

Oxford University Press), language is constantly evolving. With Double Tongued, he “hopes to cover carefully the lending and borrowing between English and other languages, to include as many words as time allows, to focus on non-standard English, to actively seek slang and jargon, and to work hard to pull from all kinds of sources, not just professionally-edited texts,” he says over email. That means working with a lot of ‘undocumented or under-documented words and expressions from the fringes of English’ that are absent from, or are poorly covered in, mainstream dictionaries.

Sample this: ‘seagen’ is a noun that refers to a vegan who likes to eat seafood (it takes all sorts to make a world), while ‘hair crush’ is a noun that refers to the object of your affection whose fabulous hair you’d kill to have. Both very identifiable, and both with potential for inclusion in the mainstream someday.

What is the point, really, we ask, and he responds with, “My first goal here, as always, is to inform and entertain.” Today, that has extended to Double Tongued being cited numerous times in legitimate publications and by plenty of regular folk, he tells us. “It all began when I was working as a lexicographer and realised I was keeping a private

list of ‘words not in,’ as lexicographers call them — words that aren’t in a particular dictionary or not in any dictionary. So, I decided to share them and do a little public lexicography.”

### For the people, by the people, and a whole lot of fun

For the people who created Samosapedia, the ‘aha!’ moment came when they realised that “South Asian discourse today, is dominated by Indians. So, we thought this would be a great opportunity to create something truly inclusive that transcends regional boundaries while respecting and celebrating highly localised culture and slang,” explains Bhaskaran.

Naturally, humour and wit is an important part of this discourse, and hence the name. Apart from having a “special fondness for hot samosas,” the quartet also decided to go with the name because “what could be more iconic to desis than the Samosa, which exists in some form or the other just about everywhere you’d think of as having a South Asian influence, whether it’s in a Burmese soup or called the “sambusa” in Kenya?”

It’s the decision to celebrate rather than decry the quirky idiosyncrasies that make up South Asian lingo that makes Samosapedia special, and fun

to read. So you have the phrase ‘Traditional with Modern Outlook’, vastly overused in all Indian matrimonial advertisements for the perfect Indian bahu, and described aptly on the site — ‘Usually refers to a woman representing the ideal catch for the contemporary Indian male. She speaks the vernacular, she toasts the coconut before putting it in the keera kootu, touches peramma’s feet at all family functions, and knows how to sport a 9-yard in the 40°C swelter of Chennai. But in the privacy of youthful company, she knocks back the Old Monk Rum and Thumbs Up as she explains how Kegels enhances the female orgasm. Woof!’

Strikes a chord, doesn’t it? Ask them if this mash-up of the English language isn’t bastardising the original, and they scoff. “I think all South Asians at some level love their language and that understated love is apparent in the nuances of usage and the joy that people take in its creative manipulations to suit their locale, community, and even family.”

“We are a people that love inside jokes and language plays a huge role!”

Point taken, as evinced by the explanation for ‘makkhan’ in Samosapedia, meaning smooth as butter — How are the chicks in that college? Maakhaann!

## QUICK FACTS

### More fulltoo fun dictionaries

**URBAN DICTIONARY (.COM):** One of the most popular sites of this category, UD, like its name implies, is a dictionary of slang words and phrases, regulated by volunteer editors and rated by site visitors. Founded in 1998 by Aaron Peckham, a freshman at California Polytechnic State University, it features mainly slang or subculture words, phrases, and phenomena not found in standard dictionaries.

**UNWORDS (.COM):** A site that features a collection of words that individuals and groups have made up at some point in time to describe things that aren’t associated with a term in the English language, to describe them with a term that is better suited, or to describe things for which they didn’t know the real term. The site was developed in the summer of 2001, and continues to delight and entertain by trying to make “English, your language”.

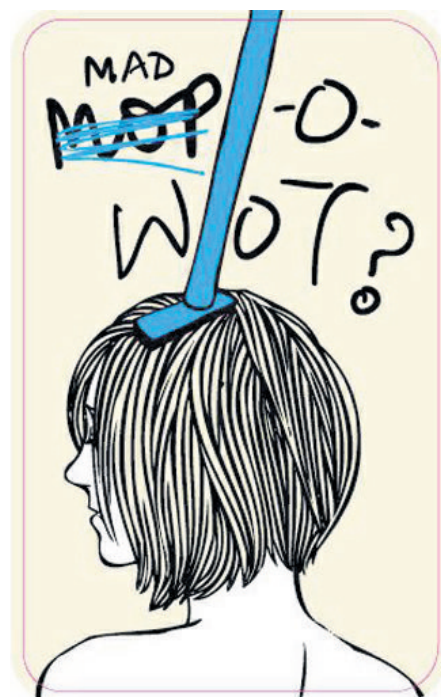
## CITATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In 2010, The New Yorker carried an article on neologisms and new constructions in language and featured the website Unwords. The article (Unwords of Wisdom, Posted by Deirdre Foley-Mendelssohn),

says, “But there are also many (words and phrases) on Unwords that now seem obvious and ubiquitous (manorexia, Masshole) — a sign that these words actually do flow into the language and are absorbed by it.”

