

## Conclusion

*...the basic, most fundamental, decolonial task is in the domain of knowledge, since it is knowledge that holds the CMP [Colonial Matrix of Power] together...*

— Walter D. Mignolo

Walter D. Mignolo and Sanjay Seth view coloniality and modernity as processes of subject formation marked by a doubleness. On one hand, “modern knowledge...creates a knowing subject who is set apart from, even set up against, the objects to be known” (Seth 4). On the other hand, this distinction entails a power difference between the two creating a second order signification of an agentive subject (of something) and a passive subject (to something). Enforcing this specific relationality made “policing this distinction the very basis of any valid knowledge” (Seth 5). The establishment of new forms of knowledge in Europe in the eighteenth century in the same moment as large-scale colonial expansion fortified the need to establish “epistemic totality”, that is, to “act...as if *their* [the Western Christians] *specific image of the world and their own sense of totality was the same for any- and everybody else on the planet*” (Mignolo 197, 195). This knowledge constituted the colony.<sup>106</sup> Yet, the process of constitution was not straightforward and absolute, necessitating multiple modes of dissemination and institutionalisation. The modes of dissemination included “armies, railroads, trade, and the institutions and practices of colonial government”, out of which “the most direct and one of the most important...was western education” in the case of India (Seth 1). The differential of colonialism and the impulse of totalisation built “colonialism...as an essentially *pedagogic* enterprise” (Seth 2). This dissertation has pursued the idea that education and pedagogy emerged as central sites where the strategies of colonisation can be observed. The need felt by the coloniser (to educate and change) had to be stimulated in the colonised for the dissemination of knowledge to be successful, and the ‘transplantation’ to take root.<sup>107</sup> This role, I have suggested, was played by the rhetoric of reform.

I have worked with the idea that the ideological contribution of reform in helping modern western knowledge take root played a key role in reshaping precolonial epistemic categories of approaching the world and restructuring native subjecthood. Nevertheless, I show that it might be too simple to suggest that reform functioned solely in the service of empire. Instead, I have studied reform as a specific category that emerged amidst political

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<sup>106</sup> This understanding draws on Ashis Nandy’s idea that colonialism “includes codes which both the rulers and the ruled can share” (2); and Mignolo’s insight that ontologies are constituted by epistemology (135, 147).

<sup>107</sup> I draw my ideas of transplantation from Mignolo 138, particularly in the context of the university.

shifts in Britain in the late eighteenth century. Thus, it was not a stable category marked by homogenous political concerns but was undergoing renegotiations through the roles it came to play in the metropole and the colony.

In an important sense, my thesis has shown how the idea of reform was imbricated with education in the colonial project of modernisation. It positions itself counter to histories that have relegated reform to an ‘age’ that spanned some specific decades in mid-nineteenth century in India and which consider reform merely as a historical-intellectual backdrop for mid nineteenth century. In this context, I point out that histories of modern western education became histories of English education owing to the policy of Anglicisation adopted in India in 1835. While language becomes a key focus of these histories, colonial terminology has not received sustained attention.

This research has used the question of reform to foreground the question of language — as an identity marker, rhetoric, narrative, discourse—in the history of colonial education in India. It has examined the discipline of English Studies which became a site for resolution of the ambivalences and contrary interests of various stakeholders in the colonial project, while also standing-in for the religious biases of an avowedly secular education. The domain of higher education was chosen as a focus-area owing to the top-down model of colonial education.<sup>108</sup> These key variables were analysed in the context of Gujarat to account for regional differentiation in the history of English Studies, and reflect on the implications of local, non-metropolitan histories on previous mappings of the field. It examines the epistemic role played by reform in the colony in ways that continue to orient political and educational activities, how English Studies offers a rich site to study the negotiations of identity and power in the complex negotiations of reform between the coloniser and the colonised, and the implications this has for an understanding of the epistemic foundations of English Studies. By concentrating on Gujarat as a region where this complex interplay of reform, identity and power takes place, it shows how the category English Studies is inflected by specific regional formations, issues and concerns. It also considers how this analysis of English Studies in Gujarat could offer new directions for its future as a decolonial field of study in India.

