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Post colonialism in Indian English literature

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Abstract

Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods. It has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history. The word 'postcolonial' is useful as a generalization to the extent that 'it refers to a process of disintegration from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by the set of phenomena: " postcolonial is a descriptive not an evaluative term." The Indian colonial paradigm is that we were forced to learn English language, which had become a source of socio-cultural status and material prosperity.

Keywords: Post Colonialism, socio-cultural status, Indian English Literature

Introduction

It is simply to acknowledge the fact of our historical fate-we didn't choose English but it chose us. In short, the essence of colonialism or internal colonialism in cultural terms is the alienation of one's native culture through the imposition of an alien language. It is ironical that the self-confidence in the creative capacity of the Indian writer in English became stronger in the post- independence period. It may appear paradoxical, even incredible, that the whole of modern Indian literature allowed its soul to be colonized by the West. This can be seen in their ideological structures, thematic obsessions and technical innovations. Whatever may have been the socio- political and cultural consequences of the introduction of English in India, it did create a situation, which may broadly be described as one of the east-west encounter. The encounter is not merely with the language but with all the contents of religion, culture, values, thoughts and attitudes, which it unfolds as challenge to our sensibilities.

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is the story of a small South Indian village caught in the maelstrom of the freedom struggle of 1930's. A major theme woven into the very structure of the novel is the meeting of the two worlds of East- West, represented, on one hand, by Rama and Kittana, and on the other, by Madeliene and Oncle Charles. Rama and Madeliene- the East and the West, like two rails of a railway track joined at several places, still maintained the distance between the two. There are deeper contrasts, too, in the attitudes of the Orientals and Occidentals on basic issues, such as, sex, marriage, religion, knowledge, learning, life and death. The attitudes of the Europeans to sex is certainly on both extremes while that of Indians is somewhere between the two. On the question of death both the East and the West are poles apart. Charles and Madeleine can't accept death as reality with that equanimity that Rama and the Little Mother can. With the rope-bridges gone, the illusion remains illusion, the reality reality. The East remains East and the West.

Indian novelists were greatly influenced by Hardy, Scott, Dickens, Faulkner and they chose to emulate them in spirit, form and expressions. Even in characterization, Narayan adopts the mock-heroic method of using a dignified style for trivial subject matter. Narayan's characters with their quaint behavior, exaggerated traits of their temperament and clumsy habits come quiet close to those of Chaucer and Dickens. Narayan is like an old aristocrat, who talks of the dignity and rules of a foreign game, plays foul, disregard its rule, and justifies his 'violation' in the name of evolving its indigenous variety.

In Kamla Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, Nathan and Rukmani continue to work ceaselessly with alternating hopes and fears while showing the futility of their labor, the title points out at Indian and Western philosophies of life. For Coleridge, doing work without hope is like drawing 'nectar in a sieve'.

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On the other hand Nathan is a karma- yogi who believe in doing one's duty without having any concern for a reward. The novel is a concrete manifestation of centuries of Indian culture, traditions, myths, religious and philosophical ideas, preserved and enriched by each succeeding generation, but now being constantly invaded by sweeping western influence and expanding urban monstrosities. The desertion of paternal home, village and later on his wife by Murugan is the direct outcome of western impact. Markandaya is imposing her experience of the West by showing the birth of Sacrabani-an illegitimate child of Ira- as almost a welcome event, so unusual in any part of India. Also depicts her western experience in Nathan's going out of home nakedly during night, which is quite unusual. Markandaya's mixed allegiance enables her to view with serenity the challenge of contrasting cultures. Nectar in a Sieve captures the dichotomy between tradition and change, the rural and the urban, the agrarian and the industrial. She has delineated the difference between Eastern and Western philosophies through the juxtaposed attitudes of Rukmani and Dr. Kenny. Former stands for blind faith whereas Kenny is rational. In *Some Inner Fury*, novelist has portrayed three different attitudes to the western way of life and the British in India, through the characters of Kit, Govind and Roshan. Kit's education at Oxford has totally swept him off his feet and alienated him from his roots. Govind harbors a deep hatred for British Rulers. Roshan is educated on the western values in England; she has a dual citizenship and feels quite at home in both the worlds. The impact of western education and, science and technology, mores and modes of living have created ferment in the tradition bound and superstition ridden Indian society.

