The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey . . . a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word ‘alien’, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it. (Rao 1938, vii)

SO OFT QUOTED THAT IT HAS BECOME ‘OFT QUOTED’, Raja Rao’s foreword to Kanthapura has clearly earned its distinction as a standard reference point in literary and linguistic discussions of Indian English (IE). The reasons for its perceived importance vary according to context. For literary critics, it captures the problem that Indian writers in English face in trying to convey with a second language the speech and thought of people who do not speak English (Sanyal 1987, 72; Ashcroft et al. 1989, 61). For sociolinguists, it serves as a compelling testament to the phenomenon of nativization, as posited in language contact theory (Kachru 1983, 44; McArthur 2002, 342). An approach to understanding the foreword and the book in both these contexts at once has, to my knowledge, not been made. Yet to fully appreciate the book’s significance in either context, such an approach is surely necessary.

Kanthapura is not unique in its manipulation of the English language; during the thirties, other prominent Indian English novelists, including Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan, experimented with English too, reshaping it in various ways to approximate this or that Indian vernacular. But while these authors give little reason to consider their stylistic innovation as anything more than a creative strategy deployed for aesthetic ends (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 32), Rao, by framing Kanthapura with his foreword, signals a different intention altogether. In saying that ‘We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American’, Rao is clearly proposing the ‘Indianized’ English of Kanthapura as a functional model for the real, spoken English of India.
As Braj Kachru (1983) and numerous scholars of IE after him have noted, the period coinciding with the independence struggle—roughly WW1 to 1947—marks a crucial phase in the history of the English language in India (23). In the terms of Edgar Schneider’s Dynamic Model (2007), this period in India falls into the third phase in the evolution of a post-colonial English, ‘nativization . . . the central phase of both cultural and linguistic transformation’, wherein the movement toward political and economic independence results in new identity constructions and corresponding changes in linguistic expression—in lexis, grammar, and phonology—amounting to a restructuring of the English language and the birth of a new, formally distinct post-colonial English (40-44). While its plot may be about the struggle for political independence, *Kanthapura* is just as concerned with this other, linguistic independence struggle. As such, the book’s language not only represents, but itself becomes an object of representation (Hoenselaars 1999, xi), thereby serving, Rao must have hoped, as a medium for reshaping Indian identity in the wake of generations of English colonial subjugation.

Complicating this apparent ambition, however, is the fact that, at the time of *Kanthapura*’s publication, the structural nativization of English in India was already well underway, with the IE of the day being strongly marked by those formal linguistic and contextual deviations known as ‘Indianisms’ (Kachru 1966, 398). Given this, it seems reasonable to assume that Rao disapproved of the way IE was shaping up during the period of its nativization. What was it about late colonial IE that he found wanting? How did his vision for IE differ? How does that vision square with the IE of today? These are the questions I will try to answer in this paper. In doing so, I hope also to shed light on the relationship of influence between ‘real’ language, or language as it is used in every day life, and creative literary representations of language, particularly in the context of postcolonial efforts to ‘decolonize’ English.

The Origins of Colonial IE

In order to understand the late colonial linguistic milieu which incited Rao to write *Kanthapura*, we need only consider the exigencies, a century or so earlier, of a rapidly expanding colonial empire. Having established itself as the dominant political power on the subcontinent, the East India Company was by 1830 finding it increasingly difficult to run its growing, multi-faceted administration with only English officials (Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy 2006, 27). Since it was not feasible to send shiploads of clerks from England (Parasher 1991, 32), a decision was made to promote English language education among Indians, so as to create, in the famous expression of Lord Macaulay’s 1835 Minute, ‘a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern . . . Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect’ (190).

Although ultimately this policy had an unanticipated boomerang effect on British rule in India, in that it created a pan-Indian communicative medium which made it possible for Indian intellectuals from all over the subcontinent to agitate jointly against British rule (Mukherjee 2007, 166), in the hundred years prior to independence it proved highly advantageous for the management and profitability of the colonial machine. Not surprisingly, the gearing of English education and usage towards the fulfilment of this agenda had a formative and lasting influence on the so-called ‘standard’ IE of the educated elite (Kachru 1983, 74)—the IE commonly
spoken and written by Indian professional men and clerks in government bureaucracy, business, education, and the press (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 100).