The primary material I studied included important texts from the point-of-view of reform and English Studies drawn from Bombay, Surat, Baroda, and Ahmedabad, and the larger historical context of India and Britain, to include prose engaging with reform such as the *Bhut Nibandh* (1849) by Dalpatram and its translation in English by A.K. Forbes, or

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<sup>108</sup> I refer here both to the filtration theory, as well as the orientation of primary and secondary education to the requirements of higher education.

Narmad's *Dharmavichar* (1885) or prose engaging with English Studies such as Harold Littledale's *Essays on Lord Tennyson's Idylls of the King* (1893); reports related to colonial/native education policy such as *Report of the Indian Education Commission of 1882* or T.K. Gajjar's *Note on the Development of a National System of Education for the Baroda State* (1888), or papers related to the university reforms of 1902-3; colonial administrative accounts through the writings of colonial officers like *John Chapman's Baroda and Bombay; Their Political Morality* (1853); institutional documents like the official calendars of the University of Bombay and Gujarat Vidyapith, or memoirs of college students, works in contemporary periodicals like *Indu Prakash*, *Navajivan*, etc., or other contemporary writings that impinge on the discussion such as Khasherao Jadhava's *Wake Up Princes* (1920). These were contextualised using studies offering historical accounts of periods discussed as well as scholarly work that analysed important debates in a given period to understand the historical and intellectual context of the primary texts.

## Findings

Chapter One traced the entry of the term reform and beginnings of colonial education in western India. The central question it dealt with was why the revolt of 1857 did not have large-scale reverberations in Gujarat and linked it to the trajectory of reform in the region. It located Gujarat within the larger Bombay presidency, traced a commonality of intellectual atmosphere in Surat and Bombay as a continuum, distinguished from Ahmedabad in British Gujarat, and the native state of Baroda. It noted that the project of reform in western India was marked by a diversity of responses. This diversity was due to two factors. Owing to the absence of a centralised governing mechanism for British India, ground-level policies depended on the individual interventions of colonial officials. Officials like Mountstuart Elphinstone and A.K. Forbes interpreted various notions of Enlightenment (that formed the bulwark of the reform project) in terms of their Scottish backgrounds and estimated the nature of reform(s) to be promoted/implemented based on the specific sociopolitical circumstances and balance of power in the regions they administered. The larger understanding of reform in the metropole was oriented by the Reform Act of 1832 which came in the wake of the French revolution and the fear of radical change. Its translation in colonial policy generated a moderatist approach in general but was equally individual-specific and region-specific. On the other hand, reform ushered in a new term—*sudharo*—in Gujarati, and a new perception towards native society. It became a dominant discourse against which identities came to be defined, and political positions were contested. However,

the nature of reform adopted and promoted in different parts of the region was contingent upon attitude to British presence in the given area, as well as nature of participation in the network of educational institutions set up by the British. Thus, education was found to actively structure a perception to reform, which led to the conclusion that the coterminous rise of reform and education in India was not a coincidence, but each was ideologically implicated in the other. Having viewed the nature of material practices related to social reform, the chapter analysed important texts related to reform and corruption in the region, to come to three major conclusions:

- (i) Whether in debates that explicitly espoused reform like Dalpatram's essay, or which implicitly co-opted it like the corruption scandal in Baroda, reform largely remained in the sociomoral domain.
- (ii) This interpretation of reform as sociomoral improvement was allied with former interpretations of the term in England where it had moved on to suggest political-institutional reform.
- (iii) At the discursive level, reform initiated the process of comparison between the west and the colony, and promoted parameters to modify the latter as per epistemic frames of the former. This process in the spatial domain was represented by translation initiatives, and the temporal domain by history-writing. Thus, it was encoded with the idea of engendering a homogeneity while constant recognition of difference. In this way, reform represented colonial epistemic violence.
- (iv) At the political level, reform in the English imagination, represented a moderate attitude to change, in binary opposition with revolt which represented radicalism.

