

Fielding's Dual Cultural Consciousness

◎ 梅 璨 杨 帆 / 湖南师范大学 湖南 长沙 410081

Abstract: Fielding was described as a cultural emissary of the British Empire with advanced humanism. On the one hand, his deep empathy for Indians reflected his admirable anti-colonialism as a British. On the other hand, he still couldn't get rid of the ideological foundation of colonialism fundamentally. He was a paradox with dual cultural consciousness.

Key Words: Dual Cultural Consciousness; A Passage to India; Fielding

1 Fielding's Superficial Anti-colonialism

As a colonist who tried hard to promote the connection between the British and Indians, Fielding had a distinct anti-colonial tendency.

In sharp contrast to those British officials who were biased against Indians, Fielding never showed hostility to them. What he craved was to establish a genuine friendship with local Indians. Not objecting to the inclusion of Indian students in schools, he taught them as equal individuals even under pressure from other British officials, which showed that Fielding fully respected the right of Indians to have equal access to education. At the Bridge Party, he abhorred the insolence of his countrymen towards Indians. Keeping appeasing Indians, he tried his best to patch up the political isolation that India had been threatened with from Britain though his action would widen the gulf between his countrymen and himself. It embodied Fielding's efforts to break through the shackles of race and politics to establish sincere friendship with Indians. After the Marabar Cave incident, Aziz was mistakenly imprisoned by colonial officials. No British believed him except Fielding. Fielding promised that he would do whatever he could to help him out though he was warned by other British officials that it was absurd to get involved in this mess and defy his compatriots. To prove his determination, he even staked his post of headmaster on Aziz's innocence. Choosing to abandon his identity as a colonist as well as the sense of national superiority, and to some extent, even making an enemy of his own race owing to publicly defending for an Indian, strongly embodied Fielding's anti-colonialism thought. Fielding, rather than align himself with arrogant British officials, strived to build a bridge between British colonists and Indians, which was an embodiment of his external cultural awareness — anti-colonialism.

2 Fielding's Deep-rooted Colonialism

However, Fielding still couldn't get rid of the political limitation of colonial regime deep down.

Although Fielding's seeming respect for Indians was quite different from other colonial officials, there were many contradictions between his inherent ideas and actual manner. He regarded the Hindus who gathered together to rescue Aziz as an unruly mob; he thought Indian demonstrations against the unfair rule as absurd and chaotic; he described Aziz as cynical and incompetent, often wailing out of cowardice... All of these were poles apart from his positive image of a British that could treat Indians equally without discrimination. Besides, Fielding seemed to ap-

prove of setting up schools in India, but in fact, what he ostensibly declared was just to cover up his deep purpose—to better publicize British ideology to Indians and consolidate the aggressive rule of the British empire. After the Malabar Cave Incident, Fielding publicly sided with Aziz, believing that he was wrongly judged, but at the same time he didn't oppose the British colonists. He thought the British empire really couldn't be abolished because Indians would soon fall into decay without British rule, which showed that in Fielding's eyes, India was their colony rather than an equal and sovereign nation. It was also an embodiment of his sense of national superiority. In addition, on his way back to Britain, Fielding even regretted standing on Indians' side and turning against his compatriots, for he awoke to his aim of coming to India to save this backward and uncivilized nation, far from openly defying British rule for India. For Fielding, imperial colonial awareness was a deep-rooted and insurmountable political barrier. Although sometimes his anti-colonialism awareness sprouted up, colonialism still prevailed.

3 Fielding's Dual Cultural Consciousness

Fielding's anti-colonialism awareness mostly resulted from his moral conscience and social responsibility. The conflicts between the British empire as a suzerain and colonial India were escalating, from which he realized that racial prejudice and colonial rule seriously hindered the communication between British and Indian civilizations. This made him uneasy and antagonistic to British colonial rule. However, growing up in the British imperial culture, Fielding was impossible to be absolutely separated from the influence of ethnocentrism awareness, and his subconscious sense of western race superiority was quite difficult to transcend. So it was unrealistic for him to give up his status as a colonist.

Fielding's ambivalence of anti-colonialism and colonialism runs through the whole novel. From the contradiction we can know that under the political and historical background of the colonial rule, the anti-colonial consciousness that yearns for freedom and equality has great congenital deficiency and historical limitation. If the colonial rule hadn't existed, perhaps he wouldn't have had a contradictory bicultural consciousness.

Work Cited

- [1] E. M. Forster. A passage to India. Mariner Books. Mariner Books, 1965.
- [2] 印度之行[M]. 译林出版社, (英)E. M. 福斯特著, 2003
- [3] 外国文学研究中的文化身份问题[J]. 王予霞. 集美大学学报(哲学社会科学版). 2007(04)
- [4] 张春梅.《印度之行》中殖民意识的悖论性研究[J]. 集美大学学报(哲学社会科学版). 2020,23(02).
- [5] 黄必辉. 论《印度之行》中被殖民主体混合文化身份的嬗变与重构[J]. 内蒙古农业大学学报(社会科学版). 2009,11(04).
- [6] 朱新燕. 浅析《印度之行》中福斯特的双重文化身份[J]. 海外英语. 2012, (17)