**Imperfectly Imitative or Indigenously Distinctive?**

General characterizations of this variety of late colonial IE vary depending, of course, on who is doing the characterizing. Contemporaneous British observers tend to fixate with a mixture of irritation and amusement on deviations from the acrolect of the occupying British—those ‘perpetrations’ emanating from a ‘native idiom . . . never completely subdued’ (Goffin 1934, 23), which ‘jar upon the ear of the native Englishman’ (Whitworth 1907, 5). In contrast to this prescriptive, complaint tradition, present-day linguists, studying written documents from the period—including the aforementioned—characterize such deviations as distinguishing features of a new variety of English, rather than as violations of a normative standard. As such they are manifestations of structural nativization, the process whereby variant forms of a linguistic norm are introduced, often as the result of indigenous vernacular influence, and eventually standardized through widespread use, even to the extent of being embraced as markers of identity (Schneider 2007, 44). In India, the sum of these variant forms, or Indianisms, may be said to constitute the Indianness in IE, a result of the acculturation of British English in the linguistically and culturally pluralistic context of the subcontinent (Kachru 1983, 1).

Despite their evaluative divergence, a common profile of late colonial educated IE underlies both these characterizations. Informed mainly by the British educational system established in India (Goffin 1934, 22), and by its extensive and long history of use in the bureaucratic domain (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 107), the educated IE of Raja Rao’s day was heavily conditioned—even in its nativized dimension—by British usage and British acculturation in general. In other words, although structurally distinct from the British standard, and perhaps embraced by IE speakers for precisely this reason, late colonial IE nevertheless bore marks of an original and probably, at the time, still well-represented social ambition, here manifested as a desire to emulate the language habits of the ruling British. What follows is a brief discussion of some of the more prevalent Indianisms of this variety of IE.

**A Closer Look: Lexis and Syntax**

Some descriptions of the lexis of late colonial IE mention heavy borrowing from the Indian vernaculars (e.g., Mukherjee 2007, 22). The persistence of this claim would seem to be the legacy of Braj Kachru (1983), who generally maintained no distinction in his analyses of IE between its creative and functional uses (77). Contemporaneous observers of late colonial IE paint a very different picture of its lexis. Citing as evidence Yule and Burnell’s 1886 Anglo-Indian lexicon *Hobson-Jobson*, which demonstrates the fondness of British expatriates for using Indian words (probably as a ‘British plus’ identity marker (Schneider 2007, 37)), Goffin (1934), for instance, states that in respect of vocabulary, ‘the Indian’s English is . . . a good deal “purer” than that of the Englishman who works in his country’ (21).

Though it was perhaps in most contexts relatively ‘pure’ of borrowings, late colonial IE reveals its distinctiveness from the British standard in other ways, such as through internal lexical change. Especially prominent in descriptive accounts of IE lexis is the tendency towards
compounding or rank-reduction, whereby a syntactic unit of a higher rank is ‘reduced’ so as to create a compound word. In other words, in places where a native speaker of English would tend to use a larger group of words (‘address of welcome’, ‘returned from Europe’), an IE user might choose a shorter compounding (‘welcome-address’, ‘Europe-returned’) (Kachru 1970, 267; Whitworth 1907, 243). Noting the similar IE proneness to using common English reduplications such as chit-chat, Kindersley (1938) suggests that such formations may be attributable to the prevalence in Indian vernaculars of reduplicated terms (27). Another possible explanation is to group compounding with the trend in IE towards lexical shortening, especially in the form of initialisms, which were frequent in bureaucratic usage. The expressions which resulted from such shortening often seem coded or context-bound, and as such unclear to those not in-the-know. The initialism and compound word in this 1943 social letter, for instance, seem to function as markers of a shared social exclusivity: ‘Dear Miss Bhalerao . . . I wish the A.I.T.U.C. would circulate you more. Can’t you possibly train up few more wholetimers like yourself?’ (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 118; italics mine).

