

11 THE BETRAYAL OF FAITH



Belief in an ideal dies hard. I had believed in an ideal for all the twenty-eight years of my life-the ideal of the British Way of Life.

It had sustained me when as a youth in a high school of nearly all white students I had to work harder or run faster than they needed to do in order to make the grade. It had inspired me in my College and University years when ideals were dragged in the dust of disillusionment following the Spanish Civil War. Because of it I had never sought to acquire American citizenship, and when, after graduation and two years of field work in Venezuela, I came to England for postgraduate study in 1939, I felt that at long last I was personally identified with the hub of fairness, tolerance and all the freedoms. It was therefore without any hesitation that I volunteered for service with the Royal Air Force in 1940, willing and ready to lay down my life for the preservation of the ideal which had been my lodestar. But now that self-same ideal was gall and wormwood in my mouth.

The majority of Britons at home have very little appreciation of what that intangible yet amazingly real and invaluable export-the British Way of Life-means to colonial people; and they seem to give little thought to the fantastic phenomenon of races so very different from themselves in pigmentation, and widely scattered geographically. assiduously identifying themselves with British loyalties, beliefs and traditions. This attitude can easily be observed in the way in which the coloured Colonial will quote the British systems of Law, Education and Government, and will adopt fashions in dress and social codes, even though his knowledge of these things has depended largely on second hand information.

Yes, it is wonderful to be British-until one comes to Britain. By dint of careful saving or through hard-won scholarships many of them arrive in Britain to be educated in the Arts and Sciences and in the varied processes of legislative and administrative government. They come, bolstered by a firm, conditioned belief that Britain and the British stand for all that is best in both Christian and Democratic terms; in their naivete they ascribe these high principles to all Britons, without exception.

I had grown up British in every way. Myself, my parents and my parents'

parents, none of us knew or could know any other way of living, of thinking, of being; we knew no other cultural pattern, and I had never heard any of my forebears complain about being British. As a boy I was taught to appreciate English literature, poetry and prose, classical and contemporary, and it was absolutely natural for me to identify myself with the British heroes of the adventure stories against the villains of the piece who were invariably non-British and so, to my boyish mind, more easily capable of villainous conduct. The more selective reading of my college and university life was marked by the same predilection for English literature, and I did not hesitate to defend my preferences to my American colleagues. In fact, all the while in America, I vigorously resisted any criticism of Britain or British policy, even when in the privacy of my own room, closer examination clearly proved the reasonableness of such criticism.

It is possible to measure with considerable accuracy rise and fall of the tides, or the behaviour in space of objects invisible to the naked eye. But who can measure the depths of disillusionment? Within the somewhat restricted sphere of an academic institution, the Colonial student learns to heal, debate, to paint and to think; outside that sphere he has to meet the indignities and rebuffs of intolerance, prejudice and hate. After qualification and establishment in practice or position, the trials and successes of academic life are half forgotten in the hurly-burly of living, but the hurts are not so easily forgotten.

To many in Britain a Negro is a "darky" or a "nigger" or a "black"; he is identified, in their minds, with inexhaustible brute strength; and often I would hear the remark "working like a nigger" or "labouring like a black" used to emphasize some occasion of sustained effort. They expect of him a courteous subservience and contentment with a lowly state of menial employment and slum accommodation. It is true that here and there one sees Negroes as doctors, lawyers or talented entertainers, but they are somehow considered "different" and not to be confused with the mass.

I am a Negro, and what had happened to me at that interview constituted, to my mind, a betrayal of faith. I had believed in freedom, in the freedom to live in the kind of dwelling I wanted, providing I was able and willing to pay the price; and in the freedom to work at the 'kind of profession for which I was qualified, without reference to my racial or religious origins. All the big talk of Democracy and Human Rights seemed as spurious as the glib guarantees with which some manu-facturers underwrite their

products in the confident hope that they will never be challenged. The Briton at home takes no responsibility for the protestations and promises made in his name by British officials over seas.

