Chapter 4

The Native Haunting

Colonialism involves two types of imperialism – political and cultural. Therefore, myth and history, language and landscape, self and the other are all very important ingredients of post-colonialism. (Das 7)

In postcolonial literature, the themes of place and displacement have much significance. The crisis is related more to placelessness than rootlessness. This chapter explores the myth, history, language and landscape which are vital in postcolonial literature. How the protagonists are motivated geographically, socially, culturally, religiously and linguistically to return to their own culture and tradition are investigated in this chapter. Ramaswamy, an Indian Brahmin, faces the cultural clash in France; Billy Biswas and Yogananda are subjected to the exposure to the American society. The common factor prominent among all these Indian protagonists is that all the three become victims of cultural clash. All these protagonists face fragmentation, displacement and discontinuity to some extent though the intensity of their feeling varies. They represent their history, identity and community though they themselves feel scattered. Earlier the term
native was used to describe the indigenous inhabitants of colonies. It represented the people ‘born to the land’. But later it referred to those people who were inferior to the colonial settlers or the colonial administrators of the colonies. The inferiority and second rate categorisation hidden in the term native permeates largely. The civilised Europe consider it their moral obligation to pulley the downtrodden natives. By rescuing and rehabilitating them, they aim to sow the seeds of civilisation through the jargon formed by them. The customs like sati or immolation and polygamy which existed in the colonies made the coloniser term the colonised as barbarians and it highlighted their need of transformation. The whites even feared the contamination of their own culture due to this process of transformation of the natives. This fear known as ‘going native’ indicates the fear of the whites that they will lose their distinctiveness and superior identity. Culture, no matter whether it is foreign or native overlaps with each other. Young Rudyard Kipling’s experience of staying in India justifies it. With the fear of their children going native, Kipling’s parents who were in India, sent them back to Europe so that their culture will be preserved. ‘Going native’ is contrasted with nativism which refers to the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in precolonial society.
The highly philosophical novel The Serpent and the Rope is not confined to one place but the readers are taken to various places like Benares, Sobornne, Aixe, Paris, London and Bombay. But the protagonist's mind is restricted to Benares. There is an abundance of words which Ramaswamy uses to glorify Benares. A geographical return occurs in his case. Ramaswamy says, "India was wonderful to me. It was like juice that one is supposed to drink to conquer a kingdom or to reach the deathless – juice of rare jasmine or golden myrobalan, brought from the nether world by a hero or dark mermaid" (SR 15). The protagonists feel perplexed when they realise that a tree cannot settle and get fixed in a foreign soil. They long to be in their homeland and cherish those moments. John Macleod emphasises the role of home in one's mind:

The concept of home often performs an important function in our lives. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong. As an idea it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort (although actual experiences of home may well fail to deliver these promises). To be 'at home' is to occupy a location where we are welcome, where we can be with people very much like ourselves. But what happens to the idea of 'home' for
migrants who live far from the lands of their birth? How might their travels impact upon the ways ‘home’ is considered? (Beginning Postcolonialism 210).

The West Indian is a shattered group that cannot even say where their home is and how it looks like. “Caribbean cultures like most diasporic cultures by definition are cultures usually of forced (or if not forced, largely forced) migration. They are born of travelling, rupture, appropriation, loss, exile. A kind of spiritual homelessness lies at the centre of diasporic experience” (Stuart Hall 27). Like most West Indians, Teeton becomes a subject of cultural assimilation. Cultural assimilation refers to absorption of the minority into the dominant culture. New customs and attitudes are acquired through contact and communication as in the case of Rama, Billy, Waiyaki and Teeton. The transfer of customs is not a one-way process. Each group of immigrants contributes some of its own cultural traits to its new society.

The conversation between Jeremy and Teeton is of great significance. In the first part of the novel Teeton is very passive regarding his return. He takes part in the gathering headed by Potaro. When Jeremy asks Teeton, if San Cristobal is not his home, Teeton replies with great resentment,"Home is where I am.” Jeremy further questions, "You think of London as home?” Teeton replies, "It's where I
am." Jeremy further asks him whether he has decided to stay in London, Teeton says, "I'm here." To Jeremy's retortion,"Permanent?" Teeton replies,"The future makes its own arrangements" (WB 96). Though Teeton responds in the negative regarding his return, in his mind he has firmly decided to return. But he does not like to disclose it to anybody. Even between his conversation and Jeremy’s, “His reflections had gone off like birds migrating to more favorable seasons; to the warm cave that was his room: 'you must tell the Old Dowager you're going home. You must tell her soon.' This duty had become more pressing than any menace which Jeremy's presence might have threatened" (WB 100). Teeton becomes angry with Jeremy as his arrival reminds him why he has left the island. “I let a personal whim – isn’t that what you’d call it – a whim about my wife’s infidelity tear me away from men who must have known similar insults from the authorities. But they had to suffer tortures which I escaped; which the American ambassador saw to it that I would be spared. God bless America, bless all ambassadors” (WB 102). Jeremy reveals the objective of his visit only at the end of the conversation – Randa’s death. He does not even wait for consoling Teeton or clarifying his apprehensions regarding his wife’s death.

In The Serpent and the Rope, Ramaswamy feels homeless as he alienates from his French wife Madeleine. Though he and Madeleine are
husband and wife, a true affection does not bind them. When she
interrogates, “What is it separated us, Rama?” he says, “India” (SR 331).
Ramaswamy is not able to be at home even at his home in France. So it
is quite natural for him to feel that India is calling him. There are many
references to Kabir, Tulsi Das and Buddha in the novel. He projects his
interest in village life, “I love rivers and lakes, and make my home easily
by any waterside hamlet. I love palaces for their echoes, their sense of
never having seen anything but the gloomy” (SR 7). Being an orphan
Ramaswamy is looked after by his aunt Lakshamma who becomes a
widow at the age of seven or eight. The reference to the Indian customs
of aunts looking after children could be observed here, “… I mean the
orphans of the family always have great-aunts, who go on changing from
orphan to orphan – that they remain ever young” (SR 8).

Ramaswamy tries to defend the smile on his Little Mother’s face
in spite of his father’s death. “In Benares one knows death is as illusory
as the mist in the morning” (SR 11). He calls Benares ‘Surrealist city’.
Surrealism is a twentieth century avantgarde movement in art and
literature which sought to release the creative potential of the
unconscious mind, for example by the irrational juxtaposition of images.
Rama says, "You never know where reality starts and where illusion
ends; whether the Brahmins of Benares are like the crows asking for
funeral rice-balls saying caw” (SR 12). Rama further states, “Benares is eternal. There the dead do not die nor the living live. The dead come to the play on the banks of the Ganges, and the living who move about, and even offer rice-balls to the manes, live in the illusion of a vast night and a bright city” (SR 22). Even in the sacred city of Benares, there is the presence of prostitutes. “The concubines of Benares are the most beautiful of any in the world” (SR 12). It is said that they worship Parvathi, the wife of Shiva so that they may have the juice of youth in their limbs. Raja Rao strikes the heart when he makes the narrator say, “Death makes passion beautiful. Death makes the concubine inevitable” (SR 12). Ramaswamy remembers his grand father telling about his mother, “Your mother had such a beautiful voice. She had a voice like concubine Chandramma” (SR 12).

The staunch love towards Madeleine, French culture and land does not permit him to let off the feelings for his homeland. The memories of his mother, grandfather, Little Mother, Benares, Indian art and literature and culture sway in his mind and merge with the foreign elements in his mind. He changes his plan of preaching the European civilisation to Indian students.

