INDIAN WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

NARANJAN SINGH UPPAL

English has borrowed, without any fuss or ado, many words from the various Indian languages. Having acquired, through usage, rights of full citizenship, they no longer strike a jarring note, dovetailing flawlessly into the body of the language.

This process of borrowing has been continuous ever since the seventeenth century, when the English made their first direct contact with India. Territorial conquest and the development of trade were accompanied by philological acquisitions.

"I once took the trouble", said Prime Minister Nehru, "to collect the Hindustani words in the English language

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speeches, by mere demonstrations of concern for the unfortunate and the underprivileged. Let us not be misled by the flattery of friends, for as has been said, our friends may at times prove to be our worst enemies.

No nation can go far with men of petty minds. The pettiness of men in public affairs and in other areas of society threatens to prevent the development of a strong civic spirit among a people. Petty poltical motives are poor guides even for decisions in the political field itself. But they are worse guides in those fields that should lie completely outside the scope of politics. One of these is education. Political interference in this field will have the effect of further worsening the present mediocre record of most of our schools. Political decisions affecting our colleges and universities are bound to depress their academic standards. The consequences of such acts constitute a serious

but could not complete the task. But I was surprised to find such a large number of Hindustani words current in English." Words from other Indian languages, especially Bengali, Kanarese, Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil and Telegu are also well represented in the English vocabulary.

According to Lord Mountbatten, last British Viceroy of India, "the British mode of life, customs, speech and thought have been profoundly influenced by those of India — more profoundly than often has been realised."

The Oxford English dictionary contains hundreds of words of Indian origin and many thousands of derivatives. These Indian words can be devided into three main categories: naturals, denizens and casuals. Naturals are those which have become fully naturalized English words. Denizens include those which have been adopted into English usage with some changes in form, inflexion or pronunciation. Casuals are those words which are not in habitual use but which, for special or temporary purposes, found their way into the English vocabulary.

The reasons for adopting Indian words in English were varied. Many of them de-

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obstacle to the development of future national leaders who have to be prepared in our institutions for higher education. These must enjoy a high degree of freedom if they are to remain centers for the diffusion and advancement of learning.

Then there is another consideration that we should take into account in a discussio of our nation's crisis. No country today can live isolated from the rest of the world. In my recent travels in different countries in Southeast Asia, I have been surprised to discover that our country has attracted the attention of many of their people. Their eyes seem to be focussed on us on more than a few occasions. They n o t i c e our political movements; they take note of our economic activities; they talk about our educational accomplishments; they r e a d about our social and cultural changes. They may be merely prompted by idle curiosity rather than moved by admiration. But whether it is one or the other, the fact is that their eyes are on us. Incidents of graft and corruption taking place among us are subjects

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noted objects and actions for which English names could not be found easily. Others were chosen because they were picturesque and added local colour. An affectation of familiarity with Indian languages was a further contributory factor.

Another reason was the tendency of early English traders and explorers to transform Indian words into English ones phonetically similar but with a different connotation. An illustration of this is the name *John Company* — the popular name for the East India Company — which, on the face of it, sounds thoroughly English. But the British historian Stanley Lane-Poole maintained that "John Company was originally Jahan Kumpany (Company of the World), the name given by the natives of India to the United East India Company." The vernacular phrase was expressive and the early English traders soon anglicised it.

Similarly, *punch*, the familiar English decoction, is an anglicised version of an Indian drink brewed during the 17th Century. This was made from five ingredients, including spirits, sugar and spices, and was, therefore, called *panch* (five).

Then there is the English expression *quite the cheese*, used in referring to something which is of good quality or comes up to one's expectations. *Cheese* here has nothing to do with the dairy product, but is the English version of the Persian and Hindustani *chiz* (thing). This is well borne out by the common Hindustani expression *koi chiz hai* (quite something), as, for instance, when it is used to refer to a girl with a comely figure.

Similarly, the English phrase *do not give a damn* is said to have no connection with the blasphemous term but has been traced to *daam*, a copper coin which was worth about a fortieth of a rupee.

In the course of transliteration into English, several Indian words underwent phonetic changes. For example, *solar topee* has its origin in the Hindi *shola* meaning pith. Early English residents altered shola into solar (stemming from the Latin *sol*: sun) so that the expression should suggest, in sound and spelling, a sun helmet. *Chit* is derived from the Hindi *chitty* (a letter or short note containing some message or news), and *shampoo* from the Hindi *champna* (to massage, to press).

Eminent English men of letters spiced their writing with Indian words. Thomas Moore introduced his readers to the *vina* (an Indian string instrument), Edmund Burke, to *zenana* (in Hindi: the women's quarters) and to the Urdu *begum* (a lady of high rank). Shelley used the Tamil *pariah* (of low caste) and the Hindi *champak* (a species of magnolia), Carlyle, the words *jungle* (Hindi and Marathi: *Jangal*) and *thug* (Hindi and Marathi *thag*: *cheat*, swindler).