Thus, the role played by reform impinged on the response to the 1857 revolt, which also marked a moment of hegemonisation of colonial pedagogy with the establishment of the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

Chapter Two examined the practice of English Studies in Baroda College in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to understand resistance to colonial rule, its impact on reform, and implications for English Studies. It contextualised the changing tides of reform by surveying the circumstances in England and Gujarat in the interim period. The Reform Bill of 1867 in England did not fulfil the promise of radical restructuring of the electorate. It also reflected a class bias that necessitated that the population be educated before it was given the right to vote, where education was imagined as a means to orient their choice. The conservative bent of reform reflected the class bias of English politics, but was

equally informed by the empire and the memories of the 1857 revolt. The revolt had also resulted in assumption of political power in the Crown of Britain in 1858. The centralisation of power translated into the domain of education as observed in the Indian Education Commission of 1882 and the university reforms of 1904. Both represented an impulse to make the structure of colonial education more hegemonic both administratively, and in the greater ideological space offered to English and modern subjects, to the detriment of traditional classical and vernacular learning in higher education. On the other hand, with emerging questions of nation and independence in the second half of the nineteenth century, the domain of reform was contested over by those in favour of sociomoral improvement, and those in favour of political-institutional reform. The ideological role of reform in service of imperial consolidation was reflected in the university curriculum of English Studies. The chapter traced the unique position of Baroda under Sayajirao Gaekwad III as an ambivalent space between sovereignty and subjecthood allowing a space for renegotiation of or resistance to colonial hegemony instantiated in reform. It also highlighted Sayajirao III's radical political position in claiming institutional reform for his state. It traced the practices of two professors of English at the Baroda College and discovered a clash between the promotion of moral reform for nation-building under the benevolence of the coloniser and the resistance to reform by ideological-conceptual alignment with revolt in the writings and activities of Aurobindo Ghose during his tenure in Baroda, and the intersection between radical politics and pedagogy in the Baroda College and state.

The chapter concluded that the native state of Baroda became a site for resistance to conservative reform inside and outside higher education. It also concluded that the category of reform had largely moved on from its association with material practices of socio-religious change to institutional-political change. Finally, Aurobindo represented a key moment of resistance by stepping outside the conceptual domain of reform in his belief in complete political independence, and the rejection of binaries in the idea of passive resistance. The implications of this historical analysis for English Studies are not only to acknowledge the specific ideological biases and political motivations of the English curriculum, but to establish pedagogic practice in the domain of the university—whether inside or outside the classroom, as a space of resistance.

Chapter Three examined the establishment of the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya and the publication of *Jodanikosh* in the 1920s to trace the impact of the nationalist politics of Gandhi on education and whether it constituted a rejection of reform alongside a rejection of English education. It also examined whether, with the eclipse of the question of reform in

British politics of the metropole, it ceased to be a point of consideration in official colonial policy. The chapter found that changes implemented in colonial policy continued to be cast in the vocabulary of reform but were influenced by the political conservatism inherent in the term. Gandhi's adoption of non-cooperation in the domain of education constituted only a rejection of vocabulary and not its biases. What he rejected was English language and not colonial education reflected in the approach to spelling reform in the *Jodanikosh* as well as the curricula for English and Gujarati in the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya which bore major similarities with the existing colonial curriculum. It observed that Gandhi was unable to identify the ideological biases inherent in the colonial curriculum, as well as the remaking of the modern vernacular of Gujarati in the image of English. Rather, by the essentialisation of language at the level of denotation, he demonstrates the functioning of reform as an episteme—a paradigm that allowed uncritical comparisons between two entities viewed as monoliths and mutually exclusive. His embracing of the colonial Gujarati curriculum, further, shows his endorsement of the reform brought about in the vernacular by English. The unintentionality of this act further bolstered the epistemic nature of reform by this point. This chapter concluded that the radical rupture and decolonial moves by Gandhi in the domain of politics in the first half of twentieth century did not successfully reverberate in his higher education initiatives. If anything, they bolstered the epistemic foundations of English Studies.