Hybridity is an important term in postcolonial. It refers to the creation of new transcultural forms produced by colonisation. In
horticulture, the term is used to refer to the cross breeding of two species by grafting or cross pollination to form a third, hybrid species. Hybridisation takes variegated forms: linguistic, political, cultural and racial. Pidgin and Creole are hybridised linguistic versions. The marriage of the French Madeliene and the Indian Rama gives birth to a son named Krishna, whom later Madeleine renames as Pierre because of the fear that Indian Gods would be angry with them. This racial hybrid dies in infancy and Madeleine’s second pregnancy also results in still birth.

In *A Dream in Hawaii*, when Stella requests Yogananda to go to the West, he is not prepared to go as he plans to start new activities for *Sadhana* – humanitarian work. Stella begins to impress Swamiji that Vivekananda has brought India not only to America, but to several European countries. When Yogananda says that Indian cultural life has spread everywhere, Stella states that knowledge has grown but not understanding. Stella is confident that Yogananda would be able to give a new meaning and purpose to Vedanta – orienting Vedanta to the present need of society by leading the Americans from darkness to the light, like a neo-Buddha. She suggests that they would be landing in Hawaii, the meeting ground of East and West as she has good contacts there in the university.
The protagonists being teachers, priests and artists are great philosophers. In *A Dream in Hawaii* there are frequent references to Vivekananda who said, “I will go into a thousand hells cheerfully if I can rouse my country-men to stand on their feet and be men” (DH 182). The proximity of the world through globalisation and the glorification of Indian culture could be observed in the words of Yogananda, “The globe has shrunk vastly since Swami Vivekananda passed away sixty years ago. All the world is now a stone's throw from India. People everywhere see our cultural life as clearly as we see theirs” (DH 11).

The difference between American society and Indian society could be made out from the words uttered by Yogananda and Professor Dodwell in response to the applause which emerged after Yogananda’s speech. Yogananda says, “I am not a professional speaker. I am not even a professor. I don’t need your applause. Please leave in silence” (DH 8). But the response of the audience is noteworthy:

The audience was stunned. Professor Dodwell, emerging from his surprise, leaned towards a microphone. “This campus follows an old American custom. The volume of hand clapping is the measure of speaker’s success or failure. But”-an embarrassed smile –“let’s respect Swami Yogananda’s unique sensitivity” (DH 8).
Yogananda comments on the lack of time and difficulty in doing dhyana in Hawaii, “Here in the alien city, time for dhyana was scarce. Despite his mission to project dhyana for its basic value: a way to reach the depths of tranquillity, the inner silence” (DH 10). When a person mingles with a foreign culture, he cannot help but react to all the new stimuli and influences in his or her life. The reaction is not a single event, but a mixture and series of emotions, ranging from elation to depression to infatuation to homesickness. This mixed bag of reactions is commonly known as Culture Shock. Yogananda is shocked at the sight of the naked ladies whom he meets at the beach. Later, he undergoes a similar experience as a result of meeting Frieda and Sylvia Koo.

Yogananda tries to stick on to his duties as an ascetic and it clearly reflects his endurance:

He follows the traditional way of inner purification: fasting, with total submergence in meditation. At first it is a five-day stretch. The first two days are easy. Hunger comes and goes. He feels fine, with an enhanced clearness of mind. Next day he is somewhat restless. It is hard not to think of food. His lips speak the hymns from Vedanta, soundlessly, almost without a pause, until he dozes off. On the fifth day he is aching with hunger. He is on the edge of breaking his
ordeal. But he holds on. Aham brahma asmi. When he is free to end his fast with a glass of lime juice, he is shamed by the intensity of his pleasure, the stark relief. (DH 15)

There is a reference to Bhagavad Gita in The Serpent and the Rope and A Dream in Hawaii. In the Kennedy Academy, the protagonist of A Dream in Hawaii glorifies the theme of freedom from desire, by quoting the holy line “Do your allotted work, but renounce its fruit. Be rid of the hankering of recompense” (DH 32). Not only in the words of Yogananda is Bhagavad Gita reverberated, but a great part of A Dream in Hawaii draws the attention to Bhagavad Gita:

The Gita demands a dynamic equilibrium in the art of living, Swami Yogananda interpreted, reciting off and on the original Sanskrit texts. Every man has to complete his inner image through the work which is his life’s mission, the work he has been born to do. To be true to his inner image at any cost in terms of materiality and in terms of struggle – that is his obligation. But even this commitment is not the last word. Do your work with no wish for results – that is the key command. Be totally free from the desire to gain the fruit of your work. Do not let your feelings directed to the outcome of your endeavor. Desire is
undeniably a prime motivating force in human activities; but emotional overtones are overwhelming and destructive. Not that you have to be indifferent to results. Even amid the striving for success, the inner spirit may stay untethered in a state of nonattachment. (DH 31)

In *A Dream in Hawaii* there is an American couple Alfred and Naomi who revere *Kamasuthra* instead of *Bhagavad Gita*. The conversation between this couple and Devjani reveals it. When Alfred says that he has heard of a wonderful book written in India, Devjani assumes it as *Bhagavad Gita*. But to her astonishment it is *Kamasutra* that he is referring to. He asks, “...every Indian has its copy of the *Kamasutra*, same as we have our Holy Bible – so it’s been stated. Is that correct?” (DH 80). The American image of India is reflected in the words of Alfred, “What! You surprise me, Devjani. How could you miss your *Kamasutra? Techniques of Love Making* that’s the English subtitle. Literal translation, right? Hindus are supersexed like all other Asians, aren’t they? *Kamasutra* must be worth a lot to them” (DH 80). The Western notion is that Hindus are supersexed like Asians. There are people like Devjani, who preach the values of Indian culture to Americans. Devjani opines, “We in India have interests somewhat higher in value” (DH 80). She even speaks about “*Vedanta*, a system of thought
concerned with God – consciousness” (81). When Yogananda stops his lecture after chanting "Om Shanti" Jennifer does not understand its meaning. Later she finds that shanti is peace and Om with its mystic connotation is no word but a mere sound – a prefix for prayers to the divine.

During her visit to India, Jennifer, an American lady, watches a dance programme in Hotel Jahangir which gives a glimpse of Indian culture. Reference to the Natya Shastra, the sacred book of Dance composed in the sixth century is also given.

At the exit she turned for a last look at the two dancers: Krishna playing on a bamboo flute; his sweetheart Radha swaying to the gay tune, enchanted. To be united with her lover, Radha was risking the fury of Aiyán, her husband. A legend that everyone in India knew, adored. A vast literature had been built around this love lore. She would like to dip into the legend, Jennifer thought – it would give her some understanding of one aspect of Indian culture.

(DH 34)

Jennifer regrets not meeting Yogananda during her Indian visit. Instead she meets Madhu, the fantastic boy in Delhi who says, “I make many tour ladies happy. Tour ladies want fun” (DH 35). The same India
produces both Yogananda and Madhu, who are polar opposites. Yogananda has great veneration for Swami Vivekananda, “‘Religion is not for empty bellies.’ Swami Vivekananda has said, ‘and hunger was only one of the problems. Sadhana with its meager resources could make a contribution that was at best trivial, but every bit counted.’”

