun. 2010  
<<http://openarchive.cbs.dk/bitstream/handle/10398/7796/Creative%20Encounters%20Working%20Papers%2026.pdf?sequence=1>>.
- Madan, T. N. *Locked Minds, Modern Myths: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Mahal, Baljinder K. *The Queen's Hinglish: How to Speak Pukka*. New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2006.
- McCormick, Ty. "Once Upon a Time in Bombay." *Foreign Policy* 24 Jun. 2011.  
12 Oct. 2012  
<[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/24/once\\_upon\\_a\\_time\\_in\\_bombay#3](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/24/once_upon_a_time_in_bombay#3)>
- McCully, B. T. *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1940.
- Mee, Jon. "After Midnight: The Novel in the 1980s and 1990s." *A Concise*

- History of Indian Literature in English*. Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2008. 358-77.
- Mehta, Monika. "What is Behind Film Censorship?" *The Bollywood Reader*. Eds. Rajinder Dudrah and Jigna Desai. Maidenhead: Open UP, 2008. 122-33.
- Mishra, Vijay. *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Mitchell, Lisa. *Language, Emotions, Politics in South Asia: The Making of a Mother Tongue*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010.
- Mukherjee, K. *Reorganisation of Indian States*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1955.
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1985.
- . "The Beginnings of the Indian Novel." *A Concise History of Indian Literature in English*. Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2008. 92-102.
- . *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2000.
- . *Twice Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English*. New Delhi: Heinemann, 1971.
- Mukherjee, Sujit. *Translation as Discovery and Other Essays on Indian Literature in English Translation*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1994.
- Mukherjee, Uddalak. "Poison Fangs." *The Telegraph Calcutta* 12 Jun. 2013. 20 Jun. 2013



<[http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130612/jsp/opinion/story\\_16991983.jsp#.Ucc-LRbvwy4](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130612/jsp/opinion/story_16991983.jsp#.Ucc-LRbvwy4)>.

Nandy, Ashis. "The Demonic and the Seductive in Religious Nationalism: Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and the Rites of Exorcism in Secularising South Asia." *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* 44 (2009). 26 Mar. 2013 <[http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/9086/1/HPSACP\\_NANDY.pdf](http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/9086/1/HPSACP_NANDY.pdf)>.

Nandy, Ashis, Shikha Trivedy, Shail Mayaram, and Achyut Yagnik. *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1995.

"Narendra Modi a 'King among Kings,' says Anil Ambani at Vibrant Gujarat Summit." *NDTV* 11 Jan. 2013. 13 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/narendra-modi-a-king-among-kings-says-anil-ambani-at-vibrant-gujarat-summit-316267>>.

"Narendra Modi Depicted as Lord Krishna in BJP Advertisement." *NDTV* 6 Apr. 2012. 10 Feb. 2013 <<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/narendra-modi-depicted-as-lord-krishna-in-bjp-advertisement-194776>>.

Nelson, Dean. "Narendra Modi tipped as India's next Prime Minister." *The Telegraph* 20 Dec. 2012. 20 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/9758527/Narendra-Modi-tipped-as-Indias-next-prime-minister.html>>.

Nijhawan, Shobna, ed. *Nationalism in the Vernacular: Hindi, Urdu, and the Literature of Indian Freedom*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010.

Oldenberg, Philip. "'A Place Insufficiently Imagined:' Language, Belief, and the Pakistan Crisis of 1971." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 44.4 (1985): 711-

33.

Omvedt, Gail. *Reinventing Revolution: New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1993.

Orsini, Francesca, ed. *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture*. New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2009.

---. *The Hindi Public Sphere: 1920-1940*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2009.

Pande, Mrinal. "The Mindset of a Man." *The Hindu* 18 Aug. 2010. 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-mindset-of-a-man/article580487.ece>>.

Pandey, Geeta. "An 'English Goddess' for India's Down-trodden." *BBC News Asia* 15 Feb. 2011. 25 Jul. 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12355740>>.

Pandey, Vineeta. "Writers Want Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi Hindi University Sacked for Insulting Women." *Daily News & Analysis* 2 Aug. 2010. 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/1417636/report-writers-want-vice-chancellor-of-mahatma-gandhi-hindi-university-sacked-for-insulting-women>>.

Paranjape, Makarand. *Making India: Colonialism, National Culture, and the Afterlife of Indian English Authority*. Sophia Studies in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Traditions and Cultures 2. New Delhi: Amaryllis-Manjul Publishing, 2013.

---. *The Official Makrand R. Paranjape's Website*. 2010. 20 Jan. 2012 <<http://www.makarand.com>>.

Pargiter, F. F. *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1922.

