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QUEST FOR POSTCOLONIAL ESSENCE IN INDIAN ENGLISH FICTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The present paper talks about the quintessence and embodiment of 'Post-Colonial' traits as seen in the creative works of the writers of Indian English literature, either in their themes or techniques of narration. Now, the nation of once colonized country want to speak about themselves, their pains, anxieties, search for identity and rootlessness, their culture, etc. without the help of the ideas and thoughts of the colonizer masters. After the independence, the Indian English Writers felt that to portray their culture and their thoughts, they need to employ different elements of Post-colonialism like gender-politics, native syntaxes in English language, hybridization, intersexuality, non-linear narrative techniques, etc. Indian writers have involved themselves in a retelling of the standard versions of history as opposed from the Imperial distortion of history by trying out variety of narrative techniques as well as rendering of several points of view that is free from any imposing knowledge of truth, hinting at multiple truths and possibilities.

Key words: Indian English Literature, colonialism, post-colonialism, subaltern, quest for identity, language, culture.

India was under the colonial reign over a period of more than two centuries. During the British Raj, there was a remarkable bulk of literature written in English. With the progress of sense of nationalism, partition and the withdrawal of colonial rule, suddenly Indian writers of English felt a void and inadequateness in the way they express themselves. The term "Post-colonialism" is a reaction against colonialism, where the world is seen through the realization of the 'colonizers' with no accounts taken about the 'colonized' or 'subaltern'. Gayatri Spivak Chakrabarty tried to point out in her seminal work, "Can the Subaltern speak?" (1993) that the subalterns are the group of people who have been considered sub-standard and always they were deprived from the right to express themselves.

"Post-colonialism" is the most dynamic and controversial term in the contemporary literary criticism. "Post-colonialism" broadly discusses how in this contemporary era, the nation of formerly colonized territory and its people represent themselves in terms of cultural, human and National identity, after being independent from their 'oppressors'. Each colonized nation has the region-specific issues which to be expressed through the western as well as native methods of narration. The word "Post-colonialism" is a collectivity of voices arising from the countries of the "Third World", like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia Australia, Singapore, Caribbean and African countries, which diligently and relentlessly 'resist', 'revisit' and 'reconstruct' their colonial past, experiences and the problematic issues faced by a newly independent nation after the decolonization..

The renowned critics, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, express the term "Post-Colonialism" to "cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression."^[2]

'Post-colonial' literature celebrates huge developments in the late twentieth century. The writers and critics created groundbreaking creative works, like, *'The Wretched of the Earth'* (1963) and *Blank Skins, White Masks'* (1967) by Frantz Fanon, *'The Empire Writes Back'* (1989) by the great trio critics, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *'Orientalism'* (1978) by Said, *'The Location Culture'* (1994) by Homi K. Bhabha. The theory of 'Post-colonialism' has its association with post-structuralism and post-modernism. It is an endless procedure of opposition of colonial theories and beliefs, along with the refurbishment of the same. It talks about the issues of the decolonized nations like quest of identity or identity crisis, hybridization, nationalism, one's role as an individual, as a society, gender politics, alienation, rootlessness, exile and language. According to the words of Bill Ashcroft, et.al. it can be summed up as: "Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe."^[3] Use of language as an instrument against the oppressor is a major and persistent concern of the post-colonial English writers. They usurped the colonial language of the oppressors, such as, English and the native language with native expressions, words, native syntaxes, experiences, idioms, speech habits and nuances of the vernacular languages. African writers like Wole Soyinka adopted the language in his African dialect whereas the English language employed by the Indian writers bears a stamp of "Indianness". They use it to survey native sentiments, cultures, customs and rituals. The prominent post-colonial writers of English language are Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*, 1981), Amitav Ghosh (*The Circle of Reason*, 1986), *The Shadowlines* (1988)], Sidhwa Bapsi (*The Ice Candy Man*, 1988), Shashi Tharoor (*The Great Indian Novel*, 1981), *Riot* (2001), Arun Joshi's [*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1973), *The Last Labyrinth* (1981)], Manohar Malgonkar [*Combat of Shadows* (2013)], and so on.

As stated earlier, language is an important essence of post-colonialism. Language and culture go simultaneously. The post-colonial writers are making a new culture for themselves, which understandably talks about displacement, alienation and quest for one's identity in one's cultural and national consciousness. Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor and the other postcolonial writers of India have been constantly revisiting and reconstructing the history. The western linear storytelling method is no longer suitable when these writers need to write the story, agony and dilemmas of post-colonial India. Instead, these writers have started to employ experiment and mix different genres and narrative techniques to say their stories. In *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie not only utilizes "magic realism" but also tries to play with Indian traditional and ancient oral story-telling.

