

Relocating English in Indian and the Postcolonial Discourse

Asok A R

Asso. Prof., SVR NSS College, Vazhoor India

Abstract

Beyond doubt, English language and literature were effectively used by the Imperial Britain, to rationalize colonial rule and many are skeptical of its role in the continuation of Western cultural hegemony. But colonial education in India often proved counter-productive while in countries where no written literature existed, it almost annihilated the ethnic identity. In the Indian context, all the languages i.e., Hindi, English and vernacular languages harmoniously co-exist as they work at different levels. In fact it is also noticed that translations of vernacular texts into English help the promotion of the texts. Recently many of the Indian universities have made modifications in their respective curriculum so as to accommodate literature from different corners translated into English language especially as a result of a series of post-colonial seminars and discussions in India. The proficiency in the language becomes beneficial when it is the global language of science, technology, trade and commerce besides its importance as the major link language across the globe. When a return to the pre-colonial reality is impractical and when English is no longer associated with the residues of colonial rule, the need of the hour is to relocate and to re-channelize “English” in India to the benefit of the nation. Here comes the importance of post-colonial discourse which is centred on the nature and effect of globalization and neo-colonialism. The Calibanic paradigm helps one to identify hegemonic tactics of neo-colonialism, globalization, racism, fascism and such other vicious factors. The post-colonial discourse has its scope of diversion from the text to the larger contexts demanding urgent attention such as neo-colonization and malign effects of globalization, the working of Eurocentric knowledge and exploitation of the less-privileged. It is this delineation of the binaries and the nuanced shades of cross-culturalities and syncretism that Indian English literature deals with as one of its major concerns. It has shown how “English literature” could be effectively utilized for the benefit of the nation by adopting post-colonial revisionary reading habits and interactive mode of teaching by developing indigenous creative thinking to dismantle, subvert and appropriate the dominant European discourse.

KEYWORDS: Western cultural hegemony, relocation of English, Euro-centric knowledge, Calibanic paradigm, appropriation of dominant European discursive strategy.

Introduction

The first and foremost question as far as the relocation of English is concerned is whether English Language and Literature still carry colonial designs. Should English Language and Literature be viewed as a remnant of Western cultural hegemony. Rajeswari Sundar Rajan says in *The Lie of the Land*:

In India recent historical researches have initiated more critical investigations of colonial education policies and the effects that followed from them. In many of the former colonies, cultural movements of resurgence and nationalism have also led to the position that the hegemony of English language and literature in these societies is a form of continuing cultural imperialism. (13)

The nature and influence of the texts which are studied in the courses of “English Studies” have also been a topic of hot discussion. The study of British texts is supposed to have a stigma of an occidental cultural hegemony. The topic has been active in academic seminars and discussions as well as in post-colonial writings. In the editorial note to ARIEL, Victor J. Ram Raj writes:

Should James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence be included in the Modern British Literature syllabus? This is the issue that members of the syllabus committee of the Department of English Brahmur University are hotly debating at one of their meetings — in Vikram Seth’s novel *A Suitable Boy* (1993). . . . Richly comic and exaggerated as this scene is, it raises crucial issues that post-independence societies have been contending with in choosing to continue institutionalizing the discipline of English that had played a critical role in their colonization.(7)

No doubt, English language and literature were effectively used by the Imperial Britain, to rationalize colonial rule. But even after independence, the “education system” which the British established in India continued. Although the Indian government has opted Hindi as the National language of India, the English language continues to enjoy its monopoly in the fields of judiciary, bureaucracy, science, technology, trade and commerce. It also shares the status of one of the official national languages. The increasing global currency of English language has further consolidated its position in India.

Logic Behind Consolidation

Perhaps the most important reason for the continued monopoly of English language is its employment potential. With the development of information technology, the whole world has virtually become a global village. So, knowledge of English has become essential for getting employment, especially in any fields related to Information Technology which provides enormous employment opportunities. So even if the government agencies and institutions try to reduce the importance of English in favour of Hindi or other Indian vernacular languages, the educated ones strive to get reasonable skill in English. If conventional schools and colleges do not offer such courses, mushrooming private institutions serve the purpose. English still enjoys the status of the language of the elites in India. The situation is more or less same in post-colonial places like Bangladesh, African countries, Caribbean countries, Malaysia, Malta, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka. But at the same time colonial experience in India was altogether different from that of many other erstwhile colonies.