(DH 11)

Ambivalence is evident in the way of dressing too. When the Indians like Nishi ape the Western way of dressing, Americans like Stella Gregson prefer the Indian style. Stella Gregson an American lady, who presents Yogananda to America, wears a white cotton sari and full sleeved blouse. In her house she is seen lighting a dark brown stick of incense, blowing out the flame of dhupa. Her house in Hon Hale is very small and humble, and has Indian paintings. It is her idea to introduce the yogi of the East in the West. She is careful to give Indian touch to Jennifer’s house at Kahala Avenue where the meeting of Yogananda with some important people will take place. She thinks the room must be stripped of furniture so that the fifty guests could sit in Indian style on the floor with its super thick cherry red carpet. She plans to give an Indian way of welcome to all including swami by placing lotus on the doorsteps:
Lotuses done with powdered rice adorned the four stone steps from the edge of the powdered lawn to the front door which stood ajar, framing Jennifer. The guests as they arrived slowed down, puzzling how to reach the door without messing up the white petals, until the hostess spoke encouragingly, “Just walk up with care. Those are auspicious signs. Pretty, don't you think?” (DH 51)

Raja Rao and Bhabhani Bhattacharya depict Benares and Ganges in their writing as they are symbols of Hindu civilisation. Raja Rao has a special fascination towards Benares as he presents it in his short stories too. Alessandro Mondi considers “Benares as an inter-entity connecting the above and the below, as a mirror (more than a bridge) between heaven and earth” (5).

In The Serpent and the Rope, the impressionistic account of Benares is given; Benares revives the cultural spirit in Ramaswamy. It is stated that Tulsi Das wrote his *Ramayana* there and how Kabir became a true devotee of Ram. He says that in Benares, “You never know where reality starts and where illusion ends” (SR 11-12). In Benares, when his little brother gives money to Brahmins, Rama realises that his father is dead. Ramaswamy speaks about a common concept about Ganges, “People say there are crocodiles in the Ganges, and some add that bits of
dead bodies, only half burnt, are often washed down by the river” (SR 23).

Through the pondering of Devjani, Benares is pictured in A Dream in Hawaii too:

The holy city with its twenty-five centuries of history was making her problem all the more acute. No place anywhere in India was more engrossed in spiritual seeking. Every Sunday, Devjani in a horse-drawn tonga rode the ten miles from the campus to the heart of the city, and she watched the visage of Varanasi with it’s multiple splendours – a fusion in which the spiritual and intellectual became united, inseparable. (DH 88)

Yogananda feels his freedom is curtailed by his own sponsors, under whose instructions his every movement is designed. He is against the establishing of a ‘Yogananda’ institute. His return is prompted by his own fall from an ascetic to a common man. That is from Yogananda to Neeloy Mukherji. When, under the instruction of Walt Gregson, Sylvia Koo tries to seduce him by dressing herself as Devjani, he acts as a common man. He realises that he is not fit to be a guru and returns to his native land rejecting all the plans his sponsors have designed.

The accumulated aversion that Yogananda has for the American
society finds expression due to the act of Sylvia Koo and he takes a drastic decision of leaving America. The novelist depicts him as a man who has no race, no country, no kith and kin, and no roots in his past beyond the beginning of his yogihood. But he feels his roots are in India and returns to the Himalayan foothills. Yogananda who lectures on the ‘Crisis in a Sick Society: What Next?’ is subjected to the corruption of the American society. The first rejection of American society could be seen when he realises that in that alien city, he could not find much time for dhyaana, away to reach the depths of the tranquility, the inner silence. He began to chant a hymn from Vedanta the mantra of “Aham brahmaasmi-I am the Brahma, THE ABSOLUTE REALITY” (DH 10).

These words matches with the opening words of The Serpent and the Rope uttered by Ramaswamy: “I was born a Brahmin – that is devoted to the truth and all that ‘Brahmin is he who knows Brahma’ ” (SR 5).

In The Strange Case of Billy Biswas, Billy prefers to live in America in the area which most of the Indians loathed, “Like most Indians I was wary of the Negroes and positively scared of Harlem” (SCBB 5). Romi accepts the suggestion of Billy to stay with him in Harlem because Billy appeared to be a member of “upper-upper crust of Indian society” (SCBB 5). At that time Billy’s father was the judge of India’s Supreme Court. Romi recollects, “White America, he said, was
much too civilised for him. His apartment was appalling. It was on the second floor of a tenement house that housed at least a dozen other families. It was situated in what must have been one of the worst slums of New York City” (SCBB 5). Like Yogananda, Billy is inspired by Tagore: “I believe I had just discovered the magic of Tagore’s songs” (SCBB 40). He adds: “Tagore now leaves me rather cold. And I haven’t discovered anyone who can take his place. I haven’t got the taste for the classical stuff” (SCBB 40).

John Macleod in Beginning Postcolonialism highlights the problems of Diaspora peoples, “Too often diaspora peoples have been ghettoized and excluded from feeling they belong to the ‘new country’, and suffered their cultural practices to be mocked and discriminated against” (208). The Harlem area in which Billy stays is more comfortable to him than the city of Delhi. The stangeness of Billy reaches its zenith during his stay in Delhi with his civilised parents and wife. The frequent expeditions are the only solace to him.

The African protagonists Ezeulu and Waiyaki face the clash with foreigners who come to their land. In the case of Indian protagonists, they were in foreign land and throughout they are haunted by the native. In Arrow of God, the action is primarily seen through the chief character Ezeulu’s eyes. The high priest, Ezeulu’s consent is of great
significance on religious, social and political aspects because without his consent, decision cannot be executed. One of the chief duties of Ezeulu is the announcement of the appearance of the New Moon every month. It is the custom that the chief priest should observe the sky and look for the signs of the New Moon. Ezeulu being very concerned about his duties begins his watch always three days before as he dislikes taking risk. He sticks on to the custom which he should follow after seeing the New Moon:

Ezeulu went into his barn and took down one yam from the bamboo platform built specially for the twelve sacred yams. There were eight left. He knew there would be eight; nevertheless he counted them carefully. He had already eaten three and had the fourth in his hand. He checked the remaining ones again and went back to his obi, shutting the door of the barn carefully after him. (AG 3)

Ezeulu reflects on the limitations of his priestly powers after eating one of the twelve sacred yams which mark the passing of the months of the Ibo Agricultural Calendar. He feels he is only the watchman. The conflict in his mind is between his own duty as a priest and the emergence of Christianity as a much accepted religion. Ezeulu is attracted and impressed by the white man Winterbottom. This
admiration to white man is one reason for sending his third son Oduche to the church school to grasp the secrets of the white man’s cleverness. He plans to use that wisdom to ameliorate his people’s condition and to consolidate his position of power. Homi Bhabha elucidates that the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is ambivalent as it describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterises their relationship. The colonised subject is never completely opposed to the coloniser. In Bhabha’s theory ambivalence disrupts the authority of the colonial administration even without any resistance or rebellion. The coloniser wants the colonised to mimic them but they never want the colonised to be their replica. Ezeulu is a man of forward thinking, ready to accept changes, if the outcome will be positive.

In the African community women are treated with due respect and care. Another custom favouring women is that the bridegroom should build a homestead for the bride before marriage. Ezeulu cannot wait for the delay Obika causes in the construction of the homestead. He says “Nothing will wait. A new wife should not come into an unfinished homestead. I know such a thing does not trouble the present age. But as long as we are there we shall continue to point out the right way” (AG 13). He gives instructions to Edogo, to take his brothers and the
women to build the barn. He also points out, “If Obika has no shame, the rest of us have.” (AG 13)