In *The Coffin Dam*, engineers from Britain came to India to construct a dam and Indians get a direct interaction with British people while in *Nectar in a Sieve*, there are no Britishers but technology west comes in form Tannery. Novelist here showed that westerners are superior in technical field. Clinton, main engineer is obsessed with his work, has superiority complex and considers Indian people just workers who works under him and are paid wages. Contrary to this Clinton's wife Helen is a kind hearted woman and she keeps all racial prejudice aside. A third person omniscient narrator is present throughout the novel. The characters of Helen and Clinton have been judged from Bashiam's eye, who is an Indian and vice-versa.

Manohar Malgonkar's *Bend in the Ganges* concentrates on the anti-colonial struggle between the British and Indian popularly known as Quit India Movement propelled by Gandhian dynamism. In it Malgonkar succeeds in tracing the various aspects of the encounter between colonial and anti-colonial forces. The novel shows how India achieved what she wanted, but she had to make a great sacrifice with the tragic loss of Pakistan from it.

Anita Desai's psychological fiction is greatly influenced by Emily Bronte, Virginia Woolf D.H. Lawrence and Henry James. Her novels tell the harrowing tales of blunted human relationships. Coldness and indifference in relationships is mainly due to the impact of western philosophy of life. Maya, in *Cry the Peacock*, describes herself as 'a body without heart and heart without a body'. Monisha finds her life a virtual imprisonment. The Indian civilization, particularly of upper classes, is shallow, artistically dry, and intellectually imitative of the western ideas. Theme of alienation in Arun Joshi's novels is concerned with man's

alienation from society and from his own self. Sindi Oberoi and Billy Biswas experience the pangs of civilization, which is full of lying, hypocrisy, bribery and womanizing. The absence not of society and their family but of primitive world and nature makes them feel unhappy and lonely. Due to increasing and wider exposure of Indians to the other English speaking regions beyond England, the West therefore becomes more charming and cultivating. It results in man's dehumanization, his loss of independence and estrangement from other fellowmen.

With the period of incubation, Indian novel in English has flourished as a liberalized art. It is now free of the anxiety of exile, alienation, crisis of identity pickle, justification of writing in English or writing novel in English at all. The impact of western education, science and technology, mores and modes of living have created a ferment in the tradition bound and superstition ridden Indian society; and Jhabvala seeks to project the process of this cultural and socio-economic amalgam through her novels. In *A New Dominion*, the irony that permeates the delineation of the Western as well as the Indian characters is obvious. While the Westerners, fed up with extravaganza, and affluence, seek a simpler life and spiritual solace. Asha, hailing from India, the land of sages, saints and swamis, seeks only bodily pleasure and thinks very highly of them. The voluptuous princess Asha and the student Gopi are poised between the traditional moribund ways of life typical of India and the wave of modernity typical of the West and they find themselves unfit for either society.

The interplay of two cultures can't be a bypass phenomenon; it is like the contradiction of two live electric wires, which resultantly sparks off a powerful current of creative tension. The tension may either end in a disastrous explosion or exquisite fusion. The writers, like painters and musicians, try to harmonize the sharp distinction through their organic vision of life. The incompatibility of the Indian and English appears to be a concrete variant of the theme of cultural encounter. The setting and the plot vary but the cultural dichotomy finds its persistent articulation in different guises: the native versus the foreigner, the servant versus the master, the spiritual versus the material, the ideal versus the practical, the spinning wheel versus the steel town, the village versus the metropolis, faith versus reason, Krishna versus Christ. Iyengar sees English language as a 'Suez Canal for intellectual intercourse between East and West'. The Europeans are unhappy because they are unable to adopt themselves to India and have nowhere else to go, and the Indians are unhappy because of their blind craze for modernism, hollow exhibitionism, false display and schizophrenia (mental disorder).

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