In India the colonial rule could not up-root the ethnic culture, whereas in many of the African and Caribbean countries the colonial rule has virtually annihilated their ethnic culture and religion. People who were replanted into new language, religion and culture felt untold emotional conflict and anarchy prevailed. In African and Black American countries, the colonial rule has made a sea change in the social structure. What the blacks lost was their self; their identity. In the “civilizing” process the colonizers trained the blacks to be their permanent slaves and white racism became their everyday reality. Everything related to the blacks was stamped as crude and primitive. They were made aware of their absolutely blank culture and tradition. Naturally there were natural protests and conscious efforts to make the ignorant masses aware of their ethnic culture. Chinua Achebe writes:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past — with

all its imperfections — was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf delivered them. Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure art. But who cares? Art is important and so is education of the kind I have in mind. (45)

But in India the colonizers could not make such fatal scars on the Indian ethos although, they could very well physically exploit India. In Africa, the Europeans could find out marks of their ethnic culture and tradition only to be exhibited in their museums as signs of savagery. But India clung to her own philosophic background considering it superior to that of the West as Nehru remarks in *Discovery of India*.

Counter-Productive Movements

But the introduction of 'English education' in India was definitely an attempt to brainwash the natives. English education enticed the young generation as it was associated with power, position and influence. English language and literature was used to belittle whatever is Indian and to idealize whatever is Western. These types of studied efforts were counter-productive and an upsurge of nationalistic movements was the result. The young men all over India showed affinity towards "modern English education" offered by the British. They appreciated the "liberal and scientific" outlook of the West. But at the same time "the modern liberal" education also made them aware of their own ethnic culture. The attempts to rediscover Indian culture and tradition also ended-up in the revival of cultural activities. Such trends in the colonial period could be observed very well in Bengal, more than anywhere else in India. Referring to Sudipto Chatterjee's article in *Imperialism and Theatre*, Jyotsna G. Singh writes:

The Bengal Renaissance was the outgrowth of the grafting of a foreign culture onto a more-than-willing native culture. For the Bengalis their response to what was imposed by the British was a search for a cultural identity that could, at some level, set them on a par with their European overlords. It is in the wake of this endeavour to assume/regain a respectful self-identity that, in the 1840s, several theatres (among other institutions) were sprawled in the native quarters of Calcutta.(132)

It became the fashion of the day in Calcutta to enact Shakespearean plays on stage. The young natives of Bengal took pride in learning and delivering lengthy dialogues on the stage and the same became an amusing discussion of the British. It is an apparent paradox that the English language and literature which was used to subdue the natives, itself inspired the natives to rediscover their own tradition. The revival of Indian culture was not done in a hostile mood, and the process was complementary to the spirit of "liberal English education". Many of the Indian epics and classics were rewritten in the British classical model during the "Bengal Renaissance" in the late nineteenth century and the works of Michael Maddusudan Dutt and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar can be taken as fine examples of this kind of a movement. These types of activities also gradually paved the way for nationalist movements.

Thus colonial education in India often proved counter-productive while in countries where no written literature existed, it almost annihilated the ethnic identity. The west in its encounter with India came to know of India's ancient culture, customs, manners and languages. In fact the advent of the British helped Indian peninsula to be

aware of its cultural unity and power. In a way it is proper to remember that “The Raj brought internal, political and economic unity to India. It also unwittingly brought the railway, the printing press and the other technological innovations and appliances to India . . .” (Om P. Juneja 14).

Further the attempt of the British to gain cultural hegemony in India did not work to the expected mark. The main reason for this is, as mentioned earlier, the highly developed vernacular languages and their written tradition of literature. Rajeswari Sundar Rajan observes in *The Lie of the Land*:

Language in society can be hegemonic in two spheres; culture and education. Though the distinction between them is not an absolute one, in India we may usefully, if broadly, distinguish between the spread of Hindi in cultural arena, and the influence of English in Education.

