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INTROSPECTION OF GEORGE MIKE'S WRITINGS ON BRITISH LIFE THROUGH ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

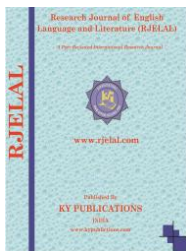
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ABSTRACT

George Mikes (1912 – 1987), a Hungarian Émigré – British journalist, humorist and writer. His writings deals with, issues of immigration, integration and belonging, anthropological approach on life style of different nations, ironical reworking on observation and imitation as survival strategies. His book 'How to be an Alien' proved a great success in 1946. Mikes wrote over Forty Books, thirty –five of them humorous with critical tone. In his writings one can witness both the disintegration of traditional cultural belonging and new appeal of dishonor and ethnic dispositions. Here in this paper the Socio cultural anthropological approach on absurdities underlying in British life is discussed to exhibit the conditions of immigrants who try to blend in with natives and survival difficulties. This introspection concentrates on the life patterns of the people of Britain, from the selected works of George Mikes's "How to Be a Brit".

Key Words – Introspection, Identity, Anthropology

George Mikes (15th Feb 1912 – 30th Aug 1987) a Hungarian – British author and Journalist. He studied Law and received his Doctorate in Budapest University. He initially wanted to become a lawyer; however, he was hired by a Budapest newspaper ("Morning") and began his career as a journalist. During the Second World War he was sent to London by his Newspaper. He immigrated to England in 1940. He is best known for humorous works such as How to be an Alien (1946), a book that makes fun of the English and their relationship with foreigners. His other works include Shakespeare and Myself (1952) and Little Cabbages (1955). He became famous for his comical critiques of several different countries. He was president of the London branch of PEN International, the worldwide association of writers.

George Bernard Shaw was one of the organization's first members. His works 'How to be an Alien', 'How to be inimitable', and 'How to be Decadent' in one volume published as '**How to be Brit**' in 1984. By the beginning of the 20th century the earlier name ethnology was gradually abandoned. It is replaced by the terms cultural Anthropology in America and By Social Anthropology in Britain. In America, a tradition of study of whole cultures developed, while in Britain the comparative study of social structures was considered to be the subject matter of social anthropology.

In the chapter "Soul and Understatement" he says,

'Foreigners have Souls; the English haven't'

He claims that the Continental people, who feels deeply for no obvious reason. They are deep thinkers of strange things. This kind of Soul is the great 'Slav Soul' just Soul nothing else. But English have no Soul; they have the habit of giving understatement, it is the way of their life. To propose love continental youth expresses in such a way that no one or nothing is important for him, even his own life. But English boy just like that pats his girl and says 'I say.....would you?' in a simple and soft way. Mikes also points out that overstatement also plays a big part in English social life, giving remarks and being silent for days. In this chapter he beautifully satirizes expressing ones thoughts and feelings varies from English people, perplexing the foreigners to follow the soul or not, is it wrong to follow the Soul.

In the chapter "Tea", Mikes has observed clearly that 'tea' a drink by nature a good drink. But Britishers always follow their traditions however strange they seem to be. This drink was not invented in Britain but still they relate it to United Kingdom. It has become the national drink of Britain unlawfully. His perspective on Tea is that in certain occasions one should not refuse tea or else will be termed as barbaric. So he gives suggestions to retain a place in civilized society. He says whether it is morning or evening, whether the hostess serve tea with smile faces or silent, one likes it or not, must receive with smile and say 'thank you so much'. Mikes use to drink en-number of coffees in day time, but at tea time he prefers tea being a custom. Humorously he has mocked the British life style. Here he finds it is necessary to explain the peculiarities of the British Nation.

In "The National Passion" Queuing is the national sport of unexcitable race. They never shy about it or adore it. English people form queue everywhere and for everything. In shops; in government offices; in Churches; at sale time they lie in queues all night. They believe that in cinemas if they do not put queuing signs do not do good business. Even English families spend evenings at home queuing up for hours and also for going to bed.

In "Three Games of Bus Drivers", Mikes satirizes cleverly. He refers the games for habits of bus drivers. His keen observation shows how the bus

drivers are irresponsible, not duty conscious, and never follow the rules. They annoy the passengers in several ways. Foreigners face great difficulty to get accustomed to it. Those who are dependent on Bus transport sometimes must be ready to miss important appointments. Even it costs their life. Mikes clearly states that if one need/wish to become a bus driver in Britain must learn to play bus drivers games.

In the chapter "Civil Servant" mikes speaks about the differences between the English civil servant and the Continental. The Continental Civil servants assume themselves military little generals; they use tactics to manage the people as they cannot send them; they speak harsh; argument cannot be avoided instead they lose documents; they think that human society's ambition is to give job to them; they make them to wait for long time; use to send to wrong offices in different floors to collect documents (cat and mouse game) until they give up. The English Civil Servant considers himself no soldier but glorified businessman. He speaks politely to people; very courteous; smiles in a greater way; he is friendly and considerate. The secured aim of English Civil servants is of centuries old that the supreme object of his vast and noble organization is not to transact any business and be left in peace to read stories undisturbed. They only promise to consider instead of taking decisions. They are find to be obedient than rough Continental Civil servants. In the Continent recommendations plays a vital part to fulfill the requests unlike in England there is no such corruption and the obedient servant will not do anything whoever you may be. Mikes beautifully pictures the state of Democracy.

Conclusion

Culture is exclusively human phenomenon. Mikes humorous narrative skill is very vibrant that can be seen in all his works. The selected works from "How to be Brit" taken for research proves it. He feels that always an immigrant is an immigrant to the natives of England. Even if an immigrant becomes citizen of England, he becomes only British can never become English. He suggests to the immigrants it is better to understand the reality and follow it. The experience of about 21 years in England shows that how the culture affects the life of foreigners making

them to feel only as an outsider. It is not the life of foreigners experience in England he has brought to the world, it is the truth put in his writings in anthropological tone. Mikes himself view British from an outsider's point of view. His unpleasant experience as an immigrant is of any other immigrant in Britain. This helps the foreigners as tips to live in Britain. This also makes the natives to realize how for the socio-culture in the country is disappearing. He also says that sometimes English are better than foreigners and sometimes they are strange that they can't understand and explain it to themselves, and simply accept it. The conservative characteristics of the English they keep it never try to change it. In an amusing way he has compared and highlighted the habits of Continental European and English habits. 'Survival to the fittest' in the only result of his introspection.

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