- Parry, Benita. *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination, 1880-1930*. London: Verso, 1998.
- Patten, Chris. "River of Smoke: Review." *Financial Times* 24 Jun. 2011. 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/b5898cee-9b4a-11e0-a254-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1vSYZdvPP>>.
- Pinto, Jerry. "Bollygood Stereotypes." *Tehelka* 29 Nov. 2009. 28 Dec. 2011 <[http://www.tehelka.com/story\\_main40.asp?filename=hub291108bollygood\\_stereotypes.asp](http://www.tehelka.com/story_main40.asp?filename=hub291108bollygood_stereotypes.asp)>.
- Prasad, G. J. V. *Writing India, Writing English: Literature, Language, Location*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2011.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Prendergast, Christopher, ed. *Debating World Literature*. London: Verso, 2004.
- "Priceless @ 95." *The Telegraph Calcutta* 11 May 2008. 13 Jun. 2013 <[http://www.telegraphindia.com/10801/jsp/7days/story\\_9254827.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/10801/jsp/7days/story_9254827.jsp)>.
- "Pune Multiplex Cancels Wake Up Sid Screening after MNS Protest." *Daily News & Analysis* 2 Oct. 2009. 12 Oct. 2012 <[http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report\\_pune-multiplex-cancels-wake-up-sid-screening-after-mns-protest\\_1294500](http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report_pune-multiplex-cancels-wake-up-sid-screening-after-mns-protest_1294500)>.
- Rahim, Sameer. "A Pukka Old Pishpash." *The Telegraph* 20 Jun. 2008. 27 Mar. 2013 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/fictionreviews/3673625/A-pukka-old-pishpash.html>>.
- Rai, Alok. *Hindi Nationalism*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2000.

- Rai, Amrit. *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi*.  
New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1984.
- Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. "The 'Bollywoodisation' of the Indian Cinema:  
Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.1: 25-  
39.
- Raju, Deva, A. "His fight for freedom." *The Hindu* 18 Aug. 2001. 10 Feb. 2013  
<<http://hindu.com/2001/08/18/stories/13181105.htm>>.
- Ramanujan, A. K. "Is There An Indian Way of Thinking?" *Contributions to  
Indian Sociology* 23 (1989). 14 Sept. 2012  
<[http://silk.arachnis.com/anthro/Is\\_there\\_an\\_Indian\\_Way\\_of\\_Thinking\\_An\\_Informal\\_Essay.pdf](http://silk.arachnis.com/anthro/Is_there_an_Indian_Way_of_Thinking_An_Informal_Essay.pdf)>.
- Ramaswamy, Sumathi. *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil  
India 1891-1970*. California: U of California P, 1997.
- . "The Politics of Prayer." *Frontline* 16.1 (1999). 10 Feb. 2013  
<<http://www.hindu.com/fline/fl1601/16010920.htm>>.
- . "When Language Becomes a Mother/Goddess: An Image Essay on Tamil."  
*Tasveer Ghar: A Digital Archive of South Asian Popular Visual Culture*. 12  
Jun. 2013 <<http://tasveerghar.net/stamil/index.html>>.
- Ranade, Sanjay. "The Kolis of Mumbai at Crossroads." 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial  
Conference of Asian Studies Association of Australia, Melbourne. 1-3 Jul.  
2008. 15 Oct. 2012  
<<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/mai/files/2012/07/sanjayranade.pdf>>.
- "Rapes Happen in India not Bharat: RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat Blames  
Western Culture for Gangrapes." *India Today* 4 Jan. 2013. 26 May 2013  
<<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/rapes-happen-in-india-not-bharat->

- rss-chief-mohan-bhagwat-blames-western-culture-for-gangrapes/1/240709.html
- Rappaport, Helen. *Joseph Stalin: A Biographical Companion*. California: ABC Clio, 1999.
- Rollason, Christopher. "Apparently Unbridgeable Gaps of Language: ' Amitav Ghosh's River of Smoke and an Emerging Global English?" *Dr Christopher Rollason: Bilingual Culture Blog* 23 Sept. 2011. 12 Jun. 2013  
<<http://rollason.wordpress.com/2011/09/23/«-apparently-unbridgeable-gaps-of-language-»-amitav-ghosh's-river-of-smoke-and-an-emerging-global-english/#comments>>.
- . "'Swimming in a Sea of Language: ' Linguistic Aspects of Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*." *Vikram Seth's A Suitable Boy: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. Ed. Murari Prasad. New Delhi: Pencraft, 2005. 62-88.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile: Or, On Education*. Trans. and introd. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1979.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, and Johann Gottfried Herder. *Two Essays: On the Origin of Language*. Trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1966.
- Rushdie, Salman. "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist." *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*. London: Granta, 1991. 61-70.
- . Introduction. *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing: 1947-1997*. Eds. Rushdie and Elizabeth West. London: Vintage, 1997. ix-xxiii.
- Russell, Bertrand. "Why I Am Not a Christian." 1957. *"Why I Am Not a Christian:" And Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. 1-19.