I reflected on my life in the U.S.A. There, when prejudice is felt, it is open, obvious, blatant; the white man makes his position very clear, and the black man fights those prejudices with equal openness and fervour, using every constitutional device available to him. The rest of the world in general and Britain in particular are prone to point an angrily critical finger at American intolerance, forgetting that in its short history as a nation it has granted to its Negro citizens more opportunities for advancement and betterment per capita, than any other nation in the world with an indigenous Negro population. Each violent episode, though greatly to be deplored, has invariably preceded some change, some improvement in the American Negro's position. The things they have wanted were important enough for them to fight and die for, and those who died did not give their lives in vain. Furthermore, American Negroes have been generally established in communities in which their abilities as labourer, artisan, doctor, lawyer, scientist, educator and entertainer have been directly or indirectly of benefit to that community; in terms of social and religious intercourse they have been largely independent of white people.

In Britain I found things to be very different. I have yet to meet a single English person who has actually admitted to anti-Negro prejudice it is even generally believed that no such thing exists here. A Negro is free to board any bus or train and sit anywhere, provided he has paid the appropriate fare; the fact that many people might pointedly avoid sitting near him is casually overlooked. He is free to seek accommodation in any licensed hotel or boarding house-the courteous refusal which frequently follows is never ascribed to prejudice. The betrayal I now felt was greater because it had been perpetrated with the greatest of charm and courtesy.

I realized at that moment that I was British, but evidently not a Briton, and that fine differentiation was now very important; I would need to re-examine myself and my whole future in terms of this new appraisal.

E.R. Braithwaite

(adapted from 'To Sir, With Love')

About the Author:

Edward Ricardo Braithwaite (born 1922) is a Guyanese novelist, writer, teacher and diplomat, best known for his stories of social conditions and racial discrimination against black people.

Braithwaite was first educated at Queen's College, Guyana and then the City College of New York (1940). He went on to attend the University of Cambridge (1949), from which he earned an undergraduate degree and a doctorate in Physics. During World War II, he joined the Royal Air Force as a pilot.

After the war, like many other ethnic minorities, despite his extensive training, Braithwaite could not find work in his field and, disillusioned, reluctantly took up a job as a school teacher in the East End of London. The book *To Sir, with Love* (1959) was based on his experiences there.

Braithwaite's numerous writings have primarily dealt with the difficulties of being an educated man, a black social worker, a black teacher and simply a human being in inhumane circumstances.

About the Text:

The extract is from E.R. Braithwaite's autobiographical novel '*To Sir, With Love*'. It deals with his disillusionment with the British way of life which he finds full of hypocrisy and deception. He felt deceived and disillusioned and wrote about the misleading British way of life. There is a lot of difference between what the English people say and do. They say that they do not make difference between the white and the black and that the Britons and the negroes enjoy equal rights of living. But Braithwaite feels that such high sounding words are a part of polished policy to befool the negro population in Britain. He points out that in Britain there are abusive terms such as "darky", "nigger" or "black" used to address a negro. He satirically comments, "yes, it is wonderful to be British-until one comes to Britain".

GLOSSARY

disillusionment (n)	:	breaking of a belief
hub (n)	:	centre

volunteered (v)	:	offered willfully
preservation (v)	:	protectoin; keeping safe
lodestar (n)	:	pole star, the guiding principle
gall and wormwood (fig.)	:	giving bad taste; unpleasant
Britons (n)	:	natives of Britain
intangible (adj.)	:	that cannot be touched
Colonial people (n)	:	the people living in the countries once controlled by the British authorities
phenomenon (n)	:	thing that appears to or experienced by the senses
pigmentation (n)	:	colour of the skin
assiduously (adv)	:	diligently; laboriously
by dint of (ph)	:	by means of; with the help of
bolstered (v)	:	supported; motivated
naivete (n)	:	natural innocence in speech and behaviour
ascribe (v)	:	consider to be the cause or reason
forebears (n)	:	ancestors
predilection (n)	:	companions working together
vigorously (adv)	:	forcefully
indignities (n)	:	insults
rebuffs (n)	:	unkind refusal, hitting back
hurly-burly (n)	:	noisy commotion, disturbing hustle and bustle
nexhaustible (adj)	:	not ending
brute (n)	:	beast
subservience (n)	:	bowing down in respect
contentment (n)	:	satisfaction
menial (adj)	:	suitable to be done by a servant
betrayal (n)	:	breach of trust
spurious (adj)	:	false; not genuine