When Oduche points out that some task has been assigned to him in the Christian school, Ezeulu becomes violent and says, “Tell them that tomorrow is the day on which my sons and my wives and my son’s wife work for me. Your people should know the custom of this island; if they don’t you must tell them. Do you hear me?” (AG 13). By using the term ‘your people’ Ezeulu associates his son with the white Christians. Achebe states in The Education of British-Protected Child “I am a prime beneficiary of the education which the missionaries had made a major component of their enterprise. My father had a lot of praise for the missionaries and their message, and so have I” (EBPC 37). Achebe who has great admiration for missionaries make his character Ezeulu criticise Christianity. In an interview conducted by Robert Serumaga, Achebe recollects his childhood days. He admits, “Christians including him were called ‘people of the church’ and the other natives were called ‘people of the world’. He remembers the co-existence of the church and the world. He recollects, “When there was a festival in the village we were supposed not to visit our neighbours because they were likely to give us food offered to idols” (Duerden 12).
Ezeulu is very much anxious of his daughter’s separation from her husband. He knows that a man who admits that his daughter is not always welcome in his home is in effect telling her husband to treat her as roughly as he likes. So when Akueke’s husband finally comes round to announce his intention to take his wife home, Ezeulu makes a show of objecting. He asks him, “Did you bring yams or cocoyam or cassava to feed her and her child? Or do you think that they are still carrying the breakfast they ate in your house last year?” (AG 64). His advice is of great significance and reflects the African culture of treating women properly. “It is not bravery for man to beat his wife. I know a man and his wife must quarrel; there is no abomination in that. Even brothers and sisters from the same womb do disagree; how much more two strangers. No, you may quarrel, but let it not end in fighting. I shall say no more at present” (AG 64). The native custom of announcing important matters is unique:

GOME GOME GOME GOME. “Ora Obodo, listen! Ezeulu has asked me to announce that the festival of the pumpkin leaves will take place on the coming Nkwo.” GOME GOME GOME GOME. “Ora Obodo! Ezeulu has asked me...” (AG 65).

Myth, the embodiment of human aspiration is an appropriate imaginative form used in postcolonial literature. In modern studies
myth plays an important role even though it is one of the oldest elements of human heritage. Dhunia states the Kala Pahar legend and justifies Billy's return to the primitive world:

When the Kala Pahar calls you, Collector sahib, there is nothing you can do but go. The first time I heard his drumming I knew the rock had called him. It is like a woman calling you. You become blind. All you see is the Big Rock. All you hear is its call. Day and night it calls you. Night and day. And you go like a fish hooked on a string, in spite of yourself, bound hand and foot. There is nothing you can do but go, when the Kala Pahar calls you.

(SCBB 158)

Dhunia reports the magical power of Billy which makes Chandtola glow even during the famine-stricken period. He also narrates the myth of the king and the queen. He admits that Billy is actually the king who has returned to his kingdom. This has resulted in the coming of Devi. This Devi was the queen of the king who excelled in everything: “in love, in magic, and in saintliness” (SCBB 155). He was a great sculptor. Once he wanted to build a temple that would surpass all others. His sculptors were the finest but the king wanted to make the chief idol himself. Day and night, he struggled with chisel in his hands. After a period of ten
years, on the last night of the last year, the king produced an idol which had great perfection. “It was so lovely that the Bhagwan himself decided to enter it before someone else did.” The Bhagwan was ready to offer a boon for the king’s struggle. The king was dumbfounded and said, “I need nothing, O Lord.” Bhagwan replied, “Be not in haste to say no. Boons are not given every day, as though they were guavas. Come again tomorrow, at this very hour, and let us know your wish.” (SCBB 155).

The king reported this matter to his evil minister who passed it to the brothers of the king. The jealous brothers poisoned and killed the king. As a result of it, “Devi, his queen, immolated on her husband’s pyre prophesying that she would return when her husband returned to the forest. And at her return Chandtola would glow again on moonlit nights” (SCBB 155). Dhunia asserts that Billy is the king and “Bilasia is only a wife of this perishable world. It is Devi Mata who has been his companion for five thousand years, from one life to another [Janam janam ki saathi]. It is from Devi Mata that he gets his magic” (SCBB 156).

Dhunia calls Billy ‘priest’. He illustrates Billy’s magical powers to Billy. “A tiger had been roaming the jungle for a week killing our cattle. Billy Bhai went to the jungle and spoke to the tiger and the tiger went away” (SCBB 156). Romi discards Dhunia’s ridiculous words but clarifies the matter with Billy who explains the same situation of
meeting the tiger. “I thought he was the handsomest thing I had ever seen. I was especially fascinated by his eyes. I stared into his light green eyes and he stared right back into mine. After about half a minute of this he just got up and went away, wagging his tail” (SCBB 171). Only a strange man can stare into the eyes of a tiger. Dhunia is grateful to Billy for curing Bilasia and for bringing life back to his grandson. Billy simplifies these instances to confirm that he does not have any charismatic power. He says that he was interested in Indian medicinal herbs and so he explored those which were meant to cure snake bite and malaria. He mentions how he treated Dhunia’s grandson. “What I did with the boy was to make a cut near the wound and apply a herb. It is called chaulai in Hindi. Amarantus Gangeticus is its botanical name. It just so happened that it was the right antidote for that particular poison” (SCBB 172). He also admits that he cured Bilasia with some antibiotics.

In Arrow of God, there are many beliefs which are different from the European cultures. There is a special custom that drive the natives of Okperi.

At first Eke was a very small market. Other markets in the neighborhood were drawing it dry. Then one day the men of Okperi made a powerful deity and placed their market in
its care. From that day Eke grew and grew until it became the biggest market in these parts. This deity which is called Nwanyieke is an old woman. Every Eke day before cock-crow she appears in the market place with a broom in her right hand and dances around the vast open space beckoning with her broom in all directions of the earth and drawing folk from every land. That is why people will not come near the market before cock-crow; if they did they would see the ancient lady in her task. (AG 19)

When Akukalia reaches Okperi, he is informed that everybody in Ibo land knows that Okperi people do not have other business on their Eke day. He is informed by one of the Okperian I have not yet heard that a message that could not wait or you have brought us news that Chukwu, the high God, is about to remove the foots that holds the world? If not then you must know that Eke Okperi does not break up because three men have to come to town. If you listen carefully even now you can hear it from Umuda. Do you think markets like that will stop to hear your message? (AG 22)

Myths and tribal rituals portrayed in The River Between strongly cement the yearning of the protagonist to return. During their hill
expedition Chege pours “a shower of saliva on to his breast in the Gikuyu way of blessing” (RB 17). Waiyaki thinks his father is blessing the river. They also disturb an antelope from its hiding place. But without disturbing them, it leaps away. Waiyaki likes antelopes and always feels a desire to touch their smooth bodies. He asks his father why the antelopes only disturb women and why they free men. Chege has an immediate reply:

Long ago women used to rule this land and its men. They were harsh and men began to resent their hard hand. So when all the women were pregnant, men came together and overthrew them. Before this, women owned everything. The animal you saw was their goat. But because the women could not manage them, the goats ran away. They knew women to be weak. So why should they fear them? (RB 18)

Achebe presents the religious belief of the Ibos. Ibo people have same language, religious beliefs and practices. African flavour is maintained in the novels with these myths. Folk literature has the great power of transporting the individual to the depths of the ancient tradition. According to Ibo theology, each person acquires a Chi or spiritual double at birth. Achebe asserts that every person has an
individual Chi who created him, its natural home is somewhere in the region of the sun but it may be inducted to visit an earthly shrine. He further asserts that the person’s fortune in life is controlled more or less completely by his Chi.

Ibos are ritually religious, but spiritually irreligious. There is a rhythm in Ibo society which celebrates every activity of life and agricultural season is punctuated by some religious exercise or expression. Ezeulu tells his son that the strange sight he has seen is that of Eru, the magnificent, the one that gives wealth to those who are favourable to him.

People sometimes see him at that place in this kind of weather. Perhaps he was returning home from a visit to Idemili or the other deities. Eru only harms those who swear falsely before his shrine. Ezeulu was carried away by his praise of the God of the wealth. The way he spoke one would have thought he was the proud priest of Eru rather than Ulu who stood above Eru and all the other deities. When he likes a man wealth flows like a river into his house; his yams grow as big as human beings, his goats produce threes and his hens hatch nines. (AG 8-9)

The place where the Christians built their place of worship is not
far from Ezeulu's compound. At first Ezeulu thinks that since the white
man has come with great power it is necessary that some people should
learn the ways of his deity. But he doubts if he is wise in sending his son
to Christian school.

