

## *English in South Asia*

### 1. London Missionary Society, from a proposal to erect a college in Bangalore (1826)

Without the charge of predilection for our own country, we think we are justified in asserting that Britain stands unrivalled by any ancient or modern nation in the study of universal knowledge, and that through the English language India will receive from her conquerors and legislators an intellectual treasure far more valuable than all she has in her power to give in exchange... A knowledge of the English tongue and its authors, therefore, appears to hold a place of the first importance in a plan for the intellectual and moral elevation of the Hindoos. The English language will not only prove a more correct medium of giving public instruction to the students, but it will facilitate their progress in useful knowledge. All the Indian languages have been for so many ages the vehicle of every thing in their superstition which is morally debasing or corrupting to the mind, and so much is the grossly impure structure of heathenism wrought into the native languages, that the bare study of them often proves injurious to the mind of a European.

### 2. Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59) to the Committee of Public Instruction (1834)

In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We 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. To that class 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.

### 3. Anglo-Indian Vocabulary

chit [1785]	cowrie [1692]	curry [1598]	dinghy [1794]
khaki [1837]	loot [1788]	nabob [1612]	pyjamas [1800]
polo [1842]	thug [1810]	toddy [1609]	veranda [1711]

### 4. David O. Allen (1799-1863), 'The State and Prospects of the English Language in India' (1853-4)

This desire to learn English has been increasing for some years past, and probably the number now engaged in acquiring it, is three times as large as it was fifteen or twenty years ago. But, even at the present time, many who become thus educated, find it very difficult, and some find it impossible, to obtain such employment as they expected. The supply of such educated talent is increasing faster than the demand, and it will not be many years before the principal motives in which this strong desire for English education had its origin, will cease, or at least will exert less influence than they have had for many years.

### 5. from Yule and Burnell's Anglo-Indian glossary (originally published in 1886)

In Bengal and elsewhere, among Anglo-Indians, [baboo] is often used with a slight savour of disparagement, as characterizing a superficially cultivated, but too often effeminate, Begali. And from the extensive employment of the class to which the term was applied as a title, in the capacity of clerks in English offices, the word has come often to signify 'a native clerk who writes English'.

6. Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948), from *Evil Wrought by the English Medium* (originally published in 1908)

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....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 became a Barrister, I may not speak my mother-tongue, and that someone else should have to translate to me from my own language? Is not this absolutely absurd? Is it not a sign of slavery? Am I to blame the English for it or myself? Is it we, the English-knowing men, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the nation but upon us.

7. Responses to the question 'Why write in English', in P. Lal, *Modern Indian Poetry in English* (1969)

*M.P. Bhaskaran.* Obviously, people [who do not write in it] are afraid of English. Or they are jealous. Perhaps both. The Hindi imperialists fear that English, unless it is rooted out, may not allow Hindi to dominate India. They are jealous of the world-wide audience that those who write in English have, actually or potentially. They are scared of the overtly if Hindi in contrast with the richness of English, and the inadequacy if Hindi to deal with the world of today and tomorrow in contrast with the ability of English.

*Deb Kumar Das.* The England which gave the world the language which is at issue has lost its claim to imperial status; 'English' is now a world language, its spread across other countries and cultures is now a historical event.

*R. de L. Furtado.* The English language has been with us for a good number of years; it has cemented the bonds of though between the north and south of the country; it has kept going a continuous dialogue between India and the rest of the world.

*Paul Jacob.* Anglophobia is a lower-class attitude. (Attitude is the key-word). In Kerala, where I come from, there is still much misdirected ill-feeling about speaking in English. Indeed, a euphemism for that particular activity there, is 'shitting in English'.

*Adil Jussawalla.* No. English is not an Indian language and never will be. Unlike West Indian English, ours is not used at all levels of society, nor are the idiosyncracies consistent enough to amount to a language.

*Meera Pillai.* The only reason I write in English in preference to nay other language is that it is the tongue I am best acquainted with...I had my entire scholl and college education in English-medium institutions run by nuns.

*Rakshat Puri.* I believe English is now an Indian language—in the way that English is an American language in the USA, an Australian language in Australia, West Indian in the West Indies, Ghanaian in Ghana...and will become more Indian as time passes.

8. Typical Features of Indian English

**Phonology**

1. Non-rhotic
2. The voiceless stops /p t k/ are pronounced without aspiration in all positions (that is, without the extra breath of air in the first *p* of *pop*)
3. The alveolar and palatal consonants /t d s z l/ are often replaced by retroflex consonants (i.e. pronounced with the tongue curled up and backwards in the mouth)
4. Loss of the distinction between /v/ and /w/, as well as of some other sounds, depending upon the speaker's native language.

## Syntax

*I am doing it* (= I constantly do it, I have been doing it)

## Vocabulary

1. Anglo-Indian Words: *juggernaut, bungalow, pundit, bandana, jungle, verandah, chutney, guru, cummerbund*
2. Archaisms: *time-piece* (watch), *out of station* (away)
3. Compounds: *mixy-grinder* (food blender), *Eve-teaser* (someone who harasses women), *newspaper wallah* (newspaper seller), *box-wallah* (businessman)
4. Loanwords from Indian Languages: *He went to the gudwarra (temple) to have a darshan of (offer worship to) the deity.*
5. A tendency to use Latinate vocabulary or expressions perceived by others as flamboyant, hyperbolic, or overly metaphoric. Examples: *demise* rather than *death*, *of tender years* rather than *young*, *melancholy* rather than *sad*; "I am bubbling with zeal and enthusiasm to serve as a research assistant". See also the letter to the *Hindu* below.

### 9. 'Evils of Dowry System', letter to the editor, The Hindu (Madras), 18 July 1980

Sir,—The prevalence of dowry is only one of the symptoms of the wide-spread national malediction with ramifications in every field from Parliament to educational institutions. We see now a conspicuous deterioration of values in all faculties as the whole nation is oriented towards 'quick-money making' with less labour and least effort....So even before this clamour to prosperity ends in vulgarity, let us rise up to revive our cherished values.

In this context, the parents and the marriageable children should first of all realise that marriage is above all a harmonious continuum of sharing of every phase of the (vicissitudes) of human experiences and so the married couple should be allowed to make their own independent life, earning their bread and winning mutual respect. The happiness of conjugal life is in struggling and seeking to fulfill the wishes and aspirations of the partners through adjustments and sacrifices in a give and take process. Borrowed wealth in the name of dowry is only surreptitious embezzlement and the monetary satiation out of it will wither away soon with the waning of this ill gotten wealth. For a youngman who takes the hand of a girl in marriage with sacred promises by holding her hand in one hand and demanding (or acquiesce to his parents' demand) and appropriating by the other hand an unscrupulous amount in cash and kind is total disgrace and dishonour. And it is equally degrading for the girl to be sold for a price losing her identity.

The substantial contributive factor towards the perpetuation of the demoralising system lies mainly with the hypocrisy of the 'parents' community....Umpteen cases are there where the parents go to the extent of selling their daughter to an unknown groom even against the wishes of their daughter just to breed their pride.

Rather than perorate further, I will say that it is high time that committed groups of youngmen and women organised themselves not only to make vows to abolish dowry but take upon themselves the task of educating the public on the new values.