glib (adj)	:	about talking smoothly but insincerely
underwrite (v)	:	provide guarantee for quality
protestations (n)	:	declarations
reflected (v)	:	thought seriously
blatant (adj)	:	noisy and rough
prone (adj)	:	habitual; having a tendency
betterment (n)	:	improvement
per capita (adj)	:	per head
deplored (v)	:	condemned

ACTIVITY -1 : COMPREHENSION

A. State True or False. Write T for true and F for false in brackets :

1. The author has a trust in the British way of life. []
2. Britons are not the natives of Britain. []
3. The British make no difference between a white and a black. []
4. The author has shown his faith in Human Rights. []
5. The Americans are more considerate towards negroes than the British. []
6. Negroes earn more money in America than in Britain. []
7. The interview disappointed the author. []

B. Answer the following questions each in about 30-40 words:

1. Why did Braithwaite not think to acquire American citizenship ?
2. What is the British way of Life ?
3. Which subjects does the colonial student learn in an academic institution of Britain?
4. Which type of work is expected from a negro in Britain ?
5. Why did Braithwaite resist any criticism of British policy ?
6. What does the expression “labouring like a black” suggest ?
7. State how Braithwaite reacts to Democracy and Human Rights.
8. What is difference between a British and a Briton ?

9. Why did Braithwaite voluntarily offer his service to the British Royal Air Force ?

C. Answer the following question each in about 60 words :

1. “Yes, it is wonderful to be British - until one comes to Britain”. Explain.
2. How did the reading of English literature, poetry and prose influence the thinking of Braithwaite ?
3. Describe his views on freedom.
4. What is the nature of anti-negro tendency in America ?
5. Comment on the nature of anti- negro policy noticed in Britain.

ACTIVITY 2 : VOCABULARY

A. Match the following :

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | bolstered | : | criticized |
| 2. | indignities | : | untouchable |
| 3. | subservience | : | deception |
| 4. | contentment | : | insults |
| 5. | betrayal | : | motivated |
| 6. | blatant | : | salutation |
| 7. | hurly - burly | : | satisfaction |
| 8. | deplored | : | noisy and rough |
| 9. | intangible | : | routinely noise |

B. Convert the following adjectives into nouns and frame one sentence on each :

Example : intangible = intangibility :

People felt confused at the intangibility of the idea.

Adjectives : independent, administrative, violent, courteous, villainous, available, confident, intolerable, responsible

C. Find out synonyms for the following words from the lesson :

lodestar, predilection, rebuff, hub, forebears, brute, appraisal,

D. Find one word for each of the following expressions from the words given below :

betrayal, Briton, pigmentation, phenomenon, naivete

1. colour of the skin.
2. natural innocence in speech and behaviour.
3. breach of trust
4. thing that appears to or experienced by the senses.
5. a native of Britain.

ACTIVITY - 3 GRAMMAR

ADVERBIAL CLAUSES

An adverbial clause does the work of an adverb ; like the noun clauses and the adjective clauses, the adverbial clauses too have structures of their own, consisting of their own subject predicate pattern, attached to the main clauses in the complex sentences.

Type of Adverbial Clauses

A. Adverbial clause of time : They are introduced by the following conjunctions as soon as, when, whenever, while, as, since, after, before, until, once.

1. I took coffee *soon after the office work was finished*.
2. *As soon as the guests arrive*, the function will start.
3. *When she comes*, I shall go.
4. *Before you begin your journey*, lock your house well.
5. Students do not go to the classrooms *until the bell goes*.

B. Adverbial clauses of place : conjunctions used to introduce the clause are: where, wherever.

1. Drugs are kept where children do not reach.
2. Armed forces were deployed wherever the terrorist hideouts were expected .