If the compounding and reduplication of late colonial IE are attributable to ‘vernacular prepossession’ (Goffin 1934, 27), we might consider them as nativized lexico-grammatical formations, which possess a kind of inward Indianness, despite their outward British lexical garb. Other features of IE lexis would seem to betray the opposite dynamic—an eagerness to access the ‘inwardness’ of British English, and the culture it encodes (Gokak 1964, 126). Such is that favourite topic of British observers of colonial IE, what Goffin (1934) calls ‘phrase-mongering’ (31)—i.e., the frequent use of clichés and metaphorical expressions (Kindersley 1938, 26). The letter quoted above furnishes two such examples: ‘This is to thank you for have given your co-operation to Dr Trivedi and Mr Shah. They have just written to me praising to the skies. Of course, I can assure you that I shall take this with a pinch of salt . . . ’. Although praising to the skies is culturally transferrable, with a pinch of salt is one of many English metaphorical expressions whose use by Indians would seem to indicate not just lexical imitation, but cultural fascination as well. In this connection, Whitworth (1907), mixing ethnography with sociolinguistics, notes that ‘though Hindus do not bury their dead, a Hindu writer will readily speak of one of his own countrymen “having one foot in the grave”’ (210).

Consistent with the use of English idiomatic expressions is the commonness in written colonial IE of words and expressions that betray the influence of a peculiarly British education and professional training. Described variously as ‘bookish’, ‘highly formal’, ‘florid and stilted’, ‘ostentatious with archaic words and old expressions’ (Parasher 1991, 51; Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy 2006, 79,163), this defining lexical style of colonial IE is typically explained as the result of an outdated school curriculum, based around the ‘English classics of bygone centuries’ (Kindersley 1938, 26). Apparent not just in formal contexts, such as bureaucratic petitions—‘Respected Sir, I beg to bring a few following lines under your kind consideration’—but even in casual correspondence—‘This was not my first visit to Bijapur. I have seen it twice or thrice before’ (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 119,114-15; my italics)—this preference for distinguished diction may also partly be, as Goffin (1934) maintains, the outcome of the prestige associated in a highly stratified society with belonging to the exclusive, educated elite (28).

Yet, here again, the relation of nativized IE features to British acculturation comes into question, for Yamuna Kachru (1991) has argued that the ‘high style’ described above is actually
typical of Indic languages (241), and thus should be regarded not as an over-enthusiastic attempt at emulating the British, but as a ‘transcreation’ of Indian cultural norms of writing in ‘the other tongue’ (242). A similar tension is evident in attempts to explain late colonial IE syntax. The following sample, taken–paradoxically–from a 1922 article protesting English education, is exemplary:

It is needless to say that the present system of education in India has been condemned by a general consensus of opinions as inadequate, halting, imperfect, unsatisfactory and barren of high results. It is neither national making for the physical, intellectual, moral and religious advancement of the people nor practical and useful in the worldly sense, calculated to develop their material and economic prosperity. (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 112)

The obvious adjective piling here, the passive construction (‘has been condemned by’), and the length and looseness of the sentence–notice especially the final, very tenuously appended clause–are all well-documented features of colonial IE syntax–a syntax not geared towards directness and concision in expression. Yet whereas Yamuna Kachru (1991) attributes these qualities to the non-linear structure of Indo-Aryan languages (231), Goffin (1934) characterizes them as ‘verbalism’ and a ‘general grandiloquence’ (30,31), whose cultivation is consistent in motivation with the ‘learned pretensions’ of IE lexis (23).