In spite of its central importance, English in India is less widely perceived as a cultural and linguistic threat to indigenous literatures and languages than it has been, for instance, in Africa where its colonial imposition displaced or marginalized the entire culture. The languages and literatures of India, many of them older and better developed than English, did not altogether languish in the shadows of a hegemonic English; and the phenomenon of bilingualism (and even trilingualism) has divided up the spheres of actual language use in such a way that English and Indian languages co-exist in a fairly natural way within social discourse. (16)

Unique Context of India

The trilingual package in education, introduced in independent India and the importance given to Hindi the national language, by the visual media especially the Doordarshan, help Hindi and other vernacular languages to assert their role in the domain of culture. In the metropolitan cities in India, Hindi could be used very well for communication with the masses. At the same time English has also successfully retained its position as the global as well as the link language. But it is to be noted that Hindi in print is not so popular or familiar to non-Hindi speaking states. Perhaps in the world of print media English holds more prominence than Hindi. The “elites” of India also prefer English to Hindi.

In the Indian context, all the languages i.e., Hindi, English and vernacular languages harmoniously co-exist as they work at different levels. A person working in a metropolitan city may speak in English at his work place, and may speak in his mother-tongue at his home and at the same time may enjoy Hindi films/film songs. Apparently no clash on linguistic terms could be seen in the present day India. Multilingualism is the prevailing system in India. Almost all the Indian vernacular languages are well developed and have rich, acclaimed literature. The study and spread of English or the development of communicative skills in English are not seen as a serious threat to the development of vernacular languages. In fact it is also noticed that translations of vernacular texts into English help the promotion of the texts. Such translations also help a better understanding among the different vernacular languages in the Indian context. Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin observe:

It is frequently asserted that the work produced by contemporary writers in languages as diverse as Maratha, Bengali, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam etc; far outweighed in quantity and quality the works produced in English. This may well be the case, though until much more extensive translations into English from these languages have been produced, it is difficult for non-speakers of these languages to judge.(122)

Those who advocate the hegemony of Hindi as the national language may find English language as a deterrent to the spread of Hindi. But the linguistic regions which oppose the imposition of Hindi may find Hindi as getting undue privilege and look at English as a neutral language which would provide natural justice. This shows that English has “liberatory” potential as well as negative connotations. It is also to be considered whether lack of proficiency in English language creates subaltern subjectivity in the Indian society.

Pramod K. Mishra in *ARIEL* argues that English has become an elite language in India; the language of power and opportunities and that the practice of keeping an elite language which demarcates the less privileged has been in practice in India even before the introduction of English in India (384,403). He says: “I have tried to show that English is structurally continuous with India’s class structure that made use of Sanskrit and Persian before it, through a combination of official, religious and cultural discourses, in order to maintain hold over the power structure” (403). He argues that Sanskrit and Persian were in the role of elite languages in India. The lack of knowledge of these languages alienated the masses from power and opportunities.

English literature courses which would include translated literatures from as many different sources as possible can definitely serve the cause of a liberal education. A liberal education without the connotations attached to the imperialistic designs could train minds to recognize not only the black and white archetypes but also the variant shades which could come in between. Recently many of the Indian universities have made modifications in their respective curriculum so as to accommodate literature from different corners translated into English language especially as a result of a series of post-colonial seminars and discussions in India.

Further the thrust on English as an instrumental language is on the increase. More number of students all over the world study English merely for the sake of better communicative skills and better employment opportunities. The younger generation is not much bothered about the British or “foreign” connection of the language. English is a language which has acquired a considerable amount of flexibility or versatility by accommodating or borrowing or imbibing words, usages or structures from other languages. The British universities have made themselves flexible to suit the need of the hour. Gilliam Beer, a professor of English, says of the current Faculty of English: “what’s so remarkable about Cambridge English is that you can study Arundhati Roy as well as Dickens and Chaucer” (20).