C. Adverbial clauses of manner : conjunctions used to introduce this clause are : as, as if,

1. The plan is to be implemented as it is.
2. He lives in a luxurious house as if owned by a king.

D. Adverbial clauses of comparison : conjunctions : as, as, so - as, more than, less -than , er - than

1. The floor tiles are as tough as stone.
2. Your house is not as large as mine.
3. India is more powerful than Pakistan.
4. His new poem is less interesting than the old one.
5. The new trains are faster than the old ones.

E. Adverbial clauses of purpose or result : conjunctions : lest, so that in order that, for fear that, such that

1. He ran fast *lest he should miss the train* (purpose)
2. The minister reached the hospital *so that he could see the condition of the patients with his own eyes.* (purpose)
3. *In order that the mob might be controlled,* armed forces were sent (purpose)
4. *For fear that floods might* disrupt common life, a control room was set up. (purpose)
5. The book was so boring that I returned it to the bookseller without asking for the money back. (result)

F. Adverbial clauses of reason or cause : conjunctions : because, as since

1. He has been arrested *because the court has declared him* guilty
2. *Since she is ill,* she cannot attend the conference.
3. *As the winter has begun,* people will buy warm clothes.

G. Adverbial clauses of condition: conjunctions : if, unless, whether, provided that:

1. I should be obliged *if they could finish this work in time.*
2. *If you come,* I shall go.
3. *Unless you show your identity card,* you cannot enter the school.
4. He can enter the office *provided that he shows his identity card.*

5. *Whether you come or not*, the programme will start.

H. Adverbial clauses of concession : conjunctions : although, as, even though,
while, though, even if, whatever, when ever, whoever, no matter

1. Although he is wealthy, he is not satisfied.
2. Wealthy though he is, he is not satisfied.
3. Even if he has won the election, he is not reliable.
4. She is not laborious, even though she is intelligent.
5. whatever may be the result, your hardwork will be appreciated.
6. While I believe that the book is difficult, it is full of ancient learning.

EXERCISE

Join the following sentences using 'when' :

1. The students stood up. The teacher entered the class.
2. The audience clapped. The chief guest finished his speech.
3. Electricity supply was stopped. The storm came.
4. I learnt flute playing. I was fifteen at that time.
5. I reached home. The sun had set.

EXERCISE

Join the sentences using the words given in brackets :

1. He fell asleep. He was reading. (while)
2. He is rich. He never helps the poor. (although)
3. The police reached. The accident had taken place there. (where)
4. The function began. The guest arrived. (as soon as)
5. He cannot buy a car. He does not have much money. (as)
6. You cannot drive a vehicle. You should have a driving licence. (unless)
7. She was ill. She could not walk. (so, that)
8. Work hard. You may fail. (lest)
9. He is a criminal. One day he will go to jail. (because)
10. People will buy coolers. The summer has set in. (as)

EXERCISE

Join the following sentence using the conjunctions given in brackets :

1. More ATM booths will be opened. People need them. (if)
2. The wheat crop will be adversely affected. The rains fail. (if)
3. Complete your homework. You will not be allowed to enter the class. (unless)
4. You cannot drive a motorcycle. You should wear a helmet. (unless)
5. We can see the rainbow. The weather should be clear. (provided that)
6. You will be proved guilty. The court will punish you. (if)
7. Don't hoard the currency notes. you may be arrested. (if)
8. I shall go to see the Nahargarh fort. My parents will permit me.
(provided that)
9. You should read the history of Mewar. You will be influenced by Maharana Pratap. (if)
10. You should read Indian philosophy. You will learn the depth of spiritualism. (if)

ACTIVITY - 4 : SPEECH ACTIVITY

Facing an interview for a job :

Select from the class three students to form an interview panel; then ask the other students of the class to appear before the interview panel one by one for an interview for a job, allowing five minutes to each student.

ACTIVITY - 5 : COMPOSITION

1. Write a paragraph on the freedom struggle of India in 100 words.
2. Write a paragraph in 75 words on how the negroes are treated in Britain and America.
3. Write a paragraph in 60 words about the Christian missionaries in India.