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Anglomania: Colonial Influence in Postcolonial India

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Abstract:

One and the half centuries of British Raj left the indelible mark on Indian lives and culture. These marks have shaken the traditional Indian notions in a great way. Literature is a replica of a mind and society. The changing phases, psychological upheavals, the crisis of identities, etc. as a result of mingling with regulations of colonizer are effectively reflected in Indian Writing in English. The prolonged acquaintance with British ways of living, modern tools and technologies fascinated Indians to imitate them. The major objective of the present paper is to discuss Anglomania amongst Indians with reference to various postcolonial literary pieces penned by Indian writers in English. It focuses majorly on class conflict, status conflict, and linguistic-conflict. It also discusses changing shades of caste conflict, acceptance, and denial of changes imposed by postcolonial era on Indian minds, fascination for Queen's English or Posh accents, etc. Various literary samples are tested against the tendency of mimicking not only the linguistic aspects but also cultural appearances of the rulers.

Keywords: Anglomania, postcolonial, class conflict, status conflict, and linguistic-conflict.

Introduction:

East India Company anchored in 1600 with the intention of trading which later developed into the desire of ruling the country with wealth and prosperity. The desire turned into the fact that lasted for long 150 years till 1947. As a result of the long association with indigenous India, the need of lingua-franca emerged. Thus, to form a class of interpreters British Raj introduced their 'alien' language in India. The institutionalization of the English

language in India falls into three major phases. In the first phase, the English language was introduced in India by the missionaries with the mere purpose to spread the religion and beliefs of the settlers. In 1698, when the charter of the Company was renewed, a 'missionary clause' was added to it. In the second phase, the ambitious Indian scholars like Rammohan Roy appealed the government to introduce English to acquire the knowledge in the fields like mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection (Kachru (1983a:18-22). In the third phase, T.B. Macaulay, in his often-quoted *Minute 1835*, dreamt of developing a culturally distinct group who would form "...a class who may be interpreters between us and those whom we govern, a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Kachru, 1986:5). Eventually, the English language became an imperative part of Indian life.

Thus, the colonizers introduced English in the Indian education system with the sole intention for producing the cheap clerks or the '*babus*' who will follow their commands and help them in the administration.

Chaudhari ridicules the view that English "was imposed on a subject people by a set of foreign rulers for the sake of carrying their alien government" (cited from Kachru, 1986:34).

Though the English language was imposed on Indians, later it became an essential part and obligatory need of Indian society.

Raj crumbled and became a part of history but the English language has been sipped and absorbed into Indian terrain. The deeply rooted tree of British Raj aged 150 years, uprooted but its sapling called 'English' remained permanent in the Indian soil and minds.

Not only the British language but also British culture lingered behind in India. The narcissism of culture, the native land of England, their white colour and modern technologies made Englishmen to think themselves as a superior race of all humankind. This tendency of Englishmen hypnotized most of the Indians, who fondly tried to imitate them. This phenomenon of Anglomania has been well captured by E.M. Forster (1952[1924]) in *a passage to India*. Referring to the Englishmen in India, one of the characters in the novel says

India likes gods,

And Englishmen like posing as gods (quoted from Kachru, 1986).

British ways of life, etiquettes, mannerisms, discipline influenced Indian lives. British introduced their language to create a class of clerks. But the ones who could speak the language of the rulers consciously or unconsciously started to copy British culture and ways

of living. In this attempt, they also copied the distance created by the rulers between them and the colonized. Education, which was the monopoly of the upper class in ancient India before colonization, was made open for all by British Raj. Though they eradicated the line of castes from the education system, the caste system that was existed in India since ages and was not wiped out thoroughly. Along with it, the drift of discrimination deepened due to class conflict. Education open for all created two major classes, educated Indians and uneducated Indians. Here again, these classes were divided into those who knew English well and those who have less command of language or who were completely ignorant about English. Thus, this distance of class started to reflect in the bourgeoisie system in India, where the economically and educationally affluent class dominates the other classes of poor and illiterate people.

As literature mirrors life, the very fact has been reflected in a few literary pieces of Indian writers in English. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, a novel by Shashi Deshpande, Madhav, a boy from the village, tries to speak in English with Saru (the protagonist and an established pediatrician in Bombay).

‘I wish’, Madhav said, suddenly switching over to English. ‘I wish I was small. I wish I was not the biggest.’ Madhav painfully aware of his poor English had asked him to speak to him in English for a short while every day.

‘And correct me when I go wrong’, he said.