Recrafting the Balance Between Englishness and Indianness

Whichever aspect of late colonial IE sociolinguists choose to privilege–its Englishness or its Indianness—it is fairly evident that Raja Rao (1938), though acknowledging the dialect’s nativized distinctiveness–‘We cannot write like the English. . ..’–nevertheless felt that its so-called Indianized features were mere accidents of a general tendency to emulate British English–‘We should not’ (vii). Picking up on this sentiment in Rao’s foreword, R. S. Pathak (1994) restates it without the obscuring tact: in the cultivation of a national dialect of English, ‘sedulous aping will not take us very far’ (4). This judgement of colonial IE–that ‘The aspiration of us colonials has been to speak English like Englishmen’ (Mehta 1989, 18)–is quite common among IE scholars, and is especially evident in critical assessments of colonial IE literature before its flowering in the 1930s: ‘The few writers who wrote novels in English in the early part of this century used the language carefully, with stiff correctness, always conscious that it was a foreign tongue’ (Mukherjee 1971, 170); they ‘produced a literature that was perhaps not first class; often the writing seemed imitation, halting, inept’ (Narayan 1965, 123); their imitative efforts, ‘on the whole, do not compare favourably with Anglo-Indian writers. That they write in a foreign tongue is a serious handicap’ (Singh 1934, 309-10). When we consider also that there may have been ‘a kind of shame, a tag of servility, attached to the writing of creative literature in English . . . in the era of newly awakened nationalism’ (Mukherjee 1971, 171), Rao’s matter-of-fact observation about Indian writers’ imitative failings (‘We cannot write like the English’) takes on the overtone of a political imperative.

Obviously Rao felt a need to recraft the balance between the Englishness and Indianness of IE. In characterizing Kanthapura’s IE, however, we must make allowances for the fact that Rao
too was a creative writer, and that his creation of a new IE had as much to do with satisfying the artistic demands of his narrative as it had to do with providing a working model for functional, ‘real-world’ IE. In particular, it must be remembered that the characters of Kanthapura—rural villagers—do not, for the most part, speak or think in English (Mukherjee 1971, 173); their voices are not transcribed directly, but translated into English from Kannada, the language of the South Indian region in which the story is set. One is forced to wonder, therefore, which the language of Kanthapura aspires more to be—an aurally authentic recreation of Kannada or a plausible reworking of IE, directly rendered. If more the former than the latter, we might expect Kanthapura’s IE, which comes from the mouths of peasants, to mark a radical departure from the IE of Rao’s day, which was a dialect of the educated elite. But rather than rejecting late colonial IE, Rao incorporates many of its nativized features into his creative dialect—especially morphological and syntactical features—while giving them a more distinctly Indian lexical texture. His agenda, in the main, seems to have been to make IE more overtly ‘culture-bound in the socio-cultural setting of India’ (Kachru 1966, 410), though without effecting a radical transformation of English speech and idiom (Rao 1980, 10). In the process, Rao’s IE becomes not just ‘more Indian’ than its contemporary real-world counterpart, but more democratic as well, reflecting the language habits of all Indians, not just the educated elite.

Kanthapura’s IE: Lexis, Syntax, and Phonology

The following passage is a good example of the change that Kanthapura’s IE represents, no less because it describes the parallel, cultural restyling of a young Indian student who
called himself a Gandhi-man. Some two years ago, when he had come back from Poona, he had given up his boots and hat and suit and had taken to dhoti and khadi, and it was said he had even given up his city habit of smoking. Well, so much the better. But, to tell you the truth, we never liked him. He had always been such a braggart. He was not like Corner-house Moorthy, who had gone through life like a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deference and brahmanic, a very prince, I tell you. (5)

Note the two compounds in this passage: Gandhi-man and Corner-house Moorthy. Although morphologically these items share the innovative rank-reduction of colonial IE, here Rao gives them a distinctly Indian lexical texture: while Gandhi-man is a loanblend or hybrid term, both it and Corner-house Moorthy are loan translations or calques—literal translations into English of vernacular equivalents (Rao 1980, 57). Rao’s liberal but unobtrusive use of borrowings adds to this texture; here dhoti and khadi, wielded with expert reflexivity, refer not only to literal clothing, but arguably to the new lexical ‘clothing’ of Kanthapura’s visionary dialect. Although vocabulary is clearly a defining ingredient of Kanthapura’s language, what really imparts to it its Indian flavour is Rao’s frequent use of directly translated native idiomatic expressions and figures of speech (Naik 2000, 61; Mukherjee 1971, 182). His rendering of expressions like the one above—to go through life like a noble cow—and many others in the book—e.g., a-crow-and-sparrow story (15), every squirrel has his day (77), not a mosquito moved (100)—gives them the ring of being adapted from analogous English expressions (Kantak 2000, 70). In this stylistic feature, then, it
would appear that Rao has preserved the ‘phrase-mongering’ of colonial IE, but given it a distinctly indigenous twist.