The myth of a Standard English by now is exploded and variants in different countries including “American English” have got acceptance. After narrating his experience in a university in a Gulf country, where English literature is being studied merely for the sake of communicative skills and job opportunities and where English helps Islamic revivalism, Edward Said in his article, “Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations” remarks:

Thus the very same English whose users in the commonwealth can aspire to literary accomplishments of a very high order and for whom, in the notion of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a critical use of the language might permit a decolonizing of the mind, coexists with new configuration. On the one hand, in place where English was once present as the language of ruler and administrator, its residue today is a much diminished presence. Either it is a technical language with wholly instrumental characteristics and features; or it is a foreign language with various implicit connections to the larger English-speaking world, but where its presence abuts on the much more impressive, much more formidable emergent reality of organized religious fervour. (56)

Thus the subjectivity of the language itself changes according to places and circumstances. The Europeans themselves gradually came to know that there have been mighty, ancient cultures and traditions in different parts of the world. The discovery of a lot many “new” art and culture of the colonies also paved the way for the questioning of the concepts of European aesthetics. Mono-culturalism and purity of race became more or less absurd in the mixing up of different peoples with different cultures and practices. Bill Ashcroft writes: “Europeans were forced to realize that their culture was only one amongst a plurality of ways of conceiving of reality and organizing its representations in art and social practice” (156). Thus in a detailed analysis to relocate “English” in India, it could be seen that “English” in the present day India has nothing to do with Britain or its hegemonic interest as such. The world has changed a lot in the years after the end of territorial colonialism. As Rajeswari Sundar Rajan points out in “Fixing English: Nation, Language, Subject”, the main factors which changed the equations are:

. . . diminution of Britain's Global power, increase in India's economic and military status, the consequent tokenism of such post-colonial affiliation in the commonwealth, the formation of significant third world alliances such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation' (SAARC), global support for the anti-apartheid movement, third world vigilance against economic exploitation and neo-colonization by multi-national corporations and international funding agencies; and, significantly, the anti-English propaganda of certain national political parties in response to internal divisive tendencies within the country.(13)

Other reasons to discard the idea of a total rejection of “English” are the fear of self-alienation and the possibility of a kind of fascism which may arise by over-riding nationalism. Pramod K. Mishra points out the claim of Bengali language in 1850s as a self-contained language, i.e.; one capable of rendering an exact equivalent of any word or expression in any other language. He also tells about the attempt of Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and Ashis Nandy in their works (Dominance without Hegemony: History and power in colonial India (1997), The Nation and Its Fragments : Colonial and Post-colonial Histories (1993) and Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves (1995) respectively) “to valorize the use of vernacular by showing how works in the fields of psychology and historiography in Bengali, appropriated and subverted the colonial forms and attitudes of those experts in these fields who were

directly complicit with the colonialist ideology” (394-95). So far it is fine, but soon after he points out “ in 1997, more than a century later [after 1950s] a language mutiny occurred in West Bengal, in which millions of parents, educationists, and college graduates ran a campaign for the restoration of English in Bengal's government - run elementary schools . . .” (395). The mutiny was against the Bengal government's decision, banning English from the elementary schools owned by the government.

Pramod K Mishra further explains: “. . . opposed to the workings of residual British colonialism and emergent American-led global capitalism, the communist government of West Bengal removed English from the government-run elementary schools altogether in 1981” (395). The argument for the removal of English was quite rational. It was with the good intention of promoting mass literacy and to check the high rate of dropouts. It was a right step toward going back to the pre-colonial reality. But it failed utterly because “literacy and education, however, are not enough anywhere if they do not help one earn a livelihood” (396). This clearly shows that an outright denial of English education in India would be foolish especially when English language has tremendous employment potential. The proficiency in the language becomes beneficial when it is the global language of science, technology, trade and commerce besides its importance as the major link language across the globe.

It would appear as patriotic if English is altogether abandoned for the sake of vernacular languages and cultural roots. But if nationalist movements are overridden, it would also lead to undesirable fascist tendencies as Rajeswari Sundar Rajan warns in the article “After “Orientalism” colonialism and English Literary Studies”:

It is all too easy to proceed from our awareness of our historically — and ideologically — enshrined colonialist relationship to English literature, to a search for ‘roots’ and origins and the recovery of a ‘lost’ native tradition. Such a simple either/or alternative seeking can be misleading. We are historically constituted to the extent of not being able to afford ‘self-marginalization’ (the phrase is Spivak's), by alienating ourselves from all Western knowledge. More crucially, in our country and in the present political conditions, nationalistic anti-imperialism takes the form of a particularly violent Hindu revivalism whose backlash is generally felt by the nations' minority communities.(28)

The significance of Postcolonial Discourse.