Ezeulu was becoming afraid that the new religion was like
a leper. Allow him a handshake and he wants to embrace.

Ezeulu had already spoken strongly to his son who was
becoming more strange every day. Perhaps the time had
come to bring him out again. But what would happen if, as
many oracles prophesied, the white man had come to take
over the land and rule? In such a case it would be wise to
have a man of your family in his band. (AG 42-43).

What Ezeulu points out is applicable to all the colonies of Africa,
India and Caribbean islands. The internal conflicts among the natives
were exploited by the colonisers and some of the natives who provided
a handshake to them were embraced by the white.

But the real admiration is seen when Winterbottom summons
Ezeulu. This takes place when the British administration at the head
quarters decides to appoint a Paramount Chief from among the natives
of Umuaro, and the man whom Winterbottom thinks of shouldering
their responsibility is Ezeulu. But to his astonishment, Ezeulu refuses.
He asks Winterbottom to come to his obi, if he wants to meet Ezeulu. He feels he is not a being to abide by the instructions rendered by the whites. He thinks he has a better responsibility to the natives of his own country than to the whites. The priest who feels earlier that the white man is in a better situation accepts that white man is like a ‘disease’.

The strong determination and veneration Ezeulu has to his own culture are reflected in the words, “Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody’s chief, except Ulu’s” (AG 174). Since Ezeulu could not eat the remaining sacred yams during his imprisonment, harvesting of the yams is delayed by two months. Ezeulu considers the New Yam Feast as the appropriate time to teach the people of Umuaro a lesson. He, as the Chief Priest of Ulu, does not announce the day of the feast. If Ezeulu does not mark the close of the old year and the beginning of the New Year, the people of Umuaro will suffer the calamity of famine with the yam buried under the ground.

There are no strict rules in the Ibo society. Rules are flexible and subjected to timely examination, debate and change. But Ezeulu is not ready to change. Arrow of God gives a series of occasions when Ezeulu’s powers are questioned and challenged by his opponent Nwako and others. Individual expression, freedom and gratification are constrained by the society. But they are ready to welcome changes; even they are
ready to appreciate the merits of their opponents. Most of the natives send their children to missionary schools. Even the Chief Priest Ezeulu sends his son to a Christian school. Though he is least interested in Christianity, he considers it as a means through which he can reach the white man’s wisdom. This progressive minded priest is responsible for the greatest social change in their community. His change is always controlled by the whip of his conscience. The tribe on the contrary opposed his ways. Ezeulu holds back the time of the harvest which results in the replacement of native harvest with Christian harvest. It is the hegemonic power of the ruling class which excels in convincing the people of other classes that their interests are the interests of all. The Christian missionaries are able to convince the Ibos the need of offering yams to the Christian God as their chief priest has failed to offer any remedy. Hegemony becomes vital because of the capacity to influence the thought of the colonised is a great operation of the imperial power in the colonised region.

Ezeulu strongly returns to his own native culture and religion but is responsible for the mass conversion of the people to Christianity. The happenings are contradictory to the expectations of Ezeulu. His plan was to tie his people close to him and the native religion. People are saved from the throes of hunger and famine as they could go to the
Christian God with the first offerings of the New Yam. In one way, though Ezeulu aims at the strong establishment of the native religious belief, ironically he becomes its abolitionist. He becomes a victim of cultural cringe.

*Arrow of God* portrays the clash between the native and the Western tenets of culture. Power is not strictly a matter of inheritance in the native society. The family of Ezeulu has been holding the position of the high priest of Ulu, but if the person proves not capable then the choice falls onto the next man. Reason and logic are noticeably absent in the native religious practices. Europeans consider natives as heathens. The native customs are considered as sheer nonsense by the Europeans.

In *The River Between*, albeit the white man’s coming to Siriana, and the conversion of Joshua and Kabonyi to Christianity, people shrug their shoulders and go on with their work, whispering, “Who from the outside can make his way into the hills?” (*RB* 9). Chege feels that the Christians are preaching against all that which is good and beautiful in the tribe. “Circumcision was the central rite in the Gikuyu way of life. Who had ever heard of a girl that was not circumcised? Who would ever pay cows and goats for such a girl?” (*RB* 44). Chege is certain that Waiyaki would never betray the tribe. Still he is doubtful, “Would he ever fail the tribe? Would he ever fail the prophecy?” (*RB* 44). He
watches Waiyaki, his progress and his behaviour. Truly “he lived in the son” (RB 45). Chege doubts if the Western education will change Waiyaki’s mind. The traditional values followed by his father and the people in Kameno highly influence Waiyaki to stick on to the tradition of the tribe.

Between the two conflicting ridges, there is a valley of life through which the Honia River flows. “The importance of Honia could never be overestimated. Cattle, goats and people drew their water from there. Perhaps that was why it was called ‘Cure’ and the valley, the Valley of life; that is what it was, a valley of life” (RB 26). During the initiation ceremonies, boys and girls come to the river bank to wet their bodies on the morning of circumcision. “It has long been discovered that very cold water numbed the skin, making it less painful during the operation” (RB 26).

Though Achebe’s father was a missionary and he was brought up as a Christian, Achebe gives detailed description of native festivals like Pumpkin Leaves Festival. Ugoye gets ready for the Pumpkin Leaves Festival. She goes behind her hut to the pumpkin which she specially planted after the first rain and cuts four leaves, ties them together with banana string and returns to her hut. “Every woman of Umuaro had a bunch of pumpkin leaves in her right hand; any woman who had none
was a stranger from the neighboring villages coming to see the spectacle” (AG 69). The pumpkin leaves that women carry symbolises many sins. They carry it to Ilo, the village green, where Ezeulu enacts the origin of Elu. He is supposed to have taken on the spirit of the deity during the rituals. “The great Ikolo sounds and calls the six villages of Umuaro one by one in their ancient order; Umunneora, Umuagu, Umuezani, Umuogwugwu, Umuisiizo and Umuachala” (AR 70). The women wave their leaves from side to side across their faces, muttering prayers to Ulu, the God that kills and saves. Ezeulu wears peculiar costume on this occasion. “He wore smoked raffia which descended from his waist to the knee. The left half of his body – from forehead to toes – was painted with white chalk. Around his head was a leather band from which an eagle’s feather pointed backwards” (AG 71). As the fleeing chief priest reaches any section of the crowd, the women wave their leaves round their heads and fling them to him with the prayer, “Great Ulu who kills and saves, I implore you to cleanse my household of all defilement. If I have spoken it with my mouth or seen it with my eyes, or if I have heard it with my ears or stepped on it with my foot or if it has come through my children or my friends or kinsfolk let it follow these leaves” (AG 73). The native belief is that all defilement can be cleansed during this holy festival. He cleanses the clan of the sins and
desecration that men and women have committed during the year and prepares the fields for fresh planting. At the end of the ceremony, women stamp on them till they wither and crumple. Ezeulu runs like an antelope, he behaves like a youngster. Later he recovers from the exhausting proceedings of the rituals.

In *Arrow of God* a detailed picture of the wedding of Obika and Okuata is provided. The bride is accompanied by her mother. Most of the women carry small head loads of the bride’s dowry to which they had all contributed – cooking-pots, wooden bowls, brooms, mortar, pestle, baskets, mats, ladles, pots of palm oil, baskets of cocoyam, smoked fish, fermented cassava, locust beans, heads of salt and pepper. It also include two lengths of cloth, two plates and an iron pot.