This is not to say, however, that Rao has abandoned ‘Britishisms’ altogether. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the IE of Kanthapura is that, even while it cultivates an increased indigenous lexical texture, it deliberately preserves some of the British flavour of colonial IE (Dey 1992, 43). In the above passage, for instance, notice the idiomatic clichés so much the better and to tell you the truth, and also the quaintly formal, old-fashioned expressions Some two years ago, had taken to [dhoti and khadi], and a very [prince]. Far from being stylistic lapses in an otherwise highly original text (Alam 1994, 51), such formations indicate the subtlety of Rao’s reworking of IE. Insofar as it was his intention to shape the nativization of IE by example, creating a dialect that is structurally consistent with the spoken and written English of Indians would seem to be more conducive to that end than radical transformation. In the context of the above passage, moreover, the presence of such Britishisms speaks aptly to the cultural tensions inherent in the independence struggle, as Indians acculturated within a British educational and institutional system turned the language and professed political values of that system back against it.

The overlapping of Kanthapura’s IE with late colonial IE is also apparent in a number of its syntactical features. The above passage, for instance, contains adjective piling (quiet, generous, serene, deference and brahmanic), a passive construction (it was said), and, with the conversion of the noun deference to an adjective, a certain quality of grammatical looseness. This last feature is a defining element of Kanthapura’s syntax, and is perhaps better represented in the following sample:

So Badè Khan went straight to the Skeffington Coffee Estate and he said, ‘Your Excellency, a house to live in?’ And Mr. Skeffington turned to his butler and said, ‘Give him a hut’, and the butler went to the maistris’ quarters and opened a tin shed and Badè Khan went in and looked at the plastered floor and the barred windows and the well near by, and he said, ‘This will do’, and going this way and that, he chose a Pariah woman among the lonely ones, and she brought along her clay pots and her mats and her brooms, and he gave her a very warmful bed. (15)

This passage is instructive because it sets Rao’s creative IE, heard through the voice of the narrator, against a snippet of stiff, pretentious colonial IE—‘Your Excellency, a house to live in?’—and a curt response—‘Give him a hut’—in the relatively unadorned British standard. Against these satirical foils, Rao sustains his innovative lexical style, with borrowings (maistris’, Pariah) and a quaint archaisms, the affixation warmful. But it is the paratactic structure of this passage that really stands out, with its characteristic coordinate clauses and frequent use of the connective and as a linkage device (Shastri 1994, 26; Naik 2000, 60). These features give the passage the ‘hurried and breathless tempo’ of Indian thought and speech claimed by Rao, which he felt ‘must be infused into our English expression’ in a form more aesthetically satisfying than the attenuated sentence structure of colonial IE (Naik 2000, 60; Rao 1938, vii).

In reshaping this nativized syntactical feature, Rao seems also to have altered the nonsegmental phonology—i.e., the rhythm and intonation—both of late colonial IE and British
English (Desai 1974a, vii). According to Braj Kachru, all the main languages of South Asia are syllable-timed, whereas English is stress-timed. This results in a distinct IE rhythm which is based on arranging long and short syllables rather than stressed and unstressed ones. This rhythm, according to Kachru (1983), hampers IE intelligibility for native English speakers (31-32). By creating a thoroughly paratactic syntax, Rao has adapted the briskly paced ‘sing-song’ syllable-timed rhythm of spoken colonial IE (Kachru 1983, 32) into a roughly analogous stress-based form, thereby reclaiming in his dialect a distinctive Indian rhythm that is either lost in written specimens of colonial IE or obscured in the oral variety. This is yet another example of Rao taking a feature from the IE of his day and reworking it into an expressive form more plainly suggestive of an indigenous cultural context.