Thus, in a sum-toto analysis, the question whether English should remain in India becomes insignificant and irrelevant. When a return to the pre-colonial reality is impractical and when English is no longer associated with the residues of colonial rule, the need of the hour is to relocate and to re-channelize “English” in India to the benefit of the nation. Here comes the importance of post-colonial discourse which is centred on the nature and effect of globalization and neo-colonialism.

It is popularly believed that the post-colonial discourse was formally set in motion with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. But as he himself acknowledged in his *Orientalism Reconsidered* much of the ideas he propounded had already been said before by numerous third world visionaries like Frantz Fanon and Romila Thapar. There are differences of opinion regarding the trajectories of post-colonial discourse. Some critics trace back the roots of post-colonial discourse to commonwealth criticism and post structuralist criticism while young post-colonial theorists ascribe its

origins to the “colonial discourse analysis model” of the trinities Said, Spivak and Bhabha. Arnab Chakladhar explains:

There are, however, objections to the telling of the post-colonial tale of origins that are located in an older critical tradition and which centres round as much on the object of criticism as on critical methodology. Critics such as Gareth Griffiths, Stephen Slemon, Helen Tiffin, while they are not hostile to “theory” per se, decry what they see as a selective amnesia on the part of many newcomers to post-colonial studies regarding the origins of the field. These critics identify two trajectories of post-colonial criticism: the colonial discourse analysis model — the Said-Spivak- Bhabha trajectory — and an older tradition arising out of commonwealth literary studies. The major point of distinction is that whereas the discourse analysis mode focuses less and less on the literary work, the older tradition is anchored very strongly in literary criticism. The discrediting of the older field by the ascendant propounders of “theory” is traced to a larger suspicion both of the humanist model of scholarship and of the privileging of the authoritative literary work as the only archive. But such a characterization of commonwealth studies as a naive, apolitical exercise, it is argued, is itself a caricature which ignores the ways in which much of commonwealth criticism as well as the texts it considered were themselves “theoretical” and anticipated the concerns of the later post structuralist trajectory. (185)

He also opines that most of the post-colonial scholars operate within all these modes. He also argues that post-colonial theoretical approach has much in common with commonwealth tradition. The practices of post-colonial criticism such as “the analyses of alterity, hybridity, subalternity” (186) have long been the interest of commonwealth tradition as well. Further the modification of syllabi and classroom practices also share commonwealth tradition although the latter is more concerned with a comparative approach as with special interest in nation and its identity (186-87). Notable objections have also been raised against some of the trends in the discourse which makes the whole discourse ineffectual. Aijaz Ahmad in *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures and ArifDirlik* in “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism,” for example, point out that the comfortably settled diaspora in the field of post-colonial studies impress with their play with affected articulation of post-colonial theories in the name of the suffering downtrodden in the third world countries and complacently end up as if in a magic show with no concrete results. ArifDirlik objects mainly to the obscuring expressive mode of the post-colonial critics which ends up the whole discourse a futile verbal exercise (x).

But this criticism as mentioned earlier is not against the post-colonial theory as such; infact it serves as a pointer to the need of the proper utilization of the discourse to make ground level transformation and definitely they too operate on the terrain of post-colonial discourse as Arnab Chakladhar further describes: “their objections can at one level be seen as largely directed at methodology: ironically enough both Ahmad and Dirlik’s texts may now be said to have entered the catalog of essential reading for post-colonial reading” (185). Irrespective of minor flaws in the working of post-colonial theory, it has already spurred a serious thinking about post-colonial life and ways of resisting hegemonic designs from different corners. It has also kicked-off attempts to radically change the existing system of education which caters to the spreading of Eurocentric knowledge and to ascertain worth and dignity to education.

As far as the discipline of “English literature” is concerned, it has already exploded the concept of “Standard English”, canonical texts and critical paradigms. It has shown how “English literature” could be effectively utilized for the benefit of the nation by adopting post-colonial revisionary reading habits and interactive mode of teaching. Perhaps development of indigenous creative thinking is the best benefit the discourse created. As it is said in *The Empire Writes Back* the contemporary art, philosophy and literature by post-colonial society are no simple continuation or adaptations of European models, as they have already undergone radical dismantling, subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourse (194-95).