‘Why do you mind so much?’ She asked him once. ‘After all, it isn’t our language, and how many people can distinguish good English from bad?’

‘But Sarutai, it makes so much difference when you’re able to read and write good English.’

She watched his struggle to improve dispassionately as it was a strange and incomprehensible exercise. She had already forgotten she had done the same thing once. (p.150)

The above instance manifests the Anglomania among Indians. Madhav, a village, wants to develop English-speaking skills in order to match with a so-called standard class of English speakers. Saru corrects his vernacular English. She asks him the reason for his stubborn preference of English over mother tongue if he is not comfortable but he says that it is a symbol of status. Saru, an educated pediatrician by profession, realizes this as a vain pursuit, but again reminds her past attempts to improve her English-speaking skills to match with the English-speaking class. Thus, though the person is from an affluent and highly

educated background or from a vernacular and average-educated background, the Anglomania is found in everyone as a part of the fear of drifting away from contemporary society.

In the novel *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, Rukmini (the protagonist) and her husband are tenant farmers. Englishmen build a tannery factory near their village, which changes their lives thoroughly. Farming is depended on nature's mercy. Traditional farmers like Rukmini dislike tannery building near their village which claims children's play area. The cost of living also goes high. Due to the excessive rain and drought, the farming resources decrease. People and animals die out of hunger. Her sons rebel against parents and join tannery. Nathan wants them to pursue an ancestral occupation, i.e. farming. However, his sons think that tannery as a fixed source of income and more reliable than farming which made them starve and lose the lives of their brothers. This instance is a symbolism of the impact of class as well as culture-conflict caused in the postcolonial era. The young generation in India was majorly attracted towards the advanced life-styles and money-policies of Englishmen, which created a class Indian in blood and colour, but British in manners and thoughts.

In the novel, *Starry Nights* by Shobha De, Kishenbhai (a producer and mentor of Aasha Rani) mesmerizes by the beauty of Aasha Rani (the protagonist and a film actress) in the first encounter. In order to display that he is a man of importance in the film industry and to impress Aasha's mother, he starts speaking in English:

'I'm knowing everyone in the industry. What is your good name? Is your *beti* knowing dancing? Actually, I'm knowing everybody- dance directors, music directors, cameraman... all big producers, *hero-log*, heroines, everybody. These days demand is good. South Indian girls are good. No *khit-pit*, no *faltu nakhras*. In Bombay all are liking South Indian girls too much, maybe I can get baby a role...' (p.7)

Above sentences are the markers of the typical English usage by the minimal bilingual Indians belonging to the Zero point in Kachru's 'cline of bilingualism' (Kachru, 1983, chapter 2, p.46). Kishenbhai in order to impress *Amma* and Aasha Rani speaks in ridiculous English. Speaking in English is considered as a mark of high-status and prestige in India. Thus, Kishenbhai speaks in English to create impression of being a successful and eminent producer. A strange attitude could commonly be found among Indians that in order to prove one's elite-class, Indians prefer speaking in English than speaking in any other Indian Language.

The affluent people from film industry always tease Aasha Rani, the dark girl from Chennai, for her Madrasi accents of English. They used to call her *gawar*, i.e. barbaric, due to her appearance and language. Later, she tries to cope up with them. After her long-stay in New Zealand with her New Zealander husband, her English accents were remarkably improved and suddenly the attitude of some people towards her too changed.

Aasha Rani unannounced settles in New Zealand and does not return to the film industry for a long period of time. When Aasha Rani appears in a filmy-party after the long gap, Rita, her old acquaintance, greets her. Aasha's reply startles her and she remarks the change in the polished accent of English of Aasha Rani due to her association with native English. Thus, the same people once laughed at her are now impressed by her polished accents.

In the novel *The God of Small Things*, Baby Kocchamma's (maternal great-aunt of the twins) doggedness over British English to vernacular or Indian English had rooted in her being a Syrian Christen. She thinks that they are the true ancestor of Christen with British origin. Thus, she compels the children to speak grammatically and phonetically accurate English.

Margaret Kochamma, British-ex-wife of Chacko (the Oxford-scholar uncle of twins, the protagonists) visits Ayemenem with her daughter Sophie Mol after the death of her husband. On their arrival, all try to impress them by mimicking native English accents. They welcome her by playing the violin and by cutting a cake. These traditions are found in British culture but not in Indian culture.