- Rustow, D. A. *A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernisation*.  
Washington: The Brookings Inst., 1967.
- Sadana, Rashmi. "A Suitable Text for a Vegetarian Audience: Questions of Authenticity and the Politics of Translation." *Public Culture* 19.2 (2007): 307-28.
- . *English Heart, Hindi Heartland: The Political Life of Literature in India*. Berkley: U of California P, 2012.
- Sahitya Akademi: National Academy of Letters*. Ed. M. Musa Raza. 26 Mar. 2013 <[http://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/sahitya-akademi/cultural-exchange-programme/cultural\\_exchange.jsp](http://sahitya-akademi.gov.in/sahitya-akademi/cultural-exchange-programme/cultural_exchange.jsp)>.
- Sanyal, Jyoti. *Indlish: The Book for Every English-Speaking Indian*. New Delhi: Viva, 2006.
- Sapir, Edward. *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality*. Ed. David G. Mandelbaum. Berkley: U of California P, 1973.
- Sau, Ranjit. "From Sanskritisation to Hindi-Isation and Hindui-Isation: The 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha." *Economic & Political Weekly* 34 (1999): 2979-2938.
- Schomer, Karine. "The Doha as a Vehicle of Sant Teachings." *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*. Ed. Karine Schomer and W. H. McLeod. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987. 61-90.
- Seth, Leila. *On Balance: An Autobiography*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2007.
- Seth, Vikram. Interview with Sheela Reddy. *Outlook India* 2 Oct. 2008. 28 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.outlookindia.com/printarticle.aspx?232671>>.
- Shackle, Christopher, and Rupert Snell. *Hindi and Urdu Since 1800: A Common Reader*. New Delhi: Heritage, 1990.
- Salomon, Richard. *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of the Inscriptions*

- in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the other Indo-Aryan Languages*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Sontag, Susan. "The World as India." St Jerome Lecture on Literary Translation. Jul. 2007. 25 Jun. 2012  
<<http://www.susansontag.com/prize/onTranslation.shtml>>.
- "South Asia Unity for Name Change in Calcutta." *BBC News World* 21 Jul. 1999. 26 May 2013  
<[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/399502.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/399502.stm)>.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Politics of Translation." *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge, 1993. 179-200.
- Srivastava, Neelam. *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.
- Srivastava, Neelam, and Baidik Bhattacharya, eds. *The Postcolonial Gramsci*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Stalin, Josef. "Marxism and the National and Colonial Question." 1913. *Works*. Vol. 2, 1907-13. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1953.
- Stokes, Eric. *The English Utilitarians and India*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1959.
- "Stop Sending RSS, BJP Kids to English Language Schools: Cong." *The Indian Express* 12 Nov. 2012. 27 Mar. 2013  
<<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/stop-sending-rss-bjp-kids-to-english-language-schools-cong/1030463>>.
- Strachey, John. *India: Its Administration and Progress*. London: Macmillan, 1888.
- "Student Commits Suicide over Telangana." *Daily News & Analysis* 15 Jun. 2013. 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.dnaindia.com/india/1848453/report>>.

- student-commits-suicide-over-telangana>.
- Swamy, Subramanian. "How to Wipe out Islamic Terror?" *Daily News & Analysis* 16 Jul. 2011. 27 Mar. 2013  
<<http://thefire.org/public/pdfs/6e0cda48154d74f6cf97b0f73d058de1.pdf?direct>>.
- Teltumbde, Anand. "Globalisation and the Dalits." *A Dalit-Bahujan Media: Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar and His People*. 13 Jun. 2013  
<<http://ambedkar.org/research/GLOBALISATIONANDTHEDALITS.pdf>>.
- Tripathi, Salil. "Narcopolis: Review." *The Independent* 2 Mar. 2012. 30 Oct. 2012 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/narcopolis-by-jeet-thayil-7468505.html>>.
- Trivedi, Harish. "The Progress of Hindi Part 2: Hindi and the Nation." *Literary Culture in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*. Ed. Sheldon Pollock. California: U of California P, 2003. 958-1022.
- . "Translation as Recovery: A Suitable Boy as Koi Accha-Sa Ladka." *Book Review* 22 (1998): 30-1.
- Tully, Mark. "Will English Kill Off India's Languages?" *BBC News Asia* 29 Nov. 2011. 12 Jun. 2013 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15635553>>.
- Umar, Badruddin. "The Anti-Heroes of the Language Movement." *Economic & Political Weekly* 33.12 (1998): 636-7.
- Varma, Rashmi. "Provincialising the Global City: From Bombay to Mumbai." *Social Text* 22.4 (2004): 65-89.
- Verma, J. S. "Judgement: Meaning of 'Hindutva' and 'Hinduism.'" 11 Dec. 1995. Repr. *News and Analysis India* 13 Jun. 2013  
<<http://www.newsanalysisindia.com/supremcourt.htm>>.



“Vibhuti Narain Rai Sahitya Ka Hitler: Mrinal Pandey.” Repr. *Mohalla Live* 10 Aug. 2010. 20 Jun. 2013 <<http://mohallalive.com/2010/08/10/mrinal-pande-react-on-vibhuti-narayan-rai/>>.

Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia UP, 1989.

Vyas, Gopal Prasad, ed. *Gandhi Hindi Darshan*. New Delhi: Dilli Pradeshik Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, n.d.

Williams, Raymond. *Culture*. Glasgow: Fontana, 1981.

Zachariah, Benjamin. *Nehru*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Zaheer, Sajjad. *Roshnai*. Delhi: Azad Kitab Ghar, 1959.

Zutshi, Amar. “Politics of Secularism.” *Statesman Weekly* 22 Nov. 1986.