Confining to the sphere of the discipline of English literature, the most important change in it that has been brought in by the post-colonial discourse is its scope of diversion from the text to the larger contexts demanding urgent attention. Gauri Viswanathan explains in her article, “An Introduction: Uncommon Genealogies”:

Perhaps the most significant effect of post-colonial studies, with all its inadequacies, self-deceptions and metropolitan parochialisms, is that the curricular study of English can no longer be studied innocently or inattentively to the deeper contexts of imperialism, transnationalism and globalization in which it first articulated its mission. It is no small matter that Caliban competes de rigueur with his creator Shakespeare as the canonical expression of late twentieth century English studies. The archetypal figure of colonial subjugation and subversion underwrites a revisionist view of English studies as a composite of discordant voices, rather than the sweet, harmonious blend of mellow tones that Matthew Arnold envisaged as the ultimate triumph of English culture. (13)

The Calibanic paradigm helps one to identify hegemonic tactics of neocolonialism, globalization, racism, fascism and such other vicious factors. This mode makes one capable of handling any text; be it canonical or post-modern and to relate it to capitalistic strategies to untutored religious fundamentalism. In fact as the texts extend to contexts, the definition of literature itself changes. Texts, apart from their aesthetic values, have acquired wider connotations as texts and contexts have developed inter-relations. Literature of men as well as women and literature of the peripheries as well as centres – all acquires greater significance as Edward Said says in “*Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations*”:

But to read and write texts cannot ever be neutral activity: there are interests, powers, pleasures entailed, no matter how aesthetic or entertaining the work. Media, political economy, mass institutions: in fine, the teaching of secular power and the influence of the state are now part of what we call literature. And just as it is true that we cannot read literature by men without also reading literature by women --so transfigured has been the shape of literature -- it is also true that we cannot deal with the literature of the peripheries without also attending to the literature of the metropolitan centres. (71)

Texts are to be approached especially from the view point of the subjugated, so that the connivance of the manipulations as well as the plight of the subaltern could be brought to light. Proper awareness about the discourse and a body of indigenous theories could emerge from such re-readings. After over 70 years of independence, when a going back to

pre-colonial reality is both impractical and unaffordable and when “English” in India has no apparent colonial hang-over, the often silent but cancerous working of neo-colonization and malign effects of globalization, the working of Eurocentric knowledge and exploitation of the less-privileged are to be recognized through such a post-colonial re-reading of texts.

Further literature is a wonderful terrain where imagination can make literary subjectivities with no limitations of institutionalized ideologies. Gauri Viswanathan in “An Introduction: Uncommon Genealogies”, argues that post-colonial criticism can be more effective on such a level:

Wonder, unlike tradition, has no institutional home, no anchoring mechanism that channels its expression in determinate ways. It does not require a structure of reference and intertextuality to construe its meaning — indeed it thwarts all identification with systematized form of knowledge. It is from this non-institutional site that post-colonial criticism can perhaps be its most vigorous and emancipatory, its driving force being an imagination just in the service of crafting a new literary subjectivity that includes, but also at the same time goes beyond, ideological critique. (27-28)

It is also important to note that expansion and not contraction is the spirit of post-colonialism. Segmentation becomes impossible as syncretism has been widely accepted in the global village. “Both literary theorists and culture historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturalities as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group ‘purity’ and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized” (Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin³⁶). It is this delineation of the binaries and the nuanced shades of cross-culturalities and syncretism that Indian English literature deals with as one of its major concerns.