Vikram Seth explores the entire India of the post-independence stage in his fictional work, *'A Suitable Boy'* through his fictional vision. The Indian society of mid-twentieth century is portrayed with all its diversity. This fiction sketches the multicultural, multilingual, multiplicity in castes and multi-religious characters and expresses the multilingualism as one great cause of diversity. The communicative vehicles of the characters are the four main languages of India: Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and English with Sanskrit and Arabic as cultural aspects of Hindus and Muslim, also use of German language and western culture to communicate with German diplomat Hans. The novel attempts to explain the significance of the linguistic difference and explores that the separation of Masses of a nation based on region, culture and language is always political. The relationships between characters of different castes, religions and social norms, reveals how the novel enforces the linguistic singularity over diversity through language in creation of Indian national identity. The central values and theme of Vikram Seth's fiction may be dealt with the relationship between personal life and politics, political interference in India, conflicts between individual and community demands. Amitav Ghosh employs the technique of intermingling of migration, globalization, transitional experiences of Nation-state and post-colonial National identity in his Novels. Through the fictional characters he tries to interpret the colonial, pre-independence and post-colonial eras and worlds. Hybridity demonstrates how cultures represent the

processes of literation (of representing sounds or words by letters or in writing) and translation through which their meanings are changeable.

Hybridity itself is vital in Salman Rushdie's novel '*The Midnight's Children*'. Rushdie adopts new techniques of plotting the narrative with direct reference to nation-state and political history using the technique of magical realism which is hybridized form of realism and super natural. Protagonist Saleem Sinai who is the narrator of this novel, was born in the midnight of 15th August 1947, at the very moment of independence of India with ability of mysterious telepathy to relate himself with the other 1000 children born at the moment of independence, narrates his familial identity combining with various cultural and religious myths, politics, history, post independence political strategies of Nehru and the proclamation of the national emergency by Indira Gandhi. According to Saleem these midnight children along with the newly independent India faced a lot of struggles in cultural, linguistics, social and political aspects. The Muslim-reared Saleem is the son of a Hindu street singer's seduced wife and British colonial Sahib, Shiva the son of a wealthy Muslim of Kashmir becomes a poor dirty Hindu street child and Parvati is a Hindu street magician. Rushdie presents a vision of India to construct hybrid national identity which reflects the combination and mixing of various new ideas, such as, hybridity of magical realism, the social hybridity through the multiple and diverse characters, the historical hybridity of the characters' perspectives, the hybridity of language and storytelling. The changing and shifting relations of characters creates social and cultural hybridization through multitude of different characters. Rushdie also creates innovative English in *Midnight's Children* through breaking the accepted old rules of grammatical and syntactical structures, the conventional sentence length, punctuation, using low culture dialect, common voices of street, slang and curse words, crass language. Nayantara Sehgal, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and many other postcolonial women writers question the power and the processes of oppression of postcolonial society, specially socio-political and psychological injustice on the women. Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri raise questions on the dislocation and identity crisis. Shashi Tharoor, a renowned diplomat and politician of Indian origin is a distinct writer of contemporary Indian English literature who embraces the literary style and technique of Rushdie. His famous Novel '*The Great Indian Novel*' is the re-writing and re-casting of the Epic Mahabharata combining with the Indian freedom struggle movement along with the context of the independent India in early years of freedom. The novel *Riot* advocates the love-hate relationship of the fanatic communities India and the novel *Show Business* is the narrative of myths of the Bombay Film Industries.

The postcolonial Indian English fiction writers adopted the contemporary issues in literature which display a huge diversity of subjects, interests and concerns as well as complexity of themes, structures and techniques. They included the topics on nationalism, communalism, modernism, subaltern representation, identity, Diaspora and influence of globalization. Their works are highly admired and accepted by the global market of creative literature. 'Post-colonialism' questions the assumptions of demanding the colonizer's culture for being superior than the culture of the colonized natives. The term encounters all postcolonial issues of racial, class, caste and regional domination, cultural, literary and linguistic hegemony, 'Diaspora', migration, sufferings, feminism and globalization, colonial legacy, 'binary opposite' power-relationship between the colonialist and the colonizers.

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