The bride’s wedding dress is of significance.

Her hair was done in the Otimili fashion. There were eight closely woven ridges of hair running in perfect lines from the nape to the front of the head and ending in short upright tufts like a garland of thick bristles worn on the hair-line from ear to ear. She wore as many as fifteen strings of jigida on her waist. Most of them were blood coloured but two or three were black, and some of the blood coloured strings had been made up with a few black
discs thrown in. Tomorrow she would tie a loincloth like a full-grown woman and henceforth her body would be concealed from the public gaze. (AG 116)

The change that comes over her dress after the marriage symbolises the change that she has to undergo as a wife. Grand food is provided for the guests. “The feasting which followed lasted till sunset. There were pots of yam pottage, foofoo, bitter-leaf soup and egusi soup, two boiled legs goat, two large bowls of cooked asa fish taken out whole from the soup and kegs of sweet wine tapped from the raffia palm”(AG 116). Achebe takes his readers to Africa’s glorious past by presenting these functions in detail. Whenever an impressive food item is served the song leader raises the old chant of thanks:

"Kwo- Kwo- Kwo- Kwo- Kwo!
Kwo-o-o-oh!
We are going to eat again as we are wont to do!
Who provides?
Who is it?
Who provides?
Who is it?
Obika Ezeulu he provides
Ayo-o-o-o-o-oh. (AG 116)
The excitement of the people on receiving grand food is reflected in these words. Moreover it is a thanks giving song which echoes through out the auspicious occasion. If the bride is virgin, the bridegroom presents a gift to his mother-in-law. “Obika had already chosen an enormous goat as a present for his mother-in-law should his wife prove to be a virgin” (AG 118). Another important custom of marriage is sacrifice of objects brought by the bride. Obika scoops the red earth and the medicine man takes out the sacrificial objects from his bag. He takes out four small yams, four pieces of white chalk and the flower of the wild lily and gives to Okuata one by one. She waves it round her head and puts it inside the hole. After this the medicine man pronounces the absolution:

Any evil which you might have seen with your eyes, or spoken with your mouth, or heard with your ears or trodden with your feet; whatever your father might have brought upon you or your mother brought upon you, I cover them all here. (AG 119)

Then he places the fired clay face downwards over the objects in the hole and puts back the loose earth. The diviner Aniegboka blesses Obika, “Your wife will bear you nine sons.” Instead of sacrificing the hen brought by Okuata, the diviner takes it and says he will eat it all alone
the next day. The greediness of the diviner makes Obika angry. But Ezeulu pacifies him, “Take your wife home and do not allow this to trouble you. If a diviner wants to eat the entrails of sacrifice like a vulture the matter lies between him and his chi. You have done your part by providing the animal” (AG 121). The medicine man of Africa and the Brahmins of Benares portray their greediness.

In A Dream in Hawaii marriage is presented as an unsuccessful institution. All the married couples seem to be dissatisfied. “Marriage reduced to a convenient contract. For the young and the unmarried, dating and mating were the same. Virginity became a sin when you were over-sixteen. Virgin girls and boys beyond their teens were all too rare anyhow” (DH 109). Even the notion of virginity is contrasted in the East and the West.

In Water with Berries, the immigrant artists feel disillusioned with England, the land of the golden chance and view it now as a sterile and decadent society. It is a sick society going mad with boredom and excessive pleasure. O’ Donnel in Water with Berries faces a pitiable situation:

He had discovered rotten treasure on the heath. Hit it and run. Catch what cunt you can, but keep on the run. Keep moving. Soon he wouldn’t be able to run. His booty had
dealt him a blow in the blood. You've got it. Jesus fucking Christ I've got it. Already he was preparing for the odour of syphilis to rise from his loins. Hit it and run. But nothing was free in God's bedchamber. He was going to pay the grimmest price. (WB 208)

Haitian Ceremony of Souls is given much importance by Lamming. It is the dialogue between the dead and the living. Teeton, an alienated Caliban understands the past better through his encounter with Myra. Teeton and Myra share the common feelings of alienation, displacement, and dispossession. The brutal rape of Myra reflects her bitter predicament. She remains as a whore on the heath. Teeton also speaks of Ceremony of Souls:

The relatives gather. Every eight years or so according to custom. In one place. And when the priest has found his powers, the dead come forward. You don’t see them; but they will be there, and you can hear them. They speak about all things that had never been said when they were alive. They are now free to accuse, and free to pardon. And the living must reply. Always through the priest. Sometimes they argue all through the night. For hours. The living and the dead. It will go on until they reach a point of
reconciliation. Then you know it’s the end. The end of all complaint from the dead; the end of all retribution for the living. The dead depart, and the relatives are free at last to go home. (WB-117-18)

The lengthy fantasy on the heath is a symbolic enactment of a West Indian ritual the Ceremony of Souls. Lamming in his article “The West Indian People” describes the Ceremony of Souls as a metaphoric drama of Cleansing for a commitment towards the future. In it living and the dead come together, the living to ask for forgiveness and the dead for a dialogue before the final departure. This communication takes place through the medium of the priest of Houngan. Lamming adds that “it’s a very awesome encounter. Some of the revelations of the people’s private lives are quite chilling. It is a very long and elaborate communion” (“The West Indian People” 6).

Every year they would come: these mourners who by native custom had to settle their final account with the dead. The cemetery was a parable of leaves and water. It was familiar as the sun at morning: this annual parliament of the dead. Saragasso. The name was bread and wine to his childhood. A faith that could make the mountains of San Cristobal crumble at the whisper of a voice coming up from
these graves. It was here the living came to submit their
charges; to hear the dead answer in forgiveness or rebuke.

(WB 107)

The several attempts Teeton makes in *Water with Berries* to free
himself from the clutches of the Old Dowager turn futile. When Teeton
says, "I must be out of here soon," (WB 183) the Old Dowager asks him
to take rest. Teeton wants to return to his roots:

For this was his last chance to return to his own roots. He
knew that this need would never bless him with its passion
again. And if he failed it now, there could be no remnant of
hope in any future which remained to him. He must be off
this island soon. Now. (WB 184)

The Old Dowager, who is a true embodiment of the coloniser, hinders
his return. Teeton lacks the strong determination of other protagonists.
But only Teeton becomes aggressive and violent which results in his
committing arson on the Old Dowager. Even though the protagonists
live away from their homeland, very often they are reminded that the
place they are residing in is not theirs. The three artists face sterility in
England:

They were young and devoted; the most eager of
candidates for adoption, indifferent to the simple demands
that nagged the social herd. They had invested all their virtues in the rigorous struggle of being artists. They had discovered a style of difficulty that promised to free them from the insecurities of their origin. More important, they had escaped the cruelties of neglect. Whatever indignities the foreign city might impose; it had achieved a most vital claim on their affection (WB 68).

They remember “they had come from a land where loyalties were fragile, and confidence in scarce supply” (WB 68). It is stated in The West Indian Novel that the three artists adopt a “revolutionary violence” to smash the “Prospero’s reality” to reach a “psychic reality” within themselves. A favourable attitude to the indigenous culture can be expected by returning to the native languages. This will save many languages which are on the verge of extinction.

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and
Language is inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (DM 16)

Language is inseparable from the community as it carries culture and values. Achebe admits that the colonies have benefitted from the process of colonisation. A major influence of colonisation is the English language. When the postcolonial world uses English language, it differs from that English used by British people. A good command of English offers the natives lucrative jobs. It bridges the coloniser and colonised, it provides a window through which the intellectuals could view the world. It even links the people of different provinces who have the language barrier. American literature, Australian literature and Canadian literature differ from Indian English literature because Indian English literature is not written in the first language of the writer nor is it the language of the characters presented in the work. Indianisation and Africanisation of English language is aimed at modifying the language for the purpose. Native writers keep up the cultural independence to avoid the Western norms.