## IT’S HAPPENING AROUND YOU

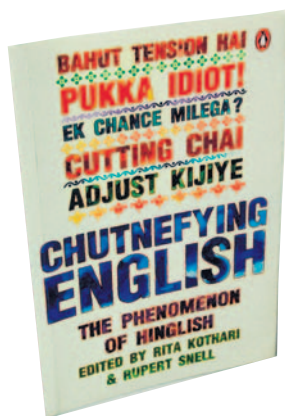
Celebrity hairstylist Sapna Bhavnani’s popular salon in Bandra and Andheri, suburbs of Mumbai, is called Mad-o-Wot, in the popular manner of speaking that conveys incredulity with a quizzical “Mad or what?!” Check out the salon’s funky calling card.



# ENGLISH IS A VERY PHUNNY LANGUAGE



**THE QUEEN'S HINGLISH: HOW TO SPEAK PAKKA, BY BALJINDER K MAHAL**



**CHUTNEFYING ENGLISH: THE PHENOMENON OF HINGLISH, EDITED BY RITA KOTHARI AND RUPERT SNELL**

Published in 2006, this humorous book deals with the subject of purism attached to the English language, and writes that India alone accounts for more than 350 million English speakers (of course, that must have changed since). Making a case for Hinglish, Baljinder K Mahal writes that “although the practice was previously frowned upon by purists, people are becoming more and more comfortable with mixing words from languages such as Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi with English. This means that Hinglish, as this modern blend of standard English, Indian English and South Asian languages is popularly known, could soon become the most widely spoken form of English on earth.” She continues: “Hinglish, once seen as the lingo of the uneducated masses, is now trendy — the language of the movers and shakers.”

In January 2009, the Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad organised a two-day international conference on Hinglish. The discussions held over those 48 hours made their way into a book titled Chutnefying English: The Phenomenon of Hinglish, published earlier this year. Various perspectives on the growth and evolution of Hinglish are presented in the book. One of the essays, by Shannon Anderson-Finch, titled ‘More than the sum of its parts: Hinglish as an additional communicative resource’, concludes that “Hinglish, in the guise of Hindi-English code-switching, is a resource that systematically expands options bilingual speakers have for making linguistic and social meaning... rather than limiting options speakers have for making linguistic meaning, Hinglish has been shown to expand speaker options in particular ways.” PIC/ SAMEER MARKANDE

## THE HANDBOOK

### YOUR GUIDE TO MEGA-FUN WORDS

**FACEBOOK MINUTE:** (n) an elongated and obscure period of time spent distracted on Facebook when the original intent was to merely check your messages.

**Eg:** Dude, where’s Mark? Oh, he just ran inside to check his messages really quick. He’ll back in a Facebook minute. F\*\*k, we’re never gonna eat now.

(From Urban Dictionary.com)

**DEPOCKET (D?-P?K’?T):** (n) To fall from a pocket due to one becoming horizontal. (n) The act of unloading the contents of one’s pockets before lying or sitting on a bed or couch. Especially done by males; items are usually deposited into their hat, or, in the event of staying the night, into their shoes, (n) To remove the pockets from an article of clothing.

**Eg:** Dude, your change is depocketing! Catch it! (From Unwords.com)

**MADRAS CUT:** (n) An editorial cut in film editing where a particular shot is replayed in quick succession several times.

**Eg:** The hero Rajinikanth leaps across a ravine to grab a bullet out of the air before it hits his grandfather’s chest. The shot of his leap is repeated 7-10 times for added effect.

OR

**Man, that Madras Cut made me feel like I was getting my money’s worth. Even I want to be like Rajini. Can you fire a gun at me?**

(From Samosapedia.com)

**BROCCOLI JOURNALISM:** (n) Collective responsibility. Socialised journalism.

**Eg:** This is the ultimate in broccoli journalism: You are not only forced to read what journalists say is good for you but you are now forced to pay for it through taxation.

(From Doubletongued.org)