It Never Really Came Off: Contemporary IE’s Colonial Veneer
If late colonial IE was heavily conditioned by a British institutional culture, and Rao’s response to that conditioning was to create an Indianized adaptation of the dialect, the question posed in the title of this essay begs now to be asked: Was Rao successful in shaping the nativization of English in India? Has his example influenced the IE of today? For post-colonial critics and theorists, who have been content to assimilate Rao into their ideological fold, this question is misguided. Sensing perhaps the futility of any attempt by a ‘microscopic minority’ of literati (Gokak 1964, 164) to shape the language habits of a relatively vast population (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 32), they disavow any such intention, seeing the struggle to ‘decolonize’ English instead as a strictly artistic process, which, in seeking to sever English’s ties with Englishness and to transform it so that it ‘bears the burden’ of the experience of colonial subjugation, stresses linguistic inventiveness over the mimetic representation of nativized language, resulting in a hybrid language that is deliberately literary and artificial (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 10; Fokkema 1999, 319-22; Blake 1999, 332). Such a concession to stubborn reality may even lurk within Rao’s foreword, which is written in an acrolect of late colonial IE rather than in anything approximating the dialect he created for Kanthapura—a detail which would seem to undermine his implicit offering of that dialect as a new standard of usage for speakers of IE to aspire to.

For scholars who have cared to address Rao’s national aspiration of evolving an Indian dialect of English, the consensus is clearly that it has not been realized: the Indianized English of Kanthapura ‘has failed to evolve as a dialect’ (Pathak 1994, 5); it ‘never really came off . . . never gained currency’ (Sircar 1994, 68); at the most, it ‘helped [Rao] to achieve a great personal style’ (Desai 1974b, 1). In accounting for this failure, several scholars have pointed to the corollary of Rao’s own statement that English ‘is the language of our intellectual make-up’ (vii): Narsingh Srivastava (1994), for example, wonders how Rao ‘could become so optimistic about the growth of an “Indian English dialect” without the sustenance of “emotional make-up”’ (71). The implication here is clear: in a multilingual country, where English is a first language to none, IE has restricted functions. While the vernaculars are used at the level of family and friends, for informal and intimate communication, IE tends to be reserved for use in more practical domains (Parasher 1991, 51; Sailaja 2009, 6), a fact which is reflected in dialect’s post-independence history. Although in 1947 it was clearly the intention of the newborn country’s political leaders to get rid of English as a marker of colonial heritage (Schneider 2007, 165), this
action was deferred because of the language’s sheer usefulness as a lingua franca of government (Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998, 185), and ultimately abandoned in the mid-sixties following riots in the southern states by speakers of Dravidian languages over the proposal that Hindi, a northern language, should become the sole official national language (Sailaja 2009, 112).

This pragmatism regarding the use of IE has endured. Today English serves a dual purpose in India: as a ‘link language’, continuing to provide a common medium in a multilingual society for the workings of government and the mass media (McArthur 2002, 313); and as a ‘window on the world’, through which India has found great competitive advantage in the global economy, given the prominent role of English in global commerce and IT technology (Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy 2006, 153). Time and economic opportunism, it would seem, have done more than literary decolonization ever could to transform IE from a symbol of colonialism and imperialism into ‘a neutral tool of communication in the new millennium’ (Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy 2006, v).

This ‘neutrality’ refers not just to India’s shedding of its colonial complexes towards English, but also to the failure of English to signal a pan-Indian identity (Schneider 2007, 167), and the positive emotional associations that are typically bound up in national symbols. Such a failure perhaps explains why the IE of today does not resemble Rao’s lovingly crafted dialect; less interested in its form per se than in its function, Indians are content to let pragmatic needs dictate how their English evolves. This is borne out in the continued presence in IE lexis of formal, archaic, and literary vocabulary, or, more generally, ‘a common liking for genteelisms’ (Spitzbardt 1976, 38)–one of many persistent traces of IE’s origins in the Britishized brand of educated IE that evolved during the second half of the nineteenth century (Sedlatschek 2009, 314). Such traces are detectable even in the informal style of recent film reviews–‘my interpretations aren’t probably the intentions of director Vikram Bhatt, but . . . directorial vision be damned’–and gossip columns–‘Hyderabadis always accept all the invites that come their way and then hop from one place to another at their own whim and fancy leaving the poor hosts flustered’ (Sailaja 2009, 144). Indians’ pragmatic attitude to English usage is also borne out in the increasing acceptance of American spellings in top Indian private schools, in part because ‘many of our students apply for admission to U.S. universities. This will help them’ (Basu 2009).