The language Ngugi wa Thiong’o used as he worked in fields and outside the home was Gikuyu. Born into a large peasant family, his
father had four wives and twenty eight children. In *Decolonising the Mind* he recollects the story telling practice in which the elders tell the stories to children. The following day the children retell the stories to their friends. When the stories of hare and leopard are told, the children identify themselves with hare which is weak but full of innovative wit. Ngugi asserts, “His victories were our victories and we learnt that the apparently weak can outwit the strong” (*DM* 10). Same language is used at home and at fields. The harmony of language is broken when he went to school. He comments, “The language of my education was no longer the language of my culture” (*DM* 11). English became the language of my formal education. “In Kenya English became more than a language: it was the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference” (*DM* 11). This reverence shown to the English language is exhibited also to the coloniser. Ngugi remembers the punishments given to students who were caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school.

The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. And how did the teachers catch the culprits? A button was initially given
to one pupil who was supposed to hand it over whoever was caught speaking his mother tongue. Whoever had the button at the end of the day would sing who had given it to him and ensuing process would bring out the culprits of the day. Thus children were turned into witch hunters and in the process were being taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one’s immediate community. (DM 11)

This practice took place in variant forms in other colonies too. The students who failed to speak in English were given insulting punishments like shaving off the head and also unaffordable fine. Ngugi remembers a friend of his who was made to fail in the entire exam though he had distinction in all subjects except English in which he had failed.

The condition was similar in India. The Minutes of Macaulay prepared in 1835 recommended English as the medium of instruction in schools and universities thinking that English tongue is best suited in the universities. English became the language of expression of the cultured Indians and also the language of creative writing. Due to these, the literary landscape of India changed.

Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history. Culture is almost
indistinguishable from language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next.

(Ngugi DM 15)

Ngugi wa Thiong’o comments that language has a dual character. It is a means of communication and carrier of culture. For the British, English language is a means of communication as well as carrier of culture. But in other countries where English is used, it is only a means of communication. But unknowingly this means of communication becomes a carrier of culture too. In the colonised countries, languages like Sanskrit, Swahili etc are carriers of culture. Language plays a vital role in transmitting habits, attitudes and experiences from one generation to another. The rejection of the foreign culture occurs when the native is forced to mould his lifestyle in accordance with the foreign. He feels cramped and uncomfortable in his European clothes, language and patterns of thought. The rejection of a foreign language occurs when the foreign tongue becomes inadequate to express the native experience.

The novelists Raja Rao, Arun Joshi, Bhabhani Battacharya, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and George Lamming have used English to express their native sensibility. In this attempt, they have
Sajitha tried to mould the language to fulfil their purpose. Indian writing springs from the Indian scene, manner and gesture. In order to create the Indian atmosphere, a literal translation of the Indian words is done to create the impression that it is an Indian novel and Indian characters are speaking. In the Foreword to *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao comments:

One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of 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 – like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional 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 someday prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it. (5)

The highly philosophical novel *The Serpent and the Rope*, projects quotes from different languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, Italian,
French, Latin and Provencal; but it is striking to note that only Sanskrit is translated. Owing to his sojourn in France, Ramaswamy could not chant or listen to Sanskrit hymns. So during his temporary return, Rama admires his Little Mother’s recital of Sankara’s Nirvana Astakam. Rama starts on “Mano budhi ahankara” as he had been to a Sanskrit School. Later he chants to her kashikapuradinatha kalabhairavam bhaje:

I worship Kalabhairava, Lord of the city of Kashi,
Blazing like a million suns;
Our great saviour in our voyage across the world,
The blue-throated, he three-eyed grantor of all desires;
The lotus-eyed who is the death of death,
The imperishable one,
Holding the rosary of the human bone and the trident

Kashikapuradinatha kalabhairavam bhaje. (SR 21-22)

The chanting of these holy verses during his return to India highlights the fact that the French culture has not annihilated the Brahmin in him. A linguistic return takes place in Rama. He later sings a hymn of Sri Sankara’s Sri Dakshinamurthi Stotram. Raja Rao employs many Sanskrit words like kumkum, aarthi, sari, choli, tali. It is full of epigrammatic sayings: “Love is rejoicing in the rejoicing of other.” “To wed a woman, you must wed her God.” The Serpent and the Rope becomes outstanding
because of the Sanskrit words and rhythm, paradoxes, parables and
digressions. Raja Rao declares that Sanskrit has the breath of eternity
and considers it as the language of Gods. So he writes in that form of
English which is nearly equivalent to Sanskrit which could be
comprehended all over the world. He comments on the syntax of English
language:

We have neither punctuation nor the treacherous ‘ats’ and
‘ons’ to bother us – we tell one interminable tale. Episode
follows episode, and when our thoughts stop our breath
stops, and we move on to other thought. This was and still
is the ordinary style of our story-telling.

(Foreword, Kanthapura 5)

Though Raja Rao feels English language is treacherous, he has
survived as a writer with this tongue. In 1964, Chinua Achebe stated in a
speech entitled, “The African Writer and the English Language”:

Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for
someone else’s? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and
produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other
choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use
it. (Morning Yet on Creation Day)

This paradox of idea presented by Achebe highlights the problem. Those
who use English have “no other choice” and they employ the borrowed tongue to carry the weight of their native experience. Achebe asserts if the English language has to carry the African experience it will have to be new English “still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new surroundings.”

The African English which Achebe uses in his own style reflects the African culture in the postcolonial world. The servant of Winterbottom, John speaks a peculiar kind of English which astonishes even the English man. Achebe uses a new kind of English to reflect the African thought. Pidgin is a mixed language that has developed to help communication between members of different cultures in contact. This usually occurs in situations of trade or colonialism. Winterbottom’s servant John uses Pidgin English, a simplified form of English which blends English grammar with that of a native language. The learning of English language has helped the natives to increase the respect among natives. Moses Unachukwu, who learned carpentry from the mission church, could obtain respect from the natives due to his knowledge of English and his ability to translate it into local Ibo. This is one reason for the elders including Ezeulu, sending their sons to mission school. The butlers and cooks from the native population are trained to European cuisine and table manners. John Nwodika learns functional English from
his master. There is a church where service is conducted by native evangelist who also conducts an elementary school which the native children are encouraged to attend. Local cases and disputes are dealt in the office of a white district commissioner. The road building project is supervised directly by a white man. Winterbottom’s servant John says “Dem talk say make rain come quick quick” (AG 31). “My pickin na dat two wey de run yonder and dat yellow girl. Di oder two na cook im pickin. Di oder one yonder na Gardener him brodder pickin” (AG 31). Unachukwu’s English is also different. He says “dat man wan axe master queshon” (AG 83). Postcolonial literature presents English not as a coloniser’s language but an anti-colonised.

Ezeulu’s prayer to Ulu is essentially Ibo in its turn of speech. He says, “Ogbuefi Akuebe may you live and all your people. I too will live with all my people. But life alone is not enough. May we have things with which to live well” (AG 35).

In Arrow of God, the language used by natives is realistic and that of the common, uneducated African. Ezeulu addresses his people and says, “If you go to war to avenge a man who passed shit on the head of his mother’s father, Ulu will not follow you to be soiled in the corruption. Umuaro, I salute you” (AG 26). One of the striking features of Achebe’s language is his use of literary devices such as proverbs and
legends. The proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten among the Ibos. “We have a saying that a toad does not run in the day unless something is after it” (AG 20). “When we see a little bird dancing in the middle of the pathway we must know that its drummer is in the near-by bush” (AG 40). “When the mother-cow is cropping giant grass her calves watch her mouth” (AG 172). “The fly that perches on mound of dung may strut around as it likes, it cannot move the mound” (AG 130). “The white man is not like the black men. He does not waste his words” (AG 138).