Chapter Four examined the state of English Studies in the postcolonial period to understand the implications of the analysis of the first three chapters for the discipline at large. It surveyed the policy-level decisions with regard to English language and literature in India, and the roles ascribed to both as the national identity was being consistently negotiated against global aspirations of the country. It, further, examined the efforts and approaches to reshape the discipline from within—in light of theoretical interventions of Marxism, Feminism, Poststructuralism, politics of identity, Postcolonialism and Decolonisation. It traced the recommendations of the crisis debates and decolonisation debates in India, the interventions made by each, and the persistent problems that the discipline of English Studies continued to face. It tested the possibility of exploring a new direction in the field by a shift to decoloniality and recommended an experimental framework for a curriculum based on decolonial theoretical considerations.

### **Limitations**

Owing to its focus on the urban centres of Surat, Ahmedabad, and Baroda in Gujarat (to be able to understand the hegemonic discourse on reform in the region), the research has not

considered in detail the local responses and institutions in the non-urban areas as well as urban centres in the Saurashtra peninsula.

The focus of the research on colonial modernity and the persistence of its epistemological paradigms is carried into the discussion of future directions for English Studies. Thus, it does not engage with other important frameworks impinging upon the domain of English Studies such as capitalism, globalisation, or practical politics.

The selection of critical interventions in English Studies in the postcolonial nation taken up for discussion was shaped to represent both landmark texts and anthologies that have continued to dominate debates on English Studies, responses with a regional bent, and contemporary interventions in the debates over English Studies. It is not an exhaustive account of all interventions in English Studies post-independence, generating the possibility of some works being left out of the discussion.

As the selection of texts for consideration in the study is driven by the archive, it is also subject to the constraints of unavailability of sources, or availability of only a fraction of sources covering a range of time. The archive of texts was oriented by the question of reform, and the research acknowledges that approaching the archive with a different question may generate a different set of texts.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the historical examination of reform and English Studies in the context of Gujarat, the major recommendation that this research makes is an experimental curricular framework for English Studies shaped by directions offered in decolonial theory.

While former scholarly-critical debates on English Studies have repeatedly focused on the importance of contexts (historical and socio-political) in the study of British literature, I recommend a framework based on co-texts, that is, the collocation of canonical British texts with Indian texts in the same unit or paper of a course in English Studies in higher education, that is detailed in Chapter Four.

The recommended framework is designed to eliminate the exclusivity of the canon and the investment of a superior or puritan value to British curriculum whereby its texts cannot be considered alongside other literatures in English in the physical representation of the curriculum. On the contrary, it is designed to highlight the interconnected histories of British and Indian literatures; to, thereby, foreground colonial contexts of canonical British texts and authors; to critically examine their ideological biases; and to understand the functioning of epistemes in the colonial knowledge project and re-examine their persistence

in contemporary intellectual frameworks. The collocation at the level of the curriculum mean that a critical examination of the texts would not be contingent on the facilitator but would be driven by the curriculum itself. It, simultaneously, allows the persistence of canonical texts in the curricula to the advantage of students appearing for various competitive examinations that continue to hold a conservative idea of English Literature.

### **Future Research Possibilities**

The National Education Policy implemented in 2020 indicates the charting of new directions in the field of education. In a postcolonial society, innovation cannot be undertaken without a re-examination of the persistence of paradigms that resist radical reconsiderations for future. The discipline of English Studies as a colonial legacy has always remained fraught with contestations, and questions of relevance in the debates over overcoming the yoke of colonialism.

In this context, decolonial thinking offers a rich direction in offering a framework oriented to re-legitimise non-western knowledges, while also acknowledging the persistence of coloniality in decolonised nation-states through the persistence of colonial epistemes.

Future researchers can use this theoretical framework to reflect on different or other epistemes and/or use similar questions to engage with their own regional histories, which will not only produce more theoretically rigorous research on coloniality but also produce diversified research that brings voices and histories from the regions to the fore generating a rigorous colonial history.