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**UPAMANYU CHATTERJEE'S *ENGLISH, AUGUST: AN INDIAN STORY*: A POST  
COLONIAL READING**

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**Abstract:**

*The western civilization has immensely dominated and covered almost all the facets of the Indian civilization. There are many factors behind this change. Notably and most important is the education system that has been introduced by the colonial British. The system was established by the British who introduced English language as the second one in the curriculum. The medium of instruction in English language is also introduced by them. This system is still in practice in almost all the schools at the higher secondary level and colleges across India.*

**Keywords:** *Colonialism, Westernization, Education system, etc.*

**Introduction:**

The adaptability of the western civilization took birth after the entry of the British in India. They implemented their own concepts in India in order to develop and modern the nation. This modernity to the new methods resulted in the westernization. Many elite educated Indians were impressed by the systems introduced by the British. These systems are still followed by Indians in General and the educated sect in particular. For instance is the education system in India.

The western civilization has immensely dominated and covered almost all the facets of the Indian civilization. There are many factors behind this change. Notably and most important is the education system that has been introduced by the colonial British. The system was established by the British who introduced English language as the second one in the curriculum. The medium of instruction in English language is also introduced by them. This system is still in practice in almost all the schools at the higher secondary level and colleges across India.

Almost the entire nation came directly under the influence of western civilization. Particularly Bengal and Calcutta were heavily dominated by the culture of the west. There are two major factors behind this change. First is the most interesting factor that leads to the adoption of western culture by the Indians.

Second factor is that most of the government employees under the East India Company and the educated class of people settled down in Calcutta and Bengal. This process of the settlement opened the gate to westernization. The deal with the British or the attraction of Indians towards the British is the cause behind this westernization.

People in these regions had frequent and familiar contacts with the colonials. The civilization of the west particularly the modernity of the west mesmerized the Indian folk in general and the educated youth in particular. They were so impressed by the civilization that their way of living changed to westernize even some of them changed their furniture to the western one.

During the survey of India in 1880, Sir Richard Temple found great changes that made India totally or almost westernized. There were changes taking place in the field of economics, moral sentiments and social attitudes of many people even the religious ideas were dominated and modified by the culture of the west. In his preface to the book, *Modern India and the West*, O' Malley writes:

In the survey of India which he gave in *India in 1880*, Sir Richard Temple drew attention to the changes which had already been effected by the plastic touch of western civilization. The face of the country and its economic organization were undergoing modification; the religious ideas, the moral sentiments, the social habits of many classes of the people were changing fast.

Lord Ripon made an observation in 1882 and came to know of the fact that there were rapid changes in the country. His attention was focused that the signs of times had entered upon a time of change. His observation reveals:

The spread of education, the influence of a free Press, the substitution of legal for discretionary administration, the progress of railways, telegraphs etc., the easier communication with Europe, and the more ready influx of European ideas were beginning to produce a marked effect. New ideas were springing up; new aspirations were being called forth (*O'Malley, Preface*).

### **English, August: An Indian Story:**

Upamanyu Chatterjee, the realistic novelist has sketched the changes in Indians after the colonial rule. Particularly his renowned work, *English, August: An Indian Story* is a fine instance of the westernization affect on the Indian urban educated youth. The protagonist is dominated by the culture of the west. He wants others to call him August, instead of his real name Agastya Sen. He is a typical Indian urban educated youth with all his love for western civilization.

He is not mingled with the outside public instead feel deserted and dissociated. He is reserve and tight lipped. He does not want to enjoy any body's company except the company of women. He is fond of taking western dishes. He hates to have Indian meals. The following line from the novel would be appropriate to this point. "Dinner was unbelievable, the dal tasted like lukewarm chilled shampoo"(Chatterjee,6).

He is more cautious about his health. He is particular whether the water served to him in Madna is boiled properly. His cautiousness about the health lables him westernized; "Then the naibtehsildar said that the Collector had told him to tell the cook to boil Agastya's drinking water as there was endemic jaundice and epidemic cholera in Madna" (Chatterjee, 6).

Being educated and westernized, Agastya is dissociated from all the activities in the outside world. He lives in his own world where he tries to find peace and good company. He spends most of his time laying in bed and watching the ceiling. He grows insomniac. He spends a big portion of the night watching the glow in the tube light.

It is his feeling of being modern and educated, that he keeps himself away from others. He is neither familiar nor friendly. He is lost in his own world of unending thought. His heart and mind is totally westernized. He is a western drink in an Indian bottle. It is a common factor that one who is educated and modern is always away from the mass. It is his or her inner feeling that he is something extraordinary. This complex makes him dissociated from others even some times from his own counter parts. The westernized Agastya is not sentimental but rational. He is practical rather than conservative.

India is one of those ancient countries that have their own culture and civilization. People are usually sentimental and respect the feelings of others. L.S.S.O'Malley mentions the following quotation of Tara Chand in his book:

The dominant fact in the consciousness of Europe is the will to know; and the peculiar emphasis of each has profoundly influenced the growth of their civilizations. Religion, philosophy, art custom and institutions all bear the same mark, and all reiterate in their different languages and fundamental concept of reality... (Chatterjee, 2).

Education is the most striking factor for an educated urban Indian to turn westernize as is the case of Agastya Sen. It is the influence that flashed into the life of elite Indians. Though there were various systems of education yet the system of education introduced by the British left an indelible impression in the minds of Indians particularly the youth. The widespread knowledge of the English language and the reading of English texts, magazines, articles and newspapers drew attention of the educated section in India which raised the attraction towards western civilization.

Agastya Sen, the protagonist when overtaken by loneliness reads nothing but only English book and listens to the music. The westernization makes the Indians modern, and at the same time, makes them estranged. This dissociation of the protagonist makes him dissatisfied in all the activities of life. For instance, he is not happy with his job and station in Madna and similarly in Delhi.

### Conclusion:

It shows the protagonist longs for peace and happiness where he finds it nowhere else. "He had no definite memories of happiness in Delhi; all he knew was that he had not been happy, and that seemed enough. Perhaps he was merely longing for the past in an uncongenial present, forgetting its petty unhappiness" (Chatterjee, 145). Next to marijuana, it is the women folk that attract Agastya. During a discussion with Agastya, his friend Tonic asks him, "And yet you want to leave the IAS, for callow reasons, just because in Madna you don't see the girls that you see in Delhi and Bombay" (Chatterjee, 171).

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