A number of traditional ceremonies, cultural activities such as feasts and marriages and community gatherings are mentioned. The elaborate description of mask-making is also described. Achebe uses images from his native environment. He comments that the moon he saw was “as thin as an orphan fed by a grudgingly cruel foster-mother” (AG 2). Addressing people like ‘Son of Our Daughter’ or ‘Father of My Mother’ is common among the people of Umuaro. Ezeulu’s enemy Nwaka is known as owner of words. Winterbottom is called ‘Destroyer of Guns’ by the clansmen. Another feature is calling people by peculiar names. Obiagili calls her brother ‘ant hill nose’ and the brother reciprocates by calling her ‘long throat’. Songs are also given much importance in the Ibos of Umuaro. “Written literature and orature are
the main means by which a particular language transmits the images of the world contained in the culture it carries” (DM 15). Obiagili comforts the crying child by singing:

Tell the mother the child is crying.

Tell the mother the child is crying
And then prepare a stew of Uziza
And also a stew of Uziza (AG 124).

Songs are sung on every occasion. Even the labourers working in the coloniser’s compound sing. There are work songs like the one sung by the grass cutters in Winterbottom's compound.

When I cut grass and you cut
What is your right to call me names? (AG 56).

Songs are given importance in The River Between also. During the ceremony of circumcision, after cutting the symbolic umbilical cord, the woman starts singing:

Old Waiyaki is born
Born again to carry on the ancient fire.(RB 14)

Circumcision is important in native society and songs are sung during the ritual. Even Christians make use of songs in church. After Joshua’s words on conversion, the congregation burst into a hymn:
Uhoro Mwega niuyu
Niukiite Guku gwiitu
Uhoro Mwega niuyu
Wa Muhonokia witu.

Good news is this
Which has come to this our place
It is the good news
Of Christ our Saviour. (RB 100)

Songs are the best means to convey messages. Some messages are of great significance. Even in the school of Waiyaki, children sing songs before meetings. The song stirs the minds of the parents and the teachers who gather there.

Father, mother
Provide me with pen and slate
I want to learn.

Land is gone
Cattle and sheep are not there
Not there any more
What’s left?
Learning, learning.

Father, if you had many cattle and sheep
I would ask for a spear and shield,

But now

I do not want a spear

I do not want a shield

I want the shield and spear of learning.

Father,

The war of shields and spears

Is now ended

What is left?

The battle of wits,

The battle of the mind.

I, we, all want to learn. (RB 106-07)

Ngugi instils the minds of the readers with the importance of education. Waiyaki has the “shield and spear of education.” The thought provoking song makes the audience burst into tears and they sing in one accord. African folk-songs mirror the wisdom and insight of the African people.

Gikuyu naa Mumbi

Gikuyu naa Mumbi

Left a land virgin and fertile

O, come all. (RB 108)
When Waiyaki reaches Joshua's house, the Christians were singing to heaven.

Maikarite thi utuku

Ariithi a Mburi

Murekio wa ngai niokire

Nake akimera o uu.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night

All seated on the ground

The angel of the lord came down

And glory shone around. (RB 152)

Achebe does not provide translation of the native words employed in *Arrow of God*. But Ngugi does. Achebe employs many Ibo words in *Arrow of God*. He uses words like *Ilo* (an open ground), *obi* (a house), *calabash* (a bowl), *foofoo* (yam food), *chi* (personal spirit), *egusi* (a native green leaf used as edible) *Okwe* (white wood), *ikenga* (the wooden symbol of personal spirit), *nwa-anyanwu* (handsome man). Moreover names of Gods such as *Eru*, *Idemili*, *Ulu* and *Ekwensu* are found throughout the novel. Names of days of week *Oye*, *Afo*, *Nkwe* are used. Names of river and stream spirits like *Nwangene* and *Ota* are also used. The art of conversation is given utmost importance in Ibo culture. Words are used sparingly and spoken with relevance attracting the
attention and the interest of the listener. Another feature of the language of *Arrow of God* is the corrupt usage of European terms like ‘Wintabota’ and ‘gorment heel’ by the natives. Winterbottom calls the natives “savage tyrants sitting on filthy animal skins” (32).

Fanon comments in *The Wretched of the Earth* that the people of South Africa, Nambia, Kenya, Zaire and many other colonised countries do not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world. In a conference of African writers of English expression, the discussion was once on extracts from works in English and hence they excluded work in Swahili, Zulu, Yoruba, Arabic, Amharic and other African languages. The effect of colonisation on African language is drastic. The neocolonies of Africa are defined in terms of the languages of Europe: English-speaking, French-speaking, or Portuguese-speaking. He further mocks the practice of the natives welcoming the foreign tongue, “English, French and Portuguese had come to our rescue and we accepted the unsolicited gift with gratitude.”

Naipaul and George Lamming have used a dialect which is close to Creole to represent the conversations in their fiction. But Lamming’s character the West Indian, Teeton, uses the Standard English in *Water with Berries*. Creole is widely used in day to day conversation in West Indies. Lamming does not hesitate to picturise the horrific rape of Myra;
he uses frequently the words like cunt, loin, shit, and fuck in the conversations of the characters. Most of the West Indians resort to filthy terms, when they use English in an emotionally effected situation.

In Kenya, the culture of the Maomi people has the vitality strength and beauty of resistance. A three language policy is followed in Kenya to strengthen the African languages.

Kiswahili would be the all Kenya national and official language; the other nationality languages would have their rightful places in the schools; and English would remain Kenya people's first language of international communication. (Preface, DM ix).

In The River Between, the people of Kameno have great hostility towards the whites. With lowered voice, they whisper together, “The white man cannot speak the languages of the hills. And knows not the ways of the land” (RB 9). In a Statement of Decolonising the Mind, Ngugi frankly admits, “This book, decolonizing the mind is my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way” (Decolonising the Mind xiv).

In the Foreword to Kanthapura, Raja Rao comments:

The tempo of Indian style must be infused into our English expression. Even as the tempo of American or Irish life has
gone into the making of theirs. We, in India, think quickly, and when we move we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumble and run on. And our paths are paths interminable.

(5)

English is the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom. The native writers use English in such a way that it expresses native sensibility, thought and culture. The English language used by them is different from the English language of the European and American writers. When they use English as the English, they cease to express their feelings. It is the fluent and errorless English used by Billy during his encounter with Romi in the forest which in one way causes his death. The officers were able to recognise his outstanding personality. Romi calls the civilised world, “bastards.” In the modern days, with the prominence of English language, many native languages are facing death day by day.

The study portrays that only Achebe uses English with a difference. Just as the West has colonised the land, Achebe, the colonised, tries to use the global language to present the native sensibility. Occasional usage of other languages is evident in The Serpent and the Rope. Other novelists use Standard English with a few
native words. Ngugi’s protest to English language is not that much evident in *The River Between*. Though all other protagonists have a loyalty towards their culture, place and customs, their conflict is a kind of mental conflict. It is evident in Rama, Yogananda, Billy and Teeton who leave their land and roots, but become patriotic to the land of their origin. The novelists present the variegated cultures of the colonies which are considered cultureless by the colonised. The spiritual wedding of Rama and Savithri, the *dhyana* of Yogananda, the tribal customs followed by Billy, the Pumpkin Leaves Festival, New Yam Festival, Female Circumcision and the Ceremony of Souls reflect the native scenario. The spiritual power of these customs generates a strong desire in the protagonists to return to their cultural roots.