The writings rooted in the cultural realities of those societies whose subjectivities have been decided generally by the past experience of the colonial rule directly reflect the intricate issues of colonial imprints. The literature in such societies, generally discuss the postcolonial issues. Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define postcolonial in *The Empire Writes Back* as “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). Indian English Literature directly reflects the literary and cultural exchange between the Orient and the Occident. Literature, written in various Indian dialects, has more diverse regional and personal issues rather than the imprints of the British rule. So naturally, Indian English Literature gets a better attention of the readers outside the country. Meenakshi Mukherjee says:

...most of our fictional literature has been conditioned by other, either older or newer, more local, diverse and complex pressures and intricate social hierarchies than what can be explained by British rule in India. This may be one reason why many of our bhasha classics – of past and present – even when translated into English, do not get noticed either by the academic establishment or the publication/distribution system outside the country. (89)

It is very difficult to define Indian English Literature with all its unique features. M.K. Naik in *A History of Indian English Literature* defines Indian English

Literature “as literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality” (2). It is Indian sensibility making the expression in English Language. Various terms have been given at different stages to the body of Indian English literature, like “Indo-Anglian Literature”, “Indo-English Literature” and “Indian Writing in English”. The term “Indo-Anglian Literature” was first used as the title of the specimen composition of some native students, published in Kolkota in 1883. The phrase was used as the title of K.R. SrinivasaIyengar’s first book, *Indo-Anglian Literature* in 1943 and thus attained wide currency. However the term did not get acceptability from many critics in the field as the name suggests a relationship between two countries rather than a body of writings. Later K.R. SrinivasaIyengar himself used the phrase “Indian Writing in English” and published a book with the title in 1962. Later a more compact and appropriate term, “Indian English Literature”, substituted the phrase, “Indian Writing in English” and the same is accepted by the SahityaAkademi. The front inside paper cover of Naik’s *A History of Indian English Literature* shows that “the SahityaAkademi has accepted ‘Indian English Literature’ as the most suitable appellation for this body of writing”. It also explains that “Indian English Literature began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India, and is now nearly two hundred years old.”

One controversy related to Indian English Literature in the early stages was about the use of English language as the medium. Raja Rao’s comment in his forward to *Kanthapura* (1938) is often quoted: “One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own, the spirit that is one’s own”. But he himself soon modifies his opinion and tells that “English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up, like Sanskrit or Persian was before but not of our emotional make-up”. English language which was used for subjugating Indian culture and to establish the upper hand of the Occident itself has been helpful to accommodate a lot of diversified concepts and information which helped India to move towards the path of the western concept of modernity. John Meeopines:

Originating in conquest and colonialism – still a badge of and means to privilege – the medium by which India communicates with the outside world and often by which the Indian languages communicate with each other, English is perpetually on the internal and external boundaries of Indian culture. By virtue of this position, Indian Writing in English is uniquely placed to re-imagine the nation. If it has sometimes acted as the instrument of globalizing culture, moving over the surface of Indian culture without acknowledging its privileged position; or, alternatively, rethematising India as an endless narrative possibility, an infinitely open market, than equally it has been used to situate modernity in relation to India. (335-36)

Further the language at times served as a Calibanic paradigm for the subversion and appropriation of the Eurocentric notions. Most of the critics also agree that the chief characteristics of postcolonialism are the strategic subversion of the imperial process and the decentring of Eurocentrism as Meenakshi Sharma says: “The notion of oppositionality and resistance to European/metropolitan discursive containment is thus central to most definitions of postcolonialism” (70). Thus it could be very well seen that Postclonialism, unlike structuralism or post structuralism, welcomes

interrogation about racism, sexism, colonialist domination, poverty and the like and opens up the possibilities for the marginals to be articulative and radical.

Conclusion

Taking stock of the present scenario, it could be seen that colonial regimes are largely displaced by neo-colonial forces like the multinationals although colonialism as such still exists in some parts of the globe as in Tibet, in East Timor and in the occupied territories in Palestine. Imperialism of the cultural, economic, military and political kind still continues to exist. "Production of culture" through the unending possibilities of media has been foregrounded by the neo-colonial forces along with the local, the national and the cultural spaces in between. Geographical and cultural displacement and the celebration of hybridity have made the spatial and temporal irrelevant. Now the exploited and the exploiters are topographically well mixed up. Thus it becomes clear that the dyad, the West and the East, are not strictly geographical locales and they represent certain codes of culture and tradition. However, the topographical borders or the nativity of the characters is insignificant as far as the encounter is concerned. Definitely the narrative form of Indian English Literature is suited to subvert and appropriate the Eurocentric notions to resist undesirable impacts of globalization and the chief characteristics of postcolonialism are the strategic subversion of the imperial process and the decentring of Eurocentrism.

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