**Code-Mixing: A Different Kind of Indianization?**

Despite its apparent failure to evolve a more distinctly indigenous lexical texture along the lines of Rao’s model, contemporary IE is, arguably, undergoing an analogous process of lexical ‘Indianization’–though one considerably different in nature from that which Rao envisioned for it. I refer here to the emergence, wide-spread use, and acceptance of code-mixing, which occurs when speakers mix words, phrases, and clauses from two or more languages in the same conversation (Gupta 1991, 207-8; Khan 2009, 378). Code-mixing is not to be confused with the kind of lexical borrowing seen in *Kanthapura*, which is limited mainly to nouns that stand for culture-bound objects and concepts which have no English equivalent. Although Rao’s IE does occasionally demonstrate code-switching, for example during his depictions of political rallies–‘And suddenly there was a clapping of hands and shoutings of “Vande Mataram, Gandhi Mahatma ki jai!” [“I bow to thee, O mother. Victory to Mahatma Gandhi!” (Rao 1967, 212)]’ (33)–
it never approximates the much more grammatically integrated, often fragmentary mixing of the following contemporary samples:

‘aapkaa [your] proposal under active consideration hai [is]’
‘uskaa [his] promotion overdue hai [is]’ (Gupta 1991, 209)

Here not only nouns (yaar), but verbs (hai), adverbs (Bilkul), and possessive adjectives (aapkaa, uskaa)—all of them with common English equivalents—mix freely with English officialese in sentences which have the general grammatical rubric of Hindi (Gupta 1991, 208). Although it is not entirely clear whether such code-mixed amalgams represent the ‘Englishization’ of Indian vernaculars rather than the Indianization of English (Kachru 1979), such constructions have nevertheless become, according to some, ‘the communicative norm for most English-knowing Indians’ (Gupta 1991, 213). Not just a slangy colloquial style of young people (McArthur 2002, 312), ‘mixed code characterizes the verbal behaviour of practically all educated Indians in all informal and semi-formal situations in a wide variety of domains’ (Gupta 1991, 208). Such is the popularity of ‘Hinglish’ and other mixed forms as identity-marking expressions of a new, modern Indian lifestyle (Sedlatschek 2009, 58) that one wonders whether mixed code will fill the vacuum of a currently non-existing pan-ethnic identity carrier, which standard IE has failed to do (Schneider 2007, 171).

Praising Kanthapura to the Skies with a Pinch of Salt
It would seem, then, that whereas Raja Rao’s solution to the problem of Indianizing a too British-conditioned IE was to seek an aesthetic synthesis between the dialect’s linguistic markers of Englishness and Indianness, history’s solution, by contrast—at least to date—has been the much more serviceable strategy of simple alternation—i.e., code-mixing. These two profiles of language change, literary and functional, are obviously informed by very different kinds of logic. On the one hand, creative writers seeking to shape a new dialect are typically motivated by artistic and, especially in post-colonial contexts, ideological concerns, while processes of contact language change, though impersonal per se, nevertheless reveal patterns of human intention on a much larger, social scale—intention that is mainly pragmatic or utilitarian. This accords with a central thesis of Braj Kachru (1983), that ‘Indianisms in Indian English are . . . linguistic manifestations of pragmatic needs for appropriate language use in a new linguistic and cultural context’ (2). In the case of IE, then, Kipling’s famous dictum, proclaiming the irreconcilability of East and West, would seem to give way to something more like, “Art is art and life is life, and never the twain shall meet”—a point which leaves Kanthapura, Raja Rao’s noble but unsuccessful attempt at bridging that divide, squarely in the realm of fiction.
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