Thomas Hood spoke of *kerseymeres* (trousers made of fine woollen cloth: a corruption of Cassimere — or Cashmere — associated with

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of comment in their newspapers. Irregularities in our elections become topics of conversation among their men of affairs. They listen to our claim for our country as a show window of democracy in Asia. While I do not feel certain that they entertain any sincere belief in it, I am convinced that they watch us with critical eyes but with a sympathetic spirit knowing that we are their neighbors and their fellow Southeast Asians. If we could show a record of excellent growth and of good government in this new independent democracy, they could point to us with pride as a demonstration of what a Southeast Asian country could do with its freedom. Here then is a responsibility thrust upon us. There is no way to evade it. Whether we like it or not, we are now an integral part of a fast shrinking world.

As we contemplate the present crisis in our nation's history and as we think of its problems and difficulties, we may well remember and heed these words of that great man, Dr. Jose P. Laurel: "Age and experience keep counselling me that, when all is said and done, it is only a sincere and realistic devotion to the highest interests of one's nation which gives one both courage and patience to wait for the deferred verdict of subsequent events and developments. Many a time, one indeed may be as one 'crying in the wilderness,' but the frustrations and even abuse become bearable when one faithfully follows one's unalloyed convictions about the national welfare, or better yet the teachings and counsel of the nation's heroes and unselfish leaders of the past."

Kersey, a type of cloth said to have originated in the place of that name in Suffolk), Lytton, of *shampoo* and *vakeel* (Urdu for an agent or representative), Dickens, of *loot* (from the Hindi *lut*) and *veranda*.

In Longfellow we find *juggernaut* (from *jagannath*: the Lord of the World, in Hindi), in Ruskin, *bungalow* (Hindi *bangla*, belonging to Bengal) and in Walter Scott, *cummerbund* (the Urdu *kamar-band*: loin-band) and *howdah* (haudah), a litter carried by elephants.

Thackeray used Indian words for naming some of his characters. For instance, Mr. Chutney (Hindi *chatni*), General Curry (Tamil *kari*), Mulligatawney (Tamil *milagu-tannir*: pepper-water) and Bangles (Hindi *bangri*: a coloured glass bracelet).

At other periods, Englishmen moving about the country enlarged their vocabulary with words relating to the persons and things they encountered during their travels. To this we owe *coolie* (from *kuli*, *koli*, an aboriginal tribe of Cujarat), *dacoit* (from the Hindi *dakait*: to plunder), *bandicoot* (a corruption of the Telegu *pandi-kokku*: pig-rat), *pug*, (the footprint of a beast) from the Hindi *pag* (footprint), and the slang term *phut* (to go phut) from *phatna* (in Hindi: to burst).

There is hardly an aspect of English life which has not been influenced by Indian words. In military parlance we have *khaki* (from the Urdu: dusty) and *puttee* (from the Hindi *patti*: a hand bandage). In sports, *gymkhana* (from the Hindustani *gendkhana*) and *polo* (from Balti, an Indus Valley dialect: *polo*, the ball used in the game).

On the culinary front we find, in addition to chutney, curry and mulligatawney, *toddy* (from the Hindi *tari*, Hind. *tar*: palm-tree) and *mango* (from the Malay *manga* and the Tamil *man-kay*).

Cloths and materials are represented by *calico* (from the name of the Indian city Calicut), *chintz* (from the Hindi *chint*) and *tussore* (from the Hindi and Urdu *tasar*: shuttle).

Among other trade goods are *copra* (Malayalam *koppara*, Hindi *khopra*: coconut), *coir* (from the Malayalam *kayar*: cord), *betel* (probably from the Portuguese, which adapted the word from the Malayalam *vettila*) and *teak* (also through the Portuguese, an adaptation of the Malayalam *tekka*). Representatives of the local fauna include the *mongoose* (from the Marathi

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purnia. But above all, he must be an educational leader. If he cannot, because of his other responsibilities, something's got to give. The solution of "a Damon-and-Pythias relationship to some trusted provost, dean of faculty, or assistant" is, according to Dr. Stoke, "rare and fortuitous." He insists that "the real solution of the problem must wait upon more fundamental institutional evolution." But can we afford to wait that long? Will Dr. Dodd's study point to a quicker way out? The college president cannot, like Pooh-bah, continue to function much longer as Lord High Everything Else. There were no H-bombs in Titipu.

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mangus) and the *cheetah* (from the Hindi *chita*).

A vast army of English words has also been admitted into the Indian languages. Spoken Telegu, for instance, is estimated to contain no less than 3,000. This enrichment of vocabulary and literature has, therefore, been a two-way traffic.

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successful until then to make so much money in other fields of its activity that the citizen will be able to mail his corrspondence, which will be electronically sorted, for a postage of still no more than twenty pfennigs.

"They tell me Boobleigh has a childlike faith in his wife."

"Yes, it's wonderful. Why, he even goes so far as to take her word for it when she says there is plenty of gas in their car." — Judge.

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Husband (to wife, over phone): Good news, dear. I'm pretty well played out, tramping all over town, but I've found an apartment at last.

Wife (ecstatically): Oh, Horace, you darling! Do hurry home and tell me all about it.

"There's no great hurry. We don't move in until 1982. *The present tenants have a two years' lease."* — Life.