Comrade K.N.M. Pillai, a leading politician of Communist party in Ayemenem (Kerala) insisted his niece Latha to recite English poem before Chacko. She mechanically recites the poem before Chacko without comprehension of meaning and in a Malayalam-influenced accent. Pillai boasts acquaintance of his family members with English including his uneducated wife. This assertion over English reveals maniac fondness of British language and culture.

The novel depicts strong provocation of Marxism information of Communist party in India, especially in Kerala. The provoked youth from poor families and low-costs are the major crowd shown as the followers of Marxism. The submerged voice of underprivileged class raged against the bourgeoisie in Kerala reflects as a marker of status-conflict upraised by rulers, which rooted in Indian lands.

The word *Zamindar/ Zamindari* found in many post-colonial novels such *The God of Small Things*, *Across the Black Water*, *Nectar in a Sieve*, etc. brings the colonial constituent in the post-colonial India through Indian Writing in English. *Zamindari* system was introduced in British Periods in order to assure the fix sum of land revenue to the state, which was collected by the *Zamindars* from the peasants. These *Zamindars* were mainly wealthy and influential landlords. Along with the right to property amendment made in the Indian Constitution after independence, the *Zamindari* system was abolished. Yet the references found in the Post-colonial Indian Writing in English, which represents the deep impact of the colonial period in post-colonial days. The tendency to follow a system implemented in the colonial period by British Raj, which is abolished in post-colonial times, represents the Anglomania of self-proclaimed hair of Indian landlords.

The story, *Karma* by Khushawant Singh, written in *The Collected Stories* in 1989, sets against times of British Raj. Mohan Lal, who used to serve the British Raj, was ashamed of Indian culture, lifestyle, but stubbornly preferred to speak Queen's English or in Anglicized Hindi. Also, he used to dress up like a high-ranked British official. He used to show off his mastery over English through various means such as speaking English with British accents, solving crossword puzzles. He used to hate his wife Lachmi, who was a representative of an ordinary Indian proud of one's own culture and ways of living, for her unsophisticated manners. Dressed like a high-ranked British official, Mohan Lal once traveled in the first class compartment, which belonged only to the British. He made his wife travel in general compartment as he was ashamed of her rustic-looks and coarse manners such as *pan*-chewing. But eventually, two Englishmen abused him for sitting in their compartment and threw him out of the train. Thus, his Anglomania makes him pay the price in the form of humiliation.

The novel, *Across the Black Waters* by Mulk Raj Anand, sets against the backdrop of colonial times in India. It depicts the story of World War I between Britain and German, in which Indians were sent to France to fight on behalf of Britain. The close assistance with British Officials in India and France motivated many Indians in the British Army to copy British ways and language. In contrast to Indian women, English women were frank enough to mix in the troops of the Indian Army. In an attempt to establish a conversation with the ladies from British Officers families, some Indians serving in the British army in France used to talk in English with funnier constructions and Indian accents. In this attempt, a bundle of literal translations is formed by various characters in the novel. For example, "What is your good name please?"

Not only the Indian common folk but also Indian Writers in English display their interest in the English tongue. The Indian poet Kamala Das also shows her fondness for the English language in her poem 'An Introduction':

‘-----The language I speak
 Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness
 All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
 Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest.’

Whereas, another eminent Indian poet K. Daruwalla in his poem 'The Mistress' calls English language as his 'mistress'. By addressing the English language as his 'mistress', he shows his fondness for the English language.

The terse mark of a character in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), a novel by Shashi Deshpande: "After all, it isn't our language" (p.150) reflects the dilemma of Indian speakers of English. Ironically, the novelist writes in English with ease and comfort. Besides the conflict, the confirmed fact is that the dispersal of bilingualism in English, its creative use and use of English as a pan-Indian link language has continued and will continue in the post-independence years. Thus, the Anglomania will co-exist with Indian society, their ways of living and Indian writing in literature.

Thus, to conclude, the influence of the English language is incredibly strong on Indian minds since ages. It is more psychological than the actual need. It is 'Linguistic Schizophrenia' (Kachru, 1986:14) that compels most of the Indians to insist 'Education in English' for their next generations. They fear to fall behind in competition and get drifted-away from the contemporary Elite society. The debate on the insistence of the English language in all aspects of life is unending as there are two major groups in India: an anti-English group and English-supporting group. The very fact has been pictured in various novels by prolific Indian writers in English. The existence of the English language in Indian soil is the undeniable fact, but the chasing English language should have some concrete ground. Though there are some strong reasons for becoming Anglomaniac, there should be some justifiable ways of persisting British language and their ways of living. The thought should be given to the question that does a person need to be anglomaniac in order to